

THE WARRIOR'S GUIDE TO WORLDS AT WAR



THE DRAGON HAS AWAKENED
SGT. SEMPER FI BRANDI
U.S.M.C. NEVER RETIRED

THE WARRIOR'S CREED

WHEN THE DARKNESS WITHIN HUMANITY THREATENS THE INNOCENT, I AS A WARRIOR WILLINGLY STEP FORWARD ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD.

LIVING BY THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF HONOR AND DISCIPLINE, IF CALLED TO DO SO, I SHALL GIVE MY LIFE TO PROTECT LIFE.

I AM NEVER ALONE IN THE DARKNESS OF WAR,
FOR MY BRETHREN WARRIORS STAND BESIDE ME.

AS A WARRIOR I AM THE LIVING TRUTH OF HUMAN NOBILITY.

I SHALL CARRY ON THE TRADITION OF ALL WARRIORS BEFORE ME,
TO BE THE EXAMPLE FOR ALL TO FOLLOW.

I AM A WARRIOR!

I SHALL ALWAYS BE PROUD TO BE A WARRIOR,
IN THIS LIFE AND THE NEXT.

FOR SURRENDER IS NOT IN MY CREED!

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BY SGT. SEMPER FI BRANDI
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CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!
AT WWW.SGTBRANDI.COM
WEBSITE DESIGNED BY AFGHAN AND IRAQ COMBAT WARRIORS

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Cover by Chris Love

*This book is dedicated to our brave Warriors
From the Afghanistan and Iraq Theaters of War.
They are the true Heroes of this nation. I am
Honored to call them not only “Friend” but my Fellow
Brother and Sister Warriors as well.
They carry on the tradition of the Warrior Class, by
Living the Code of Honor.
My deepest respect to you all.*

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Introduction

This Nation faces a potential crisis on an unprecedented scale. Never in our history have so many Warriors experienced so much combat; the killing, the loss, the sense of abandonment and alienation from the country they fought to defend.

The Warrior's Guide to Worlds At War will discuss in brutally honest fashion, exactly what lies ahead for our young men and women, our Heroes from the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. This work is a startling glimpse into their brave hearts and the wounded souls of those who would die for what they believe in.

The focus of this book is to acknowledge the sacrifices of our Warriors, to explain the perils of their now uncertain futures and to describe in detail just how “their” lives will affect this society for generations to come. It has been my honor and privilege to speak with thousands of Combat Troops, the sons and daughters, the mothers and fathers, Warriors all, caught in the traumatic aftermath of war.

I have listened to their stories, their nightmares, and their pleas for help. As one female Soldier said to me, “Sometimes you have to forget how you feel, and remember what you deserve.” And what they deserve is to be acknowledged for their service, thanked for their sacrifices and honored for who they have now become.

No one comes back from war unchanged, no one. It is not humanly possible. When you kill another human being for the first time, something painfully changes inside of you; the innocence of youth is gone forever. When you embrace a wounded friend in your heart and sometimes in your arms and watch them die, something profound

changes inside of you. And yet, this is the inescapable Code of the Warrior: Living by a Creed that pushes us beyond the limits of human endurance and into another world, another reality in which we fight for our very lives in a society we died to protect.

How then do we adapt to a world we no longer fit within, a world that in so many ways has become meaningless to who we as Warriors have now become?

If you as the reader do not choose to hear the Warrior's Story, to hear the truth as we "feel" it, then read no further. As with *The Warrior's Guide to Insanity*, this book is the vivid reality of life as seen through the eyes of a Combat Warrior. It is written from my own heart, not only to my Brothers and Sisters, but to those having never walked out onto the battlefields of death, that perhaps they may glimpse the world we live in every moment of our lives, and then not be so quick to judge us for what we are.

I now welcome you into the Inner Sanctum of the Warrior's World, a world of honor, courage, discipline, and self-sacrifice.

So then, with body armor secured, weapons locked and loaded, our mission begins.

**We have just walked "outside the wire."
Stay frosty, but be advised, "I've got your six!"**

Acknowledgments

I am honored to have had the privilege of speaking with nearly 6,000 U.S. Combat Troops from the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. This is their book. This is their story. I wish to thank each and every one of you for your strength, your bravery, and for your sacrifices. Welcome Home, my Brothers and Sisters. I've sure as hell got your six! You're all gettin' on the chopper this time.

The first thank you goes to General George and Lisa Franzen for their support and guidance through the years, and for bringing this work to completion for our Warriors. Lisa "Doc" Franzen, RN, retired from a career in the medical field, and you know how us Warriors feel about Nurses... and Docs Too! General Franzen is a Combat Fighter Pilot (USAF) having completed two hundred thirty seven Combat Missions over two tours in Vietnam. It is an honor to work side by side with two Heroes!

And speaking of Heroes, I'd like to thank three more of 'em: Sgt. Charnessa Tidwell (U.S. Army), an Iraq Combat Veteran; Sgt. Jason Burchard (U.S. Army), an Afghanistan Combat Veteran; and Sgt. Rocco (Rock) Motta (U.S. Marine Corps), a three-tour, Iraq Combat Veteran. These Warriors not only went to War for this nation, fighting for what freedom stands for, they also helped in the creation of this work. Thank you my Brothers and Sister!

If it weren't for Jock Embry, the creator of our Afghan-Iraq, Combat Warrior Website (and a computer genius), I'd be all curled up and twitchin' on the ground like a dumb shit. Thank you Jock for your patience with the computer illiterate Jar Head (that be me), for making this book happen, and for what you have done for my

Brother and Sister Warriors.

Thank you Paddy Marusch, my dear friend and Editing Deity of the Southwest! 'Cause if I had to spell out every word I spoke, I'd be a dumb ass mute. You did a great job in keepin' this old knuckle draggin' Marine from lookin' like I have an I.Q. below 38. (Maybe a lean and mean 29.5 tops?)

A special thank you to Alison Lighthall, my Fellow Sister Warrior, friend, and superb Combat Trauma Counselor. Your clinical "Squash Doc" discussions and insights into the minds and feelings of our young Warriors was a guiding element in the creation of this work.

Along with Alison, thank you to my dear friend Dr. Kathryn Kotrla, a true, think-outside-the-box Psychiatrist. And a special thanks to my Battle Buddy, Friend, and Combat Trauma Counselor, Guy "Doc" McCommon. Thank you both for your friendship, support and guidance on issues that are mission critical to helping our young Warriors, the True Heroes of this Nation.

I also wanna mention here, the late Dr. Donald Rossi. He was a Fellow Warrior from the Land of the Little People, the Nam, a Brother Marine, and my very close and trusted friend. Don crystallized for me the perspective of the Beast in all of us, and by doing so, he helped thousands of his fellow Warriors. I will love and remember my Brother until the end of my days. There's no doubt in my green brain that Don's waitin' with a "cool one" right next to St. Peter; I can't wait to pop the tab and shoot the shit with him.

The absolutely "outstanding" cover of this book was painted by Chris Love. She took the thoughts from my twitchy green brain and put 'em on canvas. You can check out her other great works at www.chrisloveart.com. On

behalf of all us Veterans, Thank You Chris!

There are so many others to thank, but I've gotta mention Command Sergeant Major Billie Russell for her support and encouragement. CSM Russell has been my door gunner, supporting our Troops since this mission began nearly four years ago. She has made it possible for me to talk with Warriors nationwide and helped with our Animal Sanctuary. Thank you CSM Billie Russell!!
HOOAH!

On that note, if it were not for my Life Partner, Karin Brandi, I couldn't have gone anywhere to talk with anyone. Besides supporting and encouraging me when I'm walkin' in the Shadow World, she takes care of our thirty-one, thousand-pound children (hoofs and horns) when I've been gone. Thank you Karin! You have directly helped my Young Brother and Sister Warriors!

That's about it, so if you made it this far, keep on readin'.

Section One: Baptized in Blood

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1-1 My Friend the Beast

As the first warm rays of daybreak clear the surrounding mountains, your sleepless night has ended. Although no safer now than in the darkness, there's a sense of relief that comes from the bantering back and forth between soldiers in war.

"These are my only 'true' friends, you think while deciding which of the MREs you'll have for breakfast. And, while tearing open the packet, "I'd die for these dumb shits... I feel closer to them than my own blood family."

It's been more than forty-five days since your last shower and a good meal, but a care package from home with baby wipes and bug spray made the last few weeks a lot better.

"Being clean doesn't mean that much compared to being alive."

As you think back to how many of your friends have been wounded and killed at this outpost.

"Damn! I've only been here six months! Seems like six years".

Today your squad's running point down the mountain and into the Korengal Valley (Valley of Death), a beautiful and yet dangerous region in the Kunar Province of Eastern Afghanistan. And as every other day you've walked "outside the wire" you embrace the reality of what just might be wait'in for you down that long, winding trail to the valley floor below.

Your weapon is clean, you've checked your ammo and the signal is given to "Move Out!"

A short distance from the firebase you look back and a chill goes down your neck. "You're Alone!" you think, "Except for the squad up ahead and Sanchez back there, bringing up the column".

Sanchez takes a quick look back too, turns and gives you a big shit-eatin grin, then yells “Fuck it Brother!” He knows exactly what you’re thinkin’, because everybody’s thinkin’ the same damn thing. You’re not alone, you’re surrounded by battle-hardened warriors!

And you know that if in fact you do engage the enemy down there, this day may be the last day of blowin’ out your knees under the weight of an eighty-plus pound pack. Bein’ a Medic, you’ve come to feel even closer to death in every firefight and even more responsible for every one of your “True Friends” than even the squad leader. “He kinda stands out up there.”

Johnson’s a six foot three inch farmer’s son from the Midwest, a sergeant E-5 and one tough son of a bitch. He never complains and watches out for all the new guys. But after Hanson took a round in the head two days ago, old Sarge hasn’t been quite the same. It’s his job to be strong, to be an example, but tears rolled down his cheeks same as the rest of us when Hansen’s body bag got zipped up and loaded on the chopper.

The crazy thing about this war is, I feel more alive here than any time I can ever remember. My life has real meaning now, purpose, and even a sense of power. I’m livin on adrenaline and MREs, my senses heightened and my combat skills peaked. Damn if I haven’t become the “Predator”, the executioner, truly walking through the Valley of Death. Hell, that old sayin about fearing no evil makes sense to me now.

But how in hell do I explain this to the folks back home? Imagine a civilian think’in that every day when he or she goes to work, they may not make it home for evening chow, or maybe come home in a body bag?

Your thoughts stop! The squad just passed through a

stand of pines and out onto the valley floor.

Johnson calls out! “Watch that tree line!”

So how then does a Warrior reach this state of “combat perfection,” you ask? How does he or she become the greatest predator on earth, facing death day after day, living in filth and delighting in the kill? You know, a lean, mean, fighting machine.

Well, my soon-to-be enlightened friends, to answer that, let’s go back to the basics... as in basic “Boot Camp.”

First off, I’ve been asked many times, ”How does a few months of boot camp change a person’s life for the rest of their life?” Hey, this ain’t rocket science here! It’s real simple.

In boot camp, we go through a perfect process of brainwashing. The shrinkers call this process “operant conditioning.” And since us Marines have an especially gnarly, dense mass of green substance behind our eyeballs, the process works exceedingly well. I’ll explain.

Just above the brain stem, entering at the base of the thick skull, there’s a lump of cells called (egg-head speak) the Hypothalamus. This is where a lot of the shit-bath experiences of war are stored for unsafe keeping. Connected to that is a little stink-beetle sized thing called the Amygdala (Marines: Not a movie). Fact is, if you turn this whole lower brain-housing-group upside down, it looks like a shriveled up scrotum with old Chester stickin’ up. Wonder if it affects the little brain in men? Well anyway, this region of the brain is where the D.I. (Meaning, Divine Intelligence) focuses on in conditioning his troops.

Normal civilian-type humans have three reactions to a life-threatening situation. They either Flee (get the hell out of Dodge), they Freeze (like a rabbit wait'in to check out) or they Fight (like a junkyard dog). I find it interesting that the dog is the mascot of lots of military units. Coincidence? Don't think so.

Anyway, by the time you get physically, mentally, and emotionally pounded on enough in boot camp, you only "react" one way, that being like a pit bull waiting for a dogfight. And all during this period of enlightenment, something called the "Primal Self" (shrinker talk) is developed and brought to full maturity. But hell, let's say it like it is. The primal self is the uncivilized savage, the unmerciful, the Beast, the non-compassionate side of human nature. It's the side of all humans that most humans pretend they don't have.

"Oh! Not me!" they say. Yeah right... we all got it, folks, and we sure as hell ain't getting rid of our Beast... so deal with it.

In boot camp, this Beast is fully developed but still in its cage. However, the door is unlocked, swung wide open... and there "It" stands, waiting; waiting for its chance at freedom, to feel the rush of combat adrenaline; to feel the satisfaction of killing; and the emotions of guilt, loss, and revenge. It's waiting for the blood lust to begin and all that gives it strength and control over its keeper.

In your first firefight or when your life is mortally threatened, that Beast is "Out!" And once out, it will never go back into its cage again, ever. You can't put it back, and the more you try (try means fail) the more you fail while it rips your life apart. And unless controlled, it will in fact destroy not only your life, but also all the lives of everyone around you... while feeling the pleasure of it all.

But let's give credit where credit's due. You need the Beast in battle. It keeps you and your friends alive, because "If we are going to survive War, we must become War." And our Beast is what reduces our enemy to less than human, to nothing more than an insect that we may step on while feeling a sense of satisfaction. It's what turns our enemy into the slant, the gook, the hajji, the jibber, or the skinny of Mogadishu; that we may kill them without compassion, without hesitation.

And by the way, hesitation means death to you and even more importantly, to your fellow Warriors. There is no political protocol, no Geneva Convention or Rules of Engagement in combat. There is only kill or be killed and no time to judge the correctness of pulling the trigger. In fact, my old Sarge used to say, "When in doubt, empty the magazine. At least you shit birds'll be alive to feel guilty later." These are the killing times of the Beast, and the Beast loves it, always wanting more.

Ask any Combat Veteran (You probably ought to be a Combat Veteran to ask), "Did you ever kill enough of those little enemy bastards?" And faster than you can chamber a round, their twitchy green brain, will fire out "Hell no!" Ya see? That's their Beast talkin' from the lizard brain, sayin', "Oh shit!" If I can't do it again, then at least I can feel the emotions of thinkin' about it again!" and, "So what do ya think, My Friend, how about just one more kill for old time sake? Please-o-please!!"

The Primal side of human nature scares the crap out of most so-called civilized people. And to most civilized people the Military "is" the Beast within our society, just like it is in our brain-housing-group. The Beast is the inseparable savage side of us, which has been "locked" into our brains since we made moonshine and drunkenly drew

stick animals on the walls of caves. And you wonder why the Military and Politicians don't see eye to eye? They aren't even in the same worlds, let alone thinkin' out of the same parts of the brain.

Strange thing is, for a lot of judgmental, goody-two-shoes, the Beast is in them too, just waitin' for a chance to kill, to feel the adrenaline rush, to explode with primitive emotions. For these folks, the Primal Side just hasn't had the right opportunity to taste blood yet. And given that right opportunity, all but the most advanced souls, the true Peace Makers of this often shit-bath world, are capable of killing. I've met a few of these beings, and that in itself is another book. Actually, book three.

"So what do we do if the Beast won't go back in its cage?" you ask timidly.

Good question! But this again, ain't launchin' the Space Shuttle either.

What you do is "Make Friends with It!"

"Oh man! Now I know this Jar Head is wacked!" you mutter tenderly.

As Warriors or civilians, the very first thing we all "must do" is to "admit" we've got a Beast. Doesn't seem too hard does it? Wrong! It's damn hard to admit you're carrying around a savage, bloodthirsty monster inside your head.

You start to think of science fiction movies, body snatchers and other such stupid-like things. If it helps, just think of it like a brain tumor... if left untreated, it gets bigger and stronger until eventually, it kills you.

In other words, you get use to the idea that you're actually "two" different people in the same body. That's what the whole Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde story was all

about. Hell, even Walt Disney showed people the truth about the Primal Side in his cartoons, when he stuck an angel on one shoulder and a little devil on the other. You know, with that forked tail stickin' out of its ass? Old Walt knew the primitive side of human beings; he just made it seem funny.

So then, you've taken the first step: You've accepted the "fact" that you have a Beast roaming around in your brain-housing-group, you have identified it, and acknowledged it as "yours". Next thing is, you've gotta make friends with it.

I know, I know, it sounds even crazier, but bear with me, there's a good reason for all this. And to really head for the padded cell and the Thorazine Shuffle, I'll go one better... it helps to name it!

Out here in New Mexico, my neighbors accuse me of bein' a redneck. Hell, I don't even know what that means, but I name everything. My truck (gun rack included) is called Miss Clare, my rifle is Raptor, the generator is Sparky and so on. Well, over the course of my sixty five jobs, on occasion, I've worked in wild life parks and zoo-like places.

Don't know if any of you have ever been up close and personal with a Kodiak bear, but they scare the be-je-bees out of you... at least they did me. They are huge, powerful, can out swim you, run ya down, and eat your ass alive at their leisure. Well, since I like to name things, I figured I'd call my Beast, Oso Grande, which means "Big Bear" in the Spanish lingo... seemed to fit.

This whole process took about two weeks or so, and by the end of that time, Oso and I became good "Friends." Fact is, after I thanked him for bringing me home alive from the battlefield, I realized it was Oso (the Primal Self)

that did all the killing, that watched people burn alive in napalm strikes while laughin' and callin' 'em "crispy critters." He's the one who looked forward to the firefights, for that opiate, combat adrenaline. And no shit, adrenaline is addictive.

The outstanding thing about all this is you can talk to your Beast any time you'd like, even in public. With all these fancy cell phones nowadays, I can't tell if these idiots in the supermarket are talkin' to me, to themselves or the small, smiling face on a can of Chef Boy-are dinky-dow. So you're "Good to Go!"

OK, so now here's the shrinker part of all this. By understanding the "permanent, hard-wired, programmed-in" Primal Side of our human nature, I was able to "Transfer" all the "Guilt" I felt over to Oso, my Beast Friend. And that felt like a hundred pound pack off my shoulders.

As time went on, I began to not only like Oso, I began to love him, and therefore developed more and more self-respect, more self-esteem. Ya see how it works?

The Beast is PART of you, so by likin' it, Hell, by lovin' it, you'll automatically love yourself. You still gotta get to the source of what's eatin' you alive from your experiences. You know, to get through it. But at least now you've got some company when you're sittin' there scarin' the shit out of the trauma counselors at the VA or other such places.

My Friend Oso is always "watching" over me, he's always evaluating the threat level, always ready to kill again and feel the rush of combat adrenaline. So just because you've come to like or even love your Beast, it doesn't mean you don't have to always be aware of him (or her) at all times.

And by the way, some Troops call their Beast Osa (female), the Guardian, the Protector, the Tasmanian Devil, and even Lobo (the Wolf in Spanish), to name a few. But don't fret about comin' up with a name for your Beast, because it will pick its own name. Seems to me, "they" like to make things real personal based on your greatest fears. Wonder what I'd have called it if I was afraid of chipmunks?

So then, when someone flips you off on the freeway, the trick is to "identify" where the emotions are coming from. Ask yourself, "Is it the Angelic, higher-brain, civilized, loving side... or is it the hateful, murderous, adrenaline-seeking savage side?"

As an example, let's suppose you're cruisin' down the street in the right (curb) lane, and some shit-for-brains in the left lane speeds up, cuts you off, and turns into the very next parking lot exit... causin' you to spill that perfectly good cup of coffee and drop your newly lit cigarette in your lap. Chances are your Beast already pulled in after the idiot, has his K-Bar out, and is gonna make sure this maggot never wears sunglasses again... you know... like in take ears.

Now do ya think that reaction is higher order, rational thinking, or coming from the monitor lizard part of your brain-housing-group? There are a few more possibilities on this.

That is, if you happen to be a male Marine and the offending driver happens to be a good lookin', pearly-white-toothed female. In that case, the Marine's little brain would automatically take over and he'd become a dumb shit. Seen that happen many times.

Figurin' out where the emotions are coming from takes a little practice, but in a short time you'll get the hang

of it. It also helps to talk to a Combat Trauma Counselor if you get stuck a bit.

One tool that works for me is counting to three out loud!! Ten is too damn long. Here, I'll give you an example of how to control your Beast when it's on the scent of fresh blood.

I start by saying "ONE you're dead meat, asshole!" Then "TWO you're a worthless piece of dog shit!" (Thinkin of a dog, might just spark some compassion?) and "THREE, you ain't worth it, scum-bag... you get to live today". Merry Fuckin' Christmas!

Now that approach may sound like advice from the local psycho-ward, but shrinkers call this a **mental stop**. You've given yourself time to think and not react.

It only takes two or three seconds to tighten the choker on your drooling, fury friend, and it'll keep you from some big, tattooed body-builder introducing you as, "Hay! Wanna meet my new Bitch?" in federal prison. You can make up whatever colorful words you'd like... just wait those three seconds.

And like any good animal keeper, you have to feed your Beast. How's that done? Well, here's what works for me.

I still self-medicate (shrinker talk for drinkin' booze) with alcohol in small quantities... two or three beers or a couple of glasses of wine a day. But on occasion, Oso gets a little restless. When that happens, I have an extra glass of red nectar and pop in a nice soothing war movie.

The last Rambo series works real well, when old John J. is flushing the toilet of humanity... you know, those deserving maggots who qualified for extinction by lead poisoning... the twenty millimeter machine gun at the end of the movie? Hell, by that time, me and Oso are even a

little teary-eyed, watchin' old battle-scarred Rambo walking down the road in Bowie Arizona, to his father's ranch house.

The point is that by the time that movie is over, Oso is purring, and so am I. Next morning I feel great, and Oso's back on his leash. Then I can go on a supply run to town without thoughts of setting clamors in the isles on my extraction from the supermarket.

For a little heads-up here, be advised that when you first hysterically gaze into the eyes of your Beast and it looks back at you, the bond is realized. You can't hide from it anymore... you can't escape it. It is You and you are It! So enjoy the new relationship. Look at it like a honeymoon with an alien Predator... like in the movie?

I can tell ya from experience, that doin' this is damn right scary as hell. Because there you are, face to face with a genetically, hard-wired-in monster that you've gotta control, or it will definitely kill your young ass.

It's sort'a like you ditty-boppin' down a forest trail, and an eight foot tall Kodiak bear stands up on his hind legs (while you're thinkin' "I just shit my shorts!") walks over, places his massive, smelly paws on your tremblin' shoulders... and then while drooling down your chest, looks into your eyes and says, "Hello my old friend!"

Do ya get the picture?

Through the process of trial and error (for Marines, mostly error) I've learned to control the large, furry friend that all us humans walk around chained to. And it's always ready and anxious to fight with someone else's Beast. You know, to feel a little rage, a little hit of combat adrenaline, maybe even a little sip of that tasty blood.

Next time you're in the supermarket, look around and

imagine that every shopper in that store is walkin' side-by-side with an eight foot Kodiak bear, and all the bears are ready to fight. It'd be damn right ugly to bump into one of 'em with your shopping cart.

Same thing when another Kodiak cuts you off on the road or flips you the middle claw! It ain't "Flee" or "Freeze" time... its Fight time. Think about it.

You can say whatever you'd like about the Beast and how to deal with it, but clinicians call this approach a "**Tool**" to help us Combat Vets adapt to society. And for many of us Warriors, it simply works.

As I said in the first book, a counselor once said to me, "Brandi, you can kill anyone you want in your mind, just don't do it in the street." He was tellin' me not to let Oso off his leash. And by controlling the Savage Side of our Nature, most often we control the emotions that drive us back onto the battlefield.

As hard as it is for most folks to understand, in many ways us Warriors may always feel more at home down range. I'll explain that as we move along here. But here in the civilian run world, we need to be the "Keepers of the Beast," in control and vigilant at all times. That is, to the potential we have of our Savage Side, our closest Friend.

Now for the sake of you Marines, who might be slowly readin' this, let's do a review of steps to control your Beast. And this ain't no training film, so pay attention... no heads bobbin' out there.

Steps to controlling your Lizard Brain, the Primal Side of human nature: (that be you!)

- **Acknowledge it Exists.** It is genetically hard-wired into your brain-housing-group. It (the Beast) lives in the lower brain and is the survival mechanism that wants to save your ass. In a life

and death situation your reaction is either flee, freeze, or fight. (Advancing under fire is fleeing to the fight?)

We've all got it, so you may as well "Stand up, hook up, shuffle to the door. Jump right out and count to four." In other words, take the first leap!

- **Identify it.** These emotions are easy to spot; like a water buffalo in a rice paddy, or a camel spider crawlin' up your leg. These are base emotions like hate, rage and anger.

Other such Beastoid-type feelings are justifying the de-humanizing of the opposition, being unmerciful, un-compassionate, reveling in the cruelest atrocities, blood lust, desiring the smells and emotions of violence, the temporary (false) satisfaction of killing, and the power over another individual or group, to name a few.

An easy guideline is, "If the feelings aren't loving, helpful, unselfish and kind", then watch where you're a steppin', cause your beast is about to shit in your mess gear.

- **Befriend it.** That's right! See it as your friend! Start a dialogue (talk out loud) with it, and begin to thank it for bringin' your ass back from war. It wants you to live; it just wants to control the way you live. This is called, "taking back your power." What better way to start than in your own thick skull?
- **Transfer your guilt.** It was the Primal Side, your Beast that enjoyed the hell out of the raw emotions of war. It's the one that killed other

human beings, blew shit up, and loved combat adrenaline. It was the Demonic side of your nature, not the Angelic side.

Look at it like this. The demonic side (Lizard Brain) is the only way you're gonna survive war. But the Angelic side is the only way you're gonna survive life. So what makes more sense?

You can walk around like I did for thirty seven years in military clothing, waiting for your big chance to gut the next enemy that comes along at the mall; or you can buy a nice pair of barn boots and some jeans, a car that ain't olive green, and get on with things.

Hell, you might even have a good relationship with one of them other human-like sorts, if you're not sleepin' in a cave and catchin' salmon in your mouth at spawning time.

- **Like it, then Love It!** I would hope that if you have a friend, then you like that person. Otherwise we need to get your ass into counseling even quicker. Anyway, as you start to like the Beast as your friend, at some point you realize that you're both in the same body and you begin to like yourself.

Eventually, you begin to love your Beast and automatically begin to love yourself. Do ya see how it works?

If you're not the one who did all the nasties, then you must be the good guy (gal). You're the Hero! And who doesn't love a Hero? So unless you love pain and wanna keep up the forced march at Twenty Nine Palms in mid July, you'll get the joke. Not only is it OK to like yourself, it's OK to love

yourself. And that don't mean you're standin in front of a damn mirror with a shit-eatin' grin on your mug 24/7. It just means you're the good guy, the Hero. So get on with it, and enjoy what's left of your life.

- **Care for It, Control It, and Remain Constantly Vigilant of It.**

You now know your Beast is always there watching, it's always a part of you. But now the separate parts have become the whole. We'll talk more about this later on.

Your Beast can never be unleashed except to protect life... including your own. Acknowledging that it can always handle any violent situation keeps it in check. If it starts to get restless, fantasize, count to three, and use the anger energy constructively. Always ask yourself "What kind of emotions am I feeling?" You know the difference now.

Enough said for the moment on "who" and "what" we all truly are. That'll give you a heads up on the topics to come. We'll develop this more in stories as we move along.

Time to head out to the next L.Z. (Landing Zone). Keep that body armor on; this next topic may be like an "Incoming" mortar round.

**Door Gunners at the Ready!
Board the Chopper!
We're Movin Out!!**

1-2 To Feel the Kill

Walking cautiously at full alert, moving along the broken sidewalk of a narrow street that could be any town in Iraq, you feel alive and in control; your heart racing, breathing accelerated, combat adrenaline pumping through every vein in your body... battle is imminent.

No civilians in sight, no children playing; only dead silence except for the imperceptible sound of your breathing, your boots gently touching the ground. You advance smoothly and deadly, watching for any signs of movement; a door cracking open, a tattered window curtain pushed aside by the enemy exposing the muzzle of a weapon aimed at your fire team.

Without warning! An AK-47 opens up!

In an instant, your ears are ringing from the deafening sounds of the firefight. An RPG explodes the door behind you... your brother falls wounded. Straining for any target, you're in a state of controlled rage, yelling,

“Medic Up! Doc! Medic Up!”

A three-round burst to the doorway up ahead, your enemy drops lifeless to the sidewalk. Bolting from the same doorway, a woman dressed in black reaches for her husband's AK. Rounds explode through her body. She too becomes the victim of war.

Then unexpectedly, another form moves from the shadows into the field of fire! It's the small form of a child dressed in white, no more than ten years old! She too lunges for the rifle!

You yell, “No! No! Stop!” She doesn't respond.

As the muzzle of her father's AK-47 quickly moves

upward toward you and your wounded team, you're left with no other choice: The "CRACK!" of two rounds from your M-4 ring out! The child collapses next to her parents, still and lifeless, bleeding from her head and chest.

The battle has ended.

Doors are swinging open, people are screaming, running into the street, dropping to their knees, tears running down their faces at the sight of the bleeding dead, screaming, wailing over what has just taken place.

You look on. Your own team wounded, with one dead... there you stand. Exhilarated by the adrenaline, yet shocked over your own loss, over the killing you've done.

Body shaking, emotions racing through your head, you're fighting to gain control, to make any sense out of the last fifteen months... desperately, you cling to the thought, "I'll be home in less than forty eight hours. It'll all be better then, and I can leave all this shit behind!"

Now let's look at this true-life story. It came from a three-tour Iraq Veteran, twenty three years old. I've heard many like it. And it's not unusual, not "breaking news" for the media to sensationalize. It's just war... cold, unmerciful killing, without hesitation, without compassion.

Actually, this young Soldier came home only eighteen hours from the time of that firefight. He continued the story.

"As the plane touched down at the Denver Airport," he said, "all I could think about was I made it home!" "I can't wait to see my wife and daughter."

He went on, "But you know Sarge, when I saw 'em

standin' there waving those flags, tears began to run down my face, *not* because I was glad to see 'em, but because they looked exactly like the mother and daughter I'd just killed!"

He said he could barely walk up to hold his own child. And when he did, she asked, "Daddy, why are you shaking?" He felt so ashamed, so confused and angry at himself.

His wife could feel the numbness when he kissed her, his reluctance to embrace her as his body trembled.

"She looked at me as though all this was my fault," he said.

Last I heard, they are no longer married, and he's out on a medical discharge, struggling in counseling.

One more casualty of war.

What could this young Soldier possibly say to his wife? How could she possibly understand his feelings, his emotions? She'd just spent another fifteen months on her own, raising their child; and like him, she had reached her limit of endurance.

The war not only destroyed this Soldier, it destroyed his family. He lost himself and the ones he loved. He could never return to his former life. Never. His hope for the future became a plummeting spiral downward.

When talking to the Troops about killing, I often use a quote I heard when lookin' into all that Eastern Philosophy and such. It goes like this:

"When you crush beneath your foot the meanest worm, you shake the THRONE of God and cause the Sword of Right to tremble in its Sheath."

Imagine that: The meanest worm. How much greater

is it to kill one of our own species? Behaviorists say that it goes against the Laws of Nature, the Evolutionary Mandate for the survival of a species to kill itself off on a large scale.

And yet Warriors do just that without hesitation, and most often without compassion in battle. I've done it. And so has every other Combat Veteran from every other war in history.

When you kill another human being, whether in anger, controlled rage, hatred or vengeance, it leaves you with a strange feeling inside. At least it did for me. When the killing was over and the adrenaline wore off, I was left with the very uncomfortable "feeling" that something was wrong with what had just happened.

Oh sure, you can deny it, you can say, "It ain't nothin'." But in the shadows of darkness, when the phantoms come, you're not real sure. The act of killing touches something deep inside of us, it touches the core of our being, making us feel ill at ease. That is, if we're not too far gone already.

When you pull that trigger, feel the rifle recoil, and watch a human being drop dead by your hand, something absolutely final has just occurred. And you can't change it. There's nothing to discuss or to be intellectual about, there's no "reset" button to push. It's done. Period! To this day, I vividly remember the absolute stillness of my first kill... the eyes, the lifeless expression, and knowing that I was the cause of it.

You can rationalize the justification for killing. You can tell yourself, "I had no choice! I've been licensed to kill by my government. I acted honorably in battle." And yet, there's that little something inside of you; that still, small voice that *whispers*, "What have you just done?"

I've heard a few shrinker reasons for feelin' like this;

like I said, goin' against that Race Survival Instinct and that Evolutionary Mandate stuff. Doesn't really matter what the hell you call it; fact is, you just did it, it don't feel real good, and it ain't goin' away, either.

That little feeling, that damn whisper, has stayed in my head since my tour in the Land of the Little People. Don't expect it'll ever go away. But then, that's what we Warriors just have to learn to deal with.

When our Troops throw a grenade into a building to clear it, how the Hell do they know it's full of women and children? They don't! Yet they've just killed 'em. No getting to start over and try that again. It's a done deal, and you've gotta live with that for the rest of your life. Those images are locked into your brain-housing-group till you take your last breath.

Now let's get real here. Of course you get pissed off at times and want to kill everyone, it's impossible not to. That's when the Beast is in full control and you're not. That's when you cut off ears to send Mom back home a nice necklace, or when a convoy driver tries to run down kids, or the soccer team needs a human head to use for the game. It's a way of numbing yourself to the brutalities of battle and loss. It's a way of letting out the rage, of payback for the brutal deaths of your beloved friends, of all the emotions that eat at you like a cancer.

Most folks will say that all this sounds pretty gross. "Oh! What Monsters! That can't be true! Our Troops would never do that!" Wrong! This sort of thing happens in every single war. It's the brutality of battle, the survival of the fittest, and who gets to come back alive.

Our youth, little Susie and Bobby, those sweet little kids who once mined for nose gold in church on Sunday, have now been trained and conditioned to kill. That's right.

We've given them a profession; we've made them Warriors. And what do Warriors do to win battles? They kill other Warriors; they kill who ever becomes the enemy.

Our Troops are now serving this nation without question. They're putting their lives on the line every single day for the freedom that so many others take for granted. They're not little kids anymore. They're full-blown Warriors, and they deserve our respect as such. But damn it, understand **what** they've become, understand what we've made them into, and what they absolutely must do to win wars. They must Kill.

So what's the limit for killing? Do we kill "just a little?" How do we kill our enemy compassionately, fully embracing the "Goodness" within those we're wipin' off the face to the earth? In battle, we don't often have the luxury or the chance to kill selectively. And besides, when everybody's the enemy, dehumanized to the level of insects or less, what's the difference?

You see, here's one of the problems: We're forged into highly skilled, extremely efficient killing machines, so-called monsters to win battles in war. We do it. And the more we do it, the more we like it. Eventually, some of us may even grow to love it. Then we come back to society, craving the needle of combat adrenaline, of purpose, of Honor, of die-for-each-other Friendship. But idiots tell us, "Oh, you have to forget all that now... get on with your life... get over it." Wrong again!

War becomes the only life we know, the only life with any real meaning. We have, in a sense, become "institutionalized" into military life, into a battlefield subculture. And you say, "Forget it"? We're gonna talk about that a bit later on, about why Warriors shouldn't forget it, even if we could. (Which we can't anyway) It's

sorta like pullin' a nice big ass shark out of the water and sayin', "OK... now breathe." But let's continue.

Killing an adult enemy is one thing, even an adult woman enemy. But enemy or not, killing kids is worse by far. In my own Green Grunt way of thinkin' about this, it has to do with their degree of innocence, with their youth itself. You know, "Kids aren't stupid, they're just little"? They have a chance of growin' up and not bein' like their radical, hateful, asshole parents.

My oath as a Warrior was to protect the innocent. And as a patriotic American, I felt that a ten-year-old kid fell into that category. It didn't matter if she was dressed in black pajamas, and it doesn't matter now what she's wearin'. Sometimes us Warriors are put into a moral dilemma that we just can't get out of. I'll give you a brief example of what I mean.

Due to bad intelligence (or the lack there of), at eighteen years old, I killed thirteen children in an ambush that I triggered. Along with being green to combat, this was so damn emotionally devastating because I killed who I was supposed to be protecting! It was truly a moral conflict, the guilt of which I still feel to this day.

And no, it doesn't matter how the hell you justify it in your mind, and it doesn't matter how shrinkers try to explain it away... to make the memories more tolerable. Fact is, it's locked into your brain, and you are the one dealing with it.

Unfortunately, my feelings changed a lot by the end of my tour. I was not only numb to the killing and the loss of true friends; I was especially insensitive to the suffering of the innocent. I'd lost my connection to humanity; that is, I had no feelings of compassion for any member of the human race, except for my fellow Warriors. This, I regret

to say, happens in every war. I've heard many accounts of this same kind of dehumanization happening today with our Troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And herein lies another major problem with the sustained Combat Trauma of multiple tours. Given enough killing, enough loss of friends, enough being witness to what most so-called civilized people would call atrocities (evil cruelty), you become emotionally numb. That means numb to doing the killing, numb to watching the killing, and numb to the results of the killing. In other words, Numb to Death itself.

When this kind of traumatic exposure continues, especially over multiple deployments, you eventually lose touch with your own humanity. And it's a foregone conclusion that anyone you consider to be the enemy; the slant, the gook, or the Hajji has lost their humanness as well. This happened to me toward the end of my one tour of thirteen months. And it's happening now, big time, with multiple tours. I'll give you an example.

Here's a story I heard from two Soldiers last spring, both back from their forth, fifteen month combat tour in Iraq.

These two men were assigned "Rabid Dog Killing Duty." As ordered, they climbed aboard their Humvee and went out on patrol. The Soldiers came across two apparently rabid dogs foaming at the mouth, and they shot them both.

The Soldiers climbed off their Humvee, buried the dogs, and said a little prayer over for the bodies... then continued their patrol.

Later that day, they came under fire and killed two of the enemy, which they referred to as "Hajji scum." The Soldiers pumped a few extra rounds into the dead bodies

and left them both lying in the sun to bloat and rot in one hundred twenty degree heat.

Some would say this was done for example, which in fact is no big deal in war. But lookin' into the eyes of these Solders as they told this story, I could see their expressions of compassion for the dogs change to rage and satisfaction over killing humans. But that's just it, you see; the Hajjis weren't human, they weren't even at the same level as maggots, crawling on the shit of the dogs they had also killed.

