

Hope-Action Theory & Military Veteran Transitions

In terms of military personnel transitions who are medical and/or retiring from the force's (Hayden & Buzzetta, 2014, p. 56) stated that theories that focus on the client's perception of themselves, the environment and others around them, address the career management needs and challenges of veterans with disabilities. I would extend this for all military transitions. Hope Action Theory strongly meets this criterion.

HAT Competencies

- **Self-Reflection**
- **Self-Clarity**
- **Visioning**
- **Goal Setting & Planning**
- **Implementing**
- **Adapting**
- **Environmental impact (internal & external)**



*Hope Action Theory pinwheel developed by
Dr Spencer Niles, Dr Hyung Joon Yung, Dr
Norm Amundson, Hope-Action Group*

HAT & Mental Health

Hope is the anchor / mechanism at the centre of the pinwheel. There is no glue, but is a mechanism which enables the winds (competencies) to move around as impacted by the air (environment). HAT and developing sustainable action-oriented hope, is essential for supporting veterans struggling with culture change, changing structure / life roles.

- Person-centred
- Recovery-oriented
- Trauma-informed
- De-stigmatises mental health issues
- Empowers clients & carers to self-advocate & take ownership of recovery

(Jacobs & Blustein, 2008) suggest that mindfulness as an intervention tool can assist in reducing anxiety for helping with employment / career pathway uncertainty, and interview techniques. A professional qualified Career Development Practitioner can teach a client this, as part of their career management toolkit.

Some challenges that veterans may face in relation to their career planning and career decision-making include: (Many challenges not confined to only one competency)

- Loss of self-identity
- Ongoing medical physiological and/or psychological conditions
- Changing structures / Life roles
- Cultural change – Feeling of being 'institutionalised'
- Stresses of 21st century life, including the impact that COVID-19 is having on employment and mental health issues not only in Australia, but globally.
- Labour market information - Awareness of current/future trends of industries locally, national and globally
- Translating military experience to civilian employment
- Job planning skills and strategies
- Awareness of workplace Laws & Legislations to protect their rights and personal safety, also an understanding of their responsibilities

***** Each of HAT's competencies represents a component of decision making, therefore one perspective is that HAT deconstructs the career decision-making process.***

NB: Not all clients will require intensive support in all competencies. This is where the Hope Action Inventory (HAI) tool is critical in identifying evidence based individual holistic needs of clients, and thus avoiding a 'cookie cutter' approach to career development support

Competency: Self-Reflection

- Veteran Challenges:
 - Loss of self-identity
 - Ongoing medical physiological and / or psychological conditions
 - Changing structures / Life roles
 - Cultural change – feeling of being 'institutionalised'
- Romaniuk and Kidd (2018), as mentioned in the Australian Government Productivity Commission report, found that veterans experience significant and multiple losses when transitioning in three interrelated domains. These being: "loss of military culture and community; loss of identity; and loss of purpose" (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2019, p. 303).
- Leaving permanent military life regardless of the circumstances, is a profound transition experience, which potentially can lead to a loss of self-identity. Anderson & Goodman (2014) also reiterate that this sense of loss of self-identity, and the need to shift from a collectivist to a more individualistic culture, where the civilian world may now be very unfamiliar territory through changed contexts, circumstances and relationships
- Self-reflection is one of the more unique aspects of HAT & it is questionable how many military personnel engage in this proactively on a regular basis pre-transition & beyond.
- Self-reflection is key, especially these days when things are so busy & we often don't take time in an intentional way. (Spencer Niles, 2021)
- This process of intentionally taking time to reflect upon:
 - Their experiences
 - What they have to tell you about themselves
 - How it helped them to think about their place in the world
 - Who they truly are (Spencer Niles, 2021)
- "There is a real focus in our world right now on climate change, the environment, who we are in the world, self- reflection lets us put ourselves into the world in a bigger kind of way. Encouraging people to start asking themselves – 'what am I doing that will make the world a better place?'
 - Leading to Green Career thinking, and sense of mattering (Norm Amundson, 2021)

Competency: Self-Clarity

- Veteran Challenges:
 - Translating military experiences and ranks into civilian terminology
 - Lack of Self-Clarity
 - Identifying & explaining transferable skills
 - Shift from collectivist to 'individualist' way of thinking & impact on values identification
- Self-Clarity is akin to building your house on the sand. It can collapse easily if you don't have 'Self-Clarity' before you build your house. Building material include:
 - Skills
 - Interests
 - Personality Types
 - Values
 - Education & where it is taking you (Spencer Niles, 2021)
- Contemporary career theories that address client's perception of themselves, the environment and others around them holistically, are critical to successful military career transitions. For example, (Stein-McCormick, Osborn, Hayden, & Van Hoose, 2013, p. 8) state that the Career Development Practitioner can frame the main goal of the client's transition as applying the adaption of skills developed in the military with the world of civilian work.
- Veterans often have difficulty identifying and articulating how their transferable skills are relevant to civilian jobs.
- "This is the competency that people tend to think about this most in terms of career interventions, and tend to link it to an assessment of some sort."
 - Standardised assessments tend to focus on the psychology of possession i.e., "how much does a person possess in terms of these traits, locating people on a 'normal curve'.
 - Rather than seeing us on the curve – see us as people with experiences & make meaning of these experiences and translate that meaning into direction for the person. This is the usefulness of informal assessments. 'Questions / activities' that don't necessarily have clear answers, but provide the opportunity for the person to think about themselves at a deeper level." (Spencer Niles, 2021)
- Self-Clarity / self-care (looking after yourself in the relationship of others)
 - Some elements of self-care
 - Spiritual Self
 - Emotional Self
 - Physical Self
 - Intellectual Self
 - Mental Health
- Super's notion of how people structure the basic roles of living into a life role that they find satisfying is often not part of career intervention – often think of work as an isolated thing that occurs in a person's life. (Spencer Niles, 2021)

