

Suicide and Homicide, or Honor and Love

Heading back to base camp on a typical monsoon day, we followed a bend in the trail. Just as the rain let up a bit, we could make out the sandbag bunkers with Old Glory hangin' on a pole just guiding us home. We had been in the "bush," on patrols and a search and destroy operation for over 30 days. We were filthy, exhausted, pissed off, and looking forward to our first hot meal since before we left on our public relations tour among the happy little people in our sector. They always enjoyed seeing us, knowing that we had come to burn their village to the ground and shoot all the family members we could find. And besides, it was Christmas, and they certainly couldn't be left off of Santa's gift list.

Passing the check point, we walked up to what was left of the chow hall after a mortar attack, fixed our bayonets, stuck our rifles in the ground (upside down), grabbed a couple of ammo cans and sat down. Ah, it was good to be home.

Murphy was smiling on us this day (so far) because the weather had cleared long enough for the choppers to bring in ammo and that hot meal we were hoping for. To this day, I remember that wonderful smell of hot turkey and dressing, and there was even something that looked like a biscuit!

We filled up our mess gear (sorta metal plates) with a great meal, and walked back to our festive picnic area, ankle deep in mud. And just as we sat down, it began to rain, monsoon style. For anyone not familiar with tropical monsoons, it's a down-pour so hard that you can barely see any distance at all, and it splashes mud a good ways from the ground back up into the air, especially if you're "on" the ground.

Well anyway, there we were, watching our only hot meal in 30+ days washing off our plates while we tried to fire down a piece of wet turkey and what was left of a soggy, biscuit- type substance. That is, before it all turned to brown slime.

As one after another of us lost the race, and began throwing our mess gear down in the mud, one Marine looks over, and while trying to light a cigarette under his poncho, says "Merry Fuckin' Christmas." As we replied in typical Marine Corps fashion with "Fuck you, I got your Christmas hangin'," and "Here, Merry this, asshole," our wise and "all knowing" sergeant, listening to his children, Speaks! He said, "Listen up you shit birds! As bad as you nose-blowers think this is, it ain't no big thing. Deal with it!" And "All you swingin' dicks are going to heaven, 'cause you spent your time in hell. And I'll be there to kick your asses if you fuck up along the way."

We all smiled and humbly bowed our heads in gratitude, while the last of our meals washed down the hill. Our "Father Sergeant" taught his pups never to quit, no matter how bad it seems. He let us bitch and blow shit up to release some of our anger, but never, ever quit!

Our Father Sarge did go to heaven on our next operation, so I know he's standing there with spit-shined boots, ready to stick one in my ass if I don't stay locked and loaded on the trail ahead. In the Corps we say, Semper Fi. It means "Always Faithful". "To what?" you ask.

We are always faithful to Code, Corps, God and Country. That is, the rifleman's Code of Honor, the Marine Corps Family, to God, and to the Principles set down by our great Nation. In that order. And country "does not" mean, cake-eating-limp-dick politicians.

Now, applying the wisdom of my Old Father Sarge, one thing is very clear. Suicide is a chicken-shit quitters' way out, and homicide (murder) is breaking the Code of Honor. Doesn't matter how the goody-two-shoes shrinkers put it, it's just that simple to me. Black and White, no Gray.

You know what I mean by gray? You don't? Well, here it is. Gray is indecision! Looked it up, it means not knowing what the fuck to do next, sort of like a fly. "A fly?" you ask. Yep! Just like a shit eatin' fly. Here, I'll give you an example.

Let's say you're a fly, and were just at the Brown Diner, you know, finishing up a good meal compliments of Buffy next door, and you decide to buzz over to the table and piss off some people. Ah, but slumped in his chair, sits a fully alert Marine, firing down brain-grenades (beers) but well trained in the killing of all manner of life. You smugly land. And instantly, two large gnarly hands come at you from both directions! Your small, shitfilled brain is confused. "Do I go forward? Do I go backward?" Splat! Your ass is history! The Marine takes a confident swig, and returns to his busy 1000 yard stare. So make a decision, Black or White!

Now, on a more serious note, "What is Suicide?" It's usually a good idea to know the meanings of the words you use. So, in the "Book of Big Words", it says that Suicide comes from some foreign language. Sui means "of oneself", and cide means "to kill". Well, that's OK, but I like this old Marine's definition better. Sui means "Sewer", and Cide means "To one side", as in a turd, slipping to one side of the toilet. Somehow, puttin' it that way makes more sense to me.

When you kill yourself, you're only going one place. That's down the shit tube. Your life is over, and you've just dropped your back-pack. The forced march is over, and you've just quit! And the way I look at it, someone that can't hack it and quits, lacks intestinal fortitude, "Guts". Look, I truly understand the desire to kill yourself. Been there many times. I could say that I didn't want my ass kicked in heaven by Father Sarge and a size 13 boot in my ass, but I've sorta had my ass kicked before and got over it.