“Terrible!” you say. Not at all... and once again, it's just war.

And what the hell do people think war is? It's not some bullshit social center picnic or some ridiculous Hollywood movie. It's the out-and-out slaughter of the enemy and often innocent (or not so innocent) civilians... many who only want the damn fighting to stop so they can have their lives back. Some assholes call the civilian dead, “Collateral Damage,” just like they call us Warriors who will never be able to adapt to society again, “Social Causalities.” You believe that shit?

Killing civilians takes place on a large scale in every war. If my sources are even close, it was about eleven civilians killed to one Soldier in Vietnam. In Iraq, as I've been told, that number dropped to four-to-five civilians to one Soldier. Gee-whiz, don't that just make you feel so much better? Wonder how the families of those four-to-five civilians feel?

But the numbers have always been something like this throughout our history. Civilians are truly the victims in war, becoming refugees and having everything in their lives destroyed during these conflicts. It happened in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. And it's sure as hell happening

now.

Why and how does this happen, you ask?

Well, it's true that ground troops account for some of these high numbers; but from what I've seen, it's the artillery and the airstrikes that do most of it. Back in the Nam, when we were getting the third degree from the media about civilian kills, bombing runs to Hanoi were killing thousands of civilians. So go figure? Civilians always get the worst of it.

The point of this topic is real simple: Even if you don't kill civilians and only kill the enemy (and it feels great when you do), the act triggers a change and certainly feelings of detachment in you. If you kill children, then the feelings of having really "screwed the pooch" (made a mistake) also kick in.

"Whoa! It feels great when you do?? As in Kill??" you ask.

That's a Roger! Yes in-deedy-bob... it feels real good to kill the enemy, and I'll see if I can explain that for ya a bit.

This is absolutely no bullshit: It's a rush to kill a human being. I know full well, by admitting this, I'm cuttin' right into the core of human moral conviction, good-against-evil and the like. But it's damn true, like it or not. It's a rush to kill an enemy and a disgrace to kill someone you feel is innocent, but there are some feelings that overlap both.

First off, you don't hear that Whisper till the killing is over, because you can't hear shit in a firefight. That's because you're deaf, pumped to the max with combat adrenaline, and the Beast is in full control!

But to actually kill a human being who (in your mind)

is your enemy is an absolute rush of emotions; and as sick as it sounds to some, it is extremely satisfying. Ask any combat Vet; and “if” they’re willing to answer, they’ll all say the same thing.

Fact is, I was just talkin’ to a good buddy of mine, and during our conversation (which is usually raggin’ on the stupidity of some civilian), he pops up with “You know what I mean Sarge, it’s just been too damn long since I’ve killed someone. Wish I had some legal excuse for a Good Shoot to feel that combat adrenaline again... I really miss the rush.”

What do I mean by “rush”?

Real simple, real Primal... you win. You’re the victor, the conquering hero, the champion of war. You get to walk off the field of battle, the field of honor, to feast on the spoils. And it’s been the same way for the thousands of years before Starbucks, computers, bullshit television, and fancy cars... same-e-same.

Your first kill is a Right of Passage, and I mean you have earned the “Right” to enter the Warrior World. You’ve earned your place among the Warrior Clan, status within the Warrior’s Code of Honor, and the Warrior Trust Bond between you and every other Warrior is strengthened.

Your first loss of a Friend is your baptism of blood. And this right of passage seals your fate for the rest of your life. There’s no returning to who you were before this transition, this emotional gauntlet. And at this moment, you will never, ever fit into the civilian world again. We’re gonna talk about that later.

You’ve been proven in battle; so from that point, all the bullshit stops. No more testing your manhood or womanhood. You’ve Passed the Test. And because of this,

not only has your life changed forever, you have now been accepted into the Brotherhood/Sisterhood of Warriors and our lonely tradition of Silence.

That is, you may speak of war, only to those who have experienced war. In your heart, you truly only respect those who have faced death and who have survived battle. All others are tolerated at best.

Now you see just how dangerous it is for returning Afghanistan and Iraq Warriors to be ignored, to be left to make it on their own, without counseling and without a support base. All that needs to happen is *You become the enemy.*

Doesn't matter what country you're in or what the *new* enemy looks like. There is only one thing to do toward resolving the problem: You kill the opposition. We can only pray that a little compassion is lodged in their brain-housing-group somewhere, and some act of kindness toward our young Troops will bring it to the surface before the Beast takes charge. But this depends on how much killing they've done, how numb they are, and how cold and emotionless they've become.

And yet, in all truthfulness, the more killing you do, the more numb you become, the easier it is to kill again... even kids. That is, eventually you get over the innocence factor, and they all become the enemy. One soldier told me with hatred in his eyes, "If I kill 'em when they're little, I won't have to kill 'em when they grow up. Besides, they can still blow up an IED or pull an AK trigger at 8 eight years old. Future Hajji terrorists."

Are you beginning to understand how this all works?
Are you beginning to grasp the problem we all face?

The more Combat Trauma you experience, the deeper

you slide into your very own Primal Self. And truly, for your own survival, your Beast becomes more and more in control... it has to be in War, if you don't wanna come home in a body bag. But your Beast is just as happy killing in the civilian world as it is on the battlefield. No shit!

Ya see, it's kind of a Catch-22. You need your Primal Side to get through war, but it can also destroy you when you're attempting to adapt to life off the battlefield. You absolutely must learn to control the Beast once it's out of its cage, because although it may protect you and be your Guardian for the rest of your life, it will kill you in a heartbeat.

Seems a strange relationship, doesn't it? Understanding your Beast and controlling it is your only chance for even a half-assed productive and semi-peaceful life. There's just no way around this one. You deal with it or you die, and maybe others die with you.

You've got a real problem if your Beast stays in control when you return stateside, because anyone who pisses you off becomes the enemy. American or not, what do you do with the enemy? That's right, you kill the enemy for many reasons, all of which make perfectly good sense in the mind of a Warrior. That is, a mind that has seen far too much combat, way too much killing, and felt too much loss.

More than one soldier has said to me that, "I really want to keep killing." That means they've done so much killing that not only have they gotten hooked on the adrenaline rush of it (like I did), but to kill the enemy is the only thing that has real meaning to them. In other words, all bad feelings and Whispers aside, the only real satisfaction some Warriors have in life is being in battle and making the kill.

Are you beginning to see the potential danger we're facing?

Understand that we have very effectively conditioned our young Troops to be highly trained “killers”. When they react in the Survival Mode, they respond as such. They're just doing what they do on the battlefield. It's second nature to them. Trouble is, that given the right trigger, they don't realize the battlefield ain't downtown San Francisco. We'll discuss this state of mind more as we move along through the first section.

And since many Americans don't realize how much actual combat our Troops are experiencing, I thought I'd just throw this little tidbit in. You're sure as hell not gonna hear all this stuff on the ambulance-chasing nightly news (which by the way, I haven't watched in over two years)... makes me wanna shoot my TV. But then I couldn't watch those nice, soothing war movies.

Well anyway, as I understand it, the average ground-pounder Soldier or Marine in WWII (called the “last good war” by those who didn't fight in it) saw about one hundred forty actual days of combat for the whole war. Best estimates on Korea are about one hundred eighty days of combat for the war. In Vietnam we saw about two hundred forty days of combat per tour... most of us did one tour, some did two, and very rarely some from my era did three.

I've talked to Troops from Afghanistan and Iraq who have seen more than three thousand days of combat! That's twenty one times more combat than in WWII, and twelve times more than what I experienced! And hell, I've got a 100% rating for Combat Trauma (PTSD). Imagine, twelve times more killing; loss of Friends; exposure to atrocities; participation in atrocities; guilt; survivor guilt;

adrenaline addiction; and developing a Warrior Trust Bond that goes so deeply into their Creed of Honor, that life itself (their lives) becomes unimportant.

Just last week I learned of an Army Medic who was blown up in an IED, three months into his ninth tour! Can any of you Old Knuckle Draggers imagine nine tours in Vietnam? But this Soldier went back for one reason only. He loved his fellow Warriors more than he did his own life. We'll talk about this Trust Bond later on.

But once again my shocked-in-disbelief friends, this is War.

Psychiatrist friends tell me that this much exposure to combat is on a scale we have never seen before. We don't know what the limits of human endurance are. We don't know what kinds of reactions this much combat will produce. And when I say "we," I mean the military, politicians, shrinkers... nobody!

As I've heard it said in several different ways, "We're in uncharted territory." Well No Shit Sherlock! Doesn't take an egghead shrinker to figure that one out!

We're gonna talk about Squad Leader and Line Officer stress-levels in Section One, Topic #8, *The Dragon has Awakened*. But I will say this: The killings that took place on November 3rd, 2009, at Ft. Hood, Texas, are potentially the tip of the iceberg of what's soon to come. That is, if we don't start right now in helping our Troops deal with the severe trauma they've got locked up in their heads, then it's all gonna come out violently in the streets.

I was at a conference near Washington, DC, the day before the shootings took place. And as usual, I warned every one of the Brass and cake-eaters I could find that "We are facing a National Security Threat" of major proportions. The next day, I received a lot of phone calls

and emails. Some said, “It was like you were foretelling the future.” I told them, “Hell no, I’m no psycho-babble-brain-dead psychic. I’m not predicting the future, I’m explaining the present!”

If anyone truly wants to understand the intense traumas that are eating our Troops alive, all they need do is put on some body armor, load their weapons, and stay a year in the Korengal Valley (the Valley of Death) in Afghanistan. I guaran-damn-tee you, it’ll all clear up real quick-like. You don’t ever intellectually understand war, you’ve gotta *feel* every bit of it. Then you own it, then you know it.

War changes every single person who lives through it and every Warrior who fights in it. Every one of us comes home only to find we just don’t fit in here anymore. Most of us are lost. And far too many are forgotten.

So what are we as Americans gonna do about it?

“I wish I could understand more,” you say. Well, be careful what you wish for, because it’s a comin’. You just gotta keep on readin’.

Alright now, draw some ammo, a couple of grenades, and your night-vision gear. We’re leavin’ base camp at zero-dark-thirty hours. This next topic may even earn you a Purple Heart!

**Saddle Up! Lock and Load!
Watch that tree line!**

1-3 Death Before Dishonor

Incoming! Corpsman Up! Doc! Corpsman Up!

Machine guns firing wide open, barrels red-hot, and shell casings falling like rain from the chopper cannons above. You're under full attack, and the enemy outnumbered you eight to one.

Your M-4 is hot, and you pray for "no jam!" as you slam in another magazine. A mortar round explodes less than twenty feet away; and even through sand bags, the concussion shakes your body. Recoiling from the impact, you continue to breathe and squeeze, making every round count.

You haven't had a shower in forty five days, nothing but the same damn MREs and few resupplies, but none of that matters now. You're living full throttle in the purest Warrior standard of Honor! Adrenaline's pumpin', you're alive, and looking death straight in the eyes!

Suddenly the mortars stop, the enemy is beaten back. "Cease Fire" rings out from your squad leader as the choppers pass overhead, firing one last barrage of rockets into the hillside. A few Marines continue to fire at what have now become phantoms among the trees.

"Cease fucking fire you shit heads!" The Sarge yells out again! "You get to kill these sons' a bitches tomorrow!"

All is quiet except for the ringing in your ears and the moaning of the blood soaked wounded. Doc sticks 'em with morphine... one lies still. You look over... Johnson and McCormick glance back, wide-eyed with bare-teeth smiles, lighting a cig, their hands still shaking from the adrenaline.

"Damn it, I love these assholes, "you think, while checking your weapon and reaching for your own smoke.

A short time passes. A body bag lies next to the

chopper pad along with several men and one woman waiting for the Med Evac Chopper. Marines are kneeling and standing by the wounded. Several are in tears over the loss of their beloved Friend. All are comforting their fellow wounded Warriors with jokes and encouragement. “You’re getting out of this fuckin’ shit hole! But don’t worry needle-dick, as soon as you heal up, your green ass’ll be right back here.” And, “As soon as you dust off, shit bird, I’m getting those good MREs you’ve been hidin’! Those Baby Wipes, too!”

Murmuring, “The fight is over for now, but God, I feel ripped apart inside!”

Your soul has been pierced again, your head is spinning, your thoughts are making no sense. “I was just talking to Baker before the attack, and now he’s gone. He’ll be on that chopper home now... family waiting for all that’s left of their Hero... my Brother, my Friend. This shit is fucked!”

Slinging your M-4, “He died with Honor,” you whisper, tears running down your cheeks. “Damn it! He died with HONOR!” you yell out!

The standard definition of Honor is respect. But the *Warrior’s Code of Honor* goes much deeper. To us, it means to Die for what you believe in. And more importantly, it means to Die for Those *who* you Believe in; your Brother, your Sister suffering the atrocities of war. These are the brethren walking side by side with you into battle.

They as you have lost touch with their own humanity. These are the ones to love unconditionally, the ones to give up your life for. And as each friend dies in battle, with

every loss, with every kill you make, you're pulled deeper into the Warrior's World of no return.

I had a Soldier tell me about his Buddy. His brigade had gotten back from Iraq. This was his third combat deployment. He said, "Yeah, no shit Sarge, in the down time, we argue and fight over dumb shit stuff... we bitch at each other all the time. Once I even told Sanchez, 'You fuckin' asshole, I hate your guts!' He continued, "But no shit Sarge, I'd take a round for him any time. That's the way it is out there. I'm not gay or nothin', but I gotta tell ya, I love my brothers more than I give a shit about bein' alive. We all feel the same way."

I suspect some would call that unconditional love-to-the-death... I would. And we're gonna talk about that Warrior Trust Bond a bit later on. But for now, let's explore how this attitude of Honor shapes the Warrior's future, everything he or she will ever do, ever think, or make a choice over for the rest of their lives.

First off we're gonna talk about a subject that scares the shit out of most civilians; that subject being suicide and how it relates to the Warriors Code of Honor. You'll need a little background first. I'll be as brief as is possible.

When I talk to civilians and say suicide, the normal reaction is fear. You can watch their eyes dilate and their body posture change. Maybe their hands even get fidgety. But the fact is they're afraid. Why?

It's because many folks in the gray civilian world haven't come to terms with their own mortality. You know, getting choppered out to that big Post Exchange in the sky... in other words, dyin'.

It's damn hard livin' in a nice house, drivin' a nice car, havin' all the chow you want, goin' to the mall... and thinkin' about dyin'. Unless, of course, you just came from

a Freddy Kruger movie while suckin' down popcorn, soda pop, and other such Podunk.

A lot of folks just don't come to terms with death and the idea of everything endin'... that at any minute, every hope, every dream, goal and/or aspiration for the future could come to a screechin' halt.

I don't personally know what's on the other side of life here, don't care. But the one thing I do know is that there's no guarantee you're gonna be around tomorrow. At any time, the real Commander In Chief can pull your liberty pass.

As a little jog off the trail here, I was doin' a presentation at a conference in Washington D.C. (my least favorite place) and at the end of the talk a Chaplain gets up and asks me, "Sarge, did God have anything to do with how you're feeling now?"

And without a pause I said "No shit, Padre! There weren't any disbelievers in my foxhole. But you know what? I really don't give a rat's ass if there's a heaven or hell, as long as there's a few Marines there to drink beer with." And with that the Chaplain sat back down, pale and shocked. But it was all the damn truth!

It'll be damn good liberty, drinkin' brain grenades with old Saint Peter and a battalion of Jar Heads, causin' shit, Up-Range!

Fact is a lot of civilians cling to their faith, their religion, or their God for a little comfort. And most of 'em don't ever think about making the passage. That is, until they get long in the tooth (become mean old farts) or they're lyin' in a hospital bed with tubes stickin' in every hole. Sometimes it takes a loved one diagnosed with a fatal disease or maybe watchin' a relative die slowly of cancer, or the like, that makes people think about their own

mortality.

Warriors, on the other hand, don't fear death. How could we? Guess the only absolute, true, scientific way to explain this is *We Just don't Give a Shit!* I know, I know, that's damn hard for a lot of civilians to understand, so let's shoot up a couple flares overhead, then maybe you'll see what I'm talkin' about.

You just can't get up every single day for fifteen months or sixty months, knowin' you're gonna die and not embrace the strong, almost certain possibility that you ain't gonna make it home for the next Trick-or-Treat. And many times in war it's so damn miserable and you're so brain-fried that you long for death. At least I sure as hell did.

Think about it: Imagine humping up and down a 4,000 foot mountain every day with body armor, weapon, ammo, and a sixty-plus pound pack, in the rain, being shot at, and watching your friends get wounded and killed. Then, making it back to your shit-hole base, filthy, stinkin' like a goat, sore, pissed off, MRP's (Meals Ready to Puke) for chow, and then getting your ass up the next day and doin' it all again. That is, for fifteen months and then another five deployments after that. Do ya think you might come to terms with death? Do ya think you might be just a little edgy when you get back to the States, maybe think your family and old friends don't have a clue?

Are you startin' to get a feel for our feelings here?

We Warriors don't kill ourselves for no good reason. Often it's because we feel we have in some way violated our Code of Honor. Sometimes we kill ourselves because we choose to protect our fellow Warriors. You know, like in those bullshit, Holly-woody war movies showing some

Hero jumping on a grenade? But sometimes that actually does happen in battle... in our real world.

Remember, we die to protect our Brothers and Sisters without hesitation. Now maybe you'll understand why. But isn't voluntarily killing yourself in any fashion, suicide? That's the definition of the word. Or do we conveniently call it self-sacrifice? Don't see much difference, you're simple ass is dead one way or another.

Sometimes we get so damn burned out, so numb to life, so alone and empty from the loss of our Brethren, that we don't give a shit about anything. We don't care if we live another day; but more often than not, we prefer to die at that moment.

As with so many of the Troops I've talked with, it's no different now than during my time in the Nam with Victor Charlie. You want to die, but you'd like to take out as many of the enemy as you can on the way out. Like in Go Out in a Blaze of Glory, John Wayne style, but not get up for donuts and coffee after the scene ends.

When Warriors get like that, and I did, that's often when a medal for Valor Under Fire is given out. You already know you're gonna die, you don't give a shit about anything, and you want to kill a bunch of the bad guys... dying with honor in a righteous firefight. Fact is you can't wait for an excuse to kill and to end all the pain in an act of glory!

"A sick and twisted perspective" you say. Nope... that's just war.

If you haven't been there, you may not get it. Sorta like the issue of giving Purple Hearts to our new Troops. You really have to get in their brain-housing-group and think about what they're feelin' before you get the true scoop. You know, their reasoning behind their actions.

They think real differently than we did, and those differences are gonna be dramatic when they finally come home. I'll explain that in a bit for you. But gettin' back to the topic of the Purple Heart Medal.

A Purple Heart is given out when you're wounded in battle. Up till now, you gotta bleed to get one. Old George Washington came up with the idea of a Purple Heart Medal back in the days of the Continental Army as a Badge of Military Merit for enlisted men.

Well anyway, many of our new Warriors won't take a Purple Heart even if they get shot. That's right! They don't feel they deserve it unless they're severely wounded.

My friends at the Military Order of the Purple Heart tell me that they're havin' a hard time getting our Combat Veterans to even come forward for a Purple Heart Medal. The Troops feel guilty if they were only nicked by an AK-47 round, or if they only got a little shrapnel from a road side bomb or RPG (rocket propelled grenade).

I know one Soldier who was blown up 15 times on patrol in Humvees by roadside bombs, was wounded several times, and he still wouldn't come in for a Purple Heart. For those who have been blown up in an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) and lived, but not wounded, the military at this time is considering giving them a Purple Heart as well.

Don't know if that's gonna happen or not. But even a combat line company Soldier or Marine who has a one hundred percent rating for PTSD (called Combat Trauma) is not eligible for a Purple Heart. Hell... if you can't get the Troops to come even if they've been shot, it's not too likely they're gonna come in because of invisible wounds.

Think about it. Imagine you're drivin' down the nice smooth, civilian freeway and a bomb goes off under your

SUV, exploding with such a force that it propels your vehicle ten feet in the air! When this happens, the Concussion Injury inside your head is incredible. Maybe you've heard the more familiar term for describing this effect called TBI, or Traumatic Brain Injury, by the media.

“So what's the point?” you ask.

The point is that we're dealing with a whole New Breed of Warrior unlike any in our history, and they live by a New Standard of Honor. They think differently than we did in the past, and they're gonna react differently when they come home. I'm gonna talk about many of my deep concerns as we move through this work; and believe me, you'd better pay attention.

Along with thinking differently about Honor and rewards, they also think differently about suicide. This is something that may confuse you a bit or even piss you off. But it's an important topic; so let's get right to it.

Suicide to a Warrior is an honorable choice over disgrace and dishonor. In other words, **Death before Dishonor!** And to help you understand this a little better, let's talk about what this means as described in the Big Book of Words (again, what Marines call the dictionary).

Shame means a strong emotion caused by a sense of guilt, embarrassment, unworthiness, or disgrace. The word disgrace means a **Loss of Honor**, respect, or reputation. Honor can also mean homage, reverence, or veneration.

So then, when we violate a trust, the Code of Honor, we disgrace ourselves, those we love and those we respect. This is an act of dishonor and a demonstration of weakness to our military family. We then become a burden, an outcast from the Warrior Class... from everything in which we find true meaning and every standard we'd die to

maintain. We are shamed through the eyes of everyone we love.

Sound a little Samurai-ish, a little historically romantic? Well get over it. This is the way things are now and the way they've been for thousands of years. One of the only things that's changed with war in modern times is that we've gotten better at killing at a distance. But the killing is the same, the battlefield is the same, and living by the Code of Honor is the same. The one significant difference in the present wars is that no one in history has seen so much combat.

The problem is, how much combat can one human being endure before breaking down? Our Troops now call this Hitting the Wall. We used to call it Losing it, going Bug-Fuck, or Dinky-Dow (Crazy in Vietnamese).

If you think about what we've just covered, it's easy to see how our Troops are in a Catch-22 situation. After experiencing more combat than anyone in history and feeling like they're gonna explode any second from the trauma, they can't say squat shit about it; or they get cast out of the only way of life that means everything to 'em. Fact is, this way of life is life itself!

Do you see why some of our Troops are committing suicide by cops?

It's not that far of a stretch, especially if your brain-housing-group is twisted up and the Beast is runnin' the show. Here's an example.

Last year, after three combat deployments, a young Marine was diagnosed with PTSD, declared unfit for duty, and given a medical discharge. In case you don't know, PTSD stands for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I never liked that Tag stamped on my head in 1980, anymore than the young Troops like it now. Sounds like something you

got dumpster-divin' in Bangkok or caught off a toilet seat on B Street in Okinawa.

In Civil War days, PTSD was called Soldier's Heart; then later on, Shell Shock and Battle Fatigue. At least those names had some dignity to 'em. I prefer to call this effect of battle, which has been around since battle began, Combat Trauma, even Combat Stress.

In shrinker jargon, the trauma is the wound of an event and the stress is the reaction to that event. If that don't make sense to you Jar Heads, I'll put it this way. You got your ass kicked, it's sore and it ain't gonna heal till you see the Doc.

Anyway, to say Combat Trauma is acceptable to me and the new Troops, since in some ancient language, the word trauma means to wound or pierce the soul. When I'm talkin' to shrinker egg-heads and am forced to use the term PTSD, I tell 'em it means "Psychological Training for Superior Discipline!" You get the picture? That old saying, "That which doesn't kill your ass, makes you stronger," fits real good here.

Getting back to our Marine who was already cast out of his unit family (Clan) and disgraced by being forced out of the Corps, he was further shamed by being tagged with PTSD. To me, that D at the end sure sounds a hell of a lot like Disease, or "Disgrace"? But reactions this Marine had were absolutely normal for what he'd been through.

No one had ever told this young man about his Beast, much less how to control it. No one gave him any support, love, or understanding. No one had listened to his pleas for help or his need to discuss the confusion over all the issues we've talked about so far.

He was drowning in the darkness of his own horrors with no one by his side. And there he was, standing alone

in his agony, in the nightmares that war had left him. No one had his six. No one cared to ask why.

Emotionally cut to the quick, he couldn't get a job because of the PTSD tattoo on his head; he'd lost his family when returning from the first deployment, couldn't see his little girl because of a restraining order, had lost all self-esteem/self-worth, and felt tremendous survivor guilt.

His friends were still in Afghanistan while he was living in the land of luxury, in a place he hated, in a world he no longer felt a part of. He didn't fit in anywhere.

So what does he do? Somehow he and his Beast get an AK-47, body armor, and ammo. He walks into a mini-mart/gas station, kills the attendant and calls 911, then waits for the police to arrive.

The Marine then fires a few rounds over the officer's heads and into their cars, herds them into a Kill Zone as he was trained to do, then Advances Under Fire to his death... Suicide by Police.

This Marine had nothing left. He wanted to die a Warrior's death. And in his mind, he needed to feel that last surge of combat adrenaline, kill as many of the enemy as he could till his last breath, and die with Honor as a Marine.

Trouble is, he wasn't in Afghanistan or Iraq, he wasn't fighting the enemy, and there was no Honor in killing innocent civilians. Tragically, fine police officers paid the price for this Marine getting little or no help. There are far too many stories like this one.

This is not an unusual or isolated case. And if we don't immediately change our entire system, many more episodes like this and Ft. Hood will be on the horizon. Look at it this way: If the system was working, if the Vet Centers had more money and far more combat counselors,

if the VA wasn't already burdened, if the programs in the military were working, etc., etc., then these violent expressions of pain wouldn't be happening. Oh sure, maybe a few once in awhile. But not like this and what else is about to occur. And I mean, look out America!

It's truly impossible to know for sure what that Marine was thinking. But I can say without a doubt that his reactions to extreme and sustained combat are very "Normal." In other words, if millions of Warriors are exposed to severe and sustained combat trauma, most if not all will have the same kinds of reactions and will act out in similar fashion.

We learned this from my era of returning Combat Veterans fresh out of the scenic bush of Vietnam. The killing, the loss, the guilt, the survival guilt, the shame, the disgrace, and the need for combat adrenaline all cause the same types of reactions. Hell, the military has charts on this stuff. But you see, the problem is that our young Troops have, in some cases, been through six and seven times (or more) War than we experienced.

The suicide rate in the military far exceeds the national average for civilians. At this time (2011), there are eighteen suicides per day by our OIF/OEF Troops. And that don't include the ones who get classified as drunk drivers, on drugs, or accidental (?) deaths.

Look, ya don't have to be an egg-head with all that high level, brain-cloggin' math to figure this one out. If you multiply (Marines: Borrow a calculator) 18 suicides per day, times 365 days in a year, you come up with 6,570 dead by suicide (this year!). Now if that don't shake your ass out of the tree, let's keep doin' the math.

Let's just take the next twenty years, or about one half of the time from the end of the Vietnam war until now. So

once again, multiply 6,570 suicides per year, times twenty years. That's a Roger! It comes out to be 131,400 deaths by suicide.

And what about women suicides? You know, the ones that no one talks about. Think about it. The average woman has about two children (or more) in her lifetime. That means for every one woman suicide, at least THREE lives are lost.

So what's the point? Well, without getting too damn pissed off, the point is this: We still loose about seven Vietnam Veterans a day to suicide as of right this minute. It took us nearly forty-five years to hit the over-a-hundred-thousand-suicides mark. Our OIF/OEF Warriors will do that in HALF the time. And there ain't no miracle in sight to slow it down, any more that there was for my generation.

When we end the war in Afghanistan, we will have lost approximately five thousand dead from combat, about thirty thousand wounded, and in twenty years, over **130,000** dead from suicide!

So what's wrong with this picture? Well no shit Sherlock! Unless you're plain-and-simple, as stupid as a piece of Double Bubble stuck between a shoe and the sidewalk, you gotta see the Truth of this. That, "**War Destroys the Warriors!**"

I'm explaining here WHY we come back from War half-dead, why we kill ourselves, kill other people, abuse ourselves, and abuse other (innocent) people.

In my Old Green way of lookin' at things, ya just can't help but wonder why no one ever looked at this before. If they have and ignored it, then they have sure as hell qualified for extinction.

If you consider all the Warriors who fought in

Vietnam, the first Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq, we will see over one quarter of a million suicides in the next twenty years. That's right, 250,000 men and women will be unable to endure the aftermath of War, the pain and torment of their lives ripped apart.

This is totally unacceptable. And it can in fact be prevented, or at least drastically reduced. There are dozens of what shrinkers call modalities for treating Combat Trauma (PTSD) that are working right now. So why aren't they all being used nationally? You decide.

I make every effort to explain that all these new approaches are just fine and dandy. But let's focus first on the most dangerous consideration facing our Troops and the civilian population. It's the Primal Side of our nature! The Beast. If there was ever a psychological triage... this is it! In case you don't know, triage is taking care of the worst patient first like on the battlefield.

Once we give our Young Warriors the tools to control this savage side of our nature, keeping it in check, (that is, preventing suicide, homicide, family abuse, and substance abuse), then they can decide what kinds of "alternative" therapy they feel comfortable with.

Then Warriors can have steel, ninja pins stuck in 'em (lookin' like Pinhead-Hellraiser?), pressure points poked with fingers (and other small objects?), their asses rubbed with incense oil, sit in a hot tub, or ride horses and pet dogs.

If they first control their Beasty, then they won't be stickin' the pins in the temples of the therapist, drowning the shrinker in the hot tub, or riding off in to the sunset, like the Horsemen Men From Hell, screaming, "The Reckoning has come!"

We've trained our Warriors to kill, and now we must, train them to live.

Think about it over the roar of the chopper blades.

We're comin' into a Hot L.Z. "Under Fire!" on this next topic.

RED SMOKE up ahead!
Door gunners at the ready!

SAFETIES OFF!!

1-4 Between Two Worlds

"Hiya, Honey," you say, speaking softly as your leg swings up and over. Positioning yourself perfectly in the comfortable saddle seat, your foot moves back slowly, pushing the metal stand into position. This is the most meaningful love of your life. You feel the bond of flesh and metal. You're at center of gravity and relaxed.

Depressing the start button, 1200ccs begins to purr, and you pull out of the bar's driveway onto the paved desert road that's now become all too familiar. Bringing Jenny up to a nice steady seventy miles per hour, the warm, dry air just east of Scottsdale, Arizona, reminds you of a time almost a year ago in another desert not so peaceful.

Shadows of Saguaro cactus just off the pavement... standing silhouetted against a starlit sky, these dark sentinels, remind you, "This is another place, another time." And yet you ask yourself, "Why do I feel so out of place, so uneasy in the town where I grew up?"

You see your Brothers, your fellow Warriors at the Vet Center twice a week, where the counselors say you're normal for what you've been through. They say you're normal for living through four, fifteen-month combat tours in Iraq, but you can't help but wonder.

You're learning to control your Primal Side, the Beast you now call your Guardian, yet five shitty jobs in the nine months since your discharge make you think, "What the hell's goin' on!"

About a month before coming home from your first tour, you thought, "Man, I'm gonna drive my car, take my wife and little girl cruisin', listen to my music, put on my great clothes, and get that Big Mac I've been dreamin' about."

But steppin' onto the tarmac in the land of the big BX, all of that changed.

Slowing to a stoplight, you decide to head East. RPMs at redline, maxing out every gear, you're pissed off and hittin' over a hundred MPH. Then, backing off, you recall,

“Man, I couldn't even drive my fuckin' car. I was afraid of IEDs and ambushes.”

Thoughts reel through your head, but you're back down to seventy.

“I was so damned ashamed, my wife had to drive my ass everywhere, my kid didn't understand... guess that don't matter now... don't have a wife or kid.”

That ended after your second deployment, after she came up behind you one night, and you almost killed her while your daughter watched on, terrified.

“Wonder how my little Chrisie's doin'?”

After a restraining order, you don't get to see her anymore. And by your fourth deployment, your wife had remarried some computer geek.

“Guess that's safer?” you think.

Still drunk and back up to over a hundred MPH, “Those telephone poles are lookin' pretty damn good... but maybe I'll wait till tomorrow to see my buddies at the Vet Center... they'll understand... hell, they're the only real friends I have now.”

Riding alone in the warm desert night, one more Warrior painfully looks into who he has now become.

This young Soldier is twenty six years old and struggling between two worlds. What do I mean by two worlds? Let's take a look at both; and maybe it'll make

sense if we think about it more as two realities, or maybe even two dimensions of thought.

After being conditioned in boot camp, it only takes one life-threatening experience to unleash the Primal Side, the Savage, the Beast, or as this Soldier calls it, the Guardian.

Understand that this is no bullshit.

In battle, Warriors are literally baptized in blood. Not in the blood of our enemies, but in the blood of our Brother and Sister Warriors. At that moment, every hope, every dream, every aspiration for the future is gone.

You have paid the “Boatman” the silver coin for the passage across the river Styx, to another world; a world from which you will never return. And from that passage, your boots are then firmly planted in two worlds, two realities, two dimensions of thought.

There is the Warrior World, of black and white, of Honor, discipline, and self sacrifice. And then, there is the Gray Civilian World in which we find little or no true Honor; the world we as Warriors for the most part hate.

We are then caught in the conflict between these two worlds, moment to moment, year after year. Because my friends, these conflicting worlds DO NOT mesh.

Our lives have changed forever, and the innocence and ignorance of youth is gone forever. We have now become a True Warrior, as all Warriors before us. We have entered the Inner Sanctum, where our pain will be kept in silence until the end of our days.

But as to innocence, I say “good riddance” to it. To this old Marine, innocence is bein’ naive. (No Marines, it don’t mean, “not evening”) It’s nothin’ but an illusion, a fairy tale perspective of life that everyone hopes for but

rarely ever comes during the extreme difficulties of life's challenges.

The perfect marriage, those perfect children, that perfect job, lots of money, or a dog that doesn't bite the neighbor's nasty little kids. That fairy-tale-illusion only happens in movies. A perfect life? Give me a break!

For example, have you ever seen those scammers' ads on the Perfect Wedding? You know, the ones that show everyone smiling, while Daddy is writin' a check to pay for this festive occasion with his whole life savings? Talk about an illusion!

The perfect day may in fact happen for one day only, or maybe for a few more on the honeymoon. But when that's all over, reality sets in and old Murphy's ridin' around on his eagle with you in the cross hairs... ready to dump right on your happy times!

It might be a tad more honest if these "make my day" marketing people would simply say, "We'll sell you happiness for one day, and for an extra bonus, we'll even throw in some Prozac for when you get over it."

In Eastern Philosophy, it's said to "know thyself." And I've got news for you: Thyself is made up of two distinct individuals in the same body... yours! But even knowing that, it's damn hard to live as a Warrior in a civilian society.

Even if you have your Beast somewhat under control and you've mastered a few tools for adapting, you still have the constant, frustrating battle of being forced to go along with wishy-washy-don't-have-a-pair, don't-want-to-upset-anyone's-feelings people.

Our Warrior World is black and white. Period. No lack of brass (either balls or ovaries), no false hopes the bad guys will change their ways, no expectations of UFO's

landing and saving our sorry human asses, and no Pollyanna-like thoughts of, “Seeing only the good in people. Now we all need to just get along.”

We don’t all get along, we can’t make everyone happy, and we damn sure better be vigilant of those who would like to turn New York City into a glass factory. There’s the way it should be, and there’s the way it is. Everyone needs to deal with that.

If we survive long enough, Warriors have an exceptional amount of control and self-discipline when living in the civilian world, and we don’t really plan too far ahead. That’s because we know we really can’t.

Life is a constant state of change. You adapt to change or you suffer even more. You remember the good times, the few moments of joy that happen to come your way; but you can’t cling to ’em and long for more or you’ll be miserable once they’re gone. We have to simply enjoy those brief moments for as long as they last, savor every second of peace and calm in our lives, then let ’em go.

It’s sorta like sittin’ down to a great meal on some holiday, if you’re lucky enough to have one. And by the way, most Warriors who’ve been down range don’t care much for holidays... especially if their friends died on ’em.

You smell the food being prepared. You anticipate the taste that’s comin’. And when it arrives, you bolt it down like a monitor lizard. Before you know it, the chow is gone, and all you have at that point is a few drinks and a memory... in the case of Warriors, the gut-wrenching memories of the deaths of your fallen comrades.

Life’s the same way to us Warriors. Sometimes we can feel something good comin’, just like we can feel an ambush comin’. We enjoy the moment or deal with the situation accordingly. Then, all we have left is a memory,

good or not so good. We don't think about three days from now, because we may not be around when it arrives. And if you haven't figured all this "live-for-the-moment stuff" out yet, let me give you an example.

After you make it through a few firefights and you see your friends blown away, you can't help but think, "Damn", that could be me in that zip-lock baggy." And, "Shit, will it be my turn tomorrow?" This tends to stick in your brain-housing-group for the rest of your life.

As a rifleman in a full-blown firefight, my life expectancy was, as I was told, three and a half seconds. That is, before being wounded or killed. In 1968-69, a line Officer (Second Lieutenant) in Vietnam lasted about sixteen minutes. So you see, every damn minute counts!

All this tends to build a division between the way Warriors think and the way they're expected to act in civilian society. Hell, it's damn hard for our new Troops goin' to school now to think ahead to the end of the semester! Again, the Warrior World and the Civilian World don't mesh.

Warriors also tolerate politics and politicians, sometimes with great difficulty. We also tolerate civilians bitching about all they don't have and all they think they need. "Why is this?" you ask. I'll explain.

We tolerate this shit-for-brains attitude because we know that nothing here is as bad as war. Nothing. Oh, some Americans think they have it bad, but they're not sittin' at a checkpoint in their SUV, with a man armed with a twin 50 caliber machine gun pointed at 'em.

They don't have to worry about drivin' down the street and having an IED go off under their vehicle. They don't have to be concerned about walking through the mall and having a suicide bomber blow their family to hell.

And they certainly don't have to worry about walking out their back door in the morning, with a fresh cup of home brewed crap-achino and having a sniper round hit them center of mass. Nothing here is as bad as war. Nothing. And by the way, there are many countries where this kind of violence happens daily.

Warriors know all this clearly because we've lived through it. That's why it pisses us off when all we hear is bitching. And how do you think our Troops feel when their friends are dying in Afghanistan and Iraq, and all they see on the news, or in newspapers, is some dipshit actor losing millions of dollars in their ninth divorce? Or some cake-eatin' politician, low-crawling under the media radar to avoid jail but voting him-self a big ass raise. Meanwhile Veterans are living homeless in the streets?

