USC News Formatting CheatSheet

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March 4

For more than a decade, a small percentage of Americans has volunteered to join the military and take part in the nation's longest-running wars, but the effects of combat and the transitions home impact more than just that 1 percent.

Families, friends and entire communities have been welcoming home service members whose wartime experiences can span the gamut of physical and psychological reactions, including post-traumatic stress disorder.

"A lot of these guys that are struggling here at home are highly operational in combat," said Charles Hoge, a psychiatrist and nationally recognized expert on PTSD, traumatic brain injury and other physiological reactions to war. "I have yet to meet a combat veteran with PTSD who wouldn't raise his hand and go back."

> **Combat-related PTSD provides a paradox that civilian society struggles to understand, specifically how its symptoms, which might impair a successful transition, can also be considered beneficial.**

It is the military-civilian cultural divide that organizers of this year's All School Day hoped to bridge.

Building Community on Campus

The USC School of Social Work's annual event began in 1992 after racial tensions sparked the Los Angeles riots as a way to raise awareness about diversity issues affecting society. This year's *"Duty of Care,"* featured a keynote address by Hoge, a former researcher at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and retired U.S. Army colonel, along with a panel of experts and a performance focusing on veteran and military issues.

Dean Marilyn L. Flynn said these wars have been long-fought in distant places and have faded from attention.

> **"This is an unseen war, an unseen [military] and an unseen group of veterans for many, many people. It is us that will define the issues and define the care for those when they return," she told the students and staff assembled at Bovard Auditorium.**
>
> Marilyn L. Flynn

Since 2001, more than 2.6 million troops have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and now face rates of suicide, depression, PTSD and traumatic brain injury that have sounded the alarm for action. These documented challenges led to the formation of the school's military social work program.

The Transition Home

Carl Castro, Kim Finney and Kristen Kavanaugh participate on an All School Day panel. (USC Photo/Andrew Taylor)

Hoge said that not everyone who experiences trauma develops PTSD. Service members are trained to be highly functional in extreme environments. As such, many of the medically labeled symptoms of PTSD are combat skills and responses that are necessary for survival and not easily turned off. For example, trouble sleeping could be rooted in the ability to be effective on limited sleep. Likewise, anger could be seen as adrenaline and focus while detachment is having control over one's emotions.

Although each transition home is unique, knowledge of this dichotomy and the overall military culture and values could help social workers — especially those planning to pursue careers working with veterans and military families — better understand clients.

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The event's panelists, including social work professors and veterans Carl Castro and Kim Finney and Kristen Kavanaugh MSW '12,
executive director of the Military Acceptance Project, expanded on Hoge's points, providing practical tips and examples on the
myriad transitional issues experienced by service members.

Castro, research director of the <em>USC Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans &amp;amp; Military Families</em> (CIR),
said that all impairments to a successful transition home revolve around relationships, either with themselves, partners,
families or work.

"Relationships are the linchpin for having a happy and productive life," he said.

Finney, who teaches in the USC military social work sub-concentration, said that terms such as soldier, sailor, airman, marine
and warrior evoke certain images.
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