The Role of Leisure for Veterans through the Decades

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Background
Stephanie Hamacher

Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)

Grand Valley State University Graduate 2014

Currently working toward Masters in Public Administration

Experience working in:

- Physical Rehabilitation
- Mental Health
- Long Term Care
- Memory Care
Denver Lawrence

Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)

Eastern Michigan University Graduate 2016

Experience working in:

- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Spinal Cord
- Inpatient/Outpatient Rehabilitation
- Long Term Care
Grand Rapids Home for Veterans

Long Term Care Facility
Founded in 1885
Large Activity Therapy Department
Specialized Services
On-Site Cemetery
Learning Objectives

1. Understand the purpose and importance of leisure for veterans
2. Gain insight on how different war eras affected leisure involvement
3. Knowledge of possible interventions to use when working with aging veterans
The War Eras
World War II

- September 2 1939 - September 2 1945
- Greeted home as heroes
  - Parades, welcome home rallies
Korean War

- June 25 1950 - July 27 1953
- “The Forgotten War”
  - No peace treaty signed at its end
- “The Unknown War”
- Returned home as outcasts
Vietnam

- November 1 1955 - April 30 1975
- United States torn apart
- Given the cold shoulder upon return home
  - Symbols of a great national failure
- Great trauma endured
Leisure
What is Leisure?

“Time free from obligation, work, and tasks required for existing”

“Set of activities people engage in during their free time”
Why is Leisure Important?

Mood stabilization
Helps prepare for old age

For everyone?
1. Who else does leisure affect?
2. Decreased our hours worked
3. Leisure is increasing
Limitation to Leisure: Trauma

“Healing from trauma is a long journey an individual embarks on in search of a deeper understanding of self”

The supportive role of leisure:

1. Cope with stress
2. Heal spiritual, social, & psychological wounds
3. Transcend challenges to engage in “living”

Impact on work, leisure, personal, and social relationships

- Social isolation
- Mental health
- Poverty

Keywords: Survivors, Pain, Conflict
Interventions to Help with Trauma

What should we do?

● Go back to their roots of leisure
● Interventions to help?

How can we help with trauma?

● Research your activities
● Talk to your patients
● Remember!

Fact: Not everyone understands leisure.

● Lack of understanding
● Advocate for leisure
Understand the purpose and importance of leisure for veterans
Case Studies
Milo - WWII

Pre service:
- Activities within the family
  - Monopoly
  - Card games
  - Camping
- Activities outside the family
  - Baseball
  - Tag
  - Playing with neighbors

During service:
- Singing with other service men

Post service:
- Worked
- Married
- Couples date nights
- Church
- Board games
- Card games

Current interests:
- Bingo
- Singing
- Church
- Arts and crafts
- Community trips
Pre-Service
- Activities within the family:
  - Card games
- Activities outside the family:
  - Swimming
  - Bicycling
  - Sports
- Minimal chores
  - More time playing than working

During service
- Traveling

During service
- During service
  - Traveling

Post Service
- Worked on cars
- Labor Work
- Decrease in leisure

Current interests:
- Trips
- Watch tv
- Bowling, bingo
- Zentangle/creative arts
Leroy W- Vietnam War

Pre Service:
- Activities within the family
  - Card games
  - Board Games
  - Movies
- Work was leisure
  - Chores and work around the house

During Service:
- Drinking
- Gambling
- Sexual Activities

Post Service
- Increased leisure time
- Working on cars
- Golfing

Current Interests:
- Decline in health
- Watching tv/movies
- Bingo
What did we learn from the Veterans?

Spanning decades, early development impacts leisure awareness

Trauma endured
Learned to cope

“Activities for a lifetime” exist

Move away from physically active lifestyle
Veterans Current Interests?

- Lifetime Activities
- Mental Stimulation
- Social Activities
- Community Trips
Leisure for Veterans

“Activities can enhance a person’s sense of well being and serve as a source of interest, satisfaction, and structure in daily life”

Popular Activities:

- Television/ Movies
- Mental Stimulation
- Bingo
- Listening to Music
- Card Games/ Board Games
- Cooking
- Spiritual
- Reading
- Creative Arts
Leisure for Veterans

Loss of interest in:

- Sports Participation
- Physical Activity
- Gardening
- Beaches
- Playing Pool
Objective Checkpoint

Gain insight on how different war eras affected leisure involvement
What does this mean for us?
Interventions for Professionals

- Mental Stimulation
- Sensory Stimulation
- Social Activities
- Bingo (common in LTC)
- Creative Arts/Zentangle
Interventions for Veterans in the Community

Join local VFW

Explore “Veterans Discounts”

Attend honorary “Veterans Night”

Mental stimulation
Objective Checkpoint

Knowledge of possible interventions to use when working with aging veterans
Community Resources

Kent County Veterans Services
Veterans Affairs
Grand Rapids Vet Center
The Grand Rapids Home for Veterans

Adult Day Care Services:
- Elders Helpers
- SaraCare
- Caretree Adult Day services
- Seniors Helping Seniors
Learning Objectives

1. Understand the purpose and importance of leisure for veterans ✓

2. Gain insight on how different war eras affected leisure involvement ✓

3. Knowledge of possible interventions to use when working with aging veterans ✓
Questions?