So here we uncomfortably sit, longing to be either deployed and back in the military, wishing for a little combat adrenaline, hoping for an opportunity to justly shoot someone, but having to listen instead to the gibberish of so many people so upset over so much that's not important.

There's a saying, don't know who said it, that, "Don't sweat the little things, and if it ain't life threatening, it sure as hell **is** a little thing." Makes sense to me and since the English isn't that great, it might have been a Marine?

"So what's the point?" you ask.

The point is that Warriors live in a different reality with a different perspective. We have a life-or-death, black-and-white, don't worry about your 401K because you ain't livin' that long to spend it, reality. We can't help the way we think, because that's what war and combat does to a human being. How could we think otherwise?

The skills we learned in battle helped us to survive. Hey, it's damn difficult to gamble with your life and to change your habits when those new habits haven't yet been battle-tested. This is one of the reasons that we don't feel like we fit in. And I can't tell you how many times I've heard, "Ya know Sarge, I don't feel like I belong here anymore."

Remember that I'm not just telling you how I feel based on my own forty plus years of living with Combat Trauma (PTSD); I'm tellin' you how the new Troops feel right this second!

I've talked to more than one Soldier or Marine, asking them, "What are you gonna do when you have to come back, when you have to stay here?" And several replies were, "There's always Blackwater." Or, "Maybe I'll go live up in the mountains."

Do you think that they're kiddin'?

The last estimate of combat Veterans living in the mountain ranges around Albuquerque, New Mexico, was approximately 1,700. That's right! There are also thousands of homeless Warriors all around America right now, living in the bush, shootin' rabbits for dinner, and wantin' nothing to do with the so called good life.

I talked to one Vietnam Vet who got med-evaced out of the local mountains due to a heart attack. He'd spent thirty years in those mountains, hunting for chow and making it on his own. He said, "I never felt better in my life, was healthier, in better shape... and now look at me." He still looked in pretty damn good shape for sixty three years old! He then went on to say, "it's another world up there, a Warrior's World, and I miss the hell out of it."

So here's a man who would rather live with nothing in

the mountains than live with civilians in society. See anything unusual about that? He said he didn't have to worry about car payments, rent, VA checks, or the threat of all that being taken away.

"I was truly happy," he said. And looking right into my eyes, he continued, "Now I'm not."

When walking off the battlefield, the Warrior then lives in two distinct worlds or realities, and again, these two worlds *do not mesh!* This is what causes us a great deal of our pain. We know how we'd like to solve problems here, but then that just wouldn't be "civilized." So what happens is that we get stuck, and then we get depressed.

I'm not sayin' it's always the case. But for me, most often it's when I get stuck between worlds that depression sets in. You know, it's when you know what to do, but you can't do it or you'll end up in the slammer.

The Warrior Way in the Warrior World is usually swift and violent. Our solution is simply more firepower. But that's a bit hard to do when you're dealin' with bankers, bean counters, and the like who think they're in control because they think lawyers are gonna protect them from a little pain... not to mention dyin' of lead poison. That is, a twenty three hundred foot per second messenger reaching out and touchin' someone from a rifle barrel.

When you really get stuck, substance abuse usually looks real good. Sometimes you're too depressed to even get out of bed in the morning. That's also when your Beast loves you the most, because you're getting close to the outer limits of control. A little nudge and you're over the top, and that can be dangerous for you and for others.

That's when you Turtle. You know, like a sea turtle going under the waves of emotions. I described this in "The Warrior's Guide to Insanity" and I'll hit it again in the

3-1 Tools Section. But suffice it to say, you force yourself up and out and do something that you enjoy. Something that takes your mind off of what it is you're thinking of at the moment. Zombie meds don't solve the problem; they just make you a Zombie. Been there, done that.

I found it much more useful to use that anger energy constructively. That's right, anger energy. Because I found that the best way to get un-depressed is to get pissed off. Snaps you right out of it. And man, in this civilian world, if you want to get pissed off fast, watch TV for ten minutes... I could write a whole damn book on that topic alone! But for now, let's rap wrap this mission up and get ready for the next one.

Break out your night vision equipment and load those magazines with every fifth round a tracer! We're movin' into dangerous territory on a black op, and we're on our own.

Stay Frosty!

**Watch your spacing and keep a sharp eye peeled
for trip wires.**

**No extraction on this one!
Un-sling those Weapons!
Move Out!**

1-5 Death is a Calling

Ever watchful, the Guardian stands by your side, evaluating the threat level... you're drifting in and out, haunted by the waking nightmare of today's battle.

Your M-4 rests comfortably on your chest, and the smell of blood lingers on your body armor, the blood of your Brother Warrior and Friend, Corporal Eddy Jones.

“No water to wash it off,”

You think, as exhaustion takes over. The dog flea collars around your waist and ankles are helping to keep those blood sucking parasites at bay.

“I've got five more months in this fucking shit hole.”

You've already been here seven. Seven miserable months in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan, “The Valley of Death” as they call it. Thoughts of riding your Harley back home bring a moment of reprieve.

Suddenly and without warning, the image of a beautiful Woman appears! “What the Hell! Am I dreaming? But my eyes are open!” You click the safety off your weapon.

“No shit, I'm awake!”

She stands motionless, looking straight into your eyes. Better than six feet tall, piercing blue eyes, jet-black hair, and a long black, shimmering gown, “Damn! What a Babe!” you think as your M-4 moves slowly in her direction.

“Hate to have to waste this one!”

She smiles and begins to glide slowly toward you. The

air becomes electrified, your hair standing up on the back of your neck. Without a word being spoken, there's a calm whisper,

“It will be alright Robert, it's not as bad as it seems.”

Without giving it a thought, you click the safety on and slowly place the rifle back on your chest while looking around. The rest of your fire team is sound asleep.

“They need to be. We've got a long, shit-bath patrol tomorrow”.

You're stunned by the absolute beauty of this Woman... Her pale skin, perfectly proportioned body, and Her powerful yet calming presence.

She's now standing by your right side, your Guardian standing on the left. Both look down into your eyes, as you lay motionless. Your skin prickles by the power of this Being, yet you're not afraid. There's a calming grace about this magnificent Woman, a peace about Her that reaches deep into your soul.

Slowly turning, She points to one of your Brothers about ten feet away, sleeping quietly near the wall of the bunker. Then gliding to his side, She looks back to you. With the kindest smile imaginable, She gently touches him on the forehead. Moving back slowly, She holds out her hand to him.

The image of Taylor, in crystal clear exactness rises up and grasps Her hand. In an instant, they are both gone.

“I'm gonna shit or go blind” you mutter, reaching for your smokes.

Since your eyes have been open the whole time, it's damn obvious you weren't asleep, and you're still shaking from what had to be an electric shock! Confused and alarmed while reaching for your smokes you mutter...

“None of this makes any sense, but I got plenty of cigs for the night, and I sure as hell ain’t goin’ to sleep!”

Moving out the next day, making your way down into the valley on what had to be a goat trail, that same prickly feeling hits you like a wave.

You freeze! And a single shot rings out, breaking the morning stillness. You yell out,

“Taylor!” But it’s too late. Taylor is gone.

Somehow you knew this last night, what the Angel meant; but you denied the truth of it, the horrible reality of it until now. And remembering the beautiful Woman, the Angel of Death, you whisper softly,

“Take care of my Brother, please take care of my Brother.”

We briefly discussed the Angel of Death in “*The Warrior’s Guide to Insanity*.” Now let’s look at the whole picture a bit closer. Let’s look at Death through the eyes of the Warrior. And by the way, some of you may think that story is bullshit. It ain’t. It’s as real as it gets. It happened in my time, and it’s happening right now with our Troops in harm’s way.

About a year ago, I talked with a young Soldier who explained to me how he felt about Death. He said,

”To me, Sarge, Death is a calling. Nothing is more intimate, more personal than walking onto the battlefield and facing Death with someone you love, with the Brother or Sister Warrior you love more than life itself. And when that true Friend is killed, you feel cheated.”

He went on to explain, “I loved my Friends with all my heart. I wanted to continue to be by their side, to

protect them, to face anything they faced, but I couldn't. I felt guilty they were gone, that I had abandoned them.”

The Soldier also said that although he longed for Death to be with the only ones he loved in this world, he would not take his own life. He felt that suicide would dishonor them. He feels that he was allowed to live so that he could help the new Veterans of War, the new Warriors that walk off the battlefield as he once had, feeling only half alive.

This Soldier now dedicates his life to just that. He lives each day with the horrors of War so that maybe, by example, our young Brothers and Sisters will realize their strengths.

I've had a number of Troops explain similar feelings about Death and about the Angel of Death. One described his feelings of comfort on the battlefield.

He said, “It was the Angel of Death that always comforted me.” She said, “Everything will be alright, no matter how it seems at the moment.”

Now some of you may say, “Oh sure! That's just your imagination. The brain makes shit up like that to make itself feel better”. Well, my un-believing friends, that may be true. Or, it may be denial? Look at it this way.

We Warriors don't give a rat's ass what anyone thinks, so are thousands of us makin' up the same illusion? I guaran-damn-tee you that people who face Death every day, who have embraced their own mortality, who are willing to die every day, think about Death a whole lot different from someone whose only concern has been their 401K or the next sale at the mall.

Since most people are afraid to even consider Death, that's what makes it so hard to accept the possibility of a magnificent Angel waiting to guide you in to the Big LZ...

you know, heaven, hell, or whatever you believe in.

“So what’s the point?” you ask patiently.

Well then, the point is that once you see Her (or Him), it affects you for the rest of your life. How? In several ways.

For me, She became my standard of perfection in women. It also made me look forward to making the passage. You know, kickin the bucket, checkin’ out, getting your ticket punched, headin’ to the land of the Big PX. In other words, it made me look forward to dying. In another way, it made me a bit jealous of my dead Friends. Hell, She could touch them, but She couldn’t touch me.

Sounds like the Old Sarge has a round jammed in the chamber, or he’s a couple cans short of a six-pack? Doesn’t it? Sure it does, unless you’ve been there, felt Her power, had premonitions of your friends dying (which came true), and could feel Her around every time before a firefight. I’ve talked with Corpsmen and Medics who saw a white globe-shaped mist leave the body when you check out. Are they all padded-cell candidates, too? Don’t think so.

So how do you describe this stuff to someone who hasn’t been there, done that? How do you describe the E-ticket rides at Disney Land unless you go on ’em? How do you describe the feeling of a canopy opening unless you jump from a perfectly good aircraft, or the magical undulations of kelp forty feet below the surface of La Jolla Cove unless you’ve been down there?

When I felt the Angel of Death for the first time, it was the most fantastic feeling of calm, peace, and joy I’d ever felt. The smell of blood and urine didn’t matter; the filth, leaches and insects didn’t matter; the stench of rotting flesh didn’t matter. All that mattered was that I

knew then, and sure as hell know now, that there's at least one fine looking woman on the other side waitin' for this old Jar Head!

If you believe in a Power greater than yourself, this Being is an extension of that Prime Source. And if She is only an Angel, you know, like a Lance Corporal, then what's it like up the Chain of Command? What's the ultimate Commander-in-Chief like?? It's gotta be good.

So you see, us Warriors are not afraid of death at all. Most of us look forward to it. But it's our duty, our mission, to live with Honor, burning the shitters of life until we get our permanent liberty pass.

Warriors fight to the Death with Honor, we live by the Code of Honor, and we leave this world with Honor as our Standard. The more you understand this Code, the more you will understand our Young Warriors coming back from the battlefields of Death.

Over the past FIVE Topics, are you beginning to see just how complex the struggle is for your loved ones?

Let's refresh your memory a bit:

- Our lives are changed forever in war; we can never, ever return to who we were.
- We fight the Angelic side and the Demonic side of our human nature; it's a battle that rages from moment to moment.
- We are caught between the two distinct and separate worlds; the Warrior World of Black-and-White that we love, and gray Civilian World we have little use for.
- We are pulled by the forces of Nature to survive, and yet we often long for Death.
- Our battlefield friendships are the standard for all

future relationships.

- Our guilt over our actions in War is compounded by our guilt over having survived War, and over those who didn't.

By now, you're probably asking yourself,

“Why in hell would anyone choose to be a Warrior?”

The answer to that is real simple:

“We didn't choose to be Warriors, we just **are** Warriors.”

Alright then, Stay Frosty!
We've got two clicks to the Firebase.
Hostiles up ahead!
Fix Bayonets!!

1-6 Home Is Where the War Is

A lone candle burns slowly on the small crate in the center of your sandbagged bunker. Except for the small yellow flame, the darkness seems impenetrable as you look Eastward through the open passageway.

Your weapon is clean, locked and loaded. Your web gear is resting on the cot you now call a bed. Thoughts are racing as you consider the mission ahead.

The silence is broken by a swirl of wind and the sounds of raindrops tamping the parched desert soil outside the doorway.

“Been a long time since I’ve heard that sound,” you think, “Guess I’d better bring my poncho on this one.”

At last it’s time to “move out!” A choice must be made. And for a moment you stand confused.

“Which one do I take?”

You’re alone, but you’re speaking out loud as though having a conversation with your squad leader.

As the first faint light of day makes the path to your vehicle visible, you decide. Ever so gently, laying your true love on the cot, you give her a tender rub, and softly whisper...

“I’ll be back soon my dear friend”. Your M-4 lies motionless.

Placing a 9mm Beretta in the small of your back, and slipping the poncho over your head, you make your way out to the truck. Starting the engine and letting Matilda warm up a bit, you’re off to the supermarket for dog food, cat litter, and beer for the weekend.

“Hope I make it back from this one, ”thinking to yourself as you light up a cig.

“I hate going to town. Hope I don’t have to shoot

someone. I'd really like to, but if I get locked up... who's gonna feed the dogs and my old cat?"

"Shit! I'd better just bring my K-bar into the store."

This may sound like a stretch for some, but take it from me, it ain't. Why is that, you ask? Well now, let's see if I can explain a few things that may just make sense to civilians about this topic.

Remember I mentioned that our Troops from the Afghan and Iraq Wars have seen more combat than anyone in our history? Ask yourself then:

What effects might that have on how they act, when and if they return to this country?

I just talked to a Combat Trauma Clinician who told me of a young Medic who got wounded by an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) three months into his ninth Deployment! Can you possibly imagine the obstacles this soldier is facing of ever reintegrating into society? He has seen unbelievable horror, has watched his Brothers and Sisters die in his arms on the battlefield, and felt helpless to do anything about it... in twenty times more combat than WWII!

The guilt shapes our behavior, the killing shapes our behavior and the losses shape our behavior. All so-called civilized human beings need to feel loved or at least accepted by someone. Hell, for most of us Vets, at times that might only be our dog. But we all collect the things around us that make us feel comfortable and then express ourselves accordingly.

Some folks like fish, other than on their plate at chow time; so they go out and buy an aquarium, fill it with expressionless creatures, and then pretend the little

suckers are glad to see 'em when they come home. Some folks collect “things” like knick knacks or art, stick pink flamingos on their lawns, or hang Buddhist prayer flags on their front porches to piss off the neighbors.

Everyone is attempting to express themselves and fill their lives with things that make them feel comfortable. Us Warriors are the same. But the things that make us feel comfortable usually scare the shit out of the civilians we're forced to live with.

Are all Warriors armed? Absolutely. It makes us feel comfortable. Do all Warriors dress like they're on patrol in the bush? Not all, but it feels good when we do. Do all Warriors like to talk about killing those who truly deserve to die? Of course we do, and we'd even volunteer for the mission. It makes us feel comfortable thinking about it, and it would make us feel even better doing it.

Unless you live in a glass bubble in La-La-Land, you damn sure know that there are lots of folks out there who qualify for extinction. We Warriors know, too. But we'd like to do something about it... you know, flush the toilet of Humanity? Think about it.

Consider this: We were trained to kill the enemy; we did it, we liked it, and we're now denied that intensely strong desire. But even so, that doesn't mean we're still not comfortable thinkin' about it.

First of all, many of our young Warriors dislike being here to such an extent that they constantly self-medicate to tolerate what they believe is bullshit. That is, people bitchin' about everything doesn't make us feel comfortable. This ain't war, so what's there to bitch about?

So we avoid the whiners like we'd avoid takin' a laxative with every meal. It makes us very uncomfortable to be around people who constantly complain about

nothin' that isn't life threatening... and truly tempts us to end their discomfort permanently.

I'm not real certain if you're starting to understand that Combat Warriors are carrying around a whole lot of baggage? Maybe if you keep reading, you will?

One thing that needs to be real clear is that all Combat Warriors do not look at things intellectually. We "Feel" our way through life, one moment at a time. We constantly deal with memories, even if we've been through all the programs (and the programs worked?). We still operate on a day-to-day schedule, evaluating the threat level at all times.

We must always maintain control of our emotions because we know full well what we're capable of.

And ain't that a major bummer?

Once, we were just like all the rest of those innocent little brats who pissed off their teachers and demoralized their parents. The big deal in my time was drinkin' on Friday night with the other jocks, pukin' up the Colt 45 Stout Malt Liquor, and Peach Brandy, then tellin' exaggerated stories till the following weekend. And then we'd do it all the hell over again.

That all changed, "Long, Long Ago in a Jungle Far, Far Away." Now it's the Desert or Goat Country, "Far, Far Away." The results are still the same: No matter how ya look at it, War changes everyone. And it's about time to accept that fact. And I mean the Military Command, politicians, and civilians alike.

I suspect that if the cake-eaters and military contractors had to listen to the Mothers and Fathers, the Spouses, and other loved ones like I do, they'd do a bit more to help our Troops when they get home.

For a starter, how about putting money into meaningful programs that actually do work and desperately need funding? Well anyway, I didn't mean to get too far off the trail, it just pisses me off the way things are goin'. We'll zero in on the topic of betrayal later on.

And since we're talking about, "The Raging War inside," I'd like to explain how most Warriors view holidays. Hope this don't burst any bubbles?

If you know a Warrior, a Veteran of War, you probably already have some idea of what I'm about to say. But for those of you who don't have that privilege, I'll ask you the question,

"Why do you think Warriors don't like holidays... especially Christmas?"

I mean, besides the Turkey Genocide, and for most people who should be eatin' diet yogurt anyway, Christmas really sticks in our craw. And it doesn't have a thing to do with the religious side of it.

You might think we don't like it because it reminds us of sittin' in a foxhole somewhere in some shit hole country, longingly thinkin' of good chow, marginally sane relatives, and the festive spirit with that Podunk-eatin' fat-man in a red suit.

Well, if that's what you think, then we need to "adjust fire", 'cause your spotter rounds are way off the target.

Sure, when you are sittin' in a foxhole in another country, in a War, hungry, tired, filthy and pissed off, of course you're gonna wanna be somewhere else. And for those of us from the Blue Collar to No Collar sector of society, we always looked forward to Papa-san's bad jokes and Momma-san spendin' all day cookin' a great meal.

"So what's the point," you ask?

The point is this: Unless your IQ is so low you that can't twist the top off a jar of peanut butter, you damn sure wanna be home for the holidays. But once you are back here, it's harder to be here than it is to be back in War.

Is that clear as mud? I'll explain.

To say, "Home is where the War is," simply means, home is where our Brothers and Sisters-in-arms are. Ask any of our young Troops, and they'll tell you the exact same thing. Besides all the other issues we're talkin' about, this one causes a lot of problems.

This one Soldier told me...

"Sure, I miss the adrenaline and feeling so damn alive, "In the Moment." But what I miss the most is that to-die-for friendship of my Bros." And, "Sharing the bad times together is a hell of a lot better than being alone in the times that aren't so bad."

I'm gonna venture a guess here, that just maybe the unconditional bond of loving friendship in War outweighs the comforts and shallow friendships in civilian society? Just a guess.

I was also talking to a medically discharged Soldier the other day. He said he felt ashamed because his wife accused him of loving his dog more than her and their daughter.

But he said...

"Ya know, Sarge, fact is I do love my dog more." Then he went on to say, "I just don't know if I'll ever be able to love again."

So in true Marine Corps fashion I replied...

"Bullshit Buddy! You are capable of loving right

this minute. Problem is, you're only capable of loving other Warriors."

And after a couple of seconds he replied...

"No Shit, Sarge... you Old Fuckin' Grunt... you're right!"

Ya see, that's part of the "Change" we go through. We now only love those who love us unconditionally like our dog... those who would die for us without hesitation. This tends to make relationships with non-combatants extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Speaking of dogs, if you do or don't have one, here's a joke I heard that reinforces the point of unconditional love.

"Let's suppose you lock your husband (or wife) and your dog in the trunk of your car for two hours on a hot Summer's day. When you open it, which one will be glad to see you?"

Oh sure, once we go through the long re-evolution from sociopaths (Marines: Not a trail for people) to semi-human, to having a relationship with a warm-bodied creature like a dog, we're capable of loving a human quite a bit.

But it ain't like a Battle Buddy coverin' your ass in a firefight. And it will most likely never be at that one hundred percent die-for-you mark like another Combat Warrior. And by the way, for those of you Warriors who have kids, this includes them as well.

I've heard a bunch of stories about trusting their kids by the Troops... especially when those kids are set-off-an-IED, or pull-the-trigger-on-an AK, little-Hajji age. We're gonna talk more about this more later on, but for now let's get back to the subject of where your heart is... if you've

been down range.

Have you ever asked yourself, “What is Love?”

I know, I know, there are one helluva lot of books and brain-dead Hollywood movies on the subject... all giving their civilian interpretation of “True Love”. But let’s look at the Ivory Tower definition.

One dictionary defines love as,

“A deep tender, ineffable feeling of affection and solicitude toward a person, such as arising from kinship, recognition of attractive qualities, or a sense of underlying oneness”.

That bein’ said, and lookin’ up solicitude (care or concern) and ineffable (indescribable), then wondering why the hell they can’t just say that in the first place, I’m struck with how similar this definition is to the Warrior Trust Bond.

We have a deep concern for the safety of our comrades in arms; we feel an incredibly strong bond of kinship or clansmen-ship; we are attracted to the strength of character of our fellow Warriors and we feel like we belong to the same inseparable blood family. Guess that means we know what love is?

Not only do we understand the true meaning of love; fact is, the War comes back home with us because we liked a lot of what we experienced. And when we’re not likin’ what we’re experiencing now, it tends to make us want to go back to War, or at least be with our real friends... even if those friends are sittin’ in a shithole bunker in Afghanistan.

A lot of folks have a hard time in life because they spend way too much of their day thinking about the past. But here’s where being a brain-fried Warrior comes in real

handy.

We live in the present most of the time, with brief periods of remembering the horrors in our past. And the more we process those memories, the more they stay in the past. And the more "they" stay in the past, the more we're able to focus in the present moment.

Ya see! Yet another reason for you Warriors to feel good about **who** you've now become!

So... bad memories are sorta like a bad target... out of range. You can see your target but you can't reach out and touch him. Only thing good here is that he can't hit you either. You know he's there, but you're safe.

No matter how much therapy and processing you go through, you're always gonna know you've got shit memories somewhere in your head, but if you've worked through your trauma enough, they're out of range to kill you.

So you see, our hearts may always be in War for many reasons, can't be helped... and that's normal for us Warriors. But if we learn to control our Beast and bring the best parts of the War into our new lives as new people in society, then we live the best of both worlds.

Fact is, that's exactly how we do live in both worlds. We take the best of each and mix 'em together, like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

As a short training exercise for you young Warriors, make a list of what you liked about war and a separate list of what you like about civilian society. Then make a list of what you didn't like about war and another of what you don't like about society.

By doing this, you'll see how to adapt your military skills to civilian life... based on the stuff you'd like to include in your future. Just for example's sake, I'm gonna

guess: that Flush toilets and good chow are keepers for sure; and what about paved streets, and running water and electricity at all hours of the day and night?

If you like these, then you may lean toward not shootin' rabbits for dinner while living in the mountains with your Beast... and not competing in the who-smells-the-worst contest.

And if for example, you like the idea of pickin' out your own school, and courses and future job (unlike getting the green weenie in the military), then maybe you'll opt for getting a good education?

Maybe you won't waste 35 years like I did, being a dumb shit and having over sixty-five jobs. I'm happy now, but why waste time figurin' it out?

But then again, each of us has to decide for ourselves, don't we? The War may always be with us, but do we have to be at War with ourselves? It is Your choice... isn't it?

Time to wrap up this topic. But no time for chow call... just grab some ammo!

More Hostiles up ahead!
We're now in a Free Fire Zone... No Friendlies...
Everyone is the Enemy!
Watch your flank!
INCOMING!

1-7 The Warrior Trust Bond

“The Strength of a Family as in an Army is in its Loyalty to one another.”

Mario Puzzo

Standing motionless in the cool, still morning air, eyes glazed, your heart is heavy as you look out over thousands of white monuments of Heroes past. Memorial Day was always filled with a solemn sadness... your father, a Combat Veteran from Vietnam always had a hard time... until he took his life that day.

You never understood his actions, never got over your anger, thinking he was weak, even dishonorable for such an act. But after two combat deployments in Iraq and two more in Afghanistan, all that's changed now.

Deep in thought as you slowly walk down the white marble staircase, the austere beauty of this Memorial Cemetery overwhelms you. Reaching for a pack of cigs, while sitting on the cool glistening stairs, you light up and recall...

“I’ve lost so many. So many that I loved so much.”

Tears well up as you pull a flask of bourbon from your field jacket. You take a long swig, then a puff, wipe your eyes, and continue...

“I feel more comfortable here among my dead Bro’s than I do out there with those fuckin’ civilians.”

Rage begins to build. Another swig, and lighting up again...

“They don’t even know there’s a war goin’ on. And I’m sittin’ here with the dead from it.”

Slowly standing, you continue down the staircase.

Following the asphalt road to your truck, you think...

“I’m sure as hell glad I’m goin’ back to base tomorrow.”

You could only stand it ten days on your pre-deployment leave. You’ll be goin’ down range for the fifth time and looking forward to it.

Deciding not to wait another day, you return to your small barren apartment and load your gear. Shutting the door for the last time with a sigh of relief, you head out back to base. The long drive is a good one. You’re calming down because you know where you’re heading.

Finally you arrive. And pulling up to the checkpoint, showing the guard your I.D. and then heading to the Base Exchange for a few last items on the list, you think...

“Damn! It feels good to be back on base. Wheels up in a couple of weeks... back to Goat Country.”

Pulling into the Exchange parking lot, turning off the engine and lighting up another cigarette, then taking a long drag... you exhale and relax for the first time in days.

Watching a battle-ready platoon standing at parade rest in the adjacent field, you think...

“I’m Home.”

An old Warrior once said,

“Truth is what drives our Spirit into action. And our Soul responds accordingly to the highest calling. So then, we must allow it full sway through Courage, Honor, and Self-Sacrifice.”

All this talk about Honor and Self-Sacrifice may be hard to get a grip on for some, so let’s just flesh it out a bit.

Battle tested Warriors live by what is absolutely the purest code of human behavior possible. They must, or someone dies from the lack of it. So whether at first they chose it or not, they've still gotta live it.

Proof is in "Actions Not Words!" So just because you put on body armor, web gear, and pick up a weapon, all that doesn't make you a Battle Tested Combat Warrior. You've gotta go down range into the shit to get Baptized in Blood... become a member, so to speak. And every member helps every other member stay alive.

Here, I'll give you an example.

Let's suppose you're gonna start car-pooling to work each day with four other people. You know each of them pretty well since you went through all the office training bullshit together, and you've been assigned to a rough part of town to set up shop.

On the first day, you're at a stoplight. Two gang bangers jump out of their low rider Chevy parked across the street. They yell "Gringo Bitches," pull out pistols, and head toward your team, screaming foul language in Spanish while crankin' rounds through your nice new Saturn sedan.

Calmly rolling down the window and reaching into her purse, your driver for-the-day pulls out a .45 Caliber Desert Eagle and drops these two shit birds before you can say, "Holy Fuck!"

This tends to build Respect in your car pool team and builds the Survival Bond of Friendship.

Next day, some moron is about to throw a Molotov Cocktail (civilian IED) at your car, but one of your Knuckle Draggin' friends from Vietnam gave you an M-79 with Pletchette rounds to make your day. As you briskly fire

your vintage weapon, you're amazed at how this advancing dingleberry is transformed into a bloody, perforated mass of flaming stupidity. And so the adventures go.

Each time you save each other's lives, respect grows, mutual gratitude grows, and you love each other a whole bunch more. And the interesting thing is, no one from "Outside" your car pool team understands what you've been through... 'cause they ain't been there.

"So how do I understand Combat Warriors?" you longingly ask.

Easy! Go into Combat! There isn't any other way to "Feel" War.

So you see, the Warrior Trust Bond is only established on the battlefield. And it goes beyond the forces of nature. Our unconditional love for our fellow Warriors is stronger than life itself. It goes beyond the love of family, children, country and God. And we would gladly die to protect our true Car-Pool Friends.

I probably should mention here that in your car pool, each time you save a member of your team's life, their life becomes more precious than your own. And of course, there's always the wonderful benefit of your entire car pool team becoming complete adrenaline junkies... ain't life in combat great?

The way we look at the relationships we have in combat becomes the ONLY standard we'll ever have for every relationship in our future.

Why is that? Real Simple.

We establish these standards of unconditional love, friendship, trust, Honor, and self-sacrifice at the highest levels of excellence possible in human beings. It's hands-down, the very best we've got as a race of marginally

insane people tryin' to exterminate ourselves.

So why settle for anything less? You want a true friend who will die for you? Don't look on the local dating website, look on the local recruiting roster instead. You want someone to be trustworthy and Honorable to the death? Don't look at who's on the election ballot... and so on.

Think about it: After thirty six months (three deployments) of car-pooling with your team, having hundreds of near death experiences, and feeling like you all live inside the same body, what's the absolute worst thing that can happen to you?

Yep! You lose one of your team members. Or even worse, you get kicked out of your team. And it really doesn't matter why. If you get kicked out of your team unit, life just isn't worth a shit. And you feel about the same.

At that point, your life may begin to spiral downward toward suicide, homicide, and substance abuse. This is happening at an alarming rate right now with our young Warriors from the Iraq and Afghan Wars.

When these Heroes are transitioned out of their units and eventually out of the military, they desperately need to replace their bond and the self-worth they once held so sacred. They need to feel something meaningful, something that breathes Honor, and someone to call Friend... that is, in the Warrior Standard of Friendship.

Now here's something you're not gonna hear on the ambulance chasin' local news or the Hollywood-Meaningless-Melodrama-Update national news. It may shock you a bit, but that's the point here, isn't it? Maybe someone should ask the folks in the media why this isn't "Breaking News"?

To show you how dangerous it is to ignore our Troops

coming back, I'd like to tell you what I learned firsthand last year. This year it's even worse.

I got a call from a buddy at the Chicago Airport, and he said,

“Brandi! You’re not gonna believe this shit!”

He went on to explain how greeting our uniformed Troops just past the security check point were “Gang Bangers” and “Bikers in Full Colors” passing out business cards! No Shit! That’s right. Gangs asking our young Troops to join up!

I called Washington as soon as I heard this, and they pitched a fit. But to this day, I haven’t heard much about the cake-eatin’-magic-bubble-folks takin’ this on as a mission. Maybe I’m wrong, but except for civilian organizations welcoming our Troops home at the airport, not much is happening.

So what does this have to do with the Warrior Trust Bond? Plenty.

Think about it. Let’s suppose you’re walking down the ramp at the airport, you’ve lost your military friends, you feel abandoned, and you’re thinkin’...

“There isn’t a friendly civilian in this entire country.”

That’s right, the country you just fought to defend. And someone walks up to you and says...

“Welcome HOME!”

He shakes your hand, then he says...

“Join our Family. We’ll take care of you. You’ll be respected and loved. And you’ll even get to blow shit up and kill people!”

Where do I sign up? That would be my response. And guess what? That’s exactly what’s happening. Gang

membership went up 30% last year, and I expect it will be even higher this year.

We're gonna go over this topic in more detail at the end of this book. But for now, be advised it is definitely a major problem for law enforcement and civilians alike. No one is hidin' in the bunker on this one, and the artillery strike is on the way. Hell, it's already begun!

It's real difficult to explain "Feelings" in words. And what I'm attempting to do here is to explain the intense feelings of the absolute trust and friendship that our young Warriors feel for one another. Here's something you might just think about. Ask yourself...

"Who is my very best Friend in this world?"

Got the image in your mind? Now, ask yourself this...

"Would that person, my friend, die for me right this second?"

That means give up his life for you without hesitation. To instantly sacrifice himself for you. To give up every hope, every dream, every aspiration and vision for his future right this second. To save your life.

Well, unless you're thinking of a Combat Warrior, chances are the answer is most likely NO. But you see, that is exactly what Warriors do. And they are doing it right now in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They've done it in the past, and they'll do it again in every conflict in the future. It's simply the Code of Honor we all live by. It's because of the Warrior Trust Bond we all share. It's because... It's just War.

You've got to respect and admire their courage, and their love for one another. This is truly living the Nobility of the Human Spirit. Too bad it has to be in War. Just imagine if everyone had this kind of color-blind, race-blind

love for one another. We can only hope that this excellent attitude will one day be the standard for all human relationships... not just Warriors.

Don't go takin' off that body armor just yet!

Grab more ammo and grenades!

The enemy's headin' our way!

Expect to "Engage" on this next topic!

Feels like an ambush! Stay Low! Stay Frosty!

1-8 The Dragon Has Awakened

It's early morning, 0200 hours, and quiet. You're sitting by the pool outside the studio apartment you now call home. Being July, it's still eighty degrees and typical for the summer months in Paradise Valley, Phoenix, Arizona.

There are no sounds except for the gentle swirl of the crystal clear water just beyond your lounge chair. But while chugging down the second glass of Chillable Red box wine, the silence is broken!

Pivot on the right foot, whirl... Kill! Pivot on the left foot, whirl... Kill!

Kill! Kill! Kill! OORAH!

Thoughts are racing through your brain.

Back from your fifth combat tour, three in Iraq and two in Afghanistan, you've managed to get a shitty job at the local smorgasbord, dishin' out food to fat civilians. You recall...

"I wanted to cut the throats of those fuckin' maggots!"

Thinking over tonight's shift, lighting up a cigarette and pouring another glass of red nectar, you're also remembering...

"Yelling 'kill!' wasn't real to me in boot camp, but after my first tour in Iraq, I now sure as hell know what my D.I. meant back there in San Diego."

He told us...

"You are Marines! Your job is to KILL! You will not hesitate to kill the enemy! You will kill without fucking Tree Hugger compassion! Hesitation will kill you and your fellow Marines!

You are killing machines! You are swift, silent, and deadly! And listen up, you shit birds! War is our business, and business is damn good!”

Your thoughts continue...

“I loved boot camp and I still love the Corps. But I never got a training film on how to deal with killin’ so many of those damn kids. Still can’t get that shit out of my head, not to mention those good lookin’ babes I wasted.”

Thoughts of the Brothers and Sisters who died next to you, who never made it back are pushing the guilt of killing children aside...

“Fuck it! They were all the enemy! Or were they?”

Alcohol and gut wrenching pain is clouding your thoughts...

“Maybe I didn’t have to kill so many?”

At 0300 hours, you grab your box of wine and stagger to the door of your apartment. Luckily for you, the door is next to the pool area.

“Another sleepless night,” you think as you open the door, set your wine on the table, and lay your body down for the day.

“I know this shit is ripping my life apart, but I don’t know what to do about it.”

As fatigue takes over and your eyes begin to close, a comforting thought comes to mind...

“There’s a group session at the Vet Center down on Weldon Avenue tomorrow. I’ll see my Brothers.”

As your eyes finally close, the phantoms return and the nightmare begins again.

You're back in the Valley of Death one more time.

Now, let's really talk about what's happenin' here in this true-life story. You may not like what you're about to hear, but I suspect if you got this far, you're a hankerin' to go a bit further? Don't worry, I'm just tellin' you the truth. Hell, how much more can that hurt? Well, I guess that depends on how responsible you feel, doesn't it? How much you care?

We've talked about bringing out the Beast, the Primal Self in the first topic, and what a kickass struggle it is to constantly control that thing. Then we talked about the real life, no bullshit, what-it's-like-to-kill feelings that Warriors deal with one second after the killing for the rest of their lives. Then rounding it out with topics three and four, we discussed what it's like to never know if we're gonna live one more day for the rest of our life, and how we're stuck between the Warrior World we love and the Civilian World we hate.

We've also discussed how Warriors feel comfortable with things that sure as hell make civilians and non-combatants uncomfortable. Then we went over how Warriors feel about friendship, Honor, and self-sacrifice in the topic of The Warrior Trust Bond.

So what happens in the Warrior Mind with the issues we've talked about so far? Well, I think the best thing here is to give you an example of what the thought process is like. (Damn! I'm soundin' like an egghead shrinker!)

I'm gonna put you in this story as a Warrior, so let's set the stage with a little background. First of all, you volunteered to give your life for this country. That's a fact that many people either seem to forget, don't think about,

or just don't give a shit about. We have an "All Volunteer" Military. Ain't but a few headin' for Canada or hangin' out in Juarez, Mexico, on this mission.

Let me throw in a bit of scuttlebutt here: Just for your information, that few I'm talkin' about was about four thousand five hundred desertions in 2009. According to my sources, most of these were Troops who had been down range once and were headin' back for the next deployment. You can check this out on the Internet for more details.

Doesn't matter if you took the Oath for the adventure of it, to fight terrorism, to get out of goin' to jail, or to get a GED. Don't really matter if you wanted to "Be all you can be," or to be one of the few and the brave. And it doesn't even matter if you signed up because you hated your parents and wanted payback. Fact is, you volunteered.

Next thing on the short list is this: You were conditioned in boot camp to bring out a side of human nature (which we all have) that scares the shit out of most people. That's right, the savage, unmerciful, bloodletting Beast that you ain't gonna control unless someone tells you about it... maybe even gives you some tools? And since you had NO de-briefing when you finally got out, the Beast is right up in your face, lookin' for the next victim.

Then, after five tours, which are more than any combatant in history, you've gotten to really like killing. You've also got a real hankerin' for the adrenaline rush of combat, and you're longing to get those feelings back... big time!

