

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

Objectives Checkpoint

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

Michael F- Korean War

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

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

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Questions?

References

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