Competency: Visioning

- Veteran Challenges:
 - Labour market information - Awareness of current / future trends of industries locally, national and globally
 - Loss of self-efficacy
 - Loss of hope
 - Fear of being 'institutionalised' to military culture
- Visioning ties in with imagination, & the need to stretch imagination. For a lot of people, as they lose hope, their imagination gets constricted, & it is harder for themselves to imagine themselves going forward, "what are they going to do etc" (Norm Amundson, 2021) – particularly relevant for veterans who are involuntary medical or administrative transitions, who have not had time to 'plan for their transition'
- Having people be able to vision – helping them to see there is something in front of them / something they can do, is critical to support successful lifelong career development.
- Some veterans may experience difficulty with the changed context of military aspects to civilian life from social interactions, use of military language and routines which are different to civilian interactions.
- The work of a Career Development Practitioner is helping people to deal with a crises of imagination. This falls under vision competency. Helping them to develop a vision for the future, so that they aren't walking along blindly.
 - Opening up to brainstorming / possibility thinking
- HAT works on possibility thinking using strengths-based interventions as opposed to probability thinking i.e., what is the likelihood of succeeding or failing.
 - When we switch to possibility thinking, you engage a person in
 - What are they excited about?
 - What do they imagine themselves doing? (Spencer Niles, 2021)
- Visioning opens up the door to thinking about possibilities, but also what happens if you stay with the status quo.

Competency: Goal Setting & Planning

- Veteran Challenges:
 - Transition date subject to change
 - Transition date may not align with job offer start date
 - Awareness of civilian workplace rights & laws as well as their responsibilities
 - Military qualifications being recognised by civilian employees and /or training establishments
 - Relocating to different location away from established support pillars / lack of awareness of facilities, labour market, opportunities, local culture in area relocating to.

- “Goal setting incorporates decision-making. In order to set goals, you have to make decisions & frame goals that are attainable. From there you move to planning” (Norm Amundson, 2021) – **how often is this step / competency undertaken as part of career development / transition programs before self-reflection, self-clarity, vision competencies?**
- Use of ‘backswing’ metaphor is beneficial for goal setting & planning. “You have to have a target to aim the direction”. The backswing is a focused and measured effort designed to generate energy and promote a launch forward. (Norm Amundson, 2021)

Competency: Implementing

- Veteran Challenges:
 - Job planning skills and strategies
 - Networks developed outside of Defence
 - Stigma / bias by civilian workforce of myths about veterans being ‘broken’ and stereotypes of what military service involves, based on popular culture e.g., movies, and / or conflicts from previous time periods e.g., WWII, Vietnam war
 - Lack of civilian hiring managers / interview panel understanding of strengths of hiring veterans, and myriad of diverse roles and experiences across the military services
- (Hayden & Buzzetta, 2014, p. 54) point out apart from the challenge’s veterans may face and the need for support relating to job preparation and job search skills, that there is potential for misconceptions regarding the hiring of transitioned military personnel which can influence an employer’s decision in regards to the hiring of the individual.
- As discussed in the (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2019, pp. 305-306), the changing nature of military operations, for example the increase in counter-insurgency (COIN) warfare may add an added layer of complexity to the transition into civilian life for ADF military personnel.

Competency: Adapting

- Veteran Challenges:
 - Stresses of 21st century life, including the impact that COVID-19 is having on employment and mental health issues not only in Australia, but globally.
 - Changing context
 - Changing routine

Creative Engagement Intervention Strategies

- Whole-brain decision making
- Miracle question / scaling questions
- Stepping stones
- Career journal / poetry / art work
- Scenario thinking
- Auditory / guided imagery
- Draw / collage – future (vision board)
- Liminality
- My life as a book
- Self-referential statement
- Walking the problem (strengths-based focus)
- Workplace attractor cards / card sorts
- Metaphors
 - “Expanding your metaphor” -can provide insight into emotions, and how people are conceptualising the situation
 - Vantage points – different points in time, past, present, future
 - Reframing
 - “My plan” activity
 - Active listening & summarising using metaphors
 - Encouragement (doormat to wall hanging)
 - Challenging perspectives (immediacy)
 - Metaphor box
 - **Benefits of metaphors:**
 - Non-threatening, therefore can reduce resistance
 - A way to express empathy & build the relationship
 - Creates engaging & memorable (sticky) interactions
 - Serves to refine perspective
 - A way to externalise problems
 - Evokes emotional & physical responses / not only intellectual
 - Brings into play the preconscious & unconscious
 - Builds creativity through use of multiple response

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