You not only killed human beings and liked it, you also lost the best friends you'll ever have in this world. And you hate it. You lost them on the battlefield, and you lost them when you were discharged. You are now alone. Fact is, you hate just about everything that's not military and

everyone who's not a Combat Warrior.

You can't adjust to a meaningless life in civilian society because you can't find any Honor in it. And if you mention you've got PTSD in any way, shape, or form, your best chance for a job is pumpin' shit out of a septic tank. Your family bailed on you after your first tour. You're hyper-vigilant (shrinker term for scared shitless to be without a weapon). And you've come to terms with death so completely; you're surprised to wake up in the morning.

Now, putting all this brain clogging, mouth drooling, bayonet sharpening emotion into one small egg-shaped skull, let's take a walk down Supermarket Lane.

It's a delightfully sunny day in Santa Fe, New Mexico. After loading your Glock 40 (with extra mags), placing your K-Bar (knife) in the small of your spine, and tenderly loading your AK-47 in the trunk (for back-up), you decide to make an emergency supply run (combat mission?) to the store for Warrior essentials... self-medicating liquid (beer and/or wine), anxiety-relief cartridges (cigs), and friendship-support aid (dog food).

You park in back of the store, lock your vehicle, check for snipers, and hug the walls of the building to safely approach the front entrance. Crossing an open field (the parking lot) is out of the question. You have no clue what day it is (that's normal for most of us brain-fried Veterans). And when turning the corner to the front doors of the store, the first thing that comes out of your mouth is,
"Oh Shit!"

It's Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving!

The ocean of vehicles looks just like the evacuation of New Orleans before Katrina. You're desperate for brewskies and food for Kujo. You lightly pat the side of your camo field jacket, making sure Von Glock is at the

ready; and a tug on your belt, lets you know your K-Bar is in place.

Taking a deep breath and checking again for snipers, you “move out!” on the extraction mission. The Beast is at full alert, evaluating the threat level as HIGH!

The only four shopping carts left are locked together. And the one you finally free up has only three good wheels... and you’re already pissed, muttering...

“Piece of shit! Probably made in fucking China.”

Since there are more than six people in the store, the adrenaline is really startin’ to kick in...

“It’s impossible to watch my back!”

Rushing to the beer cooler for medication and the tobacco counter for cigs, you’ve already got Kujo’s chow in the cart, but turning the last aisle to check out.

“Oh Shit!” again.

There are at least a dozen people in each line and even more in the quick-check, “15 items or less” aisle. There’s no escaping the stampede of food mongers!

Small, nose-dripping children are running frantically around the store. Christmas music (In November?) is playing loudly overhead. Whining children are rifling through the candy at the checkout stands... their parents (?) have no control or flat out don’t give a rat’s ass about their sweet little nose miners bouncing balls and knocking food off the shelves. Carts are overflowing with civilian fat-food. People are standing motionless, their eyes glazed over with blank expressions...

”This has got to be another planet!”

And then it happens! Murphy dumps a load of shit right in your mess gear!

A small Arab-looking man with a turban-like headpiece, along with his wife and daughter, pull in behind you; they look just like the ones you've killed! A slack-jawed, longhaired hippie tries to weasel in up ahead. The moment of decision!

Now what is going on in your mind... in the mind of a Warrior?

"I hate these fucking civilians!" is most likely first. "While these fat maggots are loading up for a one day gorge, my Brothers and Sisters are lucky to get MREs today" might be second. "They don't give a shit about the Troops in Iraq and Afghanistan" might be next. And if the Beast is truly in control, "I'd like to kill every one of these worthless pieces of shit!" could easily follow.

What then keeps you, the Warrior, in check? It's most likely your dog. Why? Because, most likely in your mind, your dog is the only true friend you have at this moment.

What's next? Could be, "I can't dishonor my fellow Warriors by killing innocent, unarmed civilians." And for sure "I've got to get the hell out of here now!"

Killing civilians may not happen unless the Warrior snaps. And what do I mean by snap? What I mean is to go blank, black out into a flashback where he or she (that's right women too) don't know where they are, what they are now doing, or what they've just done. This is now happening at an alarming rate with our Combat Veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq.

One soldier I know of went to Wal-Mart to return a defective item. (Imagine that? From China?) Anyway, the store manager got in his face, and the soldier blanked out. He jumped over the counter, grabbed the stunned manager by the throat, and was in the process of killing him as the

guards pulled him off.

The soldier woke up from the flashback totally unaware of what he had just done. He was a two-tour Iraq Combat Veteran. Imagine what six combat tours will do? I've talked with a lot of Troops who are terrified about this reaction to combat trauma.

The first thing they say when they wake up is, "Oh my God! What did I do?" And unless there's a Veteran's Court System in place in that state, guess what happens? That's right, off to jail for a long, long time.

Blanking out is one of the effects of repetitive, sustained, and intense combat; that is, seeing and doing more killing than is humanly possible to process. And how much is too much? It could be a single kill, an innocent civilian, especially a child.

If we use the term atrocity, meaning extreme cruelty, this applies as well. In War there is certainly extreme cruelty; I can assure you of that from firsthand experience. Think about it. As I've asked before, is it humanly possible to kindly, lovingly kill someone in War? Don't think so.

And here's the clincher: Do you think you as the Warrior in the supermarket are a nut case? Do you think you were acting unusual? Nope! Not at all. You were acting perfectly normal for what you have been through, for what you've experienced. You are a highly trained, professional Warrior. And Warriors are trained to win battles. That means to win those battles, you kill human beings.

Just for a little reinforcement here, I want you to understand the intensity of what our Troops are going through right this second. And no matter what year it is when you read this book, the fact remains that the "events" of any Warrior's today in a war zone are locked into every Warrior's mind for his or her entire life.

I've been emailing back and forth to Troops in Afghanistan. And on one occasion, an Army Medic wrote me back... he was a little scattered. I understood why as he went on to explain...

“It’s been a damn rough week, Sarge. I’ve been in five firefights, two mortar attacks, and one rocket attack in six days. I’ve lost some of my Brothers. And I don’t know what to do.”

This Medic is on his third deployment; that’s three years in combat. He writes that morale is very low, and his fellow Soldiers are so burned out, they can barely function on patrol. He doesn’t know what to do, because there is nothing he can do.

He has to just continue going out every single day on patrol, losing his friends, and perhaps dying in the process. He IS a Medic. He WILL continue caring for his fellow Warriors to the Death! That’s what Medics and Corpsmen do.

Now is it any wonder why some of our Troops are blacking out?

For those Warriors reading this book and thinkin’ “Holy Shit!”... Don’t freak out just yet. ‘Cause it was explained to me by a real street-smart shrinker (a Boots-on-the-Ground, Battle Shrink) that in the cases of blacking out, the brain-housing-group is just acting normal. In other words, it’s doin’ what it was designed to do... to save your ass!

Ya see, there’s a part of your brain that’s hard-wired into the shut-down survival mode, just like the Beast is hard-wired into being your Battle Buddy. And even though your Beasty likes it, when you’ve seen too much horror, killing, mutilation, loss, etc., the brain just shuts down and puts you somewhere else.

Where are you? Well, it's sorta like sittin' in your car in the Wal-Mart parking lot: Something triggers a memory, you blink your eyes, and you wake up at the Burger King two hours later. Or think of it like being "beamed up" to another planet: You don't know where that place is, and you can't remember anything about it when you get beamed back to Momma Earth. In Grunt Speak, this is called the CRS Syndrome. That is, Can't Remember Shit!

The thing about blacking/blanking out is that your body is in full throttle, the Beast (Primal Side) is doin' jumping jacks for joy, but you ain't at the steering wheel. And you don't remember shit about your time on the other planet. As I'm told, this is one of the results from too much combat.

I personally know two troops right this minute who black out and don't know what they've done when their brains are shut down... from four to nine hours at a time. Now multiply the few I talk with by a hundred thousand or more. Think about it.

"So what do you mean by a trigger?" you ask with twitchy curiosity.

Very simple: A trigger is something that makes you react. When you are supersensitive to your surroundings, are walking on molecular ice (Marines... not a small furry animal in cold water), balancing between what is present-moment-real and what is the nightmare-distortion of past-horrors consuming your life, you are at your emotional breaking point.

In other words: Your brain can't take one single more input of any kind of a threat. If that happens, you react like a snail to a saltshaker. You know... draw inside your shell and feel the pain.

And what are the triggers? Again, this depends on

your own personal set of horrible experiences. But to give you an example: It could be a single spoken word from some dipshit you meet, or the smell of urine (people release urine when they die); it could be the smell of a steak on the grill (human flesh smells like a hog roast to me); it could be the smell from a certain kind of pine tree; or the sound that a particular bird makes. It could even be the temperature of the wind hitting your face. It doesn't have to be a loud bang like fireworks on the 4th of July, or the backfire of a car. A trigger can be very subtle or very obvious.

Whatever the trigger is, it makes you recall one or more of the traumatic events in your past. And depending on whether or not you've worked through these events will determine not only how you react, but how intensely you react... as in lightin' up a cigarette or lightin' up a city block.

So my fellow Warriors, the way you prevent recalling a traumatic event that may be too painful to deal with and endin' up goin' "Bye-Bye" is to get some professional help. Talking with your Battle Buddies is good for a starter, but you've really gotta get to the root of the problem and develop some tools to keep you from takin' ears at the supermarket.

And while we're at it, let's discuss one more thing here: Line Officers, Senior NCOs (Sergeants who are E-6 and above), and Sergeants who are Squad Leaders (in charge of twelve or so other Warriors). I've talked to many of them, and their stories are all the same.

When you're responsible for the lives of others, you must be a leader. That means you must never show weakness; but instead, you must continually set the example of strength to those following you. And herein lies

the problem. Because the burden of responsibility is even greater for you than for those you lead into battle.

These Warriors take in all the pain, all the suffering and loss, as do the other Troops. But they, like Medics and Corpsmen, feel the guilt over those they lose in battle; the men and women they are tasked with keeping alive.

One Staff Sergeant on the brink of suicide said to me, “Sarge, I feel like I’m gonna explode inside! I’ve gotta end this pain now. I can’t show weakness to my men. They count on me to be strong. Please help me!”

This happened on a base where I was talking with thousands of Troops. This soldier actually ran out into the street in front of my vehicle with his arms outstretched. He put his hand on the car, running it along the hood until he got to the window. I quickly rolled the window down.

He grabbed my hand and wouldn’t let go! He was angry at himself, desperate and violent. After about twenty minutes, the Squash Doc and I got him to understand that after four, fifteen-month deployments in Iraq; he had the right to feel as he did.

He wasn’t weak. He was just damn burned out over the killing and the loss of his squad members.

We did get this Sergeant help. And he’s now dealing with his demons in counseling. But how many more did not come forward that day? How many more have gone beyond their limit of human endurance?

The same goes for Officer Pilots. Again, I’ve talked with a number of Officers, both fixed-wing (Like an F-16) and Chopper Pilots (Like Cobra Gun Ships). The stories and feelings are so close; they could be a tape recording.

The Fighter Pilots all say the same thing. “I know I’ve got Combat Stress (PTSD) but if I say anything, I’m grounded for good. I’d rather run my plane into a

mountain with full ordnance, and go out in a ball of flames than never fly again.”

With eighteen suicides a day right now, and the number climbing, don't you think it's time to pay attention to the needs of our Troops? To listen to their pleas for help, and bring them home in their minds and hearts.

For those of you who are not battle hardened Warriors, do you now see what's happened? We have truly Awakened the Dragon!

It's been said, and bein' a Marine, I won't quote it exact; “Beware the sleeping dragon, for when it awakes the world will tremble.” Now I know, some folks who study this sort of thing will say that quote applies to China and the like. But let's change that a bit to blend into our surroundings here. How about,

“The Dragon has Awakened in our Youth, and now we must tremble from fear over what we have unleashed.”

“Should I be afraid?” you ask. Damn right! You'd better be!

“Why?” How about the one million (Plus) two and three tour Iraq and Afghan Veterans now walkin' the streets for a starter? And how about the millions of four, five, and six-tour Combat Veterans who will one day be discharged and dress in civilian clothes? That means, you can't tell 'em apart from the so-called civilian normies... you know, those who are not trained killers.

We all look like civilians, and we blend in like civilians... until we explode! Doesn't give you a warm and tingly feeling, does it? These new Warriors are not easy to spot, like so many from my generation are now. They don't have long hair and a beard, sunglasses, ball cap, and camo

trousers.

Except for the many thousands of young homeless from these wars, this young generation of Warriors appears clean cut like any good ol' American jock. They act calmly up to the time they go into a complete combat adrenaline meltdown, which in some cases takes only one small trigger. Again, think about it.

We'll be blending all this into other topics a bit later on, but for now get used to the notion that we've got hundreds of thousands of time bombs waiting to go off in our society right this minute.

Now draw some ammo, and put your chest plates in your body armor. We're headin' into a free-fire zone. There are no friendlies on the next patrol.

**Gun Ships are Revved! We've got Air Support!
We're headin' into a HOT LZ!**

A Review for Marines and Other Like-Minded Troops

1-9 Section One Summary

1-1 My Friend the Beast

- You were conditioned in Boot Camp to bring out the absolute worst that Humanity has to offer... the Primal Side, better known as the Beast. Something no one likes to admit they have... but we all do.
- Once your Beasty is out of its cage, it ain't goin' back in... ever! You can't put it back. And the more you try, the more you fail. It's like tryin' to put a full grown Pit Bull in a cat carrier after a dogfight.
- When your Lizard Brain is in full control (where your Beast joyfully lives), you are a deadly killing machine... no shit!
- You are NORMAL for how you've been conditioned. The Primal Side (you the Beast-Part) is **Hard Wired** into every single human being on the planet... no exceptions!
- The one single mission of your Beast is to keep you alive.
- If you are going to survive War, you must become War. And your Beasty Loves it! Oh Boy!
- The Beast **Part** of you loves killing the enemy, loves killing women and children, and will delight in killing anything else that walks or crawls on the face of the earth. This includes enjoying acts of

mutilation, torture, and the worst shit you could dream up. It makes a Freddy Kruger movie look like Winney-the-Pooh.

- You can never, ever satisfy the blood lust of the Primal Side. But your Beast Part is kind of a dumb shit, because it doesn't know it can burn your brain out and shut you down. It will love the ride; right up till the time you stick the gun in your mouth and pull the trigger.
- The Beast not only loves killing, it also loves rage, hate, guilt, loss, depression, dominance over others, and truly lusts after the opiate Adrenaline!
- This **Dark Side** in all of us also likes emotions such as envy, greed, selfishness, prejudice, racism; and it will dehumanize anyone, anywhere, in order to dominate or kill 'em... most often both.
- You **MUST** get your animal under control, or it will rip your life apart... eventually killing you and all too often, killing others as an added bonus. The more misery, the more it likes it.
- The 1st step to controlling your Beast is: You gotta admit you've got one! No shit! And everybody does, so you ain't real different.
- The 2nd step is: You gotta make friends with it... thank it for saving your ass down range. Maybe it brought you back a little off center-of-bubble, but it brought you back. Be grateful.
- Next thing is to transfer all of your GUILT, over all you feel from War, to your Beast Part (maybe we

should say Part-ner?) It is only a *Part* of you and not the TOTAL YOU! Deal with it.

- The Primal Side, your Beast Part, did all of the killing, and it fully enjoyed the atrocities that you either took part in or watched happen. It was **Not** your HIGHER SIDE... the Higher Part of you.
- You must not only learn to like the Beast Part of you, you must also learn to **love it**. If you can respect and love that part of you, then it is possible to learn to love yourself.
- If you love yourself as a damn fine human being who kicked ass and took names, then you'll learn to love others. That is, humans as well as animals. If you only love animals, then just picture humans walkin' on all fours... many are real fine folks.
- You must feed your Beast and care for it like any good animal keeper. Feed it just a little emotion by **thinking** about killing, but **not doing it**. You can feed it a violent movie and then move on to something else when you both feel better... and you will.
- Your Beast can be your best friend and protector not only in War, but in civilian society as well. It ain't goin' anywhere. It's right by your side, so the two of you may as well enjoy each other's company... if you're livin' in the bush, you most likely smell the same anyway.
- If you control the Primal Side, the Primal Part of you, even if you've lost touch with your humanity, you will soon feel it again. You'll be able to live

without hating everything and everyone.

- Remember, “Don’t hate anyone. Just feel better when they’re not around.” That way you won’t be tempted to take a few ears.
- When you learn to control your Beasty, life may not be a perfect, bullshit Pollyanna fantasy, but at least it won’t be a continual shit bath.

Learn to Identify where the Emotions are coming from... either the Angelic Side or the Demonic Side.

Demonic Emotions: The Primal Side; the Beast, living happily in your Lizard Brain

Rage (intense anger)

Hate (to feel intense hostility, animosity)

Loss (endless bereavement cycle)

Guilt (including survival guilt)

Selfishness (unreasonable egotism, self-centeredness)

Prejudice (hating because of race, color, creed, ethnic origin, etc.)

Dehumanizing all humans (fits right in with prejudice)

Desire to kill, yourself or others (suicide and/or homicide)

Desire for adrenaline (the closer you get to death the greater the hit)

Desire to violently dominate another (rape, child abuse, family abuse, road rage, etc.)

Lust for power and control (forcing others to do your will)

Greed (avarice, mongering at the expense of others)
Extreme Cruelty (inflicting pain and suffering on another)
Contempt (scorn, disdain, disrespect)
Unreasonably harsh judgment

Angelic Emotions... Higher Brain

Love (in the sense of feeling the bond between you and all life)
Honor (living the Nobility of the Human Spirit)
Compassion (empathy, kindness)
Tolerance of others (acceptance, patience, allowance)
Unconditional love (to love someone or something so strongly, you'll die for them)
Unconditional Friendship (complete Trust of another)
Unselfishness (giving without expecting anything in return)
Self-sacrifice (giving up your comfort or safety for another)
Forgiveness (who the hell is perfect, cut folks some slack)
Fair judgment of those weaker than you
Reverence for life and all creation

So who would you rather be?

Think about it.

1-2 To Feel the Kill

- War can destroy you **or** make you stronger. The choice is yours. You have the strength of a Warrior... use it.
- You must kill to survive War and win battles. There is no other choice in the matter. If you don't fight, and if you don't kill, then you and your friends get body-bagged, or worse.
- Killing another human being violates the mandate for the survival of the species. A species doesn't kill itself off!
- Of all the species on earth, "Human Warriors" are the **only** group that systematically plans and carries out the slaughter of one another. This is called War... usually for profit.
- Killing touches something deep inside of you, and there ain't no way to get rid of it. You must learn to feel it and go on with the mission of gettin' your shit together.
- Killing changes you for the rest of your life. No goin' back to the way you were... ever. You become another person... no shit!
- The more you kill the enemy, the more you like it, and the more you want to continue to do it. Don't make excuses so you can waste an innocent victim for your Beast.
- With enough killing, you lose touch with humanity and with your own humanity. You live through the eyes of the Beast.

- Killing and the loss of True Friends makes you **Emotionally Numb**. In other words, you don't feel shit about the pain and suffering of anyone or anything. Fact is, you like it.
- When you return from War, you're still in the survival mode and the killing mode. You've gotta get in control ASAP, or you're gonna screw the pooch... big time.
- Our Afghanistan and Iraq Warriors have done more killing and have seen more combat than anyone in our history... twenty times more than in WWII and ten times more than in Vietnam!
- No one truly returns from War. The dead may have seen the end of it, but the living endure it for the rest of their days.
- We must respect those Heroes who have sacrificed their very lives for what they believed in, and for those left alive to bear the pain of it.

1-3 Death Before Dishonor

- The Warrior's Code of Honor includes dying for those WHO you believe in... battle-tested friendship.
- All Combat Warriors have faced death, and have come to terms with death and expect death, right around every corner.
- It's damn hard to plan a long-term life when you don't expect to be around to walk Kujo. Vacations, savings, 401Ks, retirement, and such things as

four year degrees, don't have a lot of real meaning when you've just survived being down range. You've gotta re-train your brain-housing-group to think about that long range shit. And that takes a bit of doin'.

- Suicide may be the tragic result of feeling that you have disgraced the Code... that you have become dishonorable in the eyes of your fellow Warriors. This is often misplaced self-judgment. When it's **your time**, you're gonna get your permanent liberty pass, and no one is gonna outrank the Real Commander-in-Big-Chief!
- Suicide often results in the darkness, when the Warrior forgets that he or she ***is not alone***. They forget there are lots of us knuckle draggers watchin' their six. They also forget their well-earned, Battlefield Strength... as the elite of society.
- Sometimes suicide results because you're just too damn tired of the pain, the struggle and the horror in your head. Sometimes Honor doesn't enter into the picture. This is when you've gotta have a Vision for your Future. That is, something to get past the shit bath of the moment. Anything will work! Just set Mission Objectives!
- In War, you are near death (up close and personal). You are the cause of death. You are the messenger of death. Hell, you are DEATH! Is it any wonder why we think the way we do?
- The reason Warriors do not expect to live a long

life comes from being in the constant life-and-death experience in War. This kind of sustained trauma permanently changes your thinking. In Shrinker terms, it “remaps” your brain.

- The more combat the Warrior is in, the more he or she is resigned to death. That’s just the way it is. That’s just what War does. Ain’t no gettin’ around it.
- Warriors die without hesitation to protect the ones they love... their true friends. My advice? Make friends with a Combat Hardened Warrior... no shit!
- You’re gonna get burned out in War. No way out of it. But burnout depends on your own level of mental self-defense. The new buzzword these days is resilience. Sounds more like the coil spring on my old truck than somethin’ in the old skull. But I guess you get used to almost anything?
- Your mental “springin’ back” level depends on a bunch of things. Could be you were a disturbed nose blower, had Charles Manson for a father, lived in a war zone neighborhood, had Mommy Dearest for a nurturing role model, or maybe you just got pissed off at life before age 10? Who knows? Don’t matter.
- When you signed up to be all you can be, you found a purpose in life. You found Honor, discipline, self-sacrifice and true friendship. You even got to go to exotic places, blow shit up, and help people die for their country.

- Honor yourselves and your Brothers and Sisters who died by your side. Live your life until you're called to the final roster. Don't deny you're a few cans shy of a twelve-pack. It's OK! There's a lot of us just like you!
- And one last thing: It's OK to receive a Purple Heart when your ass gets wounded. You don't have to lose a limb or die first. It's a medal for VALOR! It's not a measure of the degree of suffering you go through. You earned it. Pin it on!

1-4 Between Two Worlds

- In battle, we are baptized in the blood of our fellow Warriors, our Brothers and Sisters in Arms. That changes us forever. You ain't goin' back to who you were... so deal with it.
- From the time we make the passage (the Right of Passage) on the battlefield, we live in two distinct Worlds at the same time. And you ain't gettin' out of this one either, so grab another magazine and a grenade or two.
- Combat Warriors live in two distinct worlds at the same time. There is the Warrior World of black and white, of Honor, discipline, and self-sacrifice. And then there's the gray wishy-washy civilian world of little or no honor that we hate, or at best tolerate. It's like tryin' to get used to pukin' after every meal... not that easy.
- Warriors tolerate civilians. We especially tolerate those cake-eatin' politicians. That's because we know that **nothing** in civilian society is as bad as

War... nothin’.

- With all their hearts, Warriors desire to re-deploy. This is because there isn’t a whole lot here in the land of the big BX to compare with a life of Honor, true friendship, and real meaning.
- Warriors get depressed and confused when they get stuck between the two worlds. It’s kinda’ like your truck breakin’ down in a bad neighborhood at 0200 hours (2:00 AM) and you’re out of ammo.
- When we do in fact get stuck, we must learn to turtle. That is, get the hell out of Dodge. We need to force ourselves to do something, anything that makes us feel better!
- Remember! **You are normal** for what you have been through! War changes us forever... no exceptions. It ain’t a bullshit movie.
- You have survived War. Now you must learn to survive life. And you do that **not** by pretending to fit into a society you hate. You do that by adapting your military skill sets to civilian society, overcoming problems and redirecting your mission objective at all times.
- **“Don’t”** pretend to be who “you” are not! Be proud to be a Warrior and act like it... living by and through our Code of Honor!
- At times you’re gonna feel rage. All Warriors do. Use that anger energy constructively. It is a powerful emotion. Tap into it and express it without harming others.

- You know the true meaning of life. It is a state of constant change. Adapt to it and overcome obstacles by using your strength as a Warrior... your military skills and discipline.
- The Two Worlds don't mesh; so don't try (and fail) to "fake" living in one while denying the other. You are who you are... a full-blown Combat Warrior.
- Remember always, you are not alone. You are normal in what to you has become an abnormal world.

1-5 Death is a Calling

- The Angel of Death is the Friend of the Warrior... ever watchful and waiting to take your hand in the final passage from this world.
- Warriors feel cheated when their friends die next to them. They long to be with them and watch their six... just like in life.
- It is impossible to describe the feeling, the emotions on the battlefield, to those who have not been there. So don't try. You'll just scare the shit out of most people.
- Warriors do not fear death. We do not fear life. We live in the moment, and we enjoy what small measure of peace happens our way at times. Feelin' good is good enough.
- Remember your feelings of death are, again normal for what you have experienced.

1-6 Home is Where the War Is

- Warriors feel more comfortable in war... not in the shit bath, but in the unity and friendship they experience. Well, maybe some of the shit bath, too.
- Warriors are only comfortable talking with other Warriors about War... but even then it's painful to remember some of the horrors.
- Remember that killing shapes our behavior, guilt shapes our behavior, and loss shapes our behavior.
- You don't feel comfortable talking about things that make you uncomfortable.
- Being armed makes Warriors feel comfortable. Most of us like talking about the weapons of war and what those weapons can do.
- Most Combat Warriors feel very comfortable talking about killing. That is, killin' those maggots who definitely qualify for extinction. We would like to flush the toilet of humanity for a lot of those deserving souls... child molesters, rapists, and other such scum.
- Warriors live by feeling their way through life... through their heart, always evaluating the threat level at all times.
- Those who have not been in battle think (intellectually?) through their lives. Again, Warriors do not.

- Warriors barely tolerate the constant “bitching” by civilians about what is most definitely **NOT** life threatening.
- As Young Pups, Warriors looked just like all the other little nose blowers. War changed all that. They were reborn into who they are now... after walking off the battlefield, that is.
- Most Warriors don’t like the holidays... they miss the good times in War, the true friendship, and the Warrior Brother/Sisterhood.
- It’s OK to love your dog more than people... for a starter. At least it’s loving something alive. Eventually, you can transfer that love to other (two-legged) living beings.
- The unconditional bond of loving friendship far outweighs the comforts and shallow relationships in civilian society.
- Your own children can be difficult to trust if children tried to kill you, and if you killed them... even in self-defense. That’s a normal reaction that eventually you’ll learn to overcome.
- Warriors completely understand the true meaning of love to die for... we lived it.
- Learn to bring the best parts of War to the front of your thoughts. Remember the good times, not the horror. It takes a lot of practice, like becoming an expert sniper.
- Take the best of both worlds and mix them together with what makes you as a Warrior feel

comfortable.

- If people don't like you as a Warrior, they lose. Don't worry, you're gonna find lots of others who aren't center-of-bubble just like you.
- If it rings true, listen to the old Knuckle Draggers who have walked down the same booby-trapped trail before you. We've learned to spot the tripwires real good. Fact is, we set off a few in the process.

1-7 The Warrior Trust Bond

- Battle Tested Warriors live by what is absolutely the purest code of human behavior possible.
- **“Proof is in Actions, not Words.”** A Battle Tested Combat Warrior has to be in battle to become one. You've gotta jump in the shit with other Warriors to smell like one.
- The more combat you're in with other Warriors, the deeper the Bond of Friendship becomes.
- The Warrior Trust Bond is established on the battlefield. Ain't no other way.
- Warriors live by Honor, discipline, and self-sacrifice. That is very difficult for many to understand, let alone live.
- Warriors die without hesitation for those we love.
- The relationships you establish in combat sets the standard for every relationship you'll ever have for the rest of your life... no exceptions.

- No matter what the reason, to be removed from the Military Family Unit is the worst possible thing that can happen to a Warrior.
- Warriors feel they have let down their family unit if they break down emotionally. Fact is, they have seen too much War, done too much killing, and experienced too much loss. They may feel they have dishonored themselves and the Warrior Clan. **They have not!** They are simply pushed beyond the limits of human endurance. That's a different place and level for each one of us.
- Survivor Guilt is intensified in Combat Warriors. Their sense of wanting to protect their fellow combatants goes far beyond their desire to protect themselves.
- Warriors strongly desire to replace the Trust Bond with something as meaningful when they are forced to leave the military. This is not usually possible, and life becomes confusing. They long to return to battle to fill the emptiness.
- Suicide sometimes results in the overwhelming feelings of loss of status from a time when you had purpose and true friendship.
- Warriors “live” unconditional love (to die for), trust, and true friendship. This only happens in a life-and-death bond, a time when you trust your life in the hands of another.
- Warriors desperately search for honor in civilian society... it is rare, but it can be found.

- Joining a violent gang to get the friendship and the adrenaline rush you crave ain't the answer. This is not the down range battlefield. Peaceful clubs and organizations can give you the friends you seek. There are many Veterans in peaceful, community service-type organizations. And you don't end up dead or in jail.

1-8 The Dragon Has Awakened

- You joined the military, and your very own, blood lusty Beast is out of its cage and on patrol... lookin' to make an ear necklace.
- Your desire is very strong (the Beast) to continue killing the enemy. But you ain't sure just who that is. Don't matter. Anyone will do.
- You live in two separate worlds at the same time... the Warrior World you love and the civilian world you hate.
- You miss the real Trust and Friendship of War.
- There was little or no debriefing when you got back to society. You got no tools to control your rage and resentment, which fueled your sense of betrayal.
- You hate everyone and everything.
- You're havin' one hell of a time adjusting to civilian society because you can't find any honor in it.
- You check for snipers on the roof of the store, shop when few people are in town, and can't stand

- crowds of more than a few people at a time.
- You sit with your back to the wall in restaurants (if you even go?), checking for exits and the enemy.
 - You're afraid to drive your car for fear of ambushes and IEDs.
 - You trust no one, especially if they are Arabic.
 - You may be blacking out from extreme Combat Stress and/or Concussion Injury (TBI). You know, from gettin' your ass blown out of a Humvee, gettin' mortared, rocketed, or havin' a 500 pounder go off a hundred feet from your fire team.
 - You've been through more combat than anyone in history... over 20 times more than WWII and 10 times more than in Vietnam.
 - Anything can trigger you into a flashback. It might be a sound, the wind, the temperature, a smell, or a haunting memory. Maybe some asshole makes the usual stupid comment and "BANG!" Your ass is back in the Sandbox or on Goat Mountain.
 - You scare the shit out of civilians by talking too much about what you did. And they should be scared.
 - Your old, so-called friends don't get the joke. In their minds, you ain't the nice, come-over-any-time person you were before killin' Hajji and blowin' shit up in a foreign land.
 - Your family is afraid of you, too. They think you don't love 'em anymore 'cause you won't talk

about the War. They think you ain't center-of-bubble. And you ain't.

- Living in the mountains with other Veterans sounds better than pumpin a septic tank or flippin' burgers... no shit!

Do ya think you just might need to get a little counseling?

Maybe talk to a Mentor or a Battle Buddy?

Maybe take a recon of the local Vet Center?

Alright now!

We're gonna get right into the thick of battle in this next section.

REMEMBER!

Death before Dishonor!

Surrender is not in our Creed!

Enemy in sight..... .HOLD THE LINE!

Fire at will!

Section Two: Life on An Alien Planet

2-1 You Ain't Who You Used to Be

2-2 Predator and Prey

2-3 Normal is as Normal Does

2-4 Adapting to an Alien Landscape

2-5 Mean and Green Don't Mean Stupid

2-6 Section Two Summary

2-1 You Ain't Who You Used to Be

“We cannot teach people anything; we can only help them discover it within themselves.”

Galileo Galilei

The eggnog and whiskey are soothing as you take a polite sip. You feel the warmth of the radiant heat from the fireplace. Sitting comfortably in an overstuffed recliner, the smell of turkey and trimmings fills the air around you.

“Damn good to be back for Christmas,” you think.

Forty eight hours ago, you were lying on the icy ground in Afghanistan, covered with blood and praying. Praying you'd make it back while under heavy mortar attack.

The ground shook with the impact of each round, and your hearing was gone. Two of your fellow Soldiers, your close friends, exploded into a mass of red fragments. Body parts and blood covered you and everything around you.

With eyes closed and your body shaking, you prayed...

“Please God! One more day! Please God!”

A gentle hand touches your left shoulder. A plate of holiday cookies taps the end table as it touches the polished wood.

“Want a warm-up on that drink, Honey?”

“Mom’s voice always sounds so kind,” you think, while gulping down every bit of the alcohol the cup has to offer.

“Thanks Mom,” you reply, while she looks lovingly into your eyes, then tops off your mug for a third time.

“It’s so good to have my boy back home. You’re safe now Charlie. So just forget about all the War stuff.”

Your body flinches. Your hands become fists. “Relax?”

you think. “Forget about that War stuff?”

Her comments pulled you right back into battle. The fire reminds you now of the flames and concussions of an airstrike. The smell of the turkey and roast beef kindles the smell of burning human flesh, reminding you of another Brother being burned in an IED attack.

Your Dad sits quietly in another recliner. He’s watching the flames and he’s watching you. Two tours in Vietnam as a Combat Rifleman, he looks around (no one’s within ear shot) and says...

“It’s OK, son... no shit. Those flames remind me of Napalm.”

You look over, smile, and nodding your head...

“Yeah, Pop... it does about the same for me. So what the fuck do I do now?”

There’s a Warrior Bond between the two of you that you had never felt before your last bloody tour in goat country. Speaking in a low tone, he replies...

“C’mon Buddy, let’s get some chow.”

As he stands and extends his hand to pull you up and out of the chair...

“It’s a long road, son, but I know you have the strength to adapt. And I’ve got your six on this one. We’ll talk when you’re ready.”

The tree is beautifully trimmed, and the table is set with a feast for a platoon. Feeling guilt flooding every cell of your body, you think...

“My Brothers are in that shithole right now, without even water for their MREs.”

Sitting down to sparkling clean chinaware and white cloth napkins, your Mom, sits next to you, grabs your hand and says...

“Let’s give thanks for Charlie being here with us, safe and sound.”

She bows her head and continues with a prayer of gratitude. The prayer ends, she looks at you and then it happens! In front of relatives, old friends and God Himself she continues...

“Charlie, you know I love you.”

“Oh fuck!” you think. “Just like old times. Stir up the shit with every meal. Why the hell can’t I eat one damn meal in peace? I can’t even remember food like this!”

Your father’s eyes are fixed on yours. He’s slowly shaking his head to warn you. “Don’t say a fucking word,” written all over his face.

Your mother continues, in the lovingly irritating way that only mothers can do...

“You know son, you can talk to me about anything. If you love me, you will. Won’t you, Charlie? If you love me that is.”

“Holy shit, Mom! How about some fuckin’ slack” you’re thinkin’.

But without hesitation, and ignoring the warning glare from Dad, the Beast takes over in a New York second.

“Oh sure, Mom. Well, let’s see. I just killed three kids last week... I think they were the enemy... not sure, but who gives a shit anyway. I watched two of my best friends in this world turn into red vapor and body parts before I left country. I’m still shittin’ MREs. Oh, and would ya pass the mashed potatoes? Now, I’m gonna have to skip the roast beef. It smells like human flesh. But don’t worry Mom, I’ll just forget about all that War stuff!”

With you sitting right next to her, you become invisible. She turns to the shocked and silent crowd, eyes welling with emotion and says...

“Oh! He’s just not the son I used to know. That Army changed him! He didn’t mean any of that! He’s just tired and had too much to drink.”

She bursts into tears. And the festive Christmas dinner spirals down the tube into Fly Paradise.

So do you.

Well now, my fine, young, fly-covered friends, you’re sure as hell not the little kid Mama used to pamper and coddle. And you sure ain’t who you were before goin’ to War. You’re a lean, mean, fighting machine.

So let’s talk about why you’ve changed, and what’s normal for your green ass. But you gotta wonder, what do you suppose civilians think war is?

A Soldier once told me... ”Ya know Sarge, describing War to someone who hasn’t been there is sorta like describing the color red to a blind person.” Get the point?

And if you study the Civil War here in the States, you may remember how some folks took picnic lunches to see the first battle? Wonder what they were thinkin’?

Well, anyway, we condition and train our beautiful sons and daughters to become Warriors... killers to win battles. They kill human beings; and they may even take part in mutilations, torture, maiming, and the viciousness it takes to win battles and demoralize the enemy.

They return home still trained killers, and people expect them to be the same? What’s wrong with this picture? Our young Troops see this and live it.

Many have asked me, “Are people so misinformed, uninformed, and in denial? Or are they just plain stupid?” Don’t really know the answer to that one... maybe some of the above, all of the above, or a little of each? You decide.

Guess I’d better get down off my ammo can here, and get right to it. So I’ll start by saying that you Afghan and Iraq Warriors are my Heroes. And you damn sure need someone to give you a “Heads Up” on what’s normal.

“So what is normal?” you ask in twitching anticipation!

It’s all a matter of exposure. (Marines: Not zippin’ down your fly.) Here, I’ll give you an example.

Every few weeks or so this last year, my Marine Buddies and I got together for a few cigs and some brain grenades (beers to civvies). As usual, we’d rag on each other, civilians, and on the Marine Corps... which we all love dearly.

At one of our delightful gatherings, the topic of relationships came up. And between the four of us, we’ve had 23 wives and over 270 jobs! That’s right. You ain’t misreading this.

Now we’re all seasoned Combat Vets from the Land of the Little People (Nam) and after much laughing and pointing fingers (mostly the middle one), one Marine popped up and said...

“Hey! Wait a minute, you fuckin’ Jar Heads. We’re **NORMAL** for what we’ve been through! We’re **NORMAL** for our generation!”

And the small, dim green lights flickered in our heads. Damn it, if he wasn’t right as napalm!

That’s exactly why my green ass is talkin’ to you Young Pups right now. Us old Farts don’t want you to go through the same demoralizing, brain-clogging, failed

relationships and failed lives as we did. So pay attention. This ain't no training film. Don't wanna see any heads bobbin' out there.

And, by the way, I didn't dream this shit up. Couldn't. It comes from some real fine Squash Doctors. You know, as in the melon or squash that sits on top of your spines? Brain-Docs?

