

Introduction

This booklet was created for you to promote healing. Use it daily and it will pay back the time you have invested into it. What you are investing into is the “New Old You”.

The thoughts contained within are far reaching. You and I must remember that inspirational information is like a shower; it does not last more than a day. Please use it wisely. Apply it to yourself; do not beat others with the information just because you have a command of the knowledge.

Knowledge is power only when you use it properly. Use it on yourself and obtain sobriety and stability with this daily.

Find something that strikes you as important for today. Print it, write it out and display it on your fridge, bathroom mirror, car dashboard; anywhere to remind you that you are on a new mind journey.

Love yourself.

The Warrior's Code of Honor

As a combat veteran wounded in one of America's wars, I offer to speak for those who cannot. Were the mouths of my fallen combat friends not stopped with dust, they would testify that life revolves around honor.

In war it is understood that you give your word of honor to do your duty to stand and fight instead of running away and deserting your friends.

When you keep your word despite desperately desiring to flee the screaming hell all around, you earn honor.

Earning honor under fire changes who you are. The blast furnace of battle burns away impurities encrusting your soul. The white-hot forge of combat hammers you into a hardened, purified warrior willing to die rather than break your word to friends – your honor.

Combat is scary but exciting.

- You never feel so alive as when being shot at without result.
- You never feel so triumphant as when shooting back – *with* result.
- You never feel love so pure as that burned into your heart by friends willing to die to keep their word to you.
- And they do.

The biggest sadness of your life is to see friends falling. The biggest surprise of your life is to survive the war.

Although still alive on the outside, you are dead inside – shot thru the heart with nonsensical guilt for living while friends died.

The biggest lie of your life torments you that you could have done something more, different, to save them.

Their faces are the tombstones in your weeping eyes, their souls shine the true camaraderie you search for the rest of your life but never find.

You live a different world now. You always will.

- Your world is about waking up night after night screaming, back in battle.
- Your world is about your best friend bleeding to death in your arms, howling in pain for you to kill him.
- Your world is about shooting so many enemies the gun turns red and jams, letting the enemy grab you.
- Your world is about struggling hand-to-hand for one more breath of life.

You never speak of your world. Those who have seen combat do not talk about it. Those who talk about it have not seen combat.

You come home but a grim ghost of he who so lightheartedly went off to war. But home no longer exists. That world shattered like a mirror the first time you were shot at. The splintering glass of everything you knew fell at your feet, revealing what was standing behind it – grinning death – *and you are face to face, nose to nose with it!*

The shock was so great that the boy you were died of fright. He was replaced by a stranger who slipped into your body, a MAN from the Warrior's World.

In that savage place, you give your word of honor to dance with death instead of running away from it. This suicidal waltz is known as: "doing your duty."

You did your duty, survived the dance, and returned home. But not all of you came back to the civilian world. Your heart and mind are still in the Warrior's World, far beyond the Sun. They will *always* be in the Warrior's World. They will never leave, they are buried there.

In that hallowed home of honor, life is about keeping your word. People in the civilian world, however, have no idea that life is about keeping your word. They think life is about ballgames, backyards, barbecues, babies and business. The distance between the two worlds is as far as Mars from Earth. This is why, when you come home, you feel like an outsider, a visitor from another planet. You are.

Friends try to bridge the gaping gap. It is useless. They may as well look up at the sky and try to talk to a Martian as talk to you. Words fall like bricks between you.

Serving with Warriors who died proving their word has made prewar friends seem too un-tested to be trusted – thus they are now mere acquaintances.

The hard truth is that earning honor under fire changes you so much that you return a stranger in your own home town, an alien visitor from a different world, alone in a crowd.

The only time you are not alone is when with another combat veteran.

- Only *he* understands that keeping your word, your honor, whilst standing face to face with death gives meaning and purpose to life.
- Only *he* understands that your terrifying – but *thrilling* – dance with death has made your old world of backyards, barbecues and ballgames seem deadly dull.
- Only *he* understands that your way of being due to combat damaged emotions is not unusual, but the usual and you are OK.

A common consequence of combat is adrenaline addiction. Many combat veterans – including this writer – feel that war was the high point of our lives, and emotionally, life has been downhill ever since. This is because we came home adrenaline junkies. We got that way doing our duty in combat situations such as:

- Crouching in a foxhole waiting for attacking enemy soldiers to get close enough for you to start shooting;
- Hugging the ground, waiting for the signal to leap up and attack the enemy;
- Sneaking along on a combat patrol out in no man's land, seeking a gunfight;
- Suddenly realizing that you are walking in the middle of a mine field.

Circumstances like these skyrocket your feelings of aliveness far above and beyond civilian life:

- Never have you felt so terrified – yet so thrilled;
- Never have you seen sky so blue, grass so green, breathed air so sweet, etc.; because dancing with death makes you feel stratospheric aliveness.

This unforgettable experience of being sky-high on adrenaline is why you come home basically “thrill-crazy” – that is: crazy for thrills. But do you know that you are an adrenaline junky? No you do not, because being wacked-out on it 24/7, day after day, month after month, becomes the “new normal.” You do not think anything is wrong with being constantly high as a kite on adrenaline because it is not un-usual but the usual – the common everyday condition of combat.

Then you come home where the addictive, euphoric rush of aliveness / adrenaline hardly ever happens in the normal course of events. You miss being sky-high on it and find normal boring. You hunger for your “fix” of thrills/danger like an addict hungers for his “fix” of heroin. So what often happens? “Quick, pass me the motorcycle” and/or fast car, thrill-driving, drag race, speedboat, airplane, parachute, extreme sport, rock climbing, big game hunt, fist fight, knife fight, gun fight, etc.

Another reason Warriors may find the rush of adrenaline attractive is because it lets them feel *something* rather than *nothing*. The dirty little secret no one talks about is that many combat veterans come home unable to feel their feelings. It works like this.

In battle, it is understood that you give your word of honor to not let your fear stop you from doing your duty. To keep your word, you must numb up/shut down your fear. But the numb-up/shut-down mechanism does not work like a tight, narrow rifle shot; it works like a broad, spreading shot gun blast. Thus when you numb up your fear, you numb up virtually all other feelings as well.

The more combat, the more fear you must “not feel.” You may get so numbed up/shut down inside that you cannot feel much of anything. You become an emotionally dead man walking, feeling virtually nothing for nobody (if you let yourself be stopped in the flow of fighting by feelings of grief for fallen friends you may join them). This condition is known as “battle-hardened,” meaning that you can feel hard feelings like hate and anger, but not soft, tender feelings (which is bad news for loved ones).

