

Controlling the Beast

To survive war, we must become war. In the first stages of military training, the primordial self, that monster within each of us, must be brought to the surface, the predator must be let out of its cage. It is the very essence of that which civilization shuns and rejects, it is the savage part of each of us that is so looked down upon and yet, it is what those who defend this nation in war must become.

The monster, the predator, the beast as it has been called, is what makes us capable of killing without compassion, it teaches us to survive the atrocities of battle, it moves us into a state of controlled rage. When in battle, the monster shows us that the closer we approach death, the greater the opiate of adrenaline. It rewards us with accomplishment and satisfaction if we survive. And when we do survive, we yield even more control to the monster that preserved us with a power and strength over our enemy.

This beast teaches us, tantalizes us with gifts and rewards. It shows us that we have the power over life and death, it builds in us a strength to overcome that which we didn't have before battle, it shows us the darkest sides of humanity, and yet it also shows us that through Strength, Honor and Sacrifice, just how noble humans may become.

War is a shock. It teaches us what one human being is capable of doing to another; the cruelty, insensitivity to the pain and suffering of other humans and animals. War-fighting goes against everything we believe to be civilized, it nurtures the savage side of our nature. And once the monster is released from its cage, it doesn't want to go back. It will not go back!

Then, when the battles are over, and the gentler side of us looks at what we have done, there is the shock of seeing yourself as the monster, the savage, the outcast from society. And there begins the conflict and denial, there begins the pain, the guilt, the traumas of battle.

As war continues, and your experiences, the horrors of killing mount, as you experience the loss of true friends, you feel even more guilt. And yet, the monster is your only hope for survival. It takes on more dominance, more power. You have forever changed into another person. And at first you feel like the savage animal is all you are. You've lost the gentle side of your nature. You feel that there is no place in society for you ever again, except back on the battlefield, back in war. And yet you return to civilization.

You don't like yourself, and no one likes you, except for other Warriors who have become the savage as well. Your self-esteem plummets and you feel helpless to change it. The battles rage in your mind because the monster, the primordial self wants you to return to battle, to rage and the emotions of war, so it can feel alive and in control. In your mind, you feel the brutality-of-humanity shock, the guilt over killing, the loss of friends, the loss of yourself,

survivor guilt, anger and betrayal, and the loneliness of isolation from having become an outcast. And then, death by any form of suicide becomes a path to peace. But this is not the answer! There is a path the Warrior may take to heal from battle. There will always be scars, and yet life may be well worth the effort.

"But how do you control the beast?" you ask.

That is not as difficult as one might think. The answer is to admit to yourself, that first and foremost, you are not the same person you were before walking onto the battlefield. You must admit that you acted normally in war, and the killing, loss and pain are part of the results of your experiences. And then, you must admit that you are the Warrior controlling the beast within you. It will never, ever go back into its cage, ever. But it will listen to you. So what do you do?

You must never threaten to put it back into its cage. You feed it with just enough emotions by thinking about battle, about killing. But not too much. It seems to be enough for the predator to relive your past experiences and know your present potential; yet not act upon it, unless "threatened"; unless given any excuse. Because its always waiting for the chance, the opportunity to feel controlled-rage and power again.

You acknowledge it for giving you the strength to face any problem that will ever face you. You console it by admitting that the beast is always present to take over at any moment, to return to battle, to kill again. You thank it for showing you the darkest and greatest sides of human nature so that you now may judge wisely. You must also thank it for your life, for your survival of war, and for the opportunity to experience true Friendship, Love, Trust and Honor from your fellow Warriors. You will never be afraid of death again, and therefore you will never be afraid to fully live life.

You control the beast. Yet it now stands by your side, ever-waiting to be unleashed to protect and guide you once again. It is your Friend, your Guardian, not your enemy.

You now live with the strength that only a Warrior will ever know. Honor your strength, Love your Fellow Warriors and "Respect Your Self". You are far more now than you ever were before war.

We cannot expect others but Warriors to understand, but we can help other Warriors to remember who and what they've now become.

To my Fellow Warriors, my Brothers and Sisters.

From Sgt. Brandi: <http://sgtbrandi.com>