Anyway, let's start all this by talkin' about your brain-housing-group. That's the physical (body) brain part of you and just what's goin' on in your thick skull.

In combat, your brain pumps out a chemical cocktail that your body sucks up like a cold beer after a five-mile forced march. It makes such chemicals as adrenaline (your favorite) and another one called dopamine (Marines: Not a stupid friend).

These chemicals are kinda like havin' the gas pedal floored and stuck in a Ferrari on a Los Angeles freeway or sittin' on a horse that's hell-bent for the cactus patch. You're goin' along for the ride either way, and you're sure as hell gonna crash eventually.

The trouble with bein' "high" on a chemical like adrenaline is that, with enough sustained trauma (like gettin' shot at), your body not only becomes addicted, it also overrides the process for the other "slowdown" chemicals to kick in. In other words, your break lines are cut.

So what's the point? Real simple.

The point is that you as a Combat Warrior, coming back from War, are still hooked on adrenaline. You need the fix, and you react only in the "fight" mode of your lizard brain. But be advised, once again, that is a **NORMAL** result of War.

As I said, resilience seems to be the fancy word nowadays. And if I got it right, it means, “to bounce back” (or to recover quickly). But I’ll be damned if I can figure out what these eggheads want us to bounce back to?

We don’t want to be like we were before being reborn in boot camp and combat. We ain’t bouncin’ back to be a civilian! That’s a sure bet.

We’re burned out on killing and loss. So it makes no sense (military intelligence?) to bounce back into battle when we’re already brain fried? Which, by the way is what our Troops are doing right this minute. And we’re gonna talk about that real quick-like.

What does seem to make sense in my Old Green Skull is to focus this resilience stuff on bouncing back to getting in touch with not only your own humanity, but with who you’ve become after War.

You know, like maybe helpin’ us feel that every creature on Earth doesn’t need to die of lead poisoning... as in bullets to the brain. Maybe then, we can begin to trust people as much as our dog?

Anyway, my old black-and-white notion on this whole FUBAR is how about designing some training that cuts through the bullshit and helps us adapt to becoming at least semi-productive Warriors in civilian society? And not prepare our Troops to go back into battle after 20 times more combat than anyone ever thought about in WWII.

Guess I’m gettin’ pissed off here, but I gotta say that maybe these big-buck-program-designers should think about helping our Troops improvise and adapt to becoming feeling human beings again instead of preparing them for more battle. Sure they wanna go. They tell me that every day. But has anyone ever thought of the long-term consequences of combat, for a whole generation of

our youth? Don't think so.

Well then, gettin' back to the whole NORMAL issue, in ancient Greek-speak, the word trauma means, "to wound or pierce the soul." Well no shit, Sherlock! In War, your soul is definitely pierced, your body may be pierced, and your Spirit is hangin' on like it's screamin' back to Earth in a cigarette role. (That's when your chute don't open.)

So that bein' said, you youngins may just look at yourselves like bein' a powder keg of emotions, memories, and pent-up horrors with about a one second fuse. This is where we can throw in the concern for the triggers we just discussed.

Your lizard brain keeps "goin' and goin'" like that pink, fuzzy rabbit with those batteries stuck to its ass. The trauma (wound) doesn't fade away in time. Fact is, your reactions can get worse if you don't put a "round through the rabbit" by gettin' some help.

If you're not processing your shit bath memories and getting some good combat trauma guidance, then each time you "react" to a trigger (sight, sound, etc.) that kicks you into the emotional rollercoaster ride, the pathways in your lizard brain get stronger.

It's like watchin' animals make a trail. They start out walkin' over the same place over and over again. Pretty soon there's a clean path. The path gets deeper and deeper and when it rains (as in an emotional flood) the trail turns into an arroyo (deep trench).

So we've talked about the Parts that you're made up of. We've discussed the chemicals that pump you up, and we're attempting to make it as clear as mud that everything you do, everything you think and say, and every one of your actions is **NORMAL BEHAVIOR** for a Combat

Warrior.

Even CRS is normal. You know, Can't Remember Shit? And Why? Real simple. Your brain is tryin' to keep you out of the padded cell and clear of the Thorazine shuffle. It wants you to forget so you don't remember the shit. Damn if I'm not soundin' like one of them pencil neck poet-sorts.

When you've seen too much horror, the brain shuts down memory. Just that simple. You can't remember names because you don't want to think about the Brothers and Sisters you've lost.

Details are often gone, or so you think. Actually, your brain remembers every single detail of every single second... of your whole life. It's there, but you just can't recall it.

If you enjoyed killin' the enemy and a whole bunch of other good stuff in War, it doesn't make you a monster Warmonger. It makes you NORMAL for a battle tested, full-blown Combat Warrior. So be proud of it!

So you see, NORMAL is simply your experience. No one will understand you unless they have your exact (or very similar) experiences.

We're gonna talk about porno (pornography and you) in the last section, 3-1. But even that is normal for what you've been through. And I'll tell ya why. That may raise a few eyebrows!

So if you're like me and make lists of shit to remember, then forget where the lists are, it's normal. And after forty-plus years of surviving the alien world of civilians, I can tell you point-blank, that my military training is what pulled me through. It will do the same for you.

If you've killed more people than most people in

prison (like I have), it doesn't make you a criminal. It's what Warriors do in War. It's NORMAL.

I'm gonna give your young, green asses some real good tools (already have) so you don't live the life that I did. It's real simple.

Live through your gut, and live through your heart. Now I'm gettin' all tree-hugger-ish, but **if it don't feel right, then don't do it!**

I don't give a rat's ass if your Mom tells you, if an old Knuckle Dragger tells you, or if anybody you might respect tells you. If your heart and/or your gut tells you "you're walkin' into an ambush!" then don't do it!

Alright then, enough said on this one. Let's get down and dirty on this next topic. Hell, you made it this far. What have you got to lose, except bein' NORMAL?

Keep that body armor on, and get up on that 50 Cal.

Snipers on the rooftops ahead! Unlock those weapons!

We're movin' out!

2-2 Predator and Prey

“Devil Dog to Fire Base, Delta One Niner... Over”

“This is One Niner... Over”

“One Niner, be advised, heavy enemy movement detected on thermal in your sector... Over”

“Roger that Devil Dog. Enemy now in range of 50 Cal. Snipers at this time... advancing fast on our position... Over”

“You have a **GO** to engage the enemy, One Niner. Air support en route to your position... Over”

Roger that, Devil Dog... engaging now... out”

Meanwhile, grazing at the Pasture Mall...

“OH! I just love this new molasses mix from Purina. Don’t you, Daisy?”

“Me too, Blossom. It makes my fleece so thick and fluffy. And by the way, have you heard anything about the war going on at the next ranch?”

“War? Gee, Daisy, I didn’t even know there was a war going on?”

“Oh, yes! The Guard Dogs are taking a lot of casualties from the Wolves. Those awful Wolves are just terrible creatures... so mean. And you know, they even kill their own!”

“What do you think about those Guard Dog Units, Daisy?”

“Well, to be honest, Blossom, they really scare me and my relatives. When they come back to our ranch, they don’t say anything. They just stare out toward the mountains.”

“Did you know, Daisy, their Commander is a mix of Bull Mastiff and Wolf Hound? He’s enormous... and so many scars.”

“Oh! They all make me tremble when they’re around.”

Later, back at Headquarters...

Commander Max (Maximus) paces the floor. His Pack Officers are all gathered, discussing the battle now raging at Delta One Niner’s position.

“How are my Pups doin’ out there, LT?”

“They’re gettin’ hit hard, Sir. More air support and heavy reinforcements are on the way. Should be there shortly.”

Commander Max takes a deep breath...

“Remember, Gentleman, our mission is to protect the Sheeple... Do or Die.”

Back at the Grazing Mall: A lone Warrior Guard Dog, fully armed, walks among the Sheeple. They turn away in fear. He tries to pay them no attention. Staring at the mountains, the Warrior feels guilty. He thinks...

“I’m not out there with my Brothers now... not in the fight. I’m here with Sheeple who just don’t understand. Maybe some don’t even care.”

Unslinging his weapon, his thoughts continue...

“We Warriors fight for them, for their freedom, comfort, and safety. Why do they turn away from me? I’d die for any one of them.”

Then suddenly, several sinister shadows appear at the edge of the clearing. The Sheeple run behind the Warrior, screaming...

“It’s the Wolves!”

The Warrior, fixing his bayonet and chambering a round, takes a step forward toward the advancing enemy. He thinks...

“I Shall Die with Honor!”

As my good friend and Brother Warrior, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman, talks about in his presentations...

“There are three groups of people in our society: Sheep, Wolves, and Guard Dogs.”

Keeping this in mind, there appears to be two kinds of predators. The Guard Dogs are predators who protect our freedom and defend those weaker than themselves. The Wolves are predators who choose to dominate and kill those weaker than themselves.

Warriors, therefore, are the Guard Dogs of Freedom. And freedom is not free. Another friend and fellow Warrior, Major General Graham, often says...

“The Land of the Free because of the Brave.”

Think about it: Civilians did not earn freedom. Freedom was given to them by Warriors, with our blood, with our sacrifice, and with our beloved friends.

You might say that Warriors are the thin, “Green Line” between freedom and subjugation. Just like our Heroes in Law Enforcement are the thin, “Blue Line” between domestic liberty and anarchy.

Will Warriors today be looked at in history any different from those in the times of Alexander the Great or during the Legions of Rome? Perhaps not. But every Warrior knows the truth of life: That being the difference

between justice and injustice, and between honor and dishonor.

Warriors are the predators who are willing to sacrifice their lives for what they believe to be the “Greater Good”; that is, the outstanding qualities of human beings, that all may live under the banner of Liberty and Justice for All.

OK. So now that we’ve talked about the two classes of predators a bit, let’s discuss the prey, which in many cases may be looked at as the victims of predators.

I’ve been asked many times...

“Don’t you feel like a victim?”

First off, the big book of words (again: The dictionary to Marines) defines a victim as...

“One who is harmed or killed by another.”

Well that’s all fine and dandy, but I figure that definition is just a tad too general for the whole human race. Now maybe I’m wrong (won’t be the first time), but let me tell you how Warriors fit into this victim stuff.

Warriors are always predators... never, ever prey. And are we victims (hurt and killed) in War? Well, Duh! No shit, Sherlock! Everyone is a victim in War... from civilians and combatants, to the environment and animals. No exceptions.

But even though we are all victims in War, being witness to and participating in the atrocities (extreme cruelty), we are not passive (prey) observers.

Clear as mud? I’ll explain.

A lot of what I personally consider just plain bullshit in the psychological studies of Combat Troops is way off the mark. But then again, for some of these eggheads, it’s gotta be hard to think like an eagle, if you’re a dumb-ass

rodent, waitin' to check out... as in prey.

Now, I'm certainly not criticizing all Squash-Docs and all studies. But what I am saying is that a lot of organizations (as kind as I can be) are using forty-plus year old "Psychological Models" (Marines: Not a centerfold in Psychology Today).

Our young Troops are not Vietnam Era Veterans. It's like comparing a .22 caliber round and a .50 Caliber round: They both explode and go down range to the target, but one leaves a much bigger hole. If you haven't got that point yet, then keep on readin'.

Another thing about predators is that they can "sniff" out weakness like a bloodhound chasin' a wounded rabbit. Why do you think there have been so many violent outbursts in behavioral treatment centers?

But look, you don't have to be a Combat Warrior to talk to one. All you gotta do is **not** pretend to know how they feel if you haven't walked the walk.

Well anyway, let's get back to this victim stuff.

Since we as Warriors are not passive observers on the battlefield, we are therefore not looking at any traumatic events in the same way as a civilian victim would.

Of course, horrific events, like killing kids, or watching people burn alive or turn into pink vapor, leaves an imprint in our brains forever. That don't take a Ph.D. to figure out. But our perspective is entirely different. I'll explain.

Killing causes "real-time" moral dissonance (conflict) and sure as hell causes PTSD from the experience. You know, major, gut wrenching stress in your future? But we're not the victims who we've just killed. We're the victim doing the killing... and we are left with our own

moral issues to deal with as long as we live.

This is the same with issues such as guilt and loss. Simply stated, Warrior predators view their traumatic events as such... as Warriors, not as victims.

We never feel like we got a bum deal over killing the enemy. And if we lose a Brother or Sister, we don't feel like we were the victims.

When we lose a Friend, we just get pissed off, then go out and kill more of the enemy. When we kill more, we feel more of the resulting PTSD. But in the process of killing the enemy (as discussed earlier), at the time, we feel a sense of satisfaction and even joy. We never feel like we've killed enough.

And by the way, while we're on the subject of this PTSD thing, I gotta tell ya, that tag sucks big time. As I've said before, I like to call PTSD, Ppsychological TTraining for Superior Discipline. I don't like the term, and the Troops don't like the term. Once again, it sounds more like somethin' you caught off a toilet seat on B Street in Okinawa. Combat Stress has a lot more Honor attached to it. Well anyway, let's get back to the subject of victims.

Maybe another way to make this clearer, is if we think of it as in the civilian world of muggings. If a Warrior gets mugged, he or she doesn't feel like a victim. We feel like we didn't have the right weapon, firepower, or weren't aware of our surroundings enough. Why do you think we're all armed?

If something like gettin' mugged happens to us, we don't feel self-pity, and we sure as hell don't want pity. We're embarrassed that the damn enemy got the upper hand. We're gonna damn sure draw first blood in the next encounter, which we often pray for.

I know it's real hard for a whole bunch of folks in

shrinkerdom to understand, but they just can't group all humans into the same pigeonhole. And I've got news for you: these young Warriors are a real different breed than us old bottom dwellers.

How are they different?

Well here's just one thing to stick in your craw. We've talked about how they're like powder kegs, due to so much deployment, killing, loss, etc. And guess what one of the new behavioral results is... I mean, besides blacking out?

They have no middle ground. That is, they are calm and congenial one second; but if they perceive a threat, in a microsecond they are in a full combat adrenaline killing-rage.

And here's a news flash for you counselors out there. You ain't gonna tell this generation to come in "once a week" like in my time, or "once a month" and expect them to come in at all. They won't, they don't.

This new breed of Warriors needs constant support and understanding. Many are living at the threshold of suicide and homicide. It's like on a scale of 1 to 100, where 1 is calm and hunky-dory and 100 is "Let's take out the nearest gang-banger clubhouse." Many of our Combat Warriors are hovering right around the 97 to 99 mark.

Do you know why we haven't seen more mass shootings and more really destructive outbursts? Real simple: It's because of the Internet, the Code of Honor, and the Warrior's Creed on the sanctity of all Life.

First off, these youngins are talkin' to one another on Facebook, Twitter, cell phones, and even satellite phones in the military. They're talking to each other, and it's acting like a support network. They can blow off a little steam and hopefully realize that they're not alone in how they feel.

They can speak with other Warriors who understand.

The second thing that's holding back the rage is the Warrior Code of Honor. That is, we take an oath to protect the innocent. To me, that especially means women and children. So ya see, we just don't go out and shoot innocent civilians for no good reason. We may think about it, but that's the last thing we would ever do. We'd prefer to protect 'em. It'd give us a real mission.

The third thing to understand (if you haven't yet got the joke) is that Warriors hold all of Life as sacred, never to be taken without just cause. But when we do, most of us have a deep respect for the dead. Of course, there are variations on all these considerations, but I think you may be gettin' the point here?

Many of the clinicians I talk with about this whole communications issue think it's only a temporary fix. They say that eventually, all these young Warriors are gonna have to deal with their War trauma (their events) and get professional help. I certainly agree. However, the Warriors have to do all the work, and they need the tools to do it.

But do you see why the suicide rate is climbing so high? Why it's gonna get worse if nothing is done on a mass scale? Many Warriors are fearful of going into a counseling center to talk with anyone who hasn't been down range. The Warrior Trust Bond hasn't been established.

Our young Warriors are professionally trained killers, yet they are not allowed to continue their mission here in civilian society. They are tormented by their experiences in War, but except for a few (if any are still around) Battle Buddies to talk things out, they feel alone and outcast.

The regimentation of military life is gone (or so they think), and they believe that, because they're emotionally

closed off, there's something wrong with 'em. When they're alone in the darkness and the horrors close in from all sides, suicide may seem the only solution. It is not.

For you Warriors reading this, no matter what shit bath you've been through, there are now ways to help you live a damn fine life. It's gonna take a lot of practice to develop your new skill sets, but once again you have the strength to do it. Us old Knuckle Draggers have got your six.

For you civilian clinicians who plan on working with this new generation of Warriors, I respectfully suggest that you get your shit together, and real quick-like. Don't give these youngins "Just Cause."

This next topic may sting a bit; you know, like standin' naked in a hail storm, or tryin' to squat in the bushes of a Louisiana campground in the Spring... lots of winged bloodsuckers in the air?

**Grab your weapons and web gear.
The convoy's movin' out twenty clicks
to a real bad sector.**

Stay low! Stay Frosty! I got your six!

2-3 Normal is as Normal Does

Living alone with your nine cats at the top of a beautiful, wooded mountain in Ohio, the sign hanging on the locked gate at the bottom of your driveway reads...

“There’s nothing here worth dying for.”

If anyone was invited up to your base camp, the very first thing they’d see was the Marine Corps flag hanging from a twenty-foot pole. You built your home by yourself and are proud of it. There aren’t too many geodesic domes in your sector.

Hanging inside over the front door is a Mini-14 you call Sting, and over the back door hangs the love of your life. Her name is Raptor, and she’s a beautiful, Springfield M-14.

Lightly fastened to the headboard of your hand-me-down bed, tucked against the wall of the dome, lovingly hangs a .45 caliber, Ruger P-90... with five extra magazines, "just in case." Your nine sentry cats move in and out of the cat door, patrolling the compound for intruders.

It’s that Sunday when all of your equally armed Battle Buddies are about to arrive for the monthly shoot. This is the highlight of your life; and you’re excited to eat real good chow, consume unlimited numbers of brain grenades and fire your weapons with friends of like mind.

You’ve carefully stuffed a set of vintage BDUs (purchased at the local surplus store) with bundles of old newspapers. A black ski mask sits on top of its shoulders, securely sewn into place... also stuffed. Kinda gives it that hostile look.

Walking out to the end of your hundred-meter range, you secure the enemy target on a wooden 4x4x6 foot rack.

Good times are about to begin!

As your Warrior friends arrive and the day is spent having a real good time, you feel a sense of true satisfaction. Too bad the neighbors don't feel the same.

When the firing is over, you and your well-lubricated friends retrieve the manikin (Marines: Not a man that can) and hang it by its neck in the trees at the edge of your property line.

Looking down the fence line to the gallows-row of past good times makes for a great laugh and another click of the beer tab. One of your team fires another series of rounds at the enemies already hanging in place. This calls for even more laughs and a feeling of remorse that this wonderful day is drawing to a close.

Your Mennonite neighbors, who you meet by chance on occasion, constantly remind you that, "We're all praying for you." But the enemies hanging by their necks in trees, along with "No Trespassing" signs every fifty feet on the fencing prevents them, as well as other neighbors, from playing "looky-lou."

That night, with the wood burner stoked to break the autumn chill and the sentry cats all accounted for, you pop in a nice soothing movie to wind down for the day. An oldie but goodie, "Apocalypse Now" seems to fit with your gourmet Mac & Cheese (with Charlie the Tuna) dinner.

Taking a sigh of relief while patting your P-90, you think...

"This has been a damn good day... a nice, "normal" Sunday with friends."

"Whoa! Normal for the Psychos-R-Us Club!" you nervously mutter.

Not at all, just normal for Warriors feeling comfortable. You may think this story is a stretch. It ain't. Because what I've just described to you is one of my own, very happy Sundays. That is, at a time in my few-shy-of-a-six-pack days when I thought I had my shit together.

Now I'm not sayin' that I'm all center-of-bubble now, but at least I'm not hangin' dummies from trees and terrorizing my neighbors. Well, at least not like I used to in the good old days. Guess that's sayin' somethin'?

But I gotta tell you, when I look back on those good old times now of when I was hunting hunters in deer season and havin' drunkin' shoots; I was on the brink of suicide and homicide... moment to moment.

A bit dimwitted? Perhaps. Way out of plumb? No doubt. But remember, I only did one combat tour for thirteen months. Imagine if I'd have done six tours? Let your mind tickle that thought for a bit. Scary, isn't it?

Well anyway, let's get on to talkin' more about this normal thing and maybe put together all you've learned up to now about Combat Warriors. And, if your thoughts on the issues of Combat Stress aren't so fuzzy by this point, then I guess you're starting to understand. We'll see.

Like our present day Troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, I was being led down the primrose path to the slaughterhouse. My Beasty was pullin' at my lead rope like a bull with a ring in his nose. The crazier my actions got, the more I liked 'em. Hell, I didn't fit in anyway, so I guess I was developing my own twisted identity.

You know about that identity thing, don't you? It's sorta like people who have an illness or some sort of bad surgery. They call that "My illness," or, "My condition." They use that bullshit as an excuse to stay fixated (Marines: Not standin' still and eating.) at one moment in

time.

That's exactly how a lot of my Brothers from the Nam are fixated back in the War to this day. They have adapted to civilian life, while being fixated in the past. The past has become their identity, and their identity has become what is now normal for their survival in the present.

This locked-in-time mentality is dangerous. Why? Real simple. A lot of our Troops are fixated at a moment in time on the battlefield and searching the ridgeline for the enemy. That's OK in War, just not in downtown Chicago.

Think about it. If most of your waking thoughts were about the killing, the loss, and the horrors of War you've experienced, and you couldn't get a grip on it, where would you be? As in, where would your head be? Would you be in the present or in the past? It isn't too hard to figure out, is it?

In this state of mind, there is certainly no place for productive, fuzzy, warm thoughts way out in the future. Besides, as we've already seen, Warriors don't live in the future, anyway.

The trick for us is to not live fixated in the past either. We must live in the present moment, and the present moment cannot be controlled by our past events. That's usually when the Beast is the lead dog and you're hangin' on, emotionally white-knuckled.

So all this fixation stuff just adds to most every Warrior's baggage. It makes it far more difficult for us to actually live in a peaceful present. That, by the way, takes a lot of work and lots of talkin' out the problems (battlefield events) that are ripping our lives apart.

Now, back to my own Hamburger Hill in Ohio. And again like so many of our Troops today, I hated everything about civilian life. That's because I was failing miserably at

living in the Two Worlds at the same time.

Do you see how this works? I was recreating the Warrior World on my own little chunk of land. It was not only comfortable for me to be there, it became my normal environment... my identity.

Trouble was, when I finally saw how disturbed my life had become and just how plain weird I was, I bolted from there like a coyote with rock salt in its ass. I felt even more ashamed.

When our Troops find themselves in a similar situation as I've been describing, the same feelings (emotions) can turn to rage, and the rage may turn to killing... themselves and/or others.

That was one of my options. I was ashamed of "fucking up again!" Of wasting more of my life. And because of survivor guilt, a life I didn't feel I deserved.

If I hadn't met a real fine woman with two beautiful kids, I hesitate to think of the rage I would have expressed. Remember, like our Troops, I was (and am) a well-trained Killer. If your Beast is in control in this same kind of situation, the consequences can be grave... literally. That is, in a mortician's happy holiday fest.

Like so many of the Troops I've talked with, I was feeling normal up until the time I realized I was only normal for the battlefield. When this realization comes, you have only two choices: You either adapt your military training to civilian life, the civilian world; or you go ballistic and destructively express your rage.

Although extremely explosive at the time of this story, I managed to maintain marginal control. Here's a short example.

After more than twenty years of failing to see into the future to the end of a semester, I finally got a degree from

Ohio State University. And somehow, by either the fates or Murphy, I finally got certified to teach school. Look out nose-gold miners!

Of course, I ran my classroom like Marine Corps Boot Camp. Stranger yet, the kids loved it! On the first day of class, my introductory comments were...

“I am Sgt. Brandi, United States Marine Corps. I am a combat rifleman from Vietnam. If it is your will against mine, you will lose. I will love you, but I will also punish you with extreme joy.”

A bit unusual? Yep! A bit twisted? You decide, but it worked.

Well anyway, after six years (my longest job ever) when I brought my Mini-14 to parent conferences, my VA vocational counselor strongly advised...

“Brandi, you need to get your ass out of the teaching business. I won’t be of much help to you in the slammer, because that’s where you’re heading.”

He was right, even though I explained to him how so many of the parents needed to meet Jesus... as in die of lead poisoning by a .223 round. So once again, thinking I had pulled off the being “normal,” in-the-civilian-world disguise, I screwed the pooch and left with my tail between my legs.

Now, being a thick-skulled Jar Head, I still didn’t get the joke. Still thinkin’ I was in control while my Beast was runnin’ point, I chose another job.

It seemed only “normal” to put my Force Recon skills to use. So, I started making military spec. Ghillie Suits (see glossary) for operators all over the world.

But, after about 600 of those, my wife at the time

(and still my dearest friend) and I happened to start taking care of abandoned and abused farm animals... mostly horses and cattle.

Through working with new friends that could be “trusted” (all 4 legged), I realized what a shit-for-brains I’d been, even though I’d always felt normal.

Again, I was only normal for a Warrior, but I never did make it in adapting my military training to civilian society. I never gave adapting a 100% effort, because I didn’t know I needed to, and I sure as hell didn’t know how.

So, what’s the point of all this? Well, it’s real simple.

When one of our hundreds of thousands of Combat Warriors gets triggered into a rage response, they’re gonna think they’re acting normally. But, in that state of high emotions, the Warrior usually doesn’t see the contrast between their actions and what most peaceful folks accept as normal in their so-called civilized lives.

This ain’t rocket science either. You see, the Combat Warrior’s brain has been thoroughly reconditioned (remapped) in War. This means that their reaction to any threat level triggers an intense rage response... the survival mode response. This also means a maximum output of combat adrenaline. And when you’re able to leap small buildings with a single bound, you usually do.

They’re acting normally for the battlefield. But, it’s a tad bit uncomfortable for folks to know that a Warrior may be sitting calmly in front of ‘em, yet at the same time thinkin’ about guttin’ ‘em like a pig for a hog roast.

I still do this all the time. If I had a TV monitor on my head so people knew what I was really thinkin’? Well, let’s just say I’d be in a padded cell or holed up on my ranch

with a twin .50 cal. on my sandbag bunker. Here's a short example of what I'm talkin' about.

Last year I did a radio talk show with a guy who I know was an asshole. But because of wanting to get the word out about our Troops and how to not only understand them, but help them as well, I agreed to go.

One of my very dear and long-term civilian friends went along with me to watch my six. This lady understands the Combat Warrior mind, and how we pretend to fit into society.

The first thirty minutes did not go well. The guy doing the interview was not prepared, was uninformed, and had a real egotistical attitude. This tended to piss me off like a shit-throwin' gorilla at the zoo.

Stopping for a head call (toilet break) and walking down the hall, my friend asked me what I was thinkin'. She could see I was more than a little angry. Being allowed to speak freely to her I replied...

“This fucker is a waste of good oxygen. All I wanna do is ridge-hand him to the throat, light him up, and throw his maggot-ass out this third story window, in a ball of shit burnin' flames. No repelling allowed.”

That was on my TV Brain Monitor. My friend just laughed and reminded me that we had another hour to go. So I walked back in the studio, kept my “vision” for his future and did the talk for the Troops. I adapted to my surroundings without violence. But I sure as hell wanted this puke-for-brains to feel some real pain. Not that many years ago, he might have had a sky diving lesson. That is, when I was still thinkin' I was acting normal and the thought of killing a civilian was acceptable.

Do you see what happened there? The radio announcer became my enemy. He became the enemy of my

Brother and Sister Warriors. And what do you do with the enemy? To protect your fellow Warriors, you kill the enemy.

What I'm attempting to do here is explain how a Warrior's actions may appear normal through their eyes and their thinking. They may not realize how Ab-Normally **dangerous** their perspective truly is. If they're so conditioned to War and completely fixated in their battlefield "events," they may not even realize there's any other way to act. They are reacting to their conditioning, to their training. They are acting normally for War.

As you may have gleaned by now, Warriors carry around a lot of pent-up emotions in an unlocked cage. Given the right trigger, these emotions are out and looking for a victim to kill. Any victim will do, any person thought of as the enemy gets treated as such.

There is absolutely nothing like hunting a human being, especially another Warrior. The playing field is level, and whoever walks off the turf wins. **If** you are perceived as the enemy, then you're in the game... like it or not. No prisoners allowed.

This whole, "Who's the enemy," leads us into the next topic. So get ready for the concussion wave.

**A 500 pounder just detonated outside your
bunker!**

**When you ain't dizzy no more and you stop pukin'
your guts up, grab your gear.**

We're headin' to another firebase.

Choppers are Standing By!

2-4 Adapting to an Alien Landscape

You are walking in the Valley of Darkness, surrounded by the Phantoms of War. Their haunting eyes pierce your soul, bringing back the horrors of the battlefield. You feel so terribly alone.

Desperately looking for a direction in which to move forward, your eyes detect a glimmer of Light at the summit of a distant mountain... silhouetted in the blackness of this bleak and desolate world.

Moving on instinct, you head toward the Light, your spirit guiding you toward what must be hope. Your voice rings out...

“Please God! There must be a way out of this horror!”

Stumbling and falling in the darkness, your eyes remain fixed on the Light. Slowly you move forward with unfaltering determination. Step by step, the Light becomes brighter. It becomes a beacon. Your pace quickens.

The pain in your heart lessens as the Light becomes brighter. You feel strength return to your aching body, and then you realize...

“The Light is my Honor! It is my Duty! My obligation to the living! It will guide me as a beacon through my life ahead! I am a Warrior!”

I will not yield!

My young Brother and Sister Warriors, as I see it, life is like a trail, winding upward to the summit of a great mountain. Each of us has our own backpack to carry on this journey.

The weight in each backpack is the same for all of us. The only difference is that the stones we carry are different

colors, different experiences.

Each day, we move forward and upward under the weight we carry. Yet each day, we must always remain vigilant, not only of our surroundings, but of who we have now become as well.

At times the trail is unclear, shrouded with illusion and uncertainty. There are many people on this path and many choices ahead of us. Some lead us closer to the summit. Some lead us into the bed of thorns and even more pain in our lives.

Along the path of our Life Journey there are clearings in the trail, vantage points to catch our breath, to gather our thoughts. These clearings allow us to look back down the mountain and up toward the summit.

At these times, we are able to see the network of choices we've traveled and perhaps gain some insight, maybe even wisdom, in those choices that lie ahead.

In these brief moments of awareness, we are also able to see others on the path. Some of our fellow travelers are ahead of us, some stand by our side, and some are just beginning their journey upward.

There are also those at the summit of the Journey, cheering us on, offering us hope for success. And when we reach our objective, they will welcome us home, that we may all stand together overlooking the Valley of Darkness, remaining always focused in the Light.

“So what’s the point?” you ask with quivering doubt.

The point is this: Life can be a shit bath for everyone; or if we have the brass balls (or ovaries) to never quit, it can be a damn good experience. The choice is ours and ours alone.

And don't be blamin' your misfortune or “lack” on

God! Hell! If you want wisdom, do you think God just dumps it into your thick skull, like fillin' up a canteen? Or does He give you the opportunity to learn to be wise?

If you want to feel warm and fuzzy about all living beings, do you think a big ass syringe drops out of the sky, sticks you in the ass, and there ya go? Don't think so. You learn to love by taking chances, letting your guard down, and practicing love. God gives us the opportunity to learn to love through compassion.

You don't go to one of those fancy colleges for a day. You know, walk in the door, take a pill, and become a brain surgeon or a sniper. It takes hard work, practice, and lots of experience.

And I don't want to hear a bunch of whining about...

"But what about if it hurts when I lose someone I love?"

Sure, if you never open up your heart and love anyone or any being, you're never gonna feel the pain of losin' a damn thing. What a selfish, shitty life that is. You may as well check out right now.

You know, take your ain't-lovin'-nobody-self up in the Shasta Mountains and hang out till you check out. As in pay the Boat Keeper a silver coin to carry your selfish ass across the River Styx to Hades... in other words, die.

Isn't it better to feel "something" about living beings, and maybe lose those precious souls, than to never feel shit about anyone? And every living thing in this world dies. So deal with it. I know full well that losing someone you love ain't easy, but isn't that part of life?

Sure it hurts when they leave. But wasn't your life better off by having shared the Journey of Life with these beautiful, loving beings? When someone dies who you love, or leaves you for other reasons, you're still alive,

right? Well if you're still alive, and there are billions of others on this planet, then what's the problem? Adapt. Love again.

Well anyway, let's get back to this mountain topic.

Some folks, through good fortune or by trial and error, have moved up the mountain ahead of us. (Marines: They've got their shit together.) Some of us in this Community of Humanity have just begun to glimpse a little wisdom. You know, figure out where our place is in all this life stuff. Sorta like gettin' your MOS (military occupational specialty) in the military... you know what you're supposed to do.

It's been said that life leads us forward with gentle nudges; or it drags us kickin' and screamin'. So why not accept the gentle nudge up the trail and stay focused on the summit?

Why not keep walkin' on the Golden Path rather than bein' pissed off all the time in the bed of thorns? And if you come to a brick wall on the trail, why not climb over it or go around it rather than beat your head against it? Been there, done that. Unless you're into feelin' pain, it don't work too good.

If you're not gettin' any of what the old Jar Head is sayin' here, let me put it a bit different. You Troops listen up!

You're gonna make mistakes in the choices you are "about" to make. No way out of or around it. That's because you ain't perfect... join the club. If you don't quit, you **will** succeed... guaran-damn-teed.

It's OK to love a person (or animal or whatever) and live each day feeling good. When they die or leave, you'll have some good memories from having shared your life, feelin' warm and fuzzy. Remember the good times and not

the end of 'em.

Every damn day, and I mean fifty times a day if need be, you say...

“I am a Warrior!

I will improvise, adapt, and overcome!”

“I am a Warrior!

I have the strength to overcome any obstacle!”

Just think about that Warrior who lived way back in the old days. He said...

“Nothing is impossible. The impossible just takes a little longer.”

He went by the name of Alexander the Great. The point here is that nothing is impossible for you. Again, just don't quit! And look, everyone drops out pukin' at times. But like I've said, when you fall, fall forward... you're still gainin' ground.

“OK! OK!” You say. “I get the point of never quitting and headin' up the mountain. But what's at the top?”

Ah Yes, my fellow seeker-of-knowledge friend: When you've reached the summit, it means you've figured life out. In Eastern-type thinkin', its being enlightened. (Marines: Not standing in a spotlight.)

It simply means that you drop your backpack. It's empty! You truly know who you are and why you were put on this tiny, little planet. You understand your purpose... your mission. For you civvies, a mission ain't a little church in the Southwestern U.S. of A. It's your objective, the reason you're movin' like you've got a purpose in life.

When you reach the Summit, you're not fixated in the past; you've processed all the shit bath experiences in your life. And unless you're a real dumb ass, you now have a small measure of peace on occasion. You know, the warm and fuzzy feelings about being ONE with God and the

Universe stuff?

Like I said, this love stuff is better than adrenaline. That's because adrenaline is, pure and simple, Beast Juice; it's the shit that makes you feel the demonic emotions like hate and rage, and makes you want to kill everything. The emotions of love and compassion are the Angelic, Spirit driven emotions that help us to feel peace and acceptance of ourselves and others.

Adrenaline pumps us up for the moment. It allows us to survive War. Love and Compassion teach us to survive Life, and they stay with us till the day we die. You Warriors understand both. We live both, on the battlefield where we feel the unconditional love of our fellow Warriors, and the pulse of the Beast. We just need to separate the two when we get back from War.

So then, to summarize (Marines: Not to make it warm), we go through life making choices, some pretty damn good and some real dog shit poor. We hit some booby traps, have a few setbacks, and often carry a lot of weight in our backpacks. But if we don't quit, we all reach the summit... we figure things out.

When we understand our strength and draw into that strength in the dark times, overcoming the problems we face, then we feel better about ourselves and everyone around us. Just that simple.

If we worry about the failures along the trail in the past, or what shit we're gonna go through in the future, we ain't goin' anywhere. It's like a duce-and-a-half stuck in the mud... we're spinnin' our wheels, but we ain't movin'... we're fixated in the past or anticipating the future that isn't here yet.

All we need to do is live in the present moment. And understand that no matter what comes along down the

trail, we've got the strength to deal with it. You Warriors out there understand this completely. Because nothing in civilian life is as bad as war. Nothing. And if it ain't life-threatening, why sweat it?

You may be asking yourself...

“So how do I adapt to an Alien Landscape?”

I'll give you an example of one Soldier doin' just that...

He came back from his third deployment in Iraq and was discharged due to injuries. Having an exceptional relationship with his wife, he was still married. They were planning their lives ahead.

He'd been dreamin' of workin' on his old pickup truck that had been sittin' in his garage for years. So he and his very supportive wife went out, pulled off the covering, and took a look.

Inside the bed of the truck was a good bit of dirt and plant material that he hadn't cleaned out before deploying. And in the dirt were hundreds of snails, who had found it a perfect place to live.

His wife said...

“Kill those damn snails and clean out that mess, or I'm not helping you work on that old truck!”

The Soldier had done a lot of killing in War. He'd had enough. And you know how we discussed the sanctity of life to a Warrior... “Never take a life without just cause.” So to make his wife happy, he cleaned out the bed of the truck.

But before he did that, he picked up every single snail and carefully moved all of them to another spot in the backyard that he had prepared just for his new, little friends. He would not kill one of those snails without just cause. If you think about it, they could be trusted, they had

NO legs.

The Soldier knew he had changed and was sick of killing (anything); and he wouldn't compromise his Code of Honor... his convictions, his self-worth, for anyone. So he made his wife happy, and he sure as hell made the snails happy. He adapted to a new world; he made a real good choice on his journey to the summit. His trail led upward on the Golden Path and not into the bed of thorns.

So what does it mean to Adapt?

In ivory tower lingo, the word actually means, "To make suitable or fit for a specific use or situation." The word suitable means, "Appropriate to a purpose."

In Jar Head Speak, adapt means to adjust fire. The rounds aren't hittin' the target, so you move 'em to where they're gonna do some good. To make this even more clear... if what you're doin' ain't workin', then make a damn change so it does work!