The reason that the rush of adrenaline, alcohol, drugs, dangerous life style, etc. is so attractive is because you get to feel *something*, which is a step up from the awful deadness of feeling *nothing*.

Although you walk thru life alone, you are not lonely. You have a constant companion from combat – Death. It stands close behind, a little to the left. Death whispers in your ear; “Nothing matters outside my touch, and I have not touched you...YET!”

Death never leaves you – it is your best friend, your most trusted advisor, your wisest teacher.

- Death teaches you that every day above ground is a fine day.
- Death teaches you to feel fortunate on good days, and bad days --well, they do not exist.
- Death teaches you that each day of life is sufficient unto itself.
- Death teaches you that you can postpone its touch by earning serenity.

Serenity is earned by a lot of prayer and acceptance. Acceptance is taking one step out of denial and accepting/allowing your repressed painful combat memories, and repressed coming home disappointments to be re-lived/suffered thru/shared with other combat vets – and thus de-fused.

Each time you accomplish this dreaded but necessary act of courage / desperation:

- The pain gets less than the time before;

- More tormenting combat demons hiding in the darkness of your gut are thrown out into the healing sunlight of awareness, thereby disappearing them;
- The less bedeviling combat demons, the more serenity earned.

Serenity is, regretfully, rather an indistinct quality, but it is experienced as an immense feeling of fulfillment/satisfaction deep down inside; from having demonstrated to be a fact that you did your duty under fire no matter what cost, thereby proving that you are a Warrior, a Man of Honor and from being grateful to Higher Power/your Creator for sparing you. It is an iron law of nature that such serenity lengthens life span to the max.

Down thru the dusty centuries it has always been thus. It always will be, for what is seared into a man's soul who stands face to face with death never changes.

Signed,

Paul R. Allen

Purple Heart Medal recipient

Former Combat Infantryman, U.S. Army 7th Infantry Division, Korea

Life Member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)

Life Member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Dedicated to absent friends in unmarked graves

How and Why the Warrior's Code Was Written

“Dear writer of the Warrior’s Code of Honor, I thought it very well done and would like to know more about you and your experience. We might be interested in giving this far greater exposure. Thank you,

Tobias Naegele <mailto:tnaegele@atpco.com>”

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Thank you Mr. Naegele for your kind words about *The Warriors Code*. The following information may answer your question about me and my experience.

My experiences as an 18 year-old combat infantryman and my disastrous coming home experiences led me to write the Code. In general I wrote it in the hope that I could shed some small light on why combat veterans are like they are, how they can fix it and earn serenity.

In particular I wrote it to forewarn my fellow combat veterans about the dangers of coming home with un-realistic expectations and denied PTSD.

My coming home expectations were not only wrong but upside down and backwards too. I expected that things would be much the same as when I left for war, and expected to resume my life pretty much as before. These expectations were based on my ignorance of what struggling and fighting in deadly earnest amidst bodies, blood, pain, and violent death does to those who do the fighting. I now know that I was also wounded in a secret, bloodless way called PTSD but did not realize it at the time.

When I came home I had no idea that combat had aged me far beyond my years, changing me from an immature teenager into a man old enough in the head to be my own father. This is why I was so surprised and disappointed to discover that I had nothing in common with the High School friends I expected to resume hanging out with. It was if I had become their responsible, trustworthy parent and they were still irresponsible, untrustworthy adolescents. After friends died in combat keeping their word to me, they seemed too un-tested to be trusted and were now very sadly mere acquaintances to be avoided.

I had no idea that I came home thrill-crazy, which made me consider those who were not willing to engage in dangerous but thrilling activities not OK people. For example, going “blast fishing” to see who could hold a burning stick of dynamite in their hand the longest before throwing it into the water to “blast” fish to the surface. I always won those contests, holding the dynamite longer than anyone else so that when I finally did throw it into the water it only sank an inch or so before exploding and wetting everyone in the boat. As a result nobody wanted to go “fishing” with me anymore.

This is just one example of my thrill-crazy, adrenaline junky behaviors. There are others, like driving cars like a Hollywood stunt-car driver, riding motorcycles like a mad maniac, etc. I always won these events in such a dangerous, scary way that nobody wanted to do these things with me either. As a result I felt lonely and alone, a stranger in my own home town. I of course thought myself blameless for this separation/isolation from everyone I once knew – muttering to myself some such as, “I’m OK, it’s them who are not OK.”

One crashed expectation followed another in a long line of disappointments. Consequently coming home was hell for me -- not because of the people God bless them they were all OK -- but because of my un-realistic expectations and denied PTSD. Broken, dispirited, and heart-busted, I left town and never went back.

Thanks to the G.I. Bill and multiple, simultaneous part-time jobs, I graduated from university and became a successful professional by day, and a thrill-crazy alcoholic and junkie by night. I was so happy being a "cool dude" slyly getting away with burning the candle of my life at both ends that it was a real shock to discover – in a rare moment of self-honesty/self-awareness – that under my surface success I was desperately unhappy. I did not know why. Everyone I knew wished they were me.

But something was wrong, something was missing in my life I knew not what (I realized years later that my mind was troubled from combat and the “something” missing was peace of mind/serenity. I could not name this idea; I could not describe what I was looking for because I did not know that my mind was troubled and hungered for peace of mind in the first place).

The only thing I knew was that the more successful I was on the outside the more desperately unhappy I became on the inside and the more I needed help for something I knew not what. The more I kept putting off seeking help the more desperate I got and the more unmanageable my life became. It is said that desperate men do desperate things. I can testify from personal experience the truth of this saying. I got so desperate that I managed to flog Macho-Man me to the Veterans Administration, my desperation overcoming my humiliation and shame for needing help. I was covertly diagnosed as suicidal and overtly advised to check myself in to the Psycho Ward. I did so, was locked down behind bars and kept heavily sedated 24/7.

After a long time groggy and sleeping 16 hours a day I woke up enough to check myself out AMA (Against Medical Advice) and checked myself in to the wilderness of Honey Island Swamp. I stayed there alone for a year, living off the land. I gave my word of honor to myself to stop stumbling thru life thrill-crazy, stop drinking and drugging to numb my guilt for living while friends died, and stop all my other PTSD caused self-destructive behaviors. I have kept my word to this day. I kicked “cold turkey” alcohol, drugs, tobacco and came out clean as a whistle. I have been that way ever since.

I emerged from the wilderness a different person; still searching for something I knew not what. I moved far away out-of-state and started my professional practice all over again. I remain to this day a successful self-employed nobody hiding out in the weeds of anonymity for reasons no civilian will ever understand but bloodied, battle-rattled combat vets will. No one but my wife knows I was even in the military much less wrote *The Warrior’s Code of Honor*.

