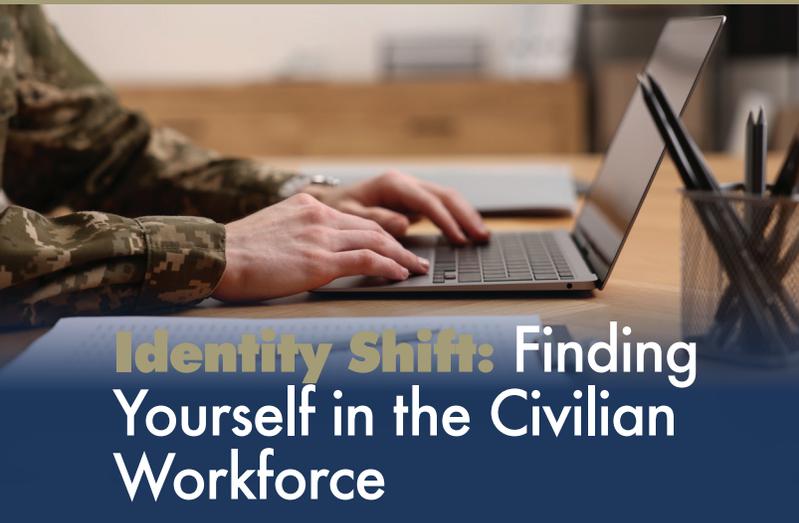


# Beyond the Barracks: Structuring Wellness in Civilian Life



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## Identity Shift: Finding Yourself in the Civilian Workforce

Before we leave the service, we start grappling with a change to a core element of our identity. In a sense, our job search and transition to the civilian world is beginning. Whether we realize it or not, we are shaping our transition experience and choosing who we will be as civilians well before we ETS.

It's scary and overwhelming, but it's an opportunity that must be engaged thoughtfully and directly. Just think of your own unit; the wide variety of personalities, skill sets, and qualities. We have had to acquiesce for the team our whole careers - this is the time to take control of defining what is best for you and your family.

**Be Intentional** Don't get swept up in the tide of what everyone else is doing or following established norms. Sure, typical post-military career paths exist for a reason, but this is your chance to forge your own. Take the time to define what is important to you and what gives you purpose before making your next move.

**Embrace Uncertainty** The military trained us to plan for contingencies, but civilian transitions rarely follow a perfect plan. While we're accustomed to clear career progression paths and knowing our next set of orders, civilian paths are often more fluid. Instead of viewing uncertainty as a threat, see it as an opportunity for exploration and growth. Some of the best career paths might be ones you haven't even considered yet.

**Take Time to Explore** Military life often moves rapidly with compressed timelines and immediate decisions. If possible, give yourself the newfound gift of time during transition. Take advantage of opportunities to explore different industries through internships, networking events, or informational interviews. Shadow professionals in fields that interest you. The more exposure you get to different work environments and roles, the more informed your decisions will be. Your military benefits might give you a financial cushion to be more selective and intentional about your future.

**Consider Your Spouse's Career** Military life often requires spouses to put their careers second, adapting to frequent moves and managing the home front during deployments. This transition is an opportunity to rebalance those sacrifices. Your post-military location and career choices can create space for your spouse to pursue their professional goals too.

Maybe your spouse has been working remotely or taking classes, waiting for stability to pursue their dream job. Or perhaps they've been unable to build seniority in their field due to constant PCS moves. Take time to have honest conversations about both of your career aspirations. Consider how your choices during transition - from where you live to the hours you work - might impact their opportunities.

CONT. INSIDE ➔

**HOLISTIC HEALTH FOR  
TRANSITIONING VETERANS:  
THE FOUR PILLARS**



ACTIVITY



MENTAL HEALTH



RECOVERY & SLEEP



NUTRITION

MilitaryConnected.org is a nonprofit organization improving the military-connected community's transition experience through employer education, data driven research, and access to a network of job opportunities with military-ready employers.