Comin' back from down range, the world hasn't changed. You've changed. So you solve problems a bit differently now than you did before goin' to War. And you sure as hell don't solve problems like you did when you were in War. I'll give you some examples.

Let's suppose you've got a problem with your apartment landlord who doesn't like your five dogs chewin' on his drywall and shittin' on his lawn. You certainly don't need the stress or the triggers in your life. So if you can't resolve the situation peacefully, you pack your duffle bag, let loose the Hounds of War into your pickup truck and move... maybe to someplace better.

If your job reminds you of a Billy goat pissin' on his own face and your boss is an asshole (?), you find a better job that helps you move along the path to the summit.

Been there, did that seventy times in forty-five years.
Seemed to work.

You've changed. Life is all about change. So you change with it. Do you see how normal you are by living as you are? The absolute God's Truth is that nothing ever remains the same.

So how in the hell could you possibly think you would be the same after a shit bath experience like War? You're flowing right along with the Big Plan. It's just that most of the folks around you aren't. I think that's their problem, not yours. As a Warrior, you're living in the moment (which you're supposed to do), and you're changing with the times (like you're supposed to do). So damn it, feel good about you!

And if you want to feel even better about yourself, maybe for a starter, you can do some kind of community service. You know, like volunteer at a homeless shelter for people, or an animal shelter for your little four legged friends. Or maybe pass out chow at a homeless shelter on Thanksgiving.

There's an old saying...

“The more you help others, the more you help yourself.”

Remember how we talked about practice? Well this is practice in expanding your heart, allowing you to feel more of those good emotions. It's sorta like doin' push-ups: The more you do 'em, the more of 'em you can do. You slowly build yourself up to loving other beings more and more. Pretty soon, you won't feel right unless that love is a part of your life all the time.

Could this notion of helping others be another step on the journey to the summit? You decide.

Here's something else to think about: When you

returned home from War, most likely you changed your choices about lots of things. Let's take music as one example of the many changes you probably made. Knowin' what you know about your Beasty, let's take a look at how music affects you now. Maybe this is something for you to be aware of?

Chances are, if you're feelin' a bit tense and droolin' at the mouth while sharpenin' your bayonet, you've got the appropriate tunes playin'. You know, with the base turned up louder than the afterburners on an F-16? Does this sound like your Beast? No doubt.

But if your warm and fuzzy Angelic side is at the steering wheel, the music you're playing is usually a bit more soothing. I don't really know what it's called nowadays; but a few years back, the loud stuff was called Ghetto Rap. Kinda stirred up the primal side. At least in my brain-housing-group.

Now I'm not sayin' there's anything wrong with that sorta music. Just a matter of choice. But hell, it'd be real tricky for me to concentrate on completin' my mission on the porcelain throne with music that would tend to drive me house-to-house with a K-Bar.

Anyway, think about this sorta thing if you're deciding what makes you feel better on the journey. But just as a side comment here about music, I'd bet good money that with your Angelic side at the helm, while your Beast is lickin' the family jewels in the basement, the music will tend to be a bit on the calmer side. But what do I know. It's somethin' for you Young Pups to figure out. Just watch those thorn beds!

Well anyway, let's talk about this change stuff a bit more. It kinda clogs up my old green brain when I think of how odd it is the way most people think.

Life is nothing but constant change, yet most folks seem to be scared shitless of just that. They think if they keep doin' the same old thing day to day, they're gonna keep everything just the same as it's always been. That is, if they keep low-crawlin' through life, they won't have to change anything. Don't think so.

A lot of people go through life with the "Pain Avoidance Attitude." You might also say that a lot of people go through life with the "Change Avoidance Attitude." In my black-and-white view of things, this all boils down to one thing: **Fear**. So let's look at fear and how that relates to you as Warriors and most other human-type people.

One of the Big Books of Words defines fear as...

"A feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the presence of imminent danger."

So what is fear? Seems to me that fear is simply a lack of faith in yourself to overcome the obstacle in front of you. Don't care if it's a pissed off drunk driver flippin' you the bird, with a crazed look in his eyes; or a battalion of the enemy yellin' "Yankee Infidel Dogs!" while chargin' up the hill. This sort of thing tends to alarm us... push our buttons and set off triggers.

Warriors understand fear, but we've been conditioned to control it. That is to say, who the hell doesn't feel fear in combat, or when someone decides to send a few mortars your way, or in an ambush? Thing is, for us, we learn to use the fear to accomplish our mission. That's called controlled fear in military lingo.

Fear is what triggers the Beast into action with adrenaline. For example, a shot is fired at your ass, the adrenaline starts pumpin', the lizard brain swells like a Zodiac boat fired out of a submarine, and your Beast is

twitchin' with anticipation... Oh Boy! It's on the scent of blood, and it's lookin' for a victim.

Fear is most likely the same for all people. And if the shrinkers are right, it's only the reactions that differ. For a trained and conditioned predator (that be you Warriors), our reaction is to "fight." For someone having not been brainwashed, the reaction to fear is most likely, "Freeze or Flee." Guess the "threat-causes-fear" thing is hard-wired into all of us?

Change will often cause fear. How you respond to it depends on a few things. If you "**Adopt the Attitude of Adapting,**" change can actually be a real good experience... an opportunity for growth. If you fight it, kicking and screaming, it's gonna beat your ass into the dirt, plain and simple. Been there, too.

If you believe in your own ability to solve any problem, then you have "faith" in yourself and your ability. Some people call this "confidence." And what is faith?

"Oh no! Here goes the Jar Head again with the dictionary," you say with muffled breath.

Well, my fine bedazzled friend. Just hang in there, 'cause there's a point to all this.

Faith means...

"A confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, an idea, or thing."

So how about looking at faith as the belief that **change** is part of life. You trust yourself to make the truest, wisest decisions possible. And if life presents a problem, you have faith in your strength and ability to solve it. Again, faith in yourself with a 100% effort in Life!

A way to "relax" in life is to accept any possibility that might come along. That is, any change. I'll give you an example.

After sixty-three years, I live on a ranch in New Mexico. And for the first time in my life, I feel like I'm home. No small thing for a Combat Warrior.

Even though I finally feel a little peace in my life, I accept any outcome, any change that might come along in the future. You do this by **adapting and adopting**. I'll explain.

We must continually adapt to change, and we must also adopt the attitude of acceptance of that change. Clear as mud? OK, let me put it this way: I'll use the worst/best scenario method, something all Warriors usually do without thinkin' much about it.

The Worst Case scenario is that, because of a "change" and my decisions being made poorly, I'll lose my ranch and the animals that I love more than life itself.

The Best Case scenario is that, because of "change" and my decisions being made wisely, I keep livin' here until the Angel of Death (the Woman of my dreams) takes me by the hand and gets me a permanent liberty pass in the Land of the Big BX. Maybe I'll even get to polish the boots of the real Commander-In-Big-Chief?

So you see, I'm prepared for any outcome, any change on the Journey of Life ahead. And that, my young Friends, is Peace... a peace that sinks right down into your soul. Try it. You'll like it. Actually, it's a whole lot better than adrenaline. So there's two things better than your Beast's favorite cocktail; Compassion and Change!

Now, isn't that a good place to be? Like you, as a Warrior, I'm not afraid of death, not afraid of change, and sure as hell not afraid of life. That's better than a whole case of Spaghetti and Meatballs MREs!

OK then, are you gettin' the picture of how to adapt to the new world? It ain't so bad. Fact is, it can be damn fine.

Just remember who you are and how strong you are as a Warrior. And as long as your feet hit the deck in the morning, “You are Good to Go!”

I find change exciting and wait for each new problem so I can use my military training to “Overcome” that problem. We Warriors do that with something called intestinal fortitude. That is, Guts!

You know exactly what I mean!

Now let’s wrap this mission and move out to the next topic. You can be at ease on this one. Let’s see who we can piss off.

Wheels Up!

We’re headin' back to the firebase for some real fine chow.

We’ve also got a hot shower and a Porta-Potty to look forward to.

(Play soothing music?)

2-5 Mean and Green Don't Mean Stupid

Looking out over the beautiful valley below, you're deep in thought. It's springtime in the rugged mountains of Afghanistan. And for the moment, even the distant sounds of the goats below seem peaceful.

Reflecting back over your previous three deployments, this one is winding down. After nearly forty eight months in a combat zone, you've only got two weeks to go.

Your family stateside is a memory of loss, the same as the Brothers and Sisters you've seen wounded and killed. It all seems like a bad dream... a nightmare you continue to feel every waking moment.

Small arms fire breaks the silence. You return to full alert. Being a Marine Scout Sniper, you swing your M-24 over the sandbags as you scan the ridgeline of the adjacent mountain.

"Hey, Sarge! Did you see that shit on the Internet? Some media puke back in the world said they found lithium here in Goat Country!"

"Yeah Roberts. I saw that bullshit," you reply, "but you know that's not why we're here."

The Internet keeps you informed of all the latest news and political rhetoric on the national media. But you're living the reality of the War in Afghanistan... moment to moment. Besides, as far as you can tell, there isn't much news about Afghanistan anyway. You're wondering if they still call this, "The Forgotten War."

Leaning over the sandbags while looking through the spotter scope, Corporal Roberts continues...

"Don't worry, Brother. It looks like we're headin' for Africa next. It'll be warmer there, and we're sure as hell used to goats."

Your Buddies over in the Army Special Operations units are already going home wounded from countries in Africa, fighting Al Qaeda. Countries that the average American hasn't even heard of. At least not yet.

Looking over to Roberts with a shit-eatin' grin on his face, you reply...

“What the fuck... Over!”

Thoughts of returning to America make you feel uncomfortable inside. It's like you've got a hole in the middle of your chest, an emptiness you can't fill. You're starting to feel a sadness when Roberts, still smiling, breaks the silence...

“We've got two more weeks in this fucking place, Sarge, then back to garrison duty to get treated like dog shit. You figure those babes down in Oceanside might still wanna have a drink with us?”

Roberts is a damn good Spotter. He's been with you for three deployments down range. Wheeler, your first Spotter, got torn up pretty bad at the end of your first tour.

“Hey! Check out that dumb ass Hajji down there, Sarge! He don't know whether to shit or go blind! Look at him scopin' us out. He's talkin' in a radio to his goats!”

You've got him in your cross hairs. Roberts is right, he's talking on a handheld radio and communicating with the enemy. You're caught in a conflict, the politics of “Winning the Hearts and Minds” and survival. You hesitate.

You don't want to be accused of an illegal kill, of being a murderer. You've only got two weeks to go!

“Let's do 'em, Sarge! C'mon, he's a bad guy, for sure!”

“No Roberts!” you reply. “Those other Hajjis would snatch that radio before we got down there. They'd lie and we'd get accused of murder. We'd end up in Leavenworth.

No way! Besides, you know how much fuckin' paperwork we've gotta do now when we shoot one of these assholes! Even if we're right!"

Even with all the bullshit now, after four years in-country, it still seems more real here than back in the states. Pullin' a pack of cigarettes out and passing one to Roberts, you both light up and lean back on the sand bags.

"You know, Roberts, I don't even wanna go back. What are we goin' back to?"

"Yeah Sarge, after a few showers and a couple of good meals, there ain't shit back there. Only good thing is the booze."

The peace is broken.

"Incoming! Hit the Deck!"

"They're walkin' 'em in on us, Sarge! I knew we shoulda killed that fucker!"

When the attack finally ends, three Marines lie wounded; one is dead... all your Brothers, your Friends, your Fellow Warriors. Doc is taking care of the wounded. Again, all is quiet.

Lighting up another cigarette, you look over to Roberts, then down into the valley. Robert takes a long drag, then exhaling says...

"Why the fuck are we really here, Sarge?"

Turning your head, and looking into his eyes, you reply...

"Doesn't really matter, does it, Brother? Guess we've got nowhere else to go."

By this point in the book, you might be gettin' to

understand the overwhelming conflicts that our Troops face, both in War and at home. You might also be asking yourself, “How can they possibly reintegrate (blend) into society again and etch out a decent life?” That, in fact, is no easy task.

Now, I don’t make political statements. That’s up to politicians. But I’ve gotta explain a few things here for our Troops fighting in or returning home from Afghanistan. And you ain’t gonna see this on the nightly news, or listen to it on NPR.

As it’s been explained to me, what I’m about to say is not a violation of any national security issues. But what I’m about to say is for the peace of mind of our Troops, my Brothers and Sisters.

As you know, Al Qaeda is a new breed of enemy. They are radical, fundamentalist, Islamic Warriors. But their radical beliefs are not the standard for ninety nine percent of all Muslims. Just like the beliefs of radical groups here in America don’t represent all Americans. But Terrorism definitely is a problem, so somebody’s gonna have to jerk their chain. That be us.

We went into Afghanistan to stabilize the country enough so Al Qaeda didn’t turn it into another Nazi Germany. Only difference then was that Hitler didn’t use religion for an excuse to exterminate the Western Powers.

We’re also there to make sure that Pakistan’s nuclear weapons don’t fall into the hands of the Taliban... members of the Al Qaeda Smotherhood. And the Taliban are sorta like club members of Al Qaeda. It’s kinda like bein’ a small gang in cahoots with a real big gang. Don’t matter, ‘cause you’re still a gang-banger, but Big Brother is always lookin’ over your shoulder.

So then, to prevent Pakistan from getting overrun by

radical, kill-all-the-infidels Holy Warriors, we moved into town to kick some gang-banger ass. We've done it, and we're still doin' it.

Can you imagine what would happen if Al Qaeda got hold of Pakistan's nukes? You could say goodbye to New York City, Disney World, and most of Israel in a heartbeat. And by the way, Europe is not excluded from the hit list.

The Afghan National Army (ANA) is the only support we have in Goat Country. And even though corruption is rampant in the ranks, they're the only thing that's gonna hold the country together when we leave.

With their troop strength, they're most likely only gonna be able to maintain peace in and around the major cities. The mountains to the Northeast and the deserts to the Southwest will once again be open to Taliban control.

And yes, we're gonna leave. That's because we don't have nearly enough Troops to lock down the border to Pakistan. And with the proposed cut backs in our Troop Strength in the Army and Marine Corps, it ain't likely we're gonna have another big surge of military might.

From what I hear from the Troops, the only way we're gonna be able to go back there again (when, not if, it turns to shit) is to make it a Covert War. That means Special Operations tactics. You can look that up on the Internet if you don't know what it means.

So what's the point of this Jar Head briefing? Real simple. Our Troops have done one helluva job in disrupting Al Qaeda's copy-Hitler approach to putting a goat in every household. They've kicked the shit out of the Taliban and shown them that the Infidels (that be us) have something to say about spousal abuse, child abuse, animal abuse, and setting up Terrorist Summer Camps to blow up innocent, non-Koran-readin' people. And our military did

all this with very few Boots on the Ground, very little money, and one outstanding attitude!

Alright then, let's get back to how smart our Troops are and the shit they have to deal with.

Do you think that our Warriors don't know that military contractors and other multinational corporations are making major bucks off of these Wars? Of course they do. Hell, you've only gotta Google the top one hundred military contractors to get an eyeshot on that one.

Does it piss 'em off? Yep! Will they decide not to return to War to defend freedom because of it? Absolutely not! They'll go back until the job is done, period. But don't try to bullshit 'em, 'cause you won't get past first base.

Our Troops only tolerate the rhetoric, but they sure as hell understand it. It's best not to throw rocks at the junkyard dog, 'cause at some point, the gate's gonna be open.

They believe as I do, that the NOBLE reason we're in Afghanistan is to fight Al Qaeda and any other Gang-Banger-Terrorist-Groups. The darker side of this War is like any other war that's ever been fought.

Some people make a ton of money from the violence. Don't suspect that's gonna change in the near future. And speaking of the near future, here's another tidbit for you. So deal with it.

The designation OIF means Operation Iraqi Freedom and pertains to the war in Iraq. The designation OEF means Operation Enduring Freedom and pertains to global Terrorism. That means terrorism in Iraq (when the Taliban moved in after our occupation), terrorism in Afghanistan, and other parts of the world, including Africa. Wherever there is a terrorist threat, and wherever Al Qaeda is planning to kill innocent people, our Troops are

likely to go there.

Less than one percent (1%) of our population is military. They are the ones making the stand for freedom. I venture to say that ninety percent of our population has no real fact-based understanding of what's really going on globally, let alone in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Besides the lack of accurate information given to the American People, they have also not been given the proper briefing on what the actual effects of War are on a human being.

Our Troops, our Sons and Daughters, are carrying the burden of War; the loss, the effects of killing, and being torn apart between two worlds. But not only are they caught in the physical and emotional impact of battle, our Troops must also endure the political frustrations of War as well. As in "political protocol." I'll explain.

The word protocol means, "The forms of ceremony and etiquette performed by diplomats and heads of state," no shit. How the hell do you perform etiquette on the battlefield? Here're a couple of examples of just how bone-headed stupid this whole notion is.

In Afghanistan (I won't say where), our Troops chased armed Taliban into a mosque (an Islamic holy building). The enemy knew that infidels (us) could not enter the sacred site because of our "diplomatic" restrictions. The mosques in both Afghanistan and Iraq became holding facilities for weapons and enemy personnel... a safe zone in which to plan attacks and return to after missions against our Troops.

On one occasion (and there were a lot), the ANA was in on the chase. And still the ANA would not allow American Troops into the mosque. In that situation, there was almost a firefight between our Soldiers and the ANA,

when some of our Troops insisted on entering the mosque in pursuit of the enemy. Of course the story is more detailed, but I think you get the picture. Imagine the frustration of taking casualties and not being able to go after the ones who caused it.

On many occasions, our Troops were not allowed to open fire on the enemy because of possible civilian casualties. Even when they were firing at our Troops! The Taliban was using their own wives and children as human shields while firing at our Troops. Again, political protocol in action.

Here's another one for you: On many occasions, the enemy was dressed in foreign made American uniforms with ski masks covering their heads. Their uniforms were exact replicas of U.S. soldiers, right down to the name-tags and weapons.

These imposters would go into villages at night and cut off the heads of several people living there. They wanted to turn everyone against the Americans. And the Americans knew who was doing it but couldn't say a damn thing.

Another threat to our Troops has been foreign mercenaries. That is in Afghanistan, Iraq and other places in the world. And many of these guys don't come from countries that hate America. Here's just an example to think about.

In the Korengal Region of Afghanistan, the foreign mercenaries (trained professionally military) were paid up to six thousand American Dollars for each planned attack on our Troops. The expendable Taliban troops (cannon fodder) would get from fifty to five hundred dollars each.

Where did the money come from? Well, without fueling the Jihad, let's just say it may have come from

within countries that are supposed to be American Allies. Makes ya wonder, don 't it?

Even with all this going on, our Warriors continue to do their job. But knowing the truth, saying nothing, and continuing your mission for freedom requires tremendous strength. They have such strength.

I've been asked many times, "Why do they want to go back?" Let's see if I can explain this a bit.

Against all obstacles, it is the Warrior's Heart and Spirit that drive them back into battle, back into War. It's not the horror they experience, but the love they feel for one another that compels them to return.

They are pulled back by the Beast; longing for the demonic pleasures of viciousness. And they are also pulled back by the Spirit; longing to express the highest nobility of creation; those Angelic qualities instilled in all humanity.

Interesting, isn't it? The Warrior lives in the darkest valley of demonic hell, in the depths of the cruelest environment on earth. And yet, as we stand side by side with the phantoms of human evil, we find our own Divinity, our place in the Universe, the God within us.

By walking on the precipice of hell, balancing between life and death, pulled by both Light and Darkness, the Warrior finds his own Divinity, the true meaning of life.

Ever ask yourself, "What is it that's so alluring about War? What's the adventure we seek?"

Well, isn't just a little of that a test? A challenge to find out who we are and what we're made of? "Do we have the courage of Heroes past, fighting for a noble cause, fighting against overwhelming odds for the Greater Good?"

But does anyone ever truly expect to open Pandora's

Box, to see what looks back at them in the Mirror of Self-Reflection? To look into your own eyes and Know you are capable of the truest, purest love, as well as the most wicked cruelty imaginable causes a shutter deep down into the depths of our souls, into our very existence.

Through this we learn that our greatest challenge, our greatest friend and worst enemy, is not in the world we walk within, but within ourselves. To understand the strengths and weaknesses of ourselves is to understand the strengths and weaknesses of humanity. This is only learned through hardship, and only learned through the heart.

So then, my friends, do you see why our Troops, our Warriors, return to War? Do you see what drives them to their own death? And do you also see how informed they are about life, and how wise they've become? With all the weight they carry, they still carry on. What more could be asked of any human being? They live Honor!

There has never been a more intelligent and self-aware military. And yet, what they know does not prevent them from what they do.

They do this for every single soul walking the streets of human liberty. Their lives are filled with pain, and they have been changed forever. Yet they would do it all again for what they believe in.

How then can we ignore their sacrifice for freedom? How in good conscience can we pretend their experiences in War are not our responsibility?

They live and breathe War on the battlefield. Their only hope is for each of us to welcome them home and into our hearts, to acknowledge that their sacrifices were not in vain. They have paid the price; they have given all they have to give.

Now we must give back, walking side by side with them into their tomorrows. And if we do reach out, perhaps their uncertain future may bring them some small measure of well-earned peace, a peace they will cherish for the rest of their days.

And I say this to each of you, my Fellow Warriors, take off your body armor and stow your weapons. Put on your civilian disguise, and walk with me up the trail to the Summit of Knowing.

Open your hearts and understand just who you have now become, and respect that beautiful soul. Walk with pride and Honor, and remember that you are never alone. All Warriors past and present walk with you, side by side into your days to come.

My Greatest Respect to each of you, my Brother and Sister Warriors.

Most Sincerely,

Sgt. Brandi,
United States Marine Corps **Semper Fi!**

**You ain't done yet!
Keep on readin'!**

A Second Review for Marines and Other Like Minded Troops

2-6 Section Two Summary

2-1 You Ain't Who You Used to Be

- After goin' to War, you ain't the little kid that used to mine for nose gold in the classroom when the teacher wasn't lookin'. You've been **Reborn!** You're a Full Blown Combat Warrior now! So get used to it, 'cause you'll never, ever be like you were. And why the hell would you wanna be?
- You were trained to kill the enemy. You did a damn good job of it in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other shit holes around the world. That makes you a trained killer. Get used to that too, and be proud of what you did for Freedom, for yourself, or just for the hell of it!
- Your family and Pre-War friends will expect you to be the same warm and fuzzy person as you were before goin' down range. They'll expect this because they don't know squat shit about what you went through and what it's like on the battlefield. Try means fail. If you try to explain War to any of 'em, you're gonna fail. Your stories will only make them afraid of you.
- You've seen shit that other people couldn't make up. You're gonna have to keep your stories to yourself until you meet up with another Combat Vet or a Combat Counselor.
- You've been livin' on adrenaline and MREs. Your

brain and your Beasty have gotten to like it. In other words, you're lookin' for the same adrenaline fix in civvie land that you had in enemy land. You're not gonna find it here in peaceful activities. Deal with it.

- Remember that you are NORMAL for what you've been through. But normal for you, ain't what most so-called civilized folks stateside think of as normal for them.
- The killing you did has changed you. The loss of Friends has changed you. The constant threat of death has changed you. Being witness to the atrocities of War has changed you. So how the hell could anyone expect you to be the same as you were? Go figure?
- The word Trauma means to wound or pierce the Soul. War pierces the Soul, big time! So even if you didn't get hit by bullets, RPGs and other such rapidly flying shit, you were emotionally wounded. That's called the Invisible Wounds of War. No way around it. (Marines: You've got a round jammed in your brain chamber.)
- The longer you wait to get help with the horrors of your battlefield experiences, the more deeply the experiences take root in your thick skull. That means you have a much harder time getting your Beast and emotions under control. That means the longer its gonna take to stop havin' the nightmares and waitin' for a mortar round to go off every time you deploy to the supermarket.

- Loss of memory is NORMAL for Combat Warriors. It's the way your brain protects you from the painful past. So adapt to it. I'm gonna tell you how shortly.
- Talking to your Battle Buddies is great, like on Facebook, Twitter, emails, and other such comm-links. But, this is not the same as you processing your battlefield experiences with a well-trained, boots-on-the-ground, Combat Trauma Counselor. You're gonna have to deal with the demons at some point in your future. Why not now?
- If it don't feel right in your gut, then don't do it! Don't matter who you think is givin' you good advice. You wouldn't volunteer to be ambushed. So why walk into one if you can flank the enemy and kill their asses? Same principle applies here without the killing.

2-2 Predator and Prey

- In my way of thinkin', there are three groups of people in society. There are common people (sheeples), there are predator wolves, and there are the Watch Dogs of freedom. Warriors (that be you) are the Watch Dogs that keep the predator wolves under control.
- Warriors are the thin Green Line standing between freedom and the wolves taking over.
- Warriors are the predators that are willing to sacrifice their lives for the Greater Good, for Liberty and Freedom for all. We don't need to be thanked, but it would be nice once and awhile.

- Warriors are never victims in their own eyes. If they're in a situation they can't control (dominate), they just get more pissed off, regroup, flank the enemy, and plan for another assault.
- Warriors do not like weakness or being bullshitted. They also tolerate most of civilian society. That's because they know that nothing here is as bad as War.
- Young Warriors are calm and controlled one second; and then with any feeling of a threat, turn instantly into full-blown, combat-adrenaline, raging monsters. They had to be in order to survive War. This has carried over when they return home without the proper debriefing.
- Be glad you're a Warrior Watch Dog. Be proud of it, lift your head, and walk in society feeling the Honor you hold as your standard.

2-3 Normal is as Normal Does

- Without getting some good counseling, you may develop a lifestyle that is comfortable for you but terrifying for everyone around you. In other words, what you think is comfortable is very uncomfortable for most of the civilians around you.
- You will most likely not even think you have a problem. You'll think it's just that everyone around you is an asshole? Don't think so. Been there, thought that. And I was wrong, big time.
- Your identity does not have to be permanently

fixated in some past battlefield event or events. You can still be proud to have served down range, but you don't have to look like it. That is, wearing body armor and Kevlar to the supermarket in hope of some recognition of who you are.

- You don't need to prove jack shit to anyone. You've earned your place among the Warrior Clan; the Eternal Brother-Sisterhood of Warriors. Feel the pride in your membership, and feel the Honor of walking with those who have shaped the course of history.
- In order not to get fixated in the past, you MUST live in the present moment. Have a short-range, battle plan (mission objective) for the future. Then work for that goal, but don't waste the present moment worrying about how to reach your objective. I'll explain how to do this in 3-1, Your Journey to the Summit.
- You had your hunting-humans-adrenaline-rush down range. Now you've gotta replace that with something that fits a little better in civilian society. You do have the strength to improvise, adapt, and overcome any problem or obstacle here. I'll explain how to do that shortly.

2-4 Adapting to an Alien Landscape

- Life is like a Journey up a long trail to the summit of a great mountain. We learn as we go, and we get better at solving problems as we go ahead. Think about how you were on your first day down range. Then think about how you were after your tenth month? I'd suspect you were a lot more

experienced and a lot more in control. Damn right confident. That's just like it is in civilian life!

- There are gonna be others that know more battle tactics than you do. And there are those who are newbies (FNGs) who you can help get squared away. Warriors helping Warriors.
- A lot of us older Warriors will help you any way we can, so you don't screw the pooch like many of us did. It's not weakness to ask for a rope, when you're up to your neck in a shit hole.
- Life is what you make it. If it's a shit bath, then you need to rethink your battle plan. Maybe you don't even know what to do, so talk to someone who is a Warrior and has his or her shit together. Copy them for a time, then make up your own mission objective.
- If you ain't doin' a damn thing to make your life better, then it won't get any better. You'll be swimmin' in the brown, shit lakes of Fly Paradise until you check out for the final patrol.
- Compassion replaces adrenaline! Try it, you'll like it. It's a whole lot better than droolin' at the mouth while cleanin' your weapon and countin' every round in your stash of ammo all the time.
- Compassion takes practice like being a good shooter. You don't learn to shoot a new weapon with one round. You gotta practice. And the more you do it, the more you'll get good at it. Same with doing something for another living being. Besides, your M-4 doesn't wag its tail when it sees you, or

lick you on the face after a good cleanin’.

- Take a chance on loving someone again. The loss of friends and loved ones sucks. But that doesn’t mean your life is over. It means you’ve gotta adapt to the absence. Just that simple.
- When you figure things out, you really start to live. That’s reaching the Summit of Knowing. That’s when you drop your backpack and really plan some meaningful missions.
- When we understand and feel our strength, we understand that we can overcome any problem we face. By using your military training and adapting those skills to overcoming any obstacle, you will succeed! Guaran-damn-teed!
- Some kind of community service might make you feel better about yourself and maybe even help you feel better about others. Hell, you’re a Warrior, so help those who need a Warrior’s hand to help them up the mountain!
- Fear triggers your Beast into action. Be aware of what makes your furry friend happy. Then don’t do it.
- **Adopt the Attitude of Adapting!** Change is great! It’s part of life. Roll with it and enjoy the excitement. It ain’t adrenaline, but it’s damn good!

2-5 Mean and Green Don’t Mean Stupid

- Terrorism is a real threat. You kicked Al Qaeda’s ass in Afghanistan and Iraq when you got there, you’re doin’ it now, and you’ll continue to do it in

whatever country they're slitherin' around in.

- All Muslims are **not** radicals out to kill the Western, Infidel-Satan-Spawn. They're just partial to the teachings of Mohammed, like others are partial to the teachings of Jesus or the Buddha. Ain't that what freedom is all about?
- We went into Afghanistan to help stabilize the country and prevent the Taliban from getting Pakistan's nukes. We didn't have enough troops to start with, and we're runnin' out of money now.
- We're gonna pull out of Afghanistan, and most likely the Taliban will gain control of a good bit of the country again. The ANA will do what they can to protect as much as they can.
- Our young Warriors understand all the political rhetoric (bullshit) they hear, and they also know full well that some folks are making a ton of money on War. Does it piss 'em off? Hell yes! Will they keep fighting the bad guys? Absolutely!
- OIF means Operation Iraqi Freedom and applies to the conflict in Iraq. OEF means Operation Enduring Freedom and applies to Terrorism.
- Our Troops are restricted by political protocol from political diplomats. This is dangerous for our Troops and is not an effective way to win battles. But then again, politicians don't fight in Wars, do they? Wouldn't that be warm and fuzzy?
- Warriors long to return to War. The Beast pulls on one side for the darkest of emotions, and the Spirit

pulls on the other side for the absolute purest love human beings can experience.

- Your worst enemy and best friend are not in the world around you, but within you.
- Walk with pride through a life of Honor, a life well spent, and always be proud to call yourself a Warrior!

Section Three: A Mission for the Future

3-1 Your Journey To The Summit, Warrior Tools for Survival

First Tool... Adopting the Proper Attitude

Second Tool... Being Aware of Your Surroundings at All Times

Third Tool... Learnin' Not to Hate

Fourth Tool... Learning to Turtle

Fifth Tool ... Controlling the Desire to Kill

Sixth Tool... Being Honest with Yourself

Seventh Tool... Dealing with the Opiate, Adrenaline
Here's a "Little Sideline for Civilians":... The Shadow World

Eighth Tool... Understanding Future Relationships
Here's yet another "Little Sideline for Civilians":...
Pornography

Ninth Tool... Understanding Loss and Grief

Tenth Tool... Understanding Guilt/Survivor Guilt

Eleventh Tool... Maintaining a Mission Objective

Twelfth Tool... Adapting to the Effects of War; Dreams,
Memory Loss

Thirteenth Tool... Holding on to a Job?

Fourteenth Tool... An Ivory Tower Education?

Fifteenth Tool... Don't Forget your Big, Hairy Friend:
Your Beasty

3-2 Resources for Warriors, Backup is Here

3-3 Glossary

3-1 Your Journey to the Summit: Warrior Tools for Survival

You've touched down on the tarmac, turned in your weapons, been discharged "Inactive Duty," and you're standing just outside the base security. Looking out at the civilian world, you're scared shitless. You're thinkin'...

"How the hell do I adapt to this cluster fuck?"

Well now, my fellow brain-fried Warriors, I'm gonna run point for your green ass on your new mission! We're gonna talk about your new "weapons issue." You know, your **tools** for infiltrating uncharted territory as a Warrior in disguise!

That means we're gonna sharpen your skills, adapt your strength as a Warrior, and give you what you need to get on with your life. And be advised, you will develop the right battle tactics to overcome any obstacle or any ambush up that trail to the Summit.

None of what we're gonna talk about comes out of some dumb ass psychobabble book. It all comes from the experiences of battle hardened Warriors who walked point before you. This is what has worked for them, and it will damn sure work for you.

Hell, there were times in my life when I was in so damn much pain, it woulda killed any small animal under ten pounds! So I get the joke about the shit in your heads and the pain in your guts! All us old knuckle draggers understand that, or we wouldn't be here now.

And don't bullshit yourself. This ain't easy. It takes a good bit of practice with a 100% effort, and the attitude of accomplishing your new mission objective.

Now, let's move out!

If you're like most of the Troops I've talked with, you feel like you're standing in the middle of the Kandahar (Afghanistan) Airfield in a bright orange jump suit with a big red bull's eye painted on your forehead; and someone cut the ass out of your jumpsuit! In other words you feel like you're a bare-assed oddball, waitin' for a sniper round, and you're also feelin' real alone.

But listen up! It's true; you sure as hell ain't center of bubble. But I'm gonna teach you how to dodge the bullets. And you are definitely not alone.

Note: These "Tools" are not in order of priority. It's just the way they came out of my twisted green brain.

Your **First Tool** for adapting to civilian life is "**Proper Attitude**".

You've already got the "**Attitude of Gratitude.**" Hell, you don't take nothin' for granted. You appreciate everything from takin' a hot shower without bein' shot at, a real bed that's not crawlin' with fleas, or wakin' up in the morning without a Camel Spider suckin' you dry.

And how about that porcelain toilet? You know, the one you're down on your knees prayin' to, after too much holy nectar, or the one you're sittin' on without the down range, screamin' shits? Yeah, I think you've got gratitude sacked up.

But now, there's one real important "Attitude" you might need to work on a bit. It's the, "**I Don't Give a Shit Attitude.**" Here's how it works. Yeah, I know I mentioned this before, but it's well worth repeatin'.

Let's suppose you and your dog are fortunate or unfortunate enough to be sharin' your hooch with a sleep-in-the-same-bed partner. And your loving (?) partner bails on you, just because you're sleepin' with a Glock under

your pillow that you love more than them.

You just say, “I don’t give a shit! I’ve still got my Glock and my dog.” And, “I’ll find someone else who really understands me.”

Or what about all those folks you used to call friends? You know, before you became a tourist on a four-star holiday cruise to an exotic country; where you got to blow shit up and kill the natives?

Suppose all your “Old” friends don’t like you bein’ at their gatherings and parties, just because all you do is sit in the corner with drool runnin’ down your chin, mumbling something like, “I want to kill. I want to kill.” Don’t know why they wouldn’t want your enjoyable, slobbering ass comin’ to all their festive occasions? Do you? I mean, you’re just so damn much fun for the civvies.

Well then, my fellow twitchy Warriors, if you find yourself in that corner, wipe your chin and say, “I don’t give a shit!” Then you go out and look for other Warriors to drool with. There are a lot of your brain-fried Brothers and Sisters out here in the “world,” low crawlin’ under the civilian radar. You just gotta know where they hang out.

But don’t worry; you’ll meet up with ’em eventually. It ain’t that hard to figure out where to look. Just go to where YOU feel comfortable (Gun Shows, Bike Rallies, Vet Rallies?), and no shit, there’ll be others there, just waitin’ for your green ass to show up!

It’s strange to civilians how that works too. You can meet another Warrior you’ve never met before, and in one hand shake it’s like you’re kin; feelin’ comfortable and jokin’ like you’ve known each other all your lives.

Remember that, “**If it ain’t life threatening, it ain’t nothin’!**” And also remember to just say, “**I Don’t Give a Shit!**” You’re gonna feel a whole lot better the

more you use this wonderful Attitude.

Your **Second Tool** is **“Being Aware of Your Surroundings at All Times”**.

Sound familiar? You gotta remember that you don’t give up **ANY** of your military skills while adapting to the Gray World. And you **must** maintain vigilance at all times. For my Fellow Marines, vigilance means caution, alertness, awareness, or attention. In other words, you gotta be aware of your surroundings while evaluating the threat level to feel safe. So do it.

Check those blind spots and dark corners in buildings. Check for extraction points (Civilians: Exit signs) in stores, and look for snipers on the roof. Sit in the corner booth in a restaurant or with your back to the wall. But keep your coat on so no one sees the 9 mill or K-Bar lovingly tucked in your back belt. Don’t wanna be too obvious.

Civilians really don’t get this “Carryin’ Weapons” thing, either. Hell, you’re armed not only to protect yourself against the maggots brimming over onto the streets; you’re armed to protect the good civilians, too! You’d think they oughta feel safer? Maybe someday they will?

When you’re driving, be aware of other drivers by looking at their faces. If it’s a hot summer’s day and you detect the smell of goats, or you spot a glassy-eyed driver, chanting, “Death to Infidels” with an AK propped on the seat, you may have a problem to solve. Oh Boy! Would you like that one! Now don’t get your Beasty all excited, ‘cause that ain’t likely to happen here anyway. But **Stay Frosty** just the same, it’ll make you **feel** more comfortable. And feelin’ good is good enough!

Damn if you ain't gonna be "blendin'" right into this gray, Alien World! And if you're not dressed like you're on patrol down range, no one will ever know WHO you really are. I'd say this is a pretty damn good covert op so far.

Your **Third Tool** is "**Learnin' Not to Hate**".

Ask yourself, "Do I hate everything and everyone?"

Well, my young rageful seeking-to-gut-people friends, hate is bad Juju. (Marines: Not candy.) You know, it ain't real good to hate all the time. It's sorta like drinkin' "piss-ditch" water, so that you maintain a good solid case of real enjoyable, explosive diarrhea. (That's called, "the down range shits.")

So why do you hate everything? Real simple. The word hate means: You feel hostile. (Marines: Not a long-hair Hippie Commune.) Hostility means, you wanna rip peoples' heads off and shit down their necks. And why? Well, once again, this ain't rocket science.

Warriors feel hate because they were "conditioned" to feel hate. That's so they have the right attitude to go out and kill people.