Over the years I often wished that I had read something like the Warrior's Code to forewarn me about the dangers of coming home with un-realistic expectations and denied PTSD. It would have saved me immense pain and suffering. I gave my word of honor to myself to write a warning to my fellow combat veterans what coming home might really be like, why this was so, and what they could do to fix it.

So I sat down and deliberately allowed repressed painful coming home disappointments, and repressed terrible combat memories hiding in the darkness of my gut to come out into the sunlight of awareness and be re-lived and suffered thru so I could write about them.

The first time I did this I wound up crouched in a corner, head in arms, crying my heart out. The second time I repeated this dreaded but necessary act I was able to remain seated at my desk, head in arms, sobbing uncontrollably for a long time. The third time I was able to sit with head up, tears flowing down my cheeks, shorter than before. The fourth time I cried even less. And so on and on and on. Each time the tears and pain were less than the time before. This is how I was able to write *The Warrior's Code of Honor*. It took years.

Meanwhile something wondrous was slowly, imperceptibly happening to me inside. Calmness and tranquility increased, inversely proportional to the decrease in emotional pain. The more pain I deliberately suffered thru thereby disappearing it, the less pain remained, making more room for the infilling of more of blessed serenity, the "something" I had been searching for all those years but could not name.

In sum, my self-inflicted pain and suffering not only enabled me to write the Code, but also earned me ever-increasing peace of mind. I am no longer searching. I found what I was looking for. I wrote *The Warrior's Code of Honor* to help others but wound up helping myself. There must be a lesson in this somewhere.

It is my life desire that my words will forewarn my fellow combat veterans that if they come home with realistic expectations and admitted PTSD, all will be well, but if they do not they will be in hell.

Ancient wisdom teaches that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. I came home un-forewarned, was thus unarmed, in hell, and bleeding – shot thru the heart by un-realistic expectations and denied PTSD. And on that bloody hook, thereby hangs this tale.

Signed,

Paul R. Allen

A Veteran's Explanation of PTSD and Suicide Prevention

The explanation of PTSD by caregivers and other would-be experts would fill a library but has done little good. Something *compels* this writer of the Warrior's Code of Honor to try and help out - not from a college/university professor's eyes or from a medical person's eyes - but from the eyes of a combat veteran who was once in a VA hospital suffering from severe PTSD and overcame it. Perhaps my experience may let others suffering from severe PTSD know that they too can overcome the condition.

- The bad news is that PTSD can never be cured (cured = no issues ever).
- The good news is that it can be overcome (overcome = overpowered, surmounted).

PTSD is acquired in an instant and lasts forever. Some combat veterans feel that their PTSD was acquired from being in combat a long time, and that "Short-timers" claiming to be suffering from PTSD are phonies and combat vet wannabees. They are wrong. One rocket or one mortar or the mere threat of danger can create a lifetime of PTSD.

PTSD and A Troubled Mind Are the Same Thing

What civilian caregivers and other would-be experts who have never seen combat do not know is that there is no difference between suffering from PTSD and having a troubled mind. Both terms describe the same thing. To say that they are not the same is to make a distinction without a difference. *Therefore for the rest of this article this writer will combine the two terms into one as follows: troubled mind/PTSD.*

It is common for combat veterans to deny that they are suffering from troubled mind/PTSD. This denial seems to be a two sided coin:

1. Not Knowing
2. Peer Pressure.

Vets Come Home With Troubled Minds/PTSD and Do Not Know It

Regarding "not knowing," many if not most combat vets come home with troubled minds because battle automatically makes your mind troubled (if you are fighting alongside me and your mind is NOT troubled you are too stupid to be safe so get out of here before you get me killed!). Having a troubled mind in combat 24/7, day after day, month after month becomes the "New Normal" and you do not think anything is wrong with it because it is not un-usual but the usual, common, everyday condition your mind is in when fighting for your life.

The problem is that for many combat vets -- including this writer -- you cannot tell any difference in your head from High School to combat to back home again. To you everything is the same in your head, there has been no change, it seems like you have always been this way, you cannot remember ever being any other way. This is why you deny that you are suffering from troubled mind/PTSD. You sincerely/genuinely do not know that you are.

This "not knowing" is one side of the troubled mind/PTSD denial coin. The other side is Warrior Culture Peer Pressure.

Peer Pressure Requires Denial of Troubled Mind/PTSD

All the while you are licking your invisible troubled mind/PTSD wounds the Macho-Man Warrior Culture requires you to deny that you have any wounds to lick. Even if you are one of those who know that you have troubled mind/PTSD, if you admit it you fear that your fellow warriors will disrespect you as a “weakling,” a “sissy,” something less than a *real* Macho-Man. You consider this a fate worse than death as proven by the fact that you risked your life in combat to earn/keep their respect.

Vets Search for Something They Know Not What (Peace Of Mind)

In sum, many if not most vets come home with troubled minds/PTSD, do not know it, even if they do know it they deny it anyway due to peer pressure, and spend the rest of their lives searching for something they know not what that is missing in their lives. That “something” is peace of mind/serenity but they cannot name it, cannot describe what they are looking for because they do not know that their minds are troubled and long for peace of mind in the first place.

Two Categories of Troubled Mind/PTSD: Non-Lethal and Lethal

Non-Lethal Troubled Mind/PTSD

1. Non-thrill seeking examples: Waking up screaming back in battle; feeling guilty for living while friends died; feeling naked and vulnerable without a gun close to hand; never entering a store, restaurant, movie theater or bar without compulsively scoping out something to hide behind if bullets start flying... always the "if" there might be a threat; must sit with back to wall or skin on back will crawl with fear; automatically duck, hide head in arms at unexpected sounds; and so on.
2. Thrill-seeking examples: Getting restless and bored super-easy; drinking to excess; drugging; doing dangerous but thrilling sports and other thrilling non-sport activities; have thrilling hobbies; live a thrilling life style; have multiple simultaneous sexual relationships seeking thrills; have multiple marriages seeking thrills; various other thrill-seeking behaviors that one may look back on as regrettable; and so on.

Lethal Troubled Mind/PTSD - The Death Wish

I call lethal PTSD "The death wish." The question naturally arises: how many combat veterans with PTSD have a death wish? I expose to ridicule my personal belief that many do and are not aware of it. They drive cars like Hollywood stunt-car drivers, ride motorcycles like mad maniacs, etc., and think they are doing it for the “thrill.”

This is true they are doing it for the thrill because virtually all combat vets come home basically “thrill-crazy.” This is the light side of the thrill-seeking coin. It has another side however, the dark side where a hidden death wish may be piggybacking on top of the light side “thrill” thing.