"What stopped me?" you ask. It was the fact that I'm not a quitter, and live by the Code of Honor. So what does honor mean? It simply means "Respect". You must respect (honor) yourself first! You must respect the ones who love and respect you. You must also, respect your right to live a good and productive life. A life that brings some joy into your tomorrows and the tomorrows of others. If you're a Warrior, your friends did not save your ass so you could blow it away! So Honor (respect) That!

And my friends, you cannot just think yourself into respect for yourself, you must Feel it and believe that its true. "But how do I start to respect myself?" you ask. Well, that one is easy to say, and very hard for some to do. Hopefully you're better at it than I was. And I'll explain some of that for you.

I had to go back in my life and pull out one experience at a time, one quality that I respected at a time. You might consider doing what I did, and actually sit down with some paper and a pen, then make a list. This isn't easy either, because it also drags up all the shit in your life that you don't respect.

But don't be discouraged if 50 things come up you don't like. Only write the ones down that you do like, the ones that you respect yourself for. Pretty soon, you'll have a list of real good things to make you feel better about "you". And if it helps, put the list on your refrigerator or some place that you can look at it all the time. This will remind you that You Are an Honorable person.

It can be anything that makes you feel good about YOU. For example, Being a good Marine or Soldier, a good Police Officer, a Nurse, or helping someone in need. Maybe you helped someone get through a bad situation, maybe you demonstrated compassion, took in a stray dog or cat, gave someone a ride to the market, or gave a street person a smile and a couple of bucks.

Everyone has done things that feel good and those things made them feel good about themselves. You just have to remember. Hell, if you can't remember enough good things to put a "Happy Face" on your list, then start a daily record of things you do for the "Greater Good". That is, start from today and move forward, marking down every good thing you do that makes you feel better about you. There's an old saying that "You never lose by giving," and "When you do good things, good things come back to YOU."

Here's one "Real Important" thing to keep in mind. Never compare your list of good things to anyone else's list. We are all different. We all have different experiences, abilities, and personalities. We all look at life in our own way, so we are not the same as anyone else in the world. We are only similar to others. And my friends, we have all made very good and very bad decisions in our lives. The main thing is, we're still alive to think about it. And as long as you "are" alive, you still have an opportunity to add to the positive side of the list.

We have all "Done the very best we could". So maybe you judge other people, and that's up to you. Just don't judge and condemn your Self. The interesting thing is, if you respect yourself, value yourself, and are finally looking at a really good future, why would you not want to be around to enjoy it? Why would you want to kill yourself, or someone else? No situation is worth that. And besides you'd wreck all the plans you've got for the good life ahead!

In some ways, life kinda' reminds me of a voyage I once took on a troop carrier. Sometimes the ride was smooth as glass, with beautiful seas ahead, and other times, it was rough as hell, and I was hangin' over the side pukin' my guts out. Same-e-Same. The better you feel about yourself and your life, the smoother the ocean stays. That is, most if not all the time. "Why" you ask? It's because the little things don't make big waves anymore, and your traumatic emotions don't have a chance to drag you under.

"So what about the ones that have already committed suicide?" you ask. Well my friends, unfortunately, I have known more Veterans who have killed themselves than I care to think about. And I do understand the feelings of wanting to end the pain at any cost, of not seeing any way out, any relief other than death. Why each of us chooses to live is our own individual choice. In the final roll call, you're gonna' have to be the one to decide if you're still here to answer up "Here Sir!" to your Creator, or if you've decided, with your own "Free Will" to not trust that you had some useful purpose for your life.

I would also like to say to those who have lost loved ones to suicide, that it is not my "intent" to criticize or shame those who have chosen this escape. And keep in mind that death by suicide is Not the fault of anyone living! I have seen situations where family, true friends and true loved

ones, made no difference in keeping the gun from the Veteran's mouth. There was nothing I could say, or anyone could say, when the "Will to Live" was lost. At that point, they just had all they could stand, and saw no relief in sight, no hope for a better life ahead. But what I'm also saying here is, that with some good professional help, and a lot of strength, which you have, killing yourself becomes less of an option. The less pain you feel, the less critical you are of yourself, the more you'll be willing to stick it out a little longer. So why not live until tomorrow to see what happens? And then the next day and the next? You've got nothing to lose, and everything in life to gain.

Eventually, as you gain self-worth (value) and self-esteem (respect), that is, finding the good things in your life that make you feel good about "You", there will be a threshold that only you may choose to step over. It is a junction point in your journey, a place where you decide that rather than choose Suicide and Homicide as a path to your future, you choose to live by Honor, and to Love living life for what it truly is: an opportunity to be grateful and joyful for every moment well lived. And living every moment is something you don't want to miss!

This all make sense to me, my young friends, because "I Am Here" to tell you first hand, that it works! And if this Old Jar Head can do it, then damn it, so can you! That about wraps up the mission for this section.

So let's saddle-up, climb aboard the choppers, and do a little aerial recon. Your tour's about up, and it's time to get back in the "World", and get on with it.

You know, the New You, in the new life.

From: "The Warriors Guide to Insanity" By Sgt. PTSD Brandi, U.S.M.C. Never Retired?
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