The Vegetus Foundation is dedicated to helping Americans improve their quality of life through education on healthy living and has published the Nutrition Health Review since 1979. Learn more at [nutritionhealthreview.com](http://nutritionhealthreview.com)



LEARN MORE AT [MILITARYCONNECTED.ORG](http://MILITARYCONNECTED.ORG)

# Resilience: Navigating the Ebbs & Flows of Civilian Life

For most of us, finding the right job in the right location is a process. It will likely be an iterative experience. There are certain paths like law enforcement, government, or education that will offer a stable and predictable experience, but for many veterans and spouses, transition is something new. With opportunity, there is also risk. It's OK to be both excited for the next chapter and recognize the gravity of the change. Part of that is being prepared for reality and most of us don't transition into a job we are in for the next 20 years – there are ebbs and flows and those shifts will affect us and our family members:

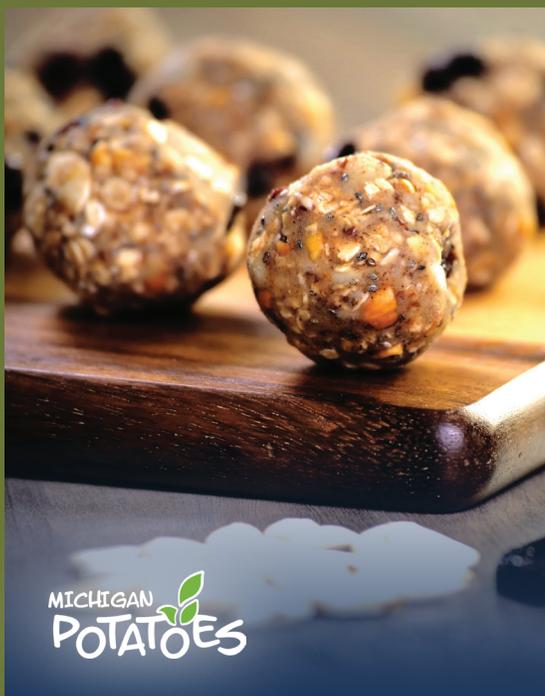
**Embracing Change as Normal** Career paths in the civilian world rarely follow the linear progression we knew in the military. Job changes, industry shifts, and role adjustments are common and often lead to growth opportunities. What might feel like a setback could be setting you up for a better position down the road.

## Building Financial Resilience

- Create an emergency fund
- Understand your benefits and entitlements
- Consider how to maintain health insurance between positions
- Plan for gaps in employment as you find the right fit

**Maintaining Mental Resilience** The skills that helped you adapt in the military – flexibility, determination, problem-solving – are valuable assets during civilian career transitions. Just as physical fitness requires consistent training, mental resilience needs regular attention and practice.

Remember that career setbacks aren't personal failures. That position you didn't get, the project that didn't succeed, or the company that wasn't the right fit – these are all normal parts of a civilian career journey. While the military often equates setbacks with failure, the civilian world views career pivots and changes as valuable experience. Don't hesitate to access mental health resources – whether through the VA, employee assistance programs, or private providers. Seeking support isn't a sign of weakness; it's a strategy for success. Many successful veterans credit their ability to navigate transition challenges to having a strong support system and professional guidance when needed.



## Michigan Potatoes: Energy Bites

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 Tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 Tablespoon ground flax
- 1 Tablespoon unsalted pumpkin seeds
- ½ cup dried cherries
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Flesh from ½ large russet potato, cooked (about ¾ cup)
- 3 Tablespoons natural peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup maple syrup

### Instructions:

- In a large bowl, combine oats, chia seeds, flax, pumpkin seeds, cherries, and cinnamon.
- In a separate bowl, mash together potato, peanut butter, vanilla, and maple syrup.
- Add potato mixture to oats, and stir until fully combined
- Roll into 12 balls, and store in fridge or freezer for up to 2 weeks.