To illustrate/offer proof of why I say this I quote a man very knowledgeable on this subject.

Death Wishes Are Disguised As So-Called “Accidents”

"Dear writer of the Warrior's Code of Honor. I have just finished my first reading of the Code. I say first because I knew, after reading it the first time, that it would require subsequent readings and thoughtful analysis. I am a retired 26 year veteran. I wrote to thank you for this great insight into the combat veteran."

I work as a civilian safety manager for Army Forces Command and see on a daily basis the struggles that combat vets are succumbing to. Yes, the adrenaline rush that leads to the fast bikes, high speed driving, substance abuse and ultimately – very, very sadly – the so-called “accidental” death of those warriors.

Please know that I will spread these words of the Code for I feel they are what we need to stop, or at least slow down, the loss of our heroes. Remember, just because an “accident” hasn’t happened doesn’t mean it isn’t about to. Thank you very much.

Mario Gabriel Jr.”

*Aviation Safety Program Manager, Safety Awards Manager.
U.S. Army Forces Command – Ft. Bragg.*

Writer’s Question to Vets: Is The Moment Of Death A Surprise?

My dear fellow thrill-crazy combat vets, do you think that the vets who had the fatal "accidents" Mr. Gabriel mentioned above knew they were going to die that day?

Or were they in denial that they had a death wish and at the moment of death were surprised?

I invite you to think on it - if your thrill-crazy adrenaline junky behaviors are inching ever-more dangerous, you may be in for a "surprise" orchestrated by your hidden, super-sneaky death wish.

The Suicide Iceberg

The sad truth is that the combat vet death wish is acted out far more often than is commonly known. It may be helpful to think of suicide as an iceberg. At the tiny 10% top of the iceberg sticking out of the water are the death wishes acted out without disguise, like doing yourself in with a gun, etc. These are visible, thus are "news" and reported as such.

But out of sight in the 90% of the iceberg down below the waterline are all the death wishes disguised as fatal “accidents.” Since these suicides are not visible they are not "news" and go un-reported.

This under-reporting is why the American people have no idea just how bad the combat vet suicide situation is now, and how bad it soon will be when the huge PTSD tidal wave hovering over America blocking out the sun fully crashes down upon this un-suspecting and totally un-prepared nation.

How The Warrior’s Honor Code Website Is Preventing Suicides

Combat veterans have saved their own lives by reading the Warrior’s Code, the feedback from other combat vets and the Writer's Notes which together form a Group Therapy. It works like this:

- a) After visiting this website a vet who is blindly doing his thrill-seeking thing starts to pay attention to his activities to see if they are inching ever closer to an "accident." When and if he catches his hidden, super-sneaky death wish in the act, he moderates/slows down to avoid getting a “surprise;”
- b) Reading this website explains to a veteran *why* he thinks and feels like he does;

- c) He sees that he is *not alone*, virtually all his fellow combat veterans have similar thoughts and feelings. Instead of being alone in this world like he thought, he is immensely relieved to find out that he is standing in the middle of a crowd;
- d) According to Sgt A. Brandi (sgtbrandi.com) "*He comes to understand that he is NORMAL for what he has been through...NORMAL!*" He realizes that having problems in his life is not un-usual, but the usual for combat vets with troubled minds. These train wrecks are known as, "Personal problems caused by PTSD," and are common to most vets. This commonality brings him the happy realization that he is not a bad person like he thought but is basically an *OK* person who has been ground down into PTSD from doing his duty under fire.
- e) It is impossible for words to adequately describe the relief / comfort/deliverance that such a realization of one's OK-ness brings to a troubled vet who thinks himself Not OK, just as it is impossible for words to adequately describe a beautiful sunrise. No matter, for purposes of clarification and emphasis I make the attempt as follows.

The difference this website makes to a troubled vet who thinks himself Not OK can be likened to the difference between night and day:

1. Before, he is in the black darkness of aloneness and low self-esteem. He feels deficient and Not OK for having train wrecks in his life -- a suicide risk;
2. After, he is in the bright sunlight of solidarity/togetherness with other vets and high self-esteem. He now happily realizes that his train wreck life is normal for a troubled vet (misery loves company) and feels OK -- not a suicide risk.
3. This OK-ness in turn becomes a platform he stands on while girding his loins for the battle with himself for humiliating, embarrassing behavior change such as swallowing his Warrior pride, admitting PTSD, and seeking professional help (you can only be as big as you are willing to be little).

Full Disclosure of the Severity of the Writer's PTSD

In the interests of full disclosure I hereby revise and extend my remarks regarding my personal PTSD experience. At the beginning of this Writer's note I stated that I was once in a VA hospital with severe PTSD. I sort of left out that it was the Psycho Ward of the hospital; I was locked down behind bars and kept heavily sedated 24/7 for a long time because I was a high suicide risk.

From that dark bottom of the PTSD hole in the ground I clawed my way up and out into the bright sunlight of recovery to write the *Warrior's Code of Honor*. I close this note with a universal truth as old as mankind. In modern times it was expressed in the famous *Kill the Bear* scene from the American movie "The Edge" starring Anthony Hopkins and Alec Baldwin:

“WHAT ONE MAN CAN DO ANOTHER CAN DO”

Signed,
Paul R. Allen

Towards Accepting a Combat Vet's Way of Being

The Warrior's Code of Honor

The writer of the Warrior's Code of Honor attempts in this work to describe the world as seen through the eyes of a combat veteran.

It is a world virtually unknown to civilians and unknown even within the Warrior culture because few veterans can talk about it. My purpose in writing the Warrior's Code is three-fold:

1. To let my fellow combat veterans know why they feel like they do, and that they are not alone in this world because there are many others who feel the same way they do.
2. To explain to the loved ones of combat vets and civilians why veterans are like they are;
3. To show how to connect with a combat veteran.

The first two purposes are hopefully fulfilled by the Code itself. I will attempt to fulfill the third purpose as follows:

People who are trying to make meaningful contact with a combat veteran can do so if they keep one thing in mind – the most important thing in his life is keeping his word of honor, as proven by the fact that he is willing to die to do so. Therefore to connect with him you must demonstrate/prove to him out in the open in front of God and everybody that you too have a Code of Honor – that is, you also keep your word – *no matter what!*

Do it and your twin Codes of Honor will twine around each other in double helix and bond you together. Do it not and you will not. This goes for everyone – especially wives and children – repeat: wives. End of story. Case closed.

I offer these poor, inadequate words – bought not taught – in the hope that they may shed some small light on why combat veterans are like they are, how they can fix it and earn serenity.

It is my life desire that this tortured work, despite its many defects, may yet still provide some tiny sliver of understanding which may blossom into tolerance – nay, acceptance – of a Warrior's perhaps unconventional way of being due to combat-damaged emotions from doing his duty under fire.

