



Peaceful Options for Training and Careers (POTC)

Alternatives to Military Enlistment: Engaging Youth/Young Adults

The purpose of this short curriculum is to help high school students gain confidence in talking to their friends about alternatives to military enlistment. This set of exercises introduces the Peaceful Options for Training Careers website, explores the attraction of military enlistment and invites young adults to practice their communication skills.

You will need group access to the POTC website

Introducing the POTC Website

- Look at the contrasting images and the questions at the top of the POTC website landing page. How do you react to these images/messages? Would your friends at school have a positive or negative reaction? Why?
- The POTC mission is to “help young adults find practical and meaningful alternatives to military enlistment.” The POTC website tries to accomplish this mission in 4 ways. View each of the following web pages briefly:
 - a. [Alternative Options](#): This page provides links to resources about funding for education, service opportunities and job training.
 - b. [FAQs](#): Provides answers to common questions about military service. There are many reasons why military enlistment might not be a good fit for someone. One doesn't have to be a pacifist to prefer other choices. Read the answers to the questions about the military enlistment contract and the length of every enlistment.
 - c. [Request Career Counseling](#): Offers one-on-one contact with an advisor via phone or email.
 - d. [Stories](#): Offers short video stories from young adults about their post-high school journey and reflections from military veterans about their military experience. View several of these stories based on the interests of your group.

Processing the Issue of Military Enlistment (Questions for Discussion)

- Invite the young adults to describe what they observe in their schools about military recruiters. What is the recruitment message? How do the recruiters interact with students?
- Invite the young adults to describe any conversations they may have had with their friends about military enlistment. What attracts young adults to military enlistment? What are the primary motivations?
- Should a young adult enlist in the military if their primary need is money for college? What are the pros and cons of making such a choice? If the primary motivation for enlistment is college money, is it a free choice?
- Important! Young adults who enlist, but change their minds before going to Basic Training, can withdraw with no negative consequences. This happens frequently. If you know someone like this, invite them to call the girightshotline.org (PH: 877 447-4487). A trained counselor will help them understand their options.
- Why do some religious groups teach against military enlistment? What is the basis for this? What does your own faith community say about military enlistment? For a very current perspective from someone in the Air Force who recently received a conscientious objector discharge, view the video on Conscientious Objection. What strikes you most about Joy's Metzler's decision? What might it cost her?
- Describe some non-religious reasons for not enlisting in the military. Look at the list on the postcard. Which reasons might be most compelling for your friends at school? Why?
- View several of the veterans' videos on the POTC website, especially "The Cost of Bombs" and "Anger in Basic Training."

POTC Stickers and Postcards (Click on the Order button to place an order)

How would you feel about putting a POTC sticker on your backpack or computer, or handing your friend a POTC postcard? Enthused? Afraid? Why?

- Would the mission of POTC be considered controversial at your school? Why/why not?
- If a friend asked you what the POTC sticker or postcard was about, what would you say? What would be your one-line response? Take turns practicing via a short role play.
- If you have a friend who is considering enlistment, show a genuine interest in their reasons. What alternative options might you suggest that could help them

meet their goals? These stickers and postcards can be a doorway to a deeper conversation.

Summary

POTC wants to make non-military options for school, service and jobs/job training easily accessible to young adults. It doesn't seem fair for young adults to have to commit to 8 years of military service and the risk of war if what they really want is funding for school, a job, or a service experience.

As a high school student, you are in a great position to talk with your friends about their future plans and introduce them to the POTC website. Your referral to POTC could make a big difference in their lives!

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