So, my soon-to-not-be-hateful Warriors, ask yourself, "Who's pullin' my chain?" No shit! You got it! It's your furry friend the Beast, tryin' to lead you to the federal recreation center. You know, the slammer, the pen, the big house...in other words, prison.

So how do you fire a tranquilizer dart into the ass of your Beasty? You practice and practice by first saying, "I don't hate that fucker! I just feel better when he's not around."

Then when the tranquilizer kicks in, you say, "I don't hate anyone. I just feel better when they're not around."

Try it. It works!

“So how do I De-Hate myself?” you tensely ask, while sharpening your Smith and Wesson Combat Knife.

The answer to this, my fellow Warriors, is as easy as Breathin’ and Squeezin’. You copy people who don’t hate! I’ll explain. And this is no bullshit, ‘cause I’ve done it, am still doing it, and it works.

Your brain is kind of a dumb shit. The more you think of something, the more it thinks your thoughts are normal. So you **pretend to feel, until you do feel.**

In other words, you copy how other people (normies?) act toward kids, animals, and adults; how they treat each other. And eventually, you will start to feel it yourself. In Squash Doc lingo, this is called remapping your brain. And like all this stuff, it takes practice and more practice to achieve the mission objective.

Sure it takes some time, but you will **retrain your brain**. Then you won’t feel like trippin’ the kid and kickin’ the dog. By picking “Role Models” to copy, you’ll know the right thing to do. (Marines: Role Models like Gandhi, Chesty Puller?) And you’re gonna feel a whole lot better the more you do it. Here are some examples.

When I got back from War, I was (and I still am) a stone cold killer. I didn’t feel shit about anyone or anything. Fact is I hated everyone and everything. But even bein’ a dumb ass Jar Head, I knew I was way too twitchy, and something was real wrong. I knew I had to adapt if I was gonna survive civilian life. No Shit!

I’ve been married to three truly fine and exceptional women in my life. My first wife (role model) taught me how to love children. She had one, so I had to learn fast. I copied her actions...and it worked!

My second wife (role model) taught me how to love

animals. I copied her, opened my heart to these beautiful beings, and that worked!

My third, beautiful wife (and still my life partner) taught me not only how to love people, she also reinforced what I already learned (felt) about children and animals. Hell, she showed me how to feel connected to everything that lives! That is, everything that flies, walks, crawls and grows in the dirt!

So you see, after many times of asking myself, “How would they act/feel at this moment?” my brain copied their actions. Eventually, I began to feel just like my “Role Models” acted. Now I feel it myself.

Of course, I had to pretend at first, like a special forces operator in an enemy village. But eventually, I started to feel again. First it was compassion, and then it was love. That is, as a Warrior feels love.

You can do the exact same thing. You just gotta want to do it. This tool will make you feel a whole lot better about being part of this world, and you’re gonna feel a whole lot better about you.

So then, just remember to “feel better” when people you don’t like AREN’T AROUND, and copy those who you respect as examples of how you would like to be and how you would like to feel. You have the strength to do this one, too.

And cut yourself some slack while you’re at it. Stop drinkin’ those brain grenades for a bit, and force your green ass OUT to do something that makes you feel better, and “calmer.” This brings us to the next Tool.

Your **Fourth Tool** is “**Learning to Turtle**”.

Sea turtles are a real fine example for us humans to copy. When they swim out into the surf, they slip under the

waves. Mother Nature has taught them how to not get their asses kicked, doin' what they like.

For you, your emotional waves will drag you to the bottom and grind you into the coral if you don't do the same. You may be goin' into emotionally heavy surf at times, but you'll avoid gettin' pounded in the rocks, and eatin' starfish shit, by learning to change your focus. I'll explain.

Remember, that when you're stuck (fixated) in a battlefield moment in civilian society, "**You can think anything you'd like. But you can't do everything you think.**" That's just the way it is. So deal with it, unless you're partial to bein' on the receiving end of a gang rape in the big House.

If you're gettin' pounded by the emotional waves, you've gotta rapidly change your focus. It's like this: If you've ever done any body surfing when you're caught in the wave and it's pounding the shit out of you, you've gotta relax your body. Then you float to the surface. The more you fight it, the more you stay stuck. The more of a beating you take.

So it's just like when you're caught in the surf. The way you emotionally "relax" is to tell yourself, "I'm caught in my feelings of killing, of loss, of guilt," and, "**I'm gonna change my thinking by changing my actions.**" "I'm goin' for a drive to my Battle Buddy's house, or I'm goin' for a walk, or I'm goin' to a movie and a meal".

Anything will work that makes you feel better. I used to go for a run until I was exhausted, then I'd ride my motorcycle (sober) to a movie and a nice dinner; an artery clogging, puke-in-the-bag burger with double fries.

Again, in this case, you change your thinking by immediately changing your actions; what you're doing at

that moment. You are then forming new habits. And the more you do this, the more effective it will become. In shrinker terms, this is called remapping your brain; modifying the trails or pathways in your brain-housing-group.

I did it. So can you. And it works. So try it. Give it a test run.

Your **Fifth Tool** is “**Controlling the Desire to Kill**”.

Do you still feel the desire to kill?

That’s an affirmative! You always will. That’s one of the bennies of walkin’ off the battlefield. It kinda makes you feel good inside knowin’ that you truly are the Warrior Monk (Marines: A holy man, not a chimp) In other words, you can be the kind, compassionate, fuzzy and warm, save-the-whales, tree-hugger one moment, and the full-blown, raging killing machine the next.

In Ivory Tower Speak, they call this a paradox. This means you’ve got two opposite sides of who you are; living in the same body. The kind and loving pet-the-bunny side, and the gut-the-bunny and roast its ass for dinner side. I’d say that’s a pretty damn good combination!

So how do you learn to control your urge to kill two legged animals? Again, it’s practice in thinking and saying the right things to change your habits. You’ve gotta change the feel good habits of killing the enemy on the battlefield, to the feel good habits you find here in the land of endless baby-wipes.

What works for me is if I say, “Prison! Prison! Prison!” Or sometimes I’ll say to myself, “This maggot truly needs to die, but who’s gonna feed my animal friends?” You make up whatever **you** feel good about, then

use it!

This whole thing of talking to your self is a real healthy thing to do. Well, at least that's what the Squash Docs I know say. Seems to work pretty good, too. Hell, you can always talk to your furry friend anytime you want. It's right inside of your head. I prefer to jabber away at the Angelic side. Smells better too.

One real smart shrinker came up with this notion of "Parts." She said that us humans are all made up of different parts. It's sorta like an MRE. You know, different "parts" of your tasty (?) meal all crammed in the same bag. Kinda like your airtight, brain-housing-group.

Just to list a few of these parts, so that you get an idea of what we're talkin' about here: There's the rational part (The intellectual, egghead side); the emotional part (The feely-touchy side); the spiritual part (the warm and fuzzy, one with all creation side) and the primal part (That's your loving, blood lusting Beastly side).

So you see, you can talk to any part of yourself you want, and not look like a dumb shit. Besides like I said before, with these new-fangled cell phones, with hearing-aid-like devices stuck in everybody's ears, it looks like most of the folks in the supermarket are on Thorazine anyway; babblin' like idiots at a potato or a dozen eggs. So relax, you'll fit right in!

But let's get real here. There are gonna be a lot of people you'll meet who truly are worthless, and are very deserving of an appointment with Saint Peter. You know, at the big checkpoint in the sky? And yet, even though they are worth the fifty-cents a-round, they're just not worth you destroying your life for.

So like we talked about early on about "Counting to Three," they simply get to live today. You're allowing them

to live today. And once again, you're gonna **feel a whole lot better when they're not around.**

Just play the Pollyanna Glad Game. You know, "I'm so glad I'm not that asshole!" and "Have a nice day. Maybe you'll do us all a favor and have a short life?"

But remember to always ask yourself, "Where are my feelings coming from at this moment?" Is it your snarly-toothed, hairy Beast, or is it the white-winged Angelic side? You know the difference.

Look, you've killed human beings and liked it, now you've gotta deal with the results. And the desire to kill never completely goes away. It was not a peaceful experience, and it's stuck in all your memories until you check out.

You didn't walk up to the enemy and say, "Gosh! You look just great today. What a nice outfit you have on, and it goes so well with your complexion. And oh, by the way, I'm sorry, but I have to put a round through your head. It won't hurt. Just close your eyes and hum your peaceful mantra." Don't think so.

You don't kill the enemy with compassion, loving kindness, courtesy or respect. Your Beast kills 'em unmercifully and longs for more.

That's why you've gotta change your thinking to change your actions in civilian society. Get control over your emotions by practicing a few simple Tools that work.

You control your desire for killing with any thoughts and images you can. Then you don't end up like the enemy you left gnarled up and dead on the battlefield.

Your **Sixth Tool** is "**Being Honest with Yourself**".

You have the strength to do this, and you have the

wisdom to understand what will happen if you don't.

To look into the "Mirror of Self-Reflection" openly and honestly takes great courage and strength. In order to truly understand the evil viciousness you are capable of, you must walk in the darkness, side by side with the demons of your own nature.

It is not in the Light of Love and Compassion that you will find an understanding of the horrors of human malice, because in Light and Compassion they do not exist.

But unless we look at the greatest evil and the greatest good we are capable of, how then could we possibly know ourselves?

Look at it this way. As you may or may not have heard it said by other Warriors, "We consider ourselves The Half Dead." This means that like it or not, part of us died in War. And we walk in the Shadow World at will.

In order for you to walk, even half alive, in the "Outer World" of civilian society, and find even a small measure of peace, you've got to learn WHO you are.

You learn who you are by looking at the worst and best parts of yourself. No matter how horrible it sounds, admit your feelings. No matter what non-combatants say about you, admit your feelings.

Now, this don't mean you shuffle down to the T-Shirt shop and stick a sign on your chest that says, "I Love Killing People!" It means to admit your feelings to YOURSELF! That's it. Real simple, well sorta?

I'll give you an example. I've killed children in War. The Spirit within me recoils from the thought of this act, but lives within the very substance, the very essence of its host; that's me. The Spirit in all of us strives to protect children, yet the demonic part of all of us longs to take more life in the cruelest manner possible; any and all life,

including children.

It doesn't mean I'm gonna run right out and start shootin' kids. It means that I understand I'm capable of it. If you're honest with yourself and understand what you're capable of, then you can prevent yourself from doing it again.

Let's put it another way, 'cause this is real important. Suppose you like killing or some other sort of vicious cruelty in War. **You admit that to yourself!**

It's OK to like it, because it was your Beast part that liked it, and you were conditioned to like it. That's how we win battles; that's how we must act in War; and that's if we chose to come home at all. (Even half alive.)

Your intellectual part didn't like it, and your Spirit certainly didn't like it. But your Beast sure as hell did like it, and the more the better. So you see, it's kinda like living in an apartment with some real good neighbors, and some real shit heads.

Trouble is, the apartment building is locked inside your skull. And unless you know all your neighbors real close-like, you may get yourself invited to the wrong apartment for chow. You may end up on the mess gear for dinner.

So the point of all this is to look at yourself, ALL of Yourself. Admit what you did, and even if you liked what you did, it's OK. You're not gonna be yelling this shit in the streets. You don't even have to speak your feelings out loud to anyone. It's your secret. **Just don't keep "your" secrets from yourself!**

And up the trail to the Summit you go!

Your **Seventh Tool** is “**Dealing with the Opiate, Adrenaline**”.

No shit! There is no greater rush than Combat Adrenaline! We’ve talked about that earlier. And remember, the closer you get to death, the greater the adrenaline hit. But look at that bullshit! The closer you get to death?

What the hell was in our corn flakes at the Chow Hall? How productive is that when you’re attempting to find some sort of peace in your life? When you’re attempting to Adapt to a new world?

Well then, my fine fellow-adrenaline-junky Warriors, there ain’t NOTHIN’ productive about huntin’ for adrenaline at all. Fact is, it’s your hairy friend that wants the hit, not any of its neighbors in your brain-housing-group apartment complex.

It’s your Primal-side part that wants you jumpin’ off a bridge with one of them fancy rubber bands strapped to your ass, or racin’ your crotch rocket when you’re so drunk you couldn’t look down to take a piss without fallin’ down. Think about it.

When you’ve reached the Summit of Knowing, the thought of recklessly, risking your life so your Beast can feel the wind in its fur don’t really sound so good.

Sure you’re gonna remember the rush of adrenalin in battle. But that doesn’t mean you gotta duplicate it here. Because there is absolutely no way that can be done without going to battle. And here, that means you’re breakin the law and goin’ to meet your new cell mates. It’s just not worth the price.

Remember, you ain’t who you used to be before War. And now you’ve gotta adapt to WHO you’ve now become. And Video Games don’t help.

I know Troops who sit in front of one of them damn TV monitors and play combat video games for hours. Hell, if they could, they'd sit there on their asses for days. But who's playin' the game? Right again! It's your Beasty, purrin' over the bloodshed and violence.

Look, I understand what's happenin' here. And it's no different from watchin a War movie... for a short time. But what you're doin' is reliving your combat experiences.

Combat video games played over and over by a Combat Warrior will trigger their memories, their experiences of killing, loss, guilt and survivor guilt. You Warriors think about this one.

Re-experiencing war through a video game may be healthy to a point, in terms of processing the event, but it's not healthy to be fixated in the past. And if all you do is sit there in front of the Lobotomy Tube without ever gettin' any real good combat counseling help, then you're treadin' brown water; you're headin' for that screamin' flush down the shitter to Fly Paradise. No insect repellent allowed.

So once again, you've gotta "REPLACE" the need for adrenaline with the opposite of what your Beast-Part wants. This means you get off your green ass, turn off that fuckin' video and go out and **do something for "yourself" by doing something for someone else.**

The more you help others, the more you help yourself. You never lose by giving, and real giving is never expecting anything in return. It'll make you feel good, and make another living being feel good, too.

Just go look into the eyes of a dog or a cat locked in a cage at the Animal Shelter. Or look into the eyes of someone who's hungry when you load up a plate of good chow for 'em. You're gonna feel good about yourself by helping them, and they'll feel good because you do.

Remember that **compassion replaces adrenaline**. It calms the Beast. It puts you more in touch with who you truly are and who you truly wanna be. It re-focuses your thinking.

The more peace you feel in your life, the less likely you'll feel like risking your life. Adrenaline will become a fond memory, but something you're NOT gonna live your life to re-feel every waking moment.

Smoking lamp is lit for you Warriors... Take Ten Mikes.

Here's "**A Little Side Line for Civilians**".

Since I've mentioned the Shadow World several times, I thought it might be good to explain that a bit.

Did you ever wonder where Dante, as in Dante's Inferno (Marines: Not a pizza restaurant) got his ideas about Hell, or the strange stuff he painted? Just a guessin' here, but aside from folks thinkin' he got into a bad batch of mushrooms, he was most likely walkin' in the Shadow World.

Same-e-same with many other people like Edgar Allen Poe. It isn't hard to go there. You just have to want to go there. And it's open to all visitors.

You might be thinkin' it's time to drop the "Big Net" on the old Jar Head here, and send his green ass off the Wake Island. So if you will, just take all this with a grain of salt (black powder for Warriors) if you don't buy into to it, that is. But it never hurts too much to keep an open mind? Your call.

Psychologists might say that what I'm about to discuss is merely a "Product of Imagination." But if you study ancient teachings a bit, a lot of people in other cultures talk about the Shadow World as bein' a real place,

too.

Way back in history, even before my time, someone once said, “Yea though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I shall fear no evil...” Now just “where” do ya suppose he meant? Guess it could be San Bernardino Valley in California? Maybe 29 Palms?

The Valley of Death, The Phantom World, The Shadow World (along with other names for it), is a real place to a lot of people on the planet. And when I go there (at will), I fear no evil because my Beast (Oso) has his big, furry paw on my shoulder, watchin’ my six. He’s purrin’ too, ‘cause this is his kinda place; real warm and fuzzy for my Big Boy.

Personally at times, I find it more comfortable in The Shadow World than here. That’s because there’s no illusion of reality there; no illusion in The Land of the Dead. There are only their stories of how they got there.

Let’s bring this “reality thing” home a bit. Make it more personal. Ever ask yourself, “What is it that causes the sadness you see in the eyes of the Warrior you love?” It’s real simple. It’s the “distancing” from others of the human race. That is, it’s a distancing from the living: Those who have not been to War; those who are still fully alive.

Civilian society is not real to us; it’s an illusion. The Shadow World, whether we’re regular visitors or not, is real to us. A little dark perhaps, but nonetheless it is reality. Every Warrior fully knows this, because every Warrior knows we’re all gonna die. We fully embrace this timeless Truth.

And while we’re at it, let’s throw another carrot into the sadness pot to simmer over a bit. Yet another reason for the sadness we feel, is because of the sadness we’ve felt. I’ll explain.

Warriors have experienced firsthand what it's like to live by the ultimate standards of human nobility. That is, we know what it means to live with Honor and self-sacrifice for those you love and who love you unconditionally.

But War has also taken a heavy toll. Warriors have been witness to the morbid, dark, and vivid truth about the human race. They have seen the viciousness and hate we are all capable of.

This in itself tends to close us off from participating in society again. Part of us is ashamed to be human, ashamed to know what we're capable of. Talk about a wake-up call at eighteen years old!

So you see, by understanding this Truth about who we really are as "The Race of Humanity," we become emotionally numb. We feel less likely (comfortable) to reach out to another human being, because every human being belongs to the same human race. That is, the part of the human race who hasn't walked with us, side by side on the battlefield, living that true nobility of the Human Spirit. This is yet another reason why the Warrior Trust Bond is so strong between us.

If we already consider ourselves half dead, and if we think of most people in society as living in an illusion, and we're certainly not afraid of death in the least, then why not ditty-bop around in a place where we understand things? That right! The Shadow World.

Many Troops have told me they've seen and/or heard the Angel of Death. Medics and Corpsmen have told me that, leaning over a fellow Warrior when he or she died in their arms, they felt a surge of energy (The Spirit or Soul?) pass through their own bodies. So why then would it be so difficult to believe in a place like The Shadow World?

Think about it.

Alright Warriors! Back to your Tools!

Your **Eighth Tool** is “**Understanding Future Relationships**”.

What I’m about to explain to your green ass comes from over thirty five years of swimmin’ in the shit-brown lakes of Fly Paradise. So listen up! And by the way, I wasn’t there alone, either. There were lots of other Combat Vets snorklin’ right along with me. No dumb shit Jar Head ever gave us a briefing on “how not to be there.”

The Tools you’re learnin’ in this last section may well be the most important intel you can possibly stuff in your brain-housing-group. And the topic of “relationships” is right at the top of the list. That is, unless you wanna live in the mountains, chewin’ on bark with your Beasty; your only big, smelly friend.

There’s no doubt that what I’m about to explain is gonna sting a bit at first. Hell, it’s gonna damn right hurt! And make no bones about it, it’s gonna hurt those who loved you before you went to War. You just gotta deal with it, and you will. Maybe they will, too?

Somebody’s gotta finally say this shit, so I guess it’s gonna be the Dumb Ass Marine. That be me. So let’s get Oscar Mike (Operationally Mobile) here.

Now, if any of you readin’ this book haven’t figured a few things out yet, like the whole shit bath of War, let me crystallize it for you once again. It’s sorta like a variable power rifle scope, when the image comes into focus real clear. Let’s get this one in the cross hairs; “breathe and squeeze,” then take the sucker out!

Quick Review:

- Warriors fight Wars.
- A Warrior's job is to kill human beings called, "the enemy."
- When Warriors kills human beings, the Warrior changes inside forever!
- When Warriors lose their friends in battle, the Warrior changes inside forever!
- Warriors DO NOT come back from War the same person, ever!

Now how much damn clearer can that be? And relationships are a BIG PART of your Warrior future, especially if you're a youngin' in your teens and early twenties. You know, young, dumb, and full of come.

Well anyway, we've talked about one of the reasons "Why" you feel like a numb-oid in section 1-7, the Warrior Trust Bond. Now let's look a little closer into your ability to be warm and fuzzy with other human beings. Four legged animals are easy. You just love 'em and feed 'em. Two legged animals are a new and challenging mission.

So put on your body armor for the next five Mikes (Minutes) or so.

Let's deal with you and "your" feelings first, then we'll talk about how to salvage a relationship, or start one. That is, if you'd like to have a decent human relationship at some point in your future.

Here's the first "Incoming Round." It is EXTREMELY difficult to accept that those of us coming off the battlefields of War have not only lost the innocence of our youth, but that we have also lost the ability to Love human beings like we used to.

Now don't go gettin' too depressed and all (stuck between worlds) 'cause life can still be damn good! You just gotta get used to WHO you are now, and adapt to your surroundings.

Think about it. Do you love your dog more than your partner? Do you "pretend" to act lovingly to someone who you know loves you? Do you feel like what your dog left on your neighbor's front lawn, because you think you don't know how to love human beings anymore?

Look, just because you can't feel **how you think you should**, don't mean there's anything wrong with you. There's a natural, self-protection reason for the way you feel closed off. It's your brain protecting you again. It's helping you avoid too much pain.

You've gotten close to people you've truly loved in battle, and you've lost 'em. Your brain remembers that, and it won't let you get too close to people you'd like to care about now. That's in case you lose those loved ones again. Real simple.

So what do you do? How do you Adapt? First of all, you cut yourself some slack. Love and compassion takes practice to RE-Feel when you've been trained and conditioned to hate.

If you're now with someone, you love them as much as you can, and **understand your limits**. Here's how it works.

You maintain your Code of Honor by being honest. But you don't tell your partner all the bloody, horrifying details of your battlefield experiences. Believe me, this doesn't work.

No other Combat Veteran I know has helped their relationship one little bit by a purge-your-soul-brain-dump. You know, spill your guts on the floor, hoping your

partner will understand the pain you feel and why you're a few cans shy of a six-pack?

This kind of way-too-honest-and-open-to-someone, who can't understand you anyway, only makes them afraid of you, set their speed dial for 911, and look for the nearest AAA for free roadmaps back to the in-law's base camp.

They get afraid of you because they don't know all the PARTS of you. They're only hearing the Beast Part, and they may not know you have the ability to control it.

Besides, most folks won't even admit they have a Beast Part, so they might quickly go into denial. You know, it's sorta like someone lookin' at another person who got all banged up in an accident, or lookin' at someone in the hospital dyin' from cancer. Some people can't admit to themselves, "That could be me there!" So they turn away, returning back into their fantasy world of make-believe.

The next thing you've gotta understand is that unless you're hooked up with another Combat Warrior, a civilian partner ain't gonna die for you. In other words, they're not at your one hundred percent unconditional, battlefield-love-to-die-for standard. Accept it and cut 'em some slack. They don't have to die for you here! And you are not on the battlefield here. Deal with it by accepting this real simple fact. Say to yourself, "I'm not at War here!" Then don't make it that way.

You see, my longing-for-a-relationship friend, you simply CAN'T judge the people you care about for what you think of as Warrior weakness. They ain't Warriors, so again, cut 'em some slack.

You're gonna have to develop some real tolerance until you get used to lookin' at folks as just folks; not battle-hardened, knuckle draggin' grunts.

So if someone you'd like to hang out with (for more

than a day) does something you think isn't up to the Warrior Standard, "Don't Say Anything Critical!" Rather, "Don't Say Anything At All," or talk with them "Carefully," or damn it, leave them alone. You know, give them some space. Let them fall down and learn from the experience. You ain't the Drill Instructor and they ain't in Boot Camp!

If all you do is criticize your partner, pushin'em and pushin'em to be the "different person you want", then your relationship has about as much chance of surviving as a herd of goats in the splash down of a 500 pounder.

If you love the person you're with (or wanna be with), and I mean love 'em at "Your Limits" of love, then accept them the way they are. If you're lucky, they'll accept you the way you are.

You gotta choose carefully too. Because the way I see it, there are only two kinds of people in this world. There are "Givers" and "Takers." Choose a Giver to hang out with. You'll feel a lot more joy in your life. You'll know the difference right off. Just ask yourself, "How selfish is this person?" They'll stand out like a "lazed target."

And if you don't agree with something your partner does, don't let your Beast negotiate the treaty. When you feel your claws comin' out, shut up, and if need be, extract to a safe LZ where you can calm down a bit. Arguing with the Beast is like arguing with a drunk or a meth-head.

Use some common sense, too. You ain't gonna change your partner any more than your partner is gonna change you. Personally, I think that the purpose of a relationship is "**Not**" to change your partner anyway.

After all, don't you like or even love 'em for the way they are? Isn't that why you wanted to get together in the first place? If it was for sex, believe me, that won't last. You've gotta get out of bed, or off the floor eventually.

Then what have you got lookin' back at you with bad breath in the morning? Be real sure you got a good one, and you be the other good one.

If you can't completely accept your partner for who they are, and they can't accept you for who you are, then why be miserable? Find another person to share what little time you have left. Enjoy your life, and enjoy the hell out of being close to another human being. There are some real fine ones out there. Tame your Beasty, and you're sure to find one.

You Warriors, take another smoke break. Gotta talk to the Civvies again!

Here's Another "**Little Side Line for Civilians**": **Porno.**

Let's talk about pornography a bit. Now I can't speak for women here, 'cause I ain't one. So I'll discuss only male Warriors down range and back in the Land of the Big Post Exchange.

Part of this comes from some of the best Combat Clinicians I know. You may not like it, but this is just the way it is, so deal with it.

Back in ancient history, when I was "shittin' and gettin'" with my Brothers in the Nam, we didn't have computers. But we did have Playboy Magazines, and they worked just fine. Because the only sex we got was with Mrs. Thumb and her four daughters. You know, masturbation. That is, unless you wanted to risk catchin' the Black Clap and never returnin' home, which in fact did happen.

But aside from the physical part of lookin' at sex, let's talk about the psychological aspect as it applies to our Troops. I've talked to a lot of Combat Warriors whose

partners were really gettin' down on 'em for lookin' at naked women on the computer.

Now, I'm not talkin' about Kiddy Porn (child pornography) because that's a "control" issue; a need for power and control (dominance) over another. I'm talkin' about our male Troops lookin' at real beautiful women on one of the many websites, compliments of the World Wide Web. And as I've been told, there's a whole bunch of 'em.

Hell, I was lookin' for an address in Washington, D.C. once, and Googled "The White House." Yep! It came up a porn site. Had to double check, just to make sure some of our "Political Representatives" didn't add a little spice to our Capital with taxpayer money. They didn't, it was just operator error, mine.

Anyway, as the Squash Docs say, just because our Troops are lookin' at porn, doesn't mean they're unhappy with their present relationship. But it does mean they're in need of a comfort zone, a mental safe zone. I'll explain.

As it's been explained to me, male Combat Warriors who have been brain-fried from War, are lookin' for a comfortable place to plug in their brains.

For some Warriors, a beautiful, warm, female image is what they need to safely hide in. When they look at certain kinds of porn, the female images bring them back to a place where they're not judged; their brains flash back to a pleasant childhood memory. You know, the warm, nurturing mother image. It's a way for the Warrior to escape the world that has become so painful.

There's also the whole procreative (Marines: Not a professional artist) side of this too. So if you're interested, then talk to a Combat Trauma Clinician for the details. In the meantime, cut your Warrior some slack.

Now, back again to your Warrior Tools!

Your Ninth Tool is “Understanding Loss and Grieving”.

Back in ancient times (The 1970’s) there was a good bit of talk about the stages of grieving. That is, how do you get through feeling like dried dog shit when someone you love dies.

A real smart shrinker named Elizabeth Kubler-Ross outlined what she figured are the Five Stages of Grieving in a book she wrote on Death and Dying. She said that the five stages, in their normal order for most folks, are as follows:

Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance.

You’ve gotta remember that these are the typical civilian responses. Also, remember that the Warrior responses below are **direct quotes from frontline combatants who actually felt and thought them.** This ain’t no “theory” stuff, either.

So just for the hell of it, and to understand the Warrior Mind, let’s compare these five “responses to loss” between the typical civilian and the typical adrenaline-crazed, battle hardened Warrior. You Warriors might wanna know this sorta stuff in case you’re sittin’ across from a shrinker at some point in your future. And most likely, you will be.

The 1st Stage of Grieving is Denial

Civilian Response in Civilian Society:

The normal civilian response might be, “I feel fine.” (They don’t.) Or, “This can’t be happening to me!” (It did.) But they didn’t die; their friend did, someone they loved.

This is where some folks get into the self-pity-trap, or the I'm-the-victim-trap. And that ain't healthy.

Warrior Response on the Battlefield:

The normal Warrior response might be, "Who can I kill for payback!" Or, "That could have been me. Damn it! It wasn't!" The Warrior will get pissed off first, then look for vengeance and follow the blood trail to "Get Some." There is NO self-pity and no feeling of being the victim. The predator is on the hunt!

The 2nd Stage of Grieving is Anger.

Civilian Response in Civilian Society:

A normal civilian response might be, "Why me!" Or, "It's not fair!" Or, "How could this be happening to me?" Or, "Who's to blame?"

Maybe civilians think like this because they don't face death every day? Your call. But there may also be elements of resentment and jealousy with civilians, too; it depends on the individual, their past experiences, and just how honest they are about admitting their true feelings to themselves.

Warrior Response on the Battlefield:

A normal response might be, "Not me this time, maybe next time." Or, "I damn sure as hell know who to blame!" Or, "I feel cheated, I wanna protect my friends on the other side!" Or, "Wonder what kind of weapons they got there?"

The 3rd Stage of Grieving is Bargaining.

Civilian Response in Civilian Society:

A normal response might be, "Just let me live long

enough to see my grandchildren grow up.” Or, “I’ll do anything to live longer,” and so on. In other words, you’re trying to make a deal with God, Fate, Murphy, or whatever. You’re bargaining for a little more time to live.

Warrior Response on the Battlefield:

A normal response might be, “Please! Take me out of this shit hole!” Or “Can I be next?” Or, “I don’t give a rat’s ass about living here. Help me take out as many of the enemy as I can on the way out!”

The Warrior is completely resigned to death, and often, longs for it. There is no bargaining to live longer. To a lot of Warriors, life is often a curse, not a blessing.

The 4th Stage of Grieving is Depression.

Civilian Response in Civilian Society:

A normal response might be, “I feel so sad, I don’t want to do anything, why bother?” Or, “Why keep living?”

Warrior Response on the Battlefield and Stateside:

“Fuck this shithole!” Or, depression sets in (Stateside) because, “I can’t return to battle, kill people, and blow shit up!” Or, “I can’t be with people I trust and love!” Or, “I’ve gotta live in this bullshit civilian world! I want payback! Gotta stay frosty!”

The 5th Stage of Grieving is Acceptance.

Civilian Response in Civilian Society:

A normal response might be, “It’s going to be OK.” Or, “I can’t control it, (Death) so I’ll just get ready for it.”

Look, you can’t blame people for thinking like this if they haven’t been to War. They just haven’t had the chance

like us Warriors to understand that death is gonna come knockin' sooner or later.

Warrior Response on the Battlefield:

“No Shit! Death is a part of life. I see death all the time. People I love die all the time.” Or, “Let’s Get It On!” Or, “Come to me, Angel of Death... Ready when you are! Standin’ By!”

Warriors feel death all around them. They understand that death is part of life, and they accept it completely. There is no fear of death to the Combat Hardened Warrior.

The point here is that Combat Warriors do not react in the same way as those who have not been on the battlefield. They cannot be grouped into the same behavioral statistics. Think about it.

Your Tenth Tool is “Understanding Guilt/Survivor Guilt”.

Guilt is defined as: A feeling of having committed a crime or violation against another, letting down or disappointing another.

Let’s look at this idea of guilt in a Warrior’s way of thinkin’. A lot of times we feel guilty because we think we should have, or could have done something that might have prevented our Battle Buddies from getting hurt or killed.

And a lot of times that’s just plain bullshit. When it’s your time, it’s your time, and there’s nothin’ you can do to change what happened. It’s your feeling of what you think of as “Losing Control” in a situation that eats at your ass, and sucks you emotionally dry like an Ohio Deer Tick. Did you really think you ever had control over death? What about God, Fate, or whatever you believe shapes your destiny? Don’t think so.

Sure if you screwed the pooch, callin' in an air strike or Arty, (Blue on Blue, Friendly Fire) and some of your friends got wasted or chewed up, you're gonna feel like a dingleberry hangin' on the south end of a northbound black bear. That would be a normal reaction. But you learn from it, and you sure as hell don't make the same mistake twice.

But what about the survival guilt we feel for the living? What about our feelings of NOT being there (Down Range, not only the Afterworld) to protect our True Friends?

It's real simple, my Fellow Warriors. Our guilt all has to do with love. That's right, it has to do with us loving our Brothers and Sisters more than we love ourselves. That's called unconditional love to die for. Ain't nothin' complicated about it.

We love 'em, wanna be with 'em, and feel like shit when we're not. Even though we're not there, we know what they're goin' through down range. And even if we're not there, we want to share their suffering and watch their six, no matter how bad it is.

Once again, it's impossible for someone to understand this if they've never developed a true Warrior Trust Bond, a "Bond of Unconditional Loving Friendship" with another human being.

Here's somethin' else to look at. Maybe you were an operator who worked alone in Spec. Ops. Maybe you thought you never formed a One-On-One friendship or the Trust Bond we're talkin' about here.

But don't bullshit yourself. You do in fact have the Trust Bond with all other Warriors! You still love 'em and feel "connected" to 'em. You ways will.

It don't matter if you are or were an independent

operator or not. You're still part of the Warrior Class, the Eternal Brother-Sister Hood of all Warriors. Accept it. Honor it. It's what sets you apart from all others. It's what allows you to live by the "Nobility of the Human Spirit."

So how do you deal with Survival Guilt? That's real simple, too. You keep lovin' each and every one of the living, and each and every one of the dead. You can't do squat shit about the dead; they're in a better place, after all. But you sure as hell can do something about the living!

You can help your fellow Warriors now. You make a new mission objective for yourself. That means, you talk with 'em, support 'em, console 'em and watch their six at all times whenever possible.

You become an example to those Warriors who need an example, a hand to lift them up and out of their pain. You help them move up the trail to the Summit!

When we're talkin' about the fellow Warriors you've lost, you've gotta re-map your brain about survivor guilt. That means you've gotta form new habits of thinking. You do this by "**Remembering the "Good" times you shared, and not when they died.**" I'll give you an example.

My "Doc" was killed in battle. I felt like shit for years. But then I learned to remember him when he was still alive. The best damn time I ever had with Doc was burnin' down a village in the Nam.

I still remember him with his Zippo Lighter, holding it under the roof overhang of that grass hooch, and starting it on fire. He stood there watching it burn; then when the hooch really got cookin', he turned to me, and with his arms outstretched, he yelled, "Semper Fucking Fi!"

The image of Doc standing in front of an inferno of flames with his arms outstretched and yelling, is how I

remember him now. It took a while to re-map my thinking, to change my pathways of memory, but now it doesn't hurt so much to think about my dear friend, my Doc.

I know, I know, this is simple to say but hard to do. But that's the way it is, if you wanna get on with your life. You remember your loved ones as they were, and you release them to where they are now. We've been through hell, so they've gotta be in a better place.

And don't worry, you'll see 'em again. That's one of the "changes" of life. Eventually, you're gonna make the journey like everyone else, no exceptions. But you already know that.

When someone you love dies, and it don't matter how, you're gonna feel like a fresh cow patty, bakin' in the hot sun for about a year or so. It takes the brain awhile to process this kinda thing.

But, "**You Honor the dead by living by Honor**". Remember them, and live your life, as they would want you to. They wouldn't want you to be miserable, stick the gun in your mouth, or commit suicide by cop. They'd want you to be an example of strength for others to follow. They'd want you to **Honor your Creed** by living the strength you have as a Warrior.

In a way, your strength is a responsibility to those who don't have it. You know, you lift others up by example. And who better to run point than you? Sometimes us Warriors forget our strength, but it's still there, just waitin' for a mission. Think about it.

And always remember the very best times with your departed Brethren. Always remember your strength as a Warrior. And always live by Honor. That is your Code. Now get on with your life!

Your Eleventh Tool is “Maintaining a Mission Objective”.

OK, so now we’ve gotta talk about how you get through each minute of each day. Then the days will grow into months and the months into years. And if you listen up, one day you’ll look back on your life without feeling like a dumb shit.

You’ve been trained and conditioned to achieve mission objectives in the military. You didn’t have to like it; you just had to do it. Now you get to make up your very own mission objectives!

Think about it. In the military, you thought in a “Military Mindset”. And I got news for you young Warriors, you always will. All that means is that you’ve gotta Adapt your training for life in Civvie-Land.

You’ve been trained to look ahead only to accomplish an immediate goal. Down range it might have been going on patrol, to win the hearts and minds of the natives. If they didn’t buy into the idea of havin’ an Infidel McDonalds on every corner and they gave you shit, you’d just call in the Cobras and kill their asses.

In the civilian world, you can’t call in Arty or the Cobra Gunships on Wal-Mart, but you still need a mission objective. So I’ll give you an example of what you can do.

When I used to get stuck between the Two Worlds, it was because I didn’t have a mission objective. So now, I set mission objectives every day. At zero dark thirty, I’m up, make my rack, have a cup of coffee and a cig, then make my battle plan for the day.

Usually, the **first objective** is to wake up enough so I don’t get the shit kicked out of me by one of the range horses. The **second objective** is to feed the animals, then pick up horse and cow shit. The **next objective** is, if I

have to cut wood or pump water, or fix something that always breaks down on the shittiest day of winter, I do that.

It works for me, if while I'm suckin' down a cup of java at first light, and pollutin' my body with a wonderful cig, I make a list of objectives on a piece of paper.

If it's mandatory to make a supply run to town, then that becomes my next mission objective after the chores are finished. When in town, my objective is not killin' stupid, dumb asses that need to meet Jesus. That way, I can make it back to Base Camp to feed my animal friends later that evening.

So you see, you've gotta make **small mission objectives** to get through each day. And it works! That way you don't get stuck between worlds, or spend your whole day cleanin' weapons and talkin' to the Shadow People.

At the end of the day when the chores are done, my mission objective is to feed my old cat and dogs, have a glass of wine, clean up, and feed myself. Then **my reward** is to put in a movie like Generation Kill or some other such soothing type entertainment.