Signed,

Paul R. Allen, Purple Heart Medal Recipient
Life Member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
Life Member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Dedicated To Absent Friends in Unmarked Graves

A PTSD Tidal Wave Is Starting To Crash Down Upon America

A Coming Crisis

The writer of the Warrior's Code of Honor attempts in this note to alert the American people about a coming catastrophe that is one of the most predictable crises in our history, yet nobody talks about it.

It concerns our PTSD caregivers. They are overwhelmed now by their current caseload. What will happen when over 300,000 new returning combat veterans swamp our caregivers already overpowered systems? This is bad enough but it gets worse. Redeployment rotation back into combat can be shameful, five or six times more, spinning families into confusion and turmoil, resulting in a 50% increase in children dependents seeking psychological treatment. Thus our PTSD problem is not only combat warriors but also their families which when added together create a PTSD tidal wave.

This tidal wave of PTSD is gathering strength and is just now starting to crash down upon our caregivers. Yet the "Powers That Be" stick their heads in the sand and play "ostrich" to it instead of preparing for it. No surprise here, this is what Putrid Politicians do.

But this neglect is *treason* because it betrays our heroic Veterans! Vets suffering from un-treated PTSD will soon skyrocket to the highest levels this nation has ever known. We will have heartbreaking hordes of homeless veterans, veterans suffering from substance abuse and suicide in stunning, mind-boggling numbers.

Code of Honor

This coming American tragedy is one of the reasons I wrote the following passage in "Towards Accepting a Combat Vet's Way of Being".

"To connect with a combat vet you must demonstrate/prove to him out in the open, in front of God and everybody that you too have a Code of Honor – that is, you also keep your word – no matter what! Do it and your twin Codes of Honor will twine around each other in double helix and bond you together. Do it not and you will not. This goes for everyone – especially wives and children – repeat: wives".

I wrote those words in an attempt to show all people in general how to connect with combat vets at the present time and especially in the near future when vets suffering from un-treated PTSD will wander the streets dazed, dispirited and suicidal. They will need the help and understanding of ALL patriotic citizens. If you are one of those and wish to help out, I respectfully suggest that you start by rigorously keeping your word to him/her in small things and as opportunity serves, keep your word in bigger things and hopefully progress to a helpful bond.

The Spouse of the Combat Vet

That was in general. In particular I am attempting to speak to the combat vet's woman at home regarding a very touchy subject that is taboo to talk about: her perceived fidelity in his eyes. Before battle he may have been a dignified, courtly gentleman who of course believed in her fidelity. After combat however, that guy is no more. He marched into battle and is gone forever, consumed in the flames of war.

Who came back may look like the guy who left, but inside is probably a secret savage beast from doing what he had to do to survive. This hidden beast part naturally has beastly thoughts and suspicions about everything under the sun because that is the mind-set you must have to survive war. Thus his suspicion will most likely include his woman's fidelity.

It works like this. In all wars since the dawn of wars when a man discovers that his woman has been unfaithful back home, in a close-knit group such as a combat unit his buddies usually find out about it. It is only natural that they wonder about their own woman's fidelity. They wonder about it but once and that is continuously.

Question 1: How many men do *not* come home suspicious after living in the suspicion soup known as "combat?"

Answer: Few and none.

Question 2: How many men come home knowing they are suspicious? Are aware of it so they can watch out for it and control it?

Answer: Few and none because suspicion is part of PTSD and many if not most combat veterans suffer from PTSD, do not know it and thus deny they have it. The bad news is that this unawareness/denial makes suspicion like an invisible snake coiled under the table, waiting to strike discord and disharmony in the home.

The good news is that the vet's woman can take a little step that helps her man big time by ostentatiously demonstrating that she keeps her word in each and every little thing around the house. Seeing her rigorously keeping her word *in all things* reassures his suspicious hidden beast part that this includes her fidelity.

On the other hand if she is sloppy about keeping her word, his hidden beast part may think this failing includes her fidelity, causing his suspicion snake to strike strife and sorrow – almost always not as suspicion but disguised as something else, some little thing, *anything*.

So woman why take this chance? Why not tighten your word up to lighten him up? Does he need such reassurance because he is a bad man, a weak man? No he is not; he needs it because he came home not bad or weak but hurt and suffering from war wounds - perhaps not on the outside but inside because, in timeless words of Jose Narosky:

“In war, there are no un-wounded soldiers.”

Understand The Warrior's Mind

A word of warning. When your man comes home do not be fooled by his outside "Warriors Swagger." Inside most combat vets come back tottering trying to tie the shattered and scattered pieces of themselves back together that were blown apart by battle. So to help your man, disregard his denial of PTSD and know that he needs you to keep on keeping on with the kids, house, school, etc. mostly by yourself for a while longer.

In closing: dear long-suffering woman, can you find the compassion within yourself to give him the time he needs to re-assemble? I invite you to think on it.

Paul R. Allen

PTSD From “War and the Soul”

“I shouldn’t be here. I should be dead a thousand times, the things I’ve been through. That’s why I’m just waitin’ for it. Death is chasing me. It’ll catch up to me. Nobody could survive what I did and still be alive. Sometimes I’m convinced I’m not.”

“You’ve been scared out of your wits”, I said. You’ve been through just about the most horrible things a person can endure. You must have been frightened down to your very soul.”

“My soul?” Art’s face turned white. He stared at me with pinpoint eyes. “My soul has fled.”

Art, recounting his time at Khe Sanh, Vietnam

“... If you had seventy near-fatal car accidents in one year of your life between the ages of eighteen and nineteen, do you think that would mess you up all by itself? That’s what it was like in Vietnam.”

Jack, Combat Reconnaissance Sergeant

*“The common therapeutic model, that is, misses the point that PTSD is primarily a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic disorder – in effect, not a **psychological** but a **soul** disorder. All of its aspects concern dimensions of the soul, inasmuch as the soul is the part of us that responds to morality, spirituality, aesthetics and intimacy.”*

“All wars are over words, God and Good. The Creator is one and the same for us all but we kill each other over our image of God. And all our wounds reduce to whether or not we were good. War is always terrible, but your lifetime of suffering is based on whether or not you know in your heart that you did good.”

Reid Mackey, a helicopter crew chief in Vietnam

“I feel like I’ve lost my sense of grace about myself and the world.” Walt said in one of our psychotherapy sessions. “I don’t belong here anymore. I don’t fit. I don’t deserve God’s love.”

“From the day I arrived on my base, I did not see any beauty. Beauty is the manifestation of the spirit. It’s the force that keeps the soul alive. Can you imagine not seeing a single speck of beauty for an entire year? Day by Day I felt my soul withering away inside me. Day by Day I fell further away from grace. For an entire year, I lived in the American Vietnam, the place of no beauty. That is the ultimate terror.”

Walt

As a guest on a Veterans Day radio talk show, I speak about the prevalence of homelessness and PTSD among Vietnam War veterans, about the unrelieved moral pain many carry to their graves. Ben, a World War II vet, calls in. Though sobbing, he forces himself to speak. “What about us?” He howls over the airwaves. “What about me? It wasn’t better in World War II. Just because history calls it ‘the good war,’ don’t believe it. It always hurts to kill. I want some peace before I die. Please, someone out there help me.”

Bob a World War II vet

“Warriors are meant to play major roles in the lives of their communities, providing help in times of need and restraining rather than encouraging violence. They need guidance from others who have been through similar experiences, and they need to pass their values, wisdom, and

experiences on to younger initiates. Ideally, during all phases of service, warriors interact with their people rather than remain separate from them. This is not the case in modern society. After soldiers are utilized for political and military purposes, they are called veterans. Other than receiving certain assistance, benefits, and occasional public ceremony, they are expected to return to civilian life and function accordingly. "Warrior" is not even a recognized social class; and a veteran, especially one with disabilities, appears to many as a failure in terms of normal civilian identity. In training and combat, soldiers are taught to release primal destructive impulses when threatened or ordered. Later, under stress, they are prone to resort to their old training. Veterans sometimes easily explode, attack, and strike out; what was normal during warfare becomes criminal or dysfunctional in peacetime. Veterans receive little help or compassion for these challenges and have no socially useful roles into which to channel these tendencies."

"My government spent over \$50,000 and many months to train me for Viet Nam," he commented, "but not a penny or a day to help me come home. How was I supposed to act civilized after being trained to beat and brutalize and then use that training against other Americans? After having watched my buddies get blown away? It takes a lot more time, effort, and money to recover from that than it does to turn a man into a beast who can behave like I did. That's why I never had kids. I can't trust myself."

Doug, military policeman and survivor of the Tet offensive

"Ironically, John Wayne himself successfully avoided conscription during World War II and never served in or experienced war. Yet through public performances of how he, and we, wished war to be, he established himself as the model for American GIs. In contrast, actor Jimmy Stewart, who did serve, said, "When I got back from the war in 1945 I refused to make war pictures."

"Let my spear lie idle for spiders to weave their web around it.

May I live in peace in white old age.

May I sing with garlands around my white head,

Having hung up my shield on the pillared house of the goddess.

May I unfold the voice of books, which the wise honor."

Euripides, Erechtheus

"While traditional cultures and mythology the world over teach us the way of life and service that is a warriors path, the specific term "warpath" is a Native American concept. In the indigenous tradition of North America, being on the warpath does not just mean going to war. It means walking the path of a spiritual warrior at all times—in war and peace, on the battlefield, and in the village. Thus the warrior's path is essentially a way of life, and it always includes the teaching and practice of the journey home."

"The pollution we accumulate through participation in war interrupts our connection to the Divine. The soul may achieve a return to divine presence through any religious or spiritual tradition; it is a simple yet profound prescription for healing and moral realignment. On the road to return, we cleanse, purify, rejoin the world community and the flow of life, and attain forgiveness.

“Unlike our contemporary culture that attempts to conduct life as usual even while we are waging a war overseas, tribal people realized that an entire society is afflicted by war and must participate in its warriors' healing. In traditional cultures, purification was the first order of business for bringing a warrior home. The Papago people, for example, held a sixteen-day purification ceremony for young warriors when they returned from their first experiences of taking life. During this ceremony they were tended only by older warriors, so that they had the benefit of their elders' experience to facilitate their transition back into civilian life. This is not to say that warriors in traditional cultures did not have what we now call PTSD. But the rituals around the condition did help to minimize its effects and lead to recovery. The condition was treated as a communal rather than an individual problem, and those who suffered from it were not pathologized.”

“Our leadership's refusal to accept responsibility for our wars helps explain the rage and mistrust veterans and their families often feel toward authority. The young man or woman, after all, went to war in the nation's name. Except in rare instances, a soldier did not kill because he was criminal or insane or possessed by selfish motives. To the contrary, and while striving under the most adverse conditions, he killed because his nation ordered him to do so in its service. Ultimately, he killed because, otherwise, he and his companions would be killed themselves. The nation and its leaders defined the enemy, provided moral and ideological reasons to go to war, trained the soldier for it, and put him in the kill-or-be-killed situation. In Plains cultures a war leader was held responsible for the casualties of his command. His people expected him to carry that difficult responsibility and judged him adversely if he did not. So should it be today.”

PTSD & Purification

*“One of the most powerful ritual practices of purification is the Native American sweat lodge. Its Lakota name is **inipi**, which has various meanings. It is called the place of the spirits because, in the inipi, we leave secular space behind and drop the ordinary barriers that stand between us and the spirit world. In the inipi, we may have visions and be entered by spirits, or, if you prefer, awaken archetypal energies and images.*

The inipi is also called the purification lodge. Its heat is so intense that it cleanses and purifies us body and soul. In the inipi, a person cannot tell a lie. We are purified by standing before the Divine in truth. And yet another name for the inipi is the stone lodge, or the stone people's lodge. In Native American teachings, everything—rocks, air, water, and the earth itself as well as all plants and animals—is alive. When heated, the stones in the lodge awaken and give their lives for us so that we can purify.

The sweat lodge is both a place and a ceremony. Everything is done in a reverential manner, carefully designed to restore balance and order as the primary ingredients of health. When we follow the order of the ritual, the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual cleansing is quite intense. In contrast, veterans in our modern society stress the extreme degree to which they feel dirty, sinful, impure, and immoral, and they can carry this sense of being soiled for the rest of their lives. Our culture has no means to help veterans purify from their combat experiences before reentering civilian culture. They take the energies and emotions of war directly back into ordinary life with neither cleansing nor transition. This state of affairs is confusing and dangerous both to returning vets and to the community welcoming them home. Sometimes, as evidenced by the higher than normal homicide and suicide rates among vets, it proves to be deadly.

Lack of purification also helps explain why alcohol abuse is common among veterans. Alcohol temporarily anesthetizes the impure feelings and energies that veterans carry. But being a depressant and a potentially addictive substance, alcohol is not a purification agent and cannot provide the true physical, moral, and spiritual cleansing needed.