By the way, just for a little sideline here. I haven't watched TV in over four years. I wanted to "Reach out and touch someone (with a full metal jacket)" way too much. That's because most of what's on TV makes my Beasty upset. (Maybe it should be called RV? As in retard vision?) There ain't a lot of good news or anything to make you feel comfortable on TV these days, so why watch the damn thing? Well, anyway.

So when your feet hit the deck in the morning and you've got one more day to live, plan out your day. Set mission objectives to get your ass through it.

And no shit! See yourself doin' each one. (Shrinkers call this visualizing.) It's like when I've gotta go into hostile territory (town) I see myself getting' back home. With each mission objective, you stay focused in the moment, but you see yourself completing the mission. That's called discipline. You've got it. So use it.

If it's been an especially shit-bath day, I see myself completing the mission objectives and suckin' down a glass of red nectar at the end of it. I focus on the mission, but I also see the **reward** at the end of it. Real simple. And it works outstanding!

Don't matter what your reward is, **just give yourself one**. Your reward could be a real good meal (MREs or Mac & Cheese?), it could be a movie you rented (Jarhead?), a walk with your dog Kujo, or anything that makes you look forward to the end of the day. Anything that makes you feel comfortable.

In case you're wondering, there's a reason for the reward. I found that re-training my old green brain was sorta like re-training a rat with cheese. You've gotta give it a "treat" if you want it to crawl down the right trail. You know, reward it for completing your mission objectives. Damned if this don't work, too!

Your **Twelfth Tool** is "**Adapting to the Effects of War: Dreams, Memory Loss, Comfortable Places to Live, etc.**"

There's no deep, dark mystery of why us Warriors do the things we do. There's no need for five-year studies on why we kill ourselves, kill others, abuse ourselves, and abuse others. It's real simple. If you wanna figure it out, then go to War.

Over the years, I've noticed a lot of really interesting

behaviors that all Warriors have in common with one another. Don't really know if this is gonna make you feel better or not so good. But it's just the way it is. Hell, it ain't so bad. My generation of Warriors has gotten right used to it by now.

Fact is, you youngins are not alone like we were, 'cause we've damn sure got your six. But just think how you'd feel forty damn years from now, if no one told you until then that, "You're Normal" for what you've been through. If no one ever told you that, "You're different for sure, but you're normal for a Warrior, strong, and able to have a decent life; maybe you'll even love people again like you love your dog!"

You'd probably feel like us Old Knuckle Draggers do now. That is, a little cheated out of a good chunk of your life. Now that's not self-pity talkin', it's just the facts of life. So us Old Vets just give it a 100% effort for what little time we've got left. We don't ever want that happenin' to you!

Well anyway, let's talk about a few things that No One told us back in ancient times. Here's one for ya.

Most of the time, without Warriors knowin' it, they move to places that make them comfortable. For example, I'm just guessin' here, but I'd put good money on the possibility that we're gonna see a lot of Iraq Vets livin' in the southwestern desert areas, like in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah.

The Afghanistan Vets might find it more comfortable in places like Durango, Colorado or the foothills in the southwestern states. And do you wanta know why? Are you sure we don't need some dumb ass study to figure it out? Just kiddin', 'cause this is truly no mystery, either.

We go to places (environments) that make us comfortable, because it reminds us of the times when our

lives had real meaning. Now of course not every Veteran from the Afghan and Iraq Wars is gonna move to the southwest, but it's likely that many will for a time.

This need to feel comfortable with the terrain kinda fades with understanding. That is, it becomes less important as you develop more understanding of WHO you are. When you're a fresh "Raptor" right out of the nest of War, you tend to act more by instinct (gut feeling). You get less "twitchy" the more you figure things out.

Now let's talk about your memory, or the lack of one. Got CRS? That is, Can't Remember Shit? I know it ain't the greatest, but most Combat Warriors have a hard time with remembering things. Why is that? Again, real simple.

Yep! It's your old green brain protecting your ass from painful memories and helping you adapt to your surroundings by not pushin' you too much. I know that it's nice to have your brain-buddy watchin your six, but it gets damned aggravating when you forget something from five seconds ago.

So you've really got to Adapt to this one! I make notes everywhere (Sometimes forgettin' where the notes are!) and I always carry a pen and some paper with me to scratch down a thought. Everywhere I go, I have something to write on. Often, that includes my hand or arm, 'cause that works good too, unless you're in the rain.

You've just gotta go with the flow on this one, and not be critical of yourself. That's a big point. Cut yourself some slack on all this stuff. It's gonna take some time to figure out how all these Tools fit into your backpack. Alright then, so let's talk about dreams a bit.

Do you have nightmares? Chances are that if you're like most of us who came back from War, you do. Here's how I understand this from talkin' to the Squash Docs.

For a Warrior, dreams relate directly to bringing the War home as well as being at home in War. That means, there are parts of War you liked and want to remember, and there are parts you hated and don't ever want to remember.

Trouble is, they're all roommates in the same thick skull. If I get this right, nightmares are unprocessed events. This means that something happened down range that you need to come to terms with, talk about, and for sure get some good combat counseling to understand. It could be the killing, the loss of friends, survivor guilt, or something else.

Personally, I found that the more I began to control the Beast, the more the nightmares faded away. Nightmares often happen when you get stuck (fixated) in a past memory.

The word nightmare means "A dream arousing feelings of intense fear, horror, and distress." This is all about your Primal-Side-Part, your Beast Part's favorite territory to hang out in. So if you process (work out) the experience with the right counseling, or Self-Talk (especially with Battle Buddies) and learn to control the Beast, then you may be able to defuse these intense emotions. That should help prevent most, if not all of the nightmares. At least it did for me.

Strange thing about dreams too, is that when you're down range, you dream about being stateside. When you're stateside, you dream about being down range. For me and some of the Troops I've talked with, when we woke up in either place, we were disappointed at still bein' human.

That's because we were (Are) ashamed of what we've seen humans do to one another. Guess that's not too hard to figure out.

You know that what some people call nightmares is all relative. What I mean is, a nightmare to a civilian might not be so bad to a battle hardened Warrior. Guess it's all about degrees of intensity?

Here's one last thought on you going to counseling. A good combat trauma counselor is worth his or her weight in gold. I know some damn good ones now. But their job is to walk you down the right trail, guide you in the right direction, and watch your six. It's up to you to make the 100% effort to heal.

They'll dig into your skull and help you find out what it is that's causing your emotional problems. They might even be able to pull all your demons to the surface so you can beat the shit out of 'em. But if you don't help your counselor help you by being open and honest, it'll be like pullin' hen's teeth. You know, chickens don't have any.

Good Combat counselors will give you the right weapons, but you're the one who has to go to battle with 'em.

We've all got bad memories, because that's part of life. But a bad memory is like a jammed round in your chamber. You've gotta get it out, if you want your weapon to fire properly.

And like everything else we're talkin' about, you've got the strength to do this one, too!

Your **Thirteenth Tool** is "**Holdin' on to a Job?**"

Now I gotta tell ya, after more than 70 jobs in my twisted life, and spending a good bit of time in the Bed of Thorns and Fly Paradise, I think I just might have a notion of what not to do here on this topic.

I used to think that all my bosses were assholes. I

thought they showed me little or no respect, and that they treated me like trash. I was wrong. Most of them weren't the asshole, I was the asshole.

They were civilians, and I was expecting them to be Warriors. I was looking for any and all reasons possible to leave a job, and I was looking for any and all reasons to disqualify them for not understanding me. But how could they?

They couldn't understand me then, and they won't understand you now. So what do you do?

First of all, you might make the effort to find a job in an area you think you'll like. Maybe you like trees and plants (no legs at all?), so something in the Forest Service might fit. Maybe mechanics or welding sounds good, so you look into those fields.

Once you pick a field of interest, you can float around in that arena. In other words, once you gain a little experience, you can move to another job in the same field and still be doing what you'd like. That's just in case your boss turns out to be an asshole? But if this happens, you best check in the mirror first... I mean, just to be sure.

One more thing to remember here, too, is to set Mission Objectives every day in the work place. That will keep you organized and focused.

The most important thing to remember in the work place is to be proud to be a Warrior and to not expect non-warriors to understand you. They can't, and it's not their fault. It's no one's fault. We're different because War has made us different, and now we need to Adapt if we're gonna successfully survive here. You can, and you will!

By the way, in case you either have or will have a disability rating for Combat Stress, don't feel like your "productive" life has ended. That's because it's actually just

the beginning of your productive life.

I know how you may be feelin' firsthand, 'cause it took me about a year to get used to the idea that I didn't really have to work anymore. Actually, in my case, it was "implied" that I wasn't allowed to work anymore. Some folks thought it was a bit too risky for the civilians.

I've had a 100% rating for PTSD (I don't hate that term, I just feel better when I don't hear it) for about fourteen years. And I've had a disability rating since 1980. Of course, I was brain fried when I got back from War in 1967.

Right now a hundred-percenter (As we call ourselves) gets around \$2,500.00 a month. That ain't a lot for nowadays, but it'll pay the rent, and put food in the bowl for you and your dogs (cats, too).

What I'm sayin' here, is Adapt to this disability thing, too. And don't feel bad about takin' the money. Just ask yourself, "How much is my life worth?" You have given your whole life to your country. No Shit!

Besides, if you don't have to go out and work a nine-to-five job, then you'll have more time to feel comfortable. You know, do things you like, form new mission objectives, and just maybe help another living soul? Just consider yourself inactive military. Standing by.

Here's just a "By the Way Here".

Has anyone in politics or the military ever thought about how much money it takes to support ONE Warrior who has now been brain-fried in War and on a 100% rating for PTSD? Well, folks, let's just take an example from today's roster.

I know several Troops that are twenty-four years old, and on a 100% rating for PTSD. Let's suppose they live to be only sixty-five. That's only forty-one years. Now take

\$30,000 a year times forty-one years. That's right! It comes to \$1,230,000.00 per Warrior.

And with a possible (minimum) two hundred thousand claims facing the VA from our new generation of Warriors, well, you do the math.

So what's the point? The damn point is this! If we'd cut the bullshit and educate our Troops on the effects of battle before they go to War, during War, and when they come home from War, more than seventy percent of them wouldn't need to be filing claims. They'd know how to deal with their traumas and how to adapt to life! This intel comes right out of the mouth of some of the best damn clinicians I know. And it makes sense.

How about bringing them home on ships, having decompression bases for reintegration, thorough debriefings and follow-up classes on all the things we're talking about in both this book and the last book?

How about properly caring for our sons and daughters whose lives will never be the same after being down range? Well, if compassion ain't gonna get the cake eaters to take action, then maybe money will? Think about it.

Let's get back to your tools, before I need to go out and fire off a few rounds and pull the tab on a brain grenade.

Your Fourteenth Tool is “An Ivory Tower Education?”

Don't be discouraged if you're havin' a hard time in college. You've really gotta set mission objectives on this one too. Because I didn't have a mission objective and really didn't have a focus on what I'd like to do with my life, it took me a long ass time to get a degree.

Fact is, without focused mission planning, it took me twenty years and five colleges to get a diploma. I'm absolutely certain that you youngins will do better a whole lot better than that.

You know the old saying that "The only free cheese in on a mouse trap"? Well, my fine soon-to-be-educated fellow Warriors, that's the absolute truth. For you Marines, this rodent saying means that you gotta work your ass off for anything you want... OORAH!

You've gotta work hard at battle tactics in the military to be an excellent war fighter. You've gotta work hard at any relationship, if you wanna have one (for more than a week). You've gotta work hard at gettin' your Beasty under control and clearin' the chamber in your brain-housing-group (from the shit bath of War). And no shit, you've gotta work hard at gettin' an education.

My first suggestion here is to find what's called a "Vet Friendly College." That means it's a college that makes a real good effort toward working with Veterans, helping them get through school.

Some schools will place you into classes with other Combat Warriors. It's kind of a Battle Buddy program. They will also help you with tutoring and Veterans' counseling. Some colleges even have a "Vets Only" student hall... civvies not allowed.

You can Google "Vet Friendly Colleges" to find out more about this, or check out my website at www.sgtbrandi.com . I'm real accessible too, so you can even email or call me if that would make you feel more comfortable.

Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, is a good one. So is the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona. In New Mexico, a Combat Vet can go to school for free; books

and tuition are paid for. There are others in the country, too, so do a little recon before you decide.

Trade schools are a real good choice too, and just as rewarding. Don't it make sense that if you like "wrenchin'," you might look into bein' a mechanic? If you like swingin' a hammer, maybe learn to be a carpenter. I did that for years. It was a great way to make some bucks.

Being a Veteran, many unions and businesses will give you a "priority" when you apply to work there, as will government departments like the Post Office, Forest Service, and many Law Enforcement and Fire Fighting Services. Every little bit helps.

So once you find a school, what do you do to make it through the first year? Because, that's usually when most Warriors get pissed off and drop out pukin'.

Like I said, start out with a full magazine. Pick a Vet Friendly College, get hooked up with other Warriors as quickly as possible, and set mission objectives.

If you're like I was (which I doubt), don't take all the rocket science classes first (like Chemistry and Physics), which require high levels of math, especially when you ain't mastered your times tables yet.

In other words, take it easy your first year. There are lots of "soft" classes you need to take anyway. So take those first. Since I failed all my entrance tests, I had to take what they called "bonehead" classes in math and English first. I still don't know if they just called 'em bonehead courses for me only? You know, bein' a thick-skulled Marine and all?

So I respectfully suggest you low-crawl into school with easy classes the first year, and surround yourself with other Warriors (Friendlies). Find places that make you comfortable on campus (Veteran Student Hall), and don't push yourself, pretending that you're like all the other

candy-ass college kids. ‘Cause you ain’t. Then just maybe you’ll be less likely to beat the shit out of them and your professors. I hear these stories all the time.

Think about it, do good recon, and pick your battles carefully. School can be an R&R from the full-blown civilian world. There are some real enjoyable things about gettin’ an education. Just don’t make it an extension of the battlefield.

Your Fifteenth Tool is “Don’t Forget your Big, Hairy Friend; Your Beast”.

Just a little reminder here about your Big, Furry Friend. You know, your Beast Part.

Many of the things that haunt you are related to the horrible experiences you’ve had in War. And during those horrible experiences, your Beast was in complete control.

That means, your Primal Side (Your Beasty) is directly connected to your terrible memories. When you gain control of your Beast, you gain control of your thinking. We’ve talked about how to do that early on.

The benefits of controlling your thinking are fewer if any nightmares; reduced or eliminated need for the adrenaline fix; getting in touch with and becoming comfortable with the New You and rejoining the human race; the good part of the human race, that is.

You have the intelligence, strength, and wisdom to have a good life. Perhaps it might be different from most, but a life in which you can and will find both love and peace. A life you can one day look back on and know, ”It was a life well lived.”

**Keep the faith in yourself, my Brothers and Sisters
and live by the Warrior Code of Honor!**

**Stay Low, Stay Frosty, and Watch your Six at all
times!**

But have a damn good life!

You owe it to yourselves!

And I'm damned proud of every one of you!!

Sgt. Brandi... .Standing By... ..OUT!

3-2 Warrior Resources, Back Up is Here

OK Warriors! There are some damn good programs that are working. I'm gonna mention only three here, but go to my website at www.sgtbrandi.com and click on the **Clinician's Corner** photo. There you'll find a real good list. So check 'em out!

I'm listing these as "Examples" for other organizations to either hookup with, or to follow. You wanna know how to set up a program that works, ask these folks. I know there are many other fine Veteran programs in the country, but I've only worked with these. Maybe you Troops can update me on others, as time goes on?

The first "outstanding" **Cowboy Up! Program** is run by **Horses for Heroes-New Mexico, Inc.** SGT. Rick Iannucci and Nancy De Santis are the Directors there. SGT. Iannucci is a Marine and Green Beret. He also spent twenty years as a U.S. Marshal.

This is a no bullshit program! It teaches you the Cowboy Skill Set, which blends real well with your Military Skill Set. You'll be with other Battle Buddies, because only Combat Veterans are allowed to be in the program.

So again, go to my website or check it out directly at www.horsesforheroes.org

The next "outstanding" program is the New Mexico, **Military Order of the Purple Heart, Mentoring Program**. This program is run by Pete Comstock, the New Mexico, MOPH Commander, and a Silver Star recipient in Vietnam.

Pete will hook you up with a Battle Buddy/Mentor in the same branch of the service, usually the same day. But you'll damn sure have someone to talk with as soon as you

call. Once again, go to my website, and click on the **Clinicians Corner** or the “**Need Help? Right Now?**” icon. And, you’ll get help right now.

The third “outstanding” program is **Paws and Strips, Helping Dogs, Helping Heroes!** Jim and Lindsey Stanek are the cofounders of this excellent program. Jim is a three tour Iraq Veteran, a U.S. Army Staff Sergeant (11 Bravo) from the Spec. Ops. Community.

SSGT. Stanek and Lindsey provide service dogs to our Military Combat Veterans who are suffering with Combat Stress (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). To contact the Sarge or Lindsey, you can call #505-999-1201, or go directly to their website at www.pawsandstripes.org. You’ll wanna find out more about these excellent programs!

3-3 Glossary of Military Speak, and Catchy Sayings

A special thanks to Sgt. Rocco (Rock) Matta, Sgt. Jason Burchard and Sgt. Charrnessa Tidwell for updating the Old Knuckle Dragger on the new Lingo! I left the old terms in here for the old Warriors to chuckle at.

A

A. J. Squared Away. Someone who is anal about organization, or just plain organized.

ABDUs. Army Battle Dress Uniforms.

Affirmative. This means YES, understood.

Air Thief. Someone who is using up good air; has qualified for extinction.

AMTRAC. A large tracked vehicle used to transport Marines.

Angel of Death. The Beautiful Round-eyed Woman that takes you to the Big Base Camp.

AO. Area of operation. Where you blow shit up.

ARTY. Artillery. Also called Steel Rain.

ASS. Used as a slang for a weapon system, “We’re rollin’ with a lot of ass today.” (Fire Power)

Asshole. Uptight, critical; generally an annoying person.

Ass-in-the-grass. Someone in the field., usually a Grunt.

Assume the Position. Drop down and get ready to feel the Goodness; that is, Pain.

AT4 Rocket. A shoulder fired anti-tank rocket good for blowin' shit up.

B

B. Street. Used to be a street in Okinawa filled with bars and fine looking women (now called escorts?).

Baby Wipe Wars. What Troops call the Iraq and Afghan Wars.

BDUs. Battle Dress Uniform. Military clothing you wear into the bush. Marines called them Utilities, the Army called them Fatigues. Don't know why?

Belt-Fed. Rounds linked together for a machine gun. Or, "That guy is a belt-fed son of a bitch!"

Big Book of Words. What Marines call the Dictionary.

Black Hawk. A helicopter used in the Iraq and Afghan Wars.

Blue on Blue. Friendly Fire. Being shot at by your own Troops.

Body Armor. Also called a flak jacket. A heavy vest that might (?) protect you against shrapnel and some small arms fire.

Boom-Boom. Screwing, in Vietnamese slang speak.

Boonie Cap. A soft cover field hat. Marines call their hat a cover.

Boot. Someone new to the military, usually in Boot Camp. Or someone just new in the unit.

Bouncing Betty. A kind of landmine, that jumps up out of the ground and blows your balls off.

Bradley. An M-2 or M-3 tank used to make the day unpleasant for the enemy.

Brain Fart. Bad output from the brain-housing-group to your mouth. Bad choice of words.

Brain Grenade. Usually a beer, but anything capable of joyfully killing brain cells.

Brain-Housing-Group. The small, cluttered human brain. Green colored substance in a Marines' head.

Briefing. An explanation of something you need to know.

Buck up. A term used to make Troops bear their pain.

Buffalo. An IED resistant (?) vehicle used in Iraq and Afghanistan (costs about \$700,000).

Bug Fuck. Small, intense, overly active. Also, something driving you crazy.

Bullet magnet. Anything that draws enemy bullets to your position.

Burn the Shitters. A 55 gallon drum, cut in half, and filled with shit. Burning the shit was done with diesel, over long intellectual conversations.

Bush. Usually means out on patrol in the landscape. Or it can mean a bush, vegetation.

C

Cake Eater. Usually a soft-bodied, self-involved Politician.

Camel pack. A backpack filled with water. You suck on, through a small tube.

Carpet Bombing. B-52 air strike that makes the landscape look like the surface of the Moon. Unpleasant to the enemy and all life.

Case-Evac. To evacuate a casualty.

Cautious Compassion. Exercise cautious compassion with the safety off! Marine diplomacy on the battlefield?

Chin up, head down, and one round in the chamber, in case you stick the bayonet. A catchy Marine saying, used by Wise and Knowing Sergeants. Means to be prepared, alert, and ready for the unexpected.

Chinook. A twin-bladed helicopter used to transport Troops and supplies.

Chow Hall. The Gourmet Kitchen of Marines, serving only the finest of foods, and staffed by world renowned chefs.

Chow. The especially tasty food of Marines and Soldiers. Usually just like Mom used to make, only she didn't shit in it.

Cleared Hot. Permission to fire your weapon. Incoming support, cleared to drop ordnance (bombs) to make our enemies meet Jesus.

Click. One click is one kilometer (1000 meters).

Cluster Fuck. Nothing's working right, Murphy in complete control.

Cobra Gunship. The AH-1 Cobra Attack Helicopter. No shit, Death From Above!

Code of Honor. Rifleman's Code; Living Honorably.

Combat Jack. Exercising old Chester in the field... masturbation.

Condition One. To put your weapon on Red Con One. That is, to chamber a round and get ready to Get Some!

Corpsman. A Navy person, medically trained who saves Marines in combat.

Cover. What Marines call a hat.

Crabbing. Walking on all fours, as low to the ground as is possible.

C-Rats. C-Rations. 12 delicious selections of canned and boxed food, complete with a tasty desert and 5 cigarettes.

Crotch. What “only” Marines may reverently call the Marine Corps.

Crotcher. A Marine.

CRS. Can’t Remember Shit. Common to all Combat Warriors.

D

Danger Close. When an air strike or Artillery is close enough to kill your ass.

DCUs Desert Camouflage Uniform. Yet another military way to name your battlefield clothes.

Death before Dishonor. A Code of Conduct that Marines live by. Means you die before you turn to chicken shit and wimp out.

Dee-Dee-Mau. (Misspelled) Vietnamese for “get the hell out.”

Devil Dogs. Marines. Our mascot is the Bull Dog.

Digitals. Also called Diggies. Your battlefield clothing that comes in wonderful blending colors.

Dinky-Dow. Crazy in Vietnamese, used by Vets from that era.

Dirties- A.K.A. Hajji, A-Rabs, and many other colorful names. But me and my buddies call em’ dirties ‘cause they were simply dirty fucks.” (Sgt Rock)

Ditty-Bop. Means to walk casually.

Donkey Dicks. Usually a radiator hose or anything resembling the “little brain-housing-group. You know, Old Chester, a dick, a penis.

Down Range. Meaning to be deployed in a Combat Zone.

Dry Firing. Practicing firing your weapon without ammo.

Duffle Bag. Same as a Sea Bag. A large green canvas bag to stuff all of your life’s possessions in to get beat to hell in travel.

Dust Off. When the choppers lift off.

E

Eagle Shits. Payday in the Marine Corps. Comes from the Eagle on the Marine Corps Emblem.

E-Tool. A small folding shovel used to dig holes for shitting and sleeping.

Extraction Point. That’s your exit point, how and where you’re gonna leave a location.

F

Field Strip. To partially break down your weapon and clean it.

Fire Mission. Calling in an air strike or artillery.

Flush the Toilet of Humanity. Someone needs to meet Jesus right away.

Fly Paradise. A brown, shit covered world where some people, who make poor decisions, go to visit. Some stay a long time.

FNG. Fucking new guy. Usually someone just “in country”, or new to a unit.

FO. Forward Observer. Someone way up front callin’ in bombs and gathering intelligence.

Foot Locker. A small green box that you hope no one inspects, and where you hide your contraband. Usually kept at the foot of your rack.

Foot Mobile. A person on foot.

Forty Mike-Mike. Refers to the millimeter of the round that is fired by the Mark 19. This is a rapid-fire grenade launcher. A wonderful weapon!

Frag. A fragmentary hand grenade, with about a seven second fuse. A life time to wait.

Free-Fire Zone. Everybody is the bad guy. You can kill’em all. Oh boy!

Friendly Fire. This is also called Blue on Blue. It means you’re gettin’ shot at by your own side.

Frosty. Means staying alert.

FUBAR. Fucked Up Beyond All Reason.

Fuck. Noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, adjective, etc. One of the two most useful and often used words in the vast Marine vocabulary.

Fucking A! Marine term for Yes! Right on!

G

Garrison. The dreaded assignment to a base stateside. No one likes garrison duty, unless you're a POG.

Get Some. Meaning to fire weapons, blow shit up, and kill the enemy.

Get the Joke. Are you understanding?

Ghillie Suit. Also called a Bush Tux. Brushed burlap covered clothing that makes one almost invisible in the bush. Used by snipers. (And crazy Old Marines just for fun)

Gig Line. Making sure you shirt, belt buckle and fly line up.

Goat Country. What Troops call Afghanistan.

Goat Fuck. Something bad happens.

Green Weenie. Old Marine Corps saying. Usually referred to as being fucked by the Green Weenie.

Ground Pounder. Usually a Grunt. The Infantry.

Grunt. A Marine Rifleman. Use to be M.O.S. 0311.

Gyreen. A Jar Head.

H

H.O.G. Hunter Of Gunmen. A school trained Sniper, who slays the P.I.G's in his platoon to prepare them for sniper school. (Sgt Rock)

Habudabi. Another name for Arabs.

Hajji. The respectful term for someone who has made the trip to the holy land. It's what you say before and after it that changes the meaning. Like fuckin' Hajji, or Hajji asshole.

Hard Ball. The blacktop pavement of a road.

Hardback. A tent having a wooded frame and a wooden floor. First class housing.

HE. High Explosives.

Head Call. Using the toilet or taking a dump.

Hesco. A large wire cage filled with rocks and dirt to protect the Troops from incoming rounds.

Hit the Wall. A new expression for breaking down emotionally.

Hookin' and Jabbin'. Hand-to-hand combat with bayonets.

Hostile. Pronounced hoss-till. An enemy.

Hot LZ. A landing site that is under enemy fire.

HUA. An Army slogan meaning, **Heard, Understood, Acknowledged.** Pronounced HOOAH!

Hummer, or Humvee. A jeep like-vehicle used by U.S. Forces.

Hump. To walk., most often with a pack and combat gear.

I

I glassed it. Scoping it out through binoculars or rifle scope.

I've got your six. I'm watchin' your back.

IED. Improvised Explosive Device. The chicken shit bomb used by the enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan, rather than a stand-up fight.

Improvise, Overcome, and Adapt! Marine attitude toward any obstacle or situation.

In-Country. To be deployed in a foreign country, or the foreign country you are in.

Intel. Intelligence (?)

Interrogative. Said before you ask a question on the radio. Don't know why.

Intestinal Fortitude. Guts.

It's All Good. Used by Troops to say "It Ain't Nothin," or, I've got it handled.

J

Jackin' Your Jaws. Talking.

Jar Head. Referring to the bald Marine head, with a starched cover, resembling a jar or jug.

Jerk Off. A waste of air, someone worthless.

Jibber. Another name for the natives in Iraq, since they speak jibberish.

Joe. The slang used between Army Troops, as in G.I. Joe.

Jug Head. Same-e-Same as Jar Head.

K

Kahuna. Hawaiian Sea God. (Mentioned in Book ONE)

K-Bar. A wonderful Marine Combat Knife, and my friend.

Keep 'em Forward. Keep your weapons toward the enemy at all times.

Kevlar. Usually what Troops call their helmet, made from Kevlar.

L

LAV. Light Armored Vehicle. A tracked vehicle, like a small tank.

Lean, Mean, Fighting Machine. A well-trained and conditioned Marine.

Leatherneck. A Marine.

Liberty. When you get to go off base and mix with the civvies.

Lifer Juice. Coffee.

Lifer. Someone who stays in the military for 20+ years.

Light 'em Up! Or to get lit up means to get fired on or to fire on the enemy.

Limp Dick. Someone usually spineless, worthless, and afraid of salt.

Lock and Load! Put your safety on and cram a magazine of ammo in your rifle.

Lolly Gaggin'. Sitting around, wasting time.

Low Crawl. Crawling as low to the ground as possible, and very slowly.

LZ. Landing Zone. A place where helicopters land.

M

M14. A wonderful, .308 caliber rifle, that I love as my own child and cherished friend.

M16A2. A full length rifle with the M203 Grenade Launcher. Another standard weapon of our Troops.

M24. A Sniper Weapon System. (Rifle)

M249 Automatic Rifle (Machine Gun) also known as the SAW. That stands for Squad Automatic Weapon.

M4. A carbine with the M203 Grenade Launcher. One of the standard short barreled weapons of our Troops.

M79 Grenade Launcher. The Vietnam era way to reach out and touch someone. It has a 79 millimeter round.

Maggot. Usually a Marine in boot camp. A generally worthless person.

Make My Bird. Get out of this place. Fly away.

Mess Gear. Metal, fold-up plates that you don't want to shit in.

Mikes. Minutes

Military Alphabet. A=Alpha, B=Bravo, C=Charlie, D=Delta, E=Echo, F=Foxtrot, G=Golf, H=Hotel, I=India, J=Juliet, K=Kilo, L=Lima, M=Mike, N=November, O=Oscar, P=Papa, Q=Quebec, R=Romeo, S=Sierra, T=Tango, U=Uniform, V=Victor, W=Whiskey, X=X-ray, Y=Yankee, Z=-Zulu.

Military Intelligence. You figure that one out?

Military Time. From 12:00 midnight until 1:00 pm it's the same, except we say, for example, ten hundred, instead of ten o'clock. One o'clock is 1300, (thirteen hundred), 2 is 1400, 3 is 1500, 4 is 1600, 5 is 1700, 6 is 1800, 7 is 1900, 8 is 2000 (twenty hundred) 9 is 2100, 10 is 2200, 11 is 2300, and it goes up to 2359 and turns back to zero one hundred.

Mind Fuck. Common term in the Marine Corps. Means you are confused, or you're being confused by someone or something.

Mission Critical. Absolutely important to the success of the mission.

Mission focus. The intent of the mission without deviation.

Mission Objective. What it is you are going to achieve.

MK-19. Known as the Mark 19, a 40 millimeter (grenade launching) machine gun, capable of 325 rounds per minute. WOW! Makes us old Knuckle Draggers drool!

MOPP Suit. (Mission Oriented Protective Posture) pronounced as "mop". A hot miserable suit you wear when you think you're gonna get hit with chemical or biological weapons.

MOS. Military Occupational Specialty. What you are best qualified for without screwin' up.

MREs. Meals Ready to Eat/Excrete. Foil wrapped food that makes you constipated if you eat it dry. Also called MRPs, Meals Ready to Puke.

Murphy. A being that waits for you to make a mistake, to make things worse. Usually flies on the back of a Great Eagle that shits on your head.

N

Napalm. Dropped from aircraft in air strikes to convert Communists to our way of thinking.

No Salute Zone. In the field when you don't salute officers. So the enemy doesn't know who the officers are?

Non-Hacker. Someone who quits, and drops out pukin'.

NVGs. Night Vision Goggles. They're the ones that fit on your helmet and swing up and down.

O

O Dark Hundred. When it's dark. Also called Zero Dark Thirty or Zero Dark Hundred.

OEF. Operation Enduring Freedom. The War on Terrorism.

OIF. Operation Iraqi Freedom. A tour might be called OIF One, or the second assault might be referred to as OIF Two. This will vary.

One is none. Two is one. If one of anything can go wrong, it will. Two gives you a better chance. This is especially true in setting explosive charges or depending on military equipment.

OORAH! A Marine word that comes from the Turkish word that means Kill. Marines use this a lot. It is what we say when another Marine says Semper Fi. The response is OORAH!

Ordnance. Explosives, usually dropped from an aircraft.

Oscar Mike. Operationally Mobile. This means you're movin' out!

Outside the wire. Means you've left the safety (?) of base camp.

Overwatch. A position that offers protective fire for a base of operation.

Oxygen Thief or Bandit. Someone who is a waste of good air and needs to be flushed down the toilet of humanity. Seems to be a lot of ‘em?

P

P.I.G. Professionally Instructed Gunman! Also someone new to a sniper platoon who is slayed like a pig when he screws up. (Sgt. Rock)

Pain is Good, Now Feel the Goodness. A favorite saying of Drill Instructors about to make your body, feel the Goodness. You know, like in “drop down and give me a thousand!”

Paint Me, or Paint the Target. To shine your gun sight laser on the target to shoot it.

PLF. Parachute Landing Fall. A five point landing that’s supposed to take up most of the shock of impact when your ass hits the ground.

Podunk. Candy, Twinkie-like crap filled with sugar.

POG. Person other than Grunt.

Police Action. An undeclared war, like in Vietnam and other delightful places?

Police up. To clean up or correct something.

Politics. Poly, meaning many. Ticks, meaning blood suckers.

Precision Guided Whoop-ass. Incoming artillery or an air strike.

Predator. The MQ-1B Predator. An armed, unmanned Drone used to gather intelligence and blow shit up. There are a number of these, like the MQ-9 Reaper and RQ-4A Global Hawk, but most folks know them as Predators. Who thinks these names up?

PTSD. My definition is, Psychological Training for Superior Discipline. In shrinker speak it means, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. That D at the end, sure sounds a lot like disease to me?

Puss Nuts. Someone real stupid or asking dumb ass questions.

PX. Post Exchange. A Store on a Naval Military Base. On an Army and Air Force Base it's called the Base Exchange (BX). Don't ask me why?

Q

Qualifies for Extinction. Someone needs to put this person out of his misery. A waste of good oxygen, an oxygen thief.

R

R.P.G. A rocket propelled grenade. Not real accurate but effective. U.S. military doesn't use this weapon.

Rack. Your wonderful Marine Corps bed.

Ranger Grave. Sleeping holes dug to prevent gettin' hit at night by mortar fire.

Red-con-One. A loaded weapon with a round in the chamber, safety on.

Ripped Fuel. A brand name for stimulant pills banned by the military, but in still in popular use.

ROKs. Korean Marines from the Republic of South Korea. Wonderful fighters, and greatly appreciated by U.S. Marines in Vietnam.

S

Saddle Up! Means to get up off your ass, get your gear on and get ready to go Oscar Mike.

Same-e-Same. Vietnamese saying meaning “the exact same thing.”

Sand Bagger. Someone lazy, or trying to skate. Mostly used in this context, “You sand baggin’ son of a bitch, get your lazy ass out there and help with that working party.” (Sgt. Rock)

Sand Pit. What some Troops call Afghanistan.

Sandbox. What Troops call Iraq, among other things.

SAPI Plates. Twelve inch square ceramic plates worn in the front and back of your body armor to stop the AK-47 round.

SAW. Squad Automatic Weapon. The M249 Automatic Rifle.

Scoop, or Skinny. Information, the latest news.

Screw the Pooch. You’ve made a big mistake.

Scum Bag. Someone fully qualified for extinction.

Semper Gumby. “Means, ‘Always Flexible!’ for two reasons, cause the word changes and you need to accept that, and so that your ass ain’t tight when the green weenie plugs it.” (Sgt. Rock)

Shit Bird. Generally, anyone with a poor attitude.

Shit Tube. A direct drop or shortcut to Fly Paradise.

Shit. Second most common Marine word, taking the place of most parts of speech.

Shit-for-Brains. Someone who cannot think clearly; easily confused.

Shrapnel. Small bits of bombs that travel freely through your body.

Sit-Rep. Situation Report. What is happening at this moment.

Skater. Someone who comes up with creative ways of getting out of the field or out of working parties. In context, “you skatin’ bitch!” (Sgt. Rock)

Skivvies. Your under ware.

Snap To. To get your shit together and deal with it.

Snappin’ In. Dry-firing your weapon, or paying attention.

SOP. Standard Operating Procedure. The way it’s usually done, even if it’s wrong.

Spineless Maggot. Someone worthless, having no back bone, and having a great fear of salt.

Splash Down. When the arty or incoming air support ordnance hits the ground.

Spotter Round. In the old days, it was usually a White Phosphorus round that marks the spot for a napalm strike. White Phosphorus is a delightful substance that sticks to you and burns like hell until its gone.

Squad Bay. The barracks that Marines call home.

Stay Frosty. To stay alert and on guard at all times.

Steel Rain. Artillery.

Step Off. To move out on a mission.

Suckin' Wind. You're dog-ass tired.

Surrender is Not in Our Creed! Marines do not surrender, do not quit, or give up.

Sweep (or Search) and Destroy. The public relations policy in Vietnam, to make better friends and neighbors.

T

Tango. Usually referred to as an enemy.

The Stan. A name Troops use for Afghanistan, other than Goat Country.

The Suck. A name only Marines use for the Corps.

Thermite Grenade. A hand grenade that produces tremendous heat, and can melt through an engine block.

Thousand Yard Stare. The spaced out stare of a Combat Warrior, thinking about his her traumatic experiences.

Tracer Round. A bullet that when fired is visible, especially at night. Only problem is, the enemy can also see it and where it's being fired from.

T-Rats. Pre-manufactured military food usually served in the chow halls of forward units.

Triggers. What sets you off emotionally.

Two is one and one is none. One charge is never enough to be sure. The same way with anything, you need a backup to be sure.

U

Unfuck. Adverb, noun, adjective, verb. The process undertaken to organize a cluster fuck. It may also be used in this way. (I.E.) A senior enlisted Marine may say, "Hey squad leader, go unfuck that cluster fuck," or, "Go unfuck that private, he's all fucked up." (Sgt. Rock)

Utilities. What Marines call their BDUs, the clothes they wear in the field.

V

Victor. A vehicle.

VIED. Vehicle Improvised Explosive Device.

W

Wheels Up. Usually means when your aircraft is taking off. Sometimes it means taking off to be deployed down range.

When conditions are at their very worst, people are at their very best. This is when the tough get going!

When the going gets tough, the tough get going.
Applies to all non-quitters.

Winged Lizard. A bird-like creature.

Y

Yellow Jugs. A yellow jug that is filled with explosives, used by the enemy.

You don't have to like it, you just have to do it. No quitters, no wimps and no whiners. What we all have to do at times and make the best of it.

Young Pups. Young Marines, Young Devil Dogs.

Z

Zero Dark Thirty, or Zero Dark Hundred. Night .