Especially orchestrated for veterans, the sweat lodge can be a powerful tool for purification in several respects: To begin with, the inipi is a safe place; entering it is symbolic of entering Mother Earth's womb. It is a place where we are held and embraced and can feel protected. And because of the inipi's status as a place of change, it can provide veterans with a much-needed symbolic transition from the

combat zone back to a world at peace. The inipi can serve as a tunnel of return, transporting vets from the interior war zone they still dwell in through the inner and spirit realms and then back into our common world cleansed.

The inipi is also a place that, literally as well as figuratively, melts away the defenses that the soldier by necessity had to develop during combat. In the intense heat, and with other participants as witnesses all around, the prayers are sincere. A person cannot help but be open, honest, and vulnerable. Psychic numbness eases so that true feelings can be reactivated. Since veterans' numbness is chronic and severe, such measures that counteract closure and defensiveness can be especially effective.

Further, the inipi is a communal experience. Everybody is a brother or sister in the lodge and each just as vulnerable as the other. We turn everything over to the Divine, in whose eyes we are all equal and whose plans for our lives we cannot see. No person or experience is judged or shunned. It is important for vets to feel like equal members of a circle of vulnerable and open people. In the inipi, anything they say is respected. They can feel accepted in ways they need and may not have experienced.

Finally, the inipi is sacred space. After we have dropped our defenses through ritual and sensed them melt away through steam and heat, we may connect with energies of nature or spirit we cannot ordinarily experience. We seek these connections in a sincere and reverential manner. Veterans feel that they have lost their souls, their grace, and their relationship with divinity. Telling them otherwise does no good. They need to experience a connection for themselves.

They need to feel their souls alive inside their bodies. Through the inipi, they may have visions or energetic infusions that can help reawaken their souls and bring them home. Through such a radical ritual, they can begin to feel an order and a purpose and compassion in the universe that includes them.”

From 'War and the Soul'

The Many Spellings of PTSD

**Pychological Training for Superior
Discipline - Sgt Brandi**

Post Traumatic Spiritual Disorder - Rick Ianucci

Post Traumatic Injury - Monty Roberts

Post Traumatic Stress

A Vet's Cry for Help

"Try to understand"

If he stays home alone,
and doesn't like to hear the phone
If he won't answer the door,
'cause he doesn't want to see anyone anymore.

"Try to understand"

If nighttime is something to dread,
and his sleep is restless and fleeting in bed,
If he quietly gets up in the night,
so as not to disturb your pleasant respite.

"Try to understand"

If he becomes nervous and jumps around,
at unexpected movement or a sudden sound.
If he sits in a restaurant with his back to the wall,
because he can't have anyone behind him at all.

"Try to understand"

If he shows no fear and wouldn't turn if he could,
that part of him has gone that says you should.
If his anger seems quick and extreme,
He's only trying to control intense emotions unseen.

"Try to understand"

If he seems emotionless and indifferent some days,
And perhaps he just says "Go Away!"
If he becomes depressed and may seem unkind,
He is only trying to spare you the agony in his mind.

"Try to understand"

If his mood changes and alters
and he becomes unsure and often falters,
If he becomes sad and stares into space,
He has only gone to some other place.

"Try to understand"

.....Because he can't.....

By David Fye, ADF, Viet Nam veteran.

My Mission is Real Simple...

About Sgt Brandi

Sgt. Brandi, USMC (Ret) currently speaks around the country for troops deploying to or returning from combat, he meets with Senior Officers and NCO's, speaks with troops with Combat Trauma, makes presentations to various Combat Brigades, Colleges and Veterans, Clubs, Counselors and administrators, and to students and the general public.

He is a Vietnam Vet who has experienced the trauma of war and has dealt with PTSD for over 40 years. From his website:

"Today, I've assigned myself a new mission; to help my younger Brothers and Sisters avoid what my generation has experienced over the past 40 years."

Changing and Saving Lives

By helping each and every Warrior understand, they've walked off the battlefield far stronger than when they walked on, and to then use that strength to overcome the traumas of their experiences. This allows them not only to understand their feelings about their experiences are normal and to heal, thus preventing them from taking their lives and the lives of others. It also directs them toward life goals that benefit themselves and their loved ones and leads to a more productive and excellent future.

Explaining how Post Combat Feelings are Normal

The Warrior's Guide says it all. And once they understand the savage side of their nature, they are on the road to healing. Sure, there will always be scars, but that's the price we willingly pay to serve this nation. And I want them to feel comfortable in remembering the war, the loss of true friends and the pain we've shared as Brothers and Sisters. Because everything we've experienced in Battle makes us stronger, wiser and better human beings when we keep that focus; allowing others to be weaker than we are, and yet to help them to a position of strength that we as Warriors all have.

Focusing on the Needs of the Troops

My primary focus today is our Troops, past and present; they are my Brothers and Sisters, my fellow Warriors. And I will do whatever it takes to help and encourage each of them on their Journey of Honor.

Endorsed By the Veterans Administration

"The Warrior's Guide to Insanity, has been endorsed and purchased by the Department of Veterans Affairs; is in the process of being purchased by the Veterans Administration; purchased by the United States Army at Fort Carson; has been endorsed by the Health Science Center, College of Medicine, Round Rock Texas; endorsed and recommended by Col. Dave Grossman, a National Speaker and Director of the Kilology program for Veterans and Law Enforcement, and by many private psychologists and psychiatrists working with Veterans and their families."

"... the U.S. Military is recognizing the value of The Warriors Guide to Insanity as a guide for our Troops dealing with Combat. It's recently been approved by The Department of Veteran Affairs for distribution to all Vet Centers around the country as a "clinical tool", a communication bridge between the Combat Veteran and the clinician."

"...Thousands of copies are now in the hands of Active and Inactive Military personnel, families of Veterans, Clinicians, Media and Civilians supporting our Troops"

(This comes from Sgt Brandi's website. It is a fantastic resource for getting information on the effects of PTSD from the Veteran's standpoint. It is full of information, links and contact information to other resources. Both his books, "The Warrior's Guide to Insanity" and "The Warrior's Guide to Worlds at War" are offered to Veterans as a free eBook download.)

Website: **<http://sgtbrandi.com>**

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Controlling the Beast

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

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

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

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

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

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

You don't like yourself, and no one likes you, except for other Warriors who have become the savage as well. Your self-esteem plummets and you feel helpless to change it. The battles rage in your mind because the monster, the primordial self wants you to return to battle, to rage and the emotions of war, so it can feel alive and in control. In your mind, you feel the brutality-of-humanity shock, the guilt over killing, the loss of friends, the loss of yourself, survivor guilt, anger and betrayal, and the loneliness of isolation from having become an outcast. And then, death by any form of suicide becomes a path to peace. But this is not the answer! There is a path the Warrior may take to heal from battle. There will always be scars, and yet life may be well worth the effort.

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

That is not as difficult as one might think. The answer is to admit to yourself, that first and foremost, you are not the same person you were before walking onto the battlefield. You must admit that you acted normally in war, and the killing, loss and pain are part of the results of your experiences. And

then, you must admit that you are the Warrior controlling the beast within you. It will never, ever go back into its cage, ever. But it will listen to you.

So what do you do?

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

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

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

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

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

To my Fellow Warriors, my Brothers and Sisters.

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

Symptoms of Combat Stress

So here we go! “Why do I have Combat Trauma, otherwise known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?” you ask. Well maybe it was the planets, fate, karma, Murphy, or any other excuse you’d care to make, but the fact is, “You’ve Got it” . And it’s gonna stick with you like a tick on a dog. Like it or not, you are damn well gonna have to deal with it now, or deal with it later. I recommend now.

Alright then, my fine Youngins, let’s look at what may have caused a round to jam in your chamber. As you go through the list, see if any of these hit the “bull’s eye”, and you don’t have to say a word to anyone (unless you need to read out loud like Marines). This will be your own little secret for now; you can say “Holy shit!” in silence.

Do any of the following fit you?

- 1. You have been through a traumatic, “life and death” experience, maybe a lot of them.*
- 2. You may be feeling “No one understands me”. That may be true unless you talk to the right people.*
- 3. You are in “pain”, mentally, physically, or both, and you don’t know why.*
- 4. You are suffering with the emotional waves of “Loss”.*
- 5. You are feeling “helpless” in getting a grip on the waves of emotions flooding your thoughts.*
- 6. You may be feeling “survivor guilt”, because you are still alive, and your friends are not.*
- 7. You may be feeling “guilt” over the things you’ve done and don’t know who or what to blame.*
- 8. Nothing “seems the same” to you anymore. Everything that was once familiar, comfortable and normal is now different and uncomfortable.*
- 9. Nothing feels important, not family, friends, work, or your life.*
- 10. You are not sleeping much, and having nightmares when you do.*
- 11. You are having “flashbacks” from your traumatic experiences.*
- 12. You want to return to the war, to your unit and friends and don’t really know why.*
- 13. You now have a violent temper. You get pissed off over every little thing, and want to lash out at everyone all the time.*
- 14. You may want to kill everyone who pisses you off. Everyone is an asshole.*
- 15. Your guard is always up, and you can’t trust anyone anymore.*
- 16. You can’t seem to find any real friends to “trust”.*
- 17. You can’t relax around people, and can’t stand crowds.*
- 18. You can’t go into public places and not be on full alert, checking for the enemy.*
- 19. You’ve turned to drugs and or alcohol to kill the pain in your head and body.*
- 20. You’ve lost what self-esteem you once had, and don’t think you’re worth squat shit.*
- 21. You can’t make plans for tomorrow because the present is so miserable.*

22. *No one wants to be around you anymore, not family or friends. You've become angry, hateful, critical, and negative about everyone and everything.*
23. *You may be thinking of suicide as a way to escape, and have become reckless with your life and the lives of others.*
24. *You feel like no one gives a shit about you anymore, and don't have a clue why.*
25. *You find it more comfortable on base than around civilians, or you just want to be alone all the time. The 1000 yard stare has become your pastime activity.*
26. *And generally, you're up to your neck in shit, and nobody's throwing you a line.*

Well, my fine troubled friends, no matter how many of these nasty little items have struck a chord in your brain-housing-group, it's not hopeless, and "I AM" throwin' you a rescue line. So rest assured. And you may still smell like shit for awhile after you get pulled out, but don't sweat it, you'll meet others that smell the same way. Once you shower up, you can rub a little deodorant on your ass, and no one will know the difference.

This is just an Old Marine's way of saying:, "*You Are Not Alone*". There are ways to get through all this, and "YOU WILL" improvise, overcome and adapt! The choice is yours. And after a good bit of work, you'll be able to plan your **custom-tailored** life, and enjoy the hell out of it.

So then, just "Why" you have a post traumatic stress disorder doesn't really matter. That you "do" have it, does. Deal with it in a constructive way.

Question: *Why do I have what shrinkers call Psychological Training for Superior Discipline (PTSD)? What Warriors call, Combat Trauma or Combat Stress.*

Answer: This ain't rocket science: You don't spend every damn day for 12 to 15 months thinkin "I may die this day"; you don't watch your true Friends get body-bagged or blown apart; you don't kill other human beings (including women and children) and not feel like you've just been spin-kicked in the head. If you have emotions, if you are a human being, then you have definitely been psychologically wounded. That is, you've got a round stuck in your chamber and you need to talk about this shit with someone. Another Warrior will do, but better yet, if it's a qualified combat trauma counselor.

From the Website: <http://sgtbrandi.com> - This is an extract of Section 5-3 of The Warrior's Guide to Insanity. (A free download on the site)

Veterans and Animals

If you want a good friend that will love you unconditionally, will never judge you, and die to protect you, then get a dog. Cats are without exception, another source of unconditional love. Perhaps a little quieter than dogs (sometimes) but none the less, true companions. Over the course of the last 7 years, it's become obvious to me that animals of all kinds return far more love than I could ever give in return. The word animal itself means "Living Soul", and these beautiful beings are examples to all of us of what living in the moment truly means. They don't worry about the past or the future, and they sure as hell don't bitch about how bad they've got or what they don't have.



As we used to say back in "The Land of the Little People" (the Nam), "Feel'in good is good enough!" and when conditions went from bad to worse, we'd say "Ain't nothin but a thing...ain't nothin". Standing out with my cattle friends in the rain or snow, they just "Tuff it out!"... Ain't nothin. That's a good thing to remember when the world turns to shit at times. If it ain't life threatening, then it truly "Ain't nothin".

Having talked to hundreds of Combat Veterans over the years, I find it interesting that we all feel pretty much the same on the subject of Friendship. Animals are about the best examples of such Friendship that I know. It's also interesting to me, how many Combat Vets run animal sanctuaries like I do, or take in numbers of animals that have been abandoned or abused by human assholes.

Guess it's sort of our way of giving back a little life that we all had to take in war. I'm not real sure, but it does feel good to know that because of you, a loving animal has a little longer to live in this world, will get a little love they never had, and a chance to be a real important part of your life. Let's face it, left to itself, the world would be a beautiful place. It's humans that turn it into a shit hole. Just feels good to help old Mother Nature out a bit, by takin good care of some of Her animals.



Animals are even being used in some hospitals to help out patients. My good friend, Billie Russel, a retired Army, Command Sergeant Major, from the 7th Medical Battalion told me a story about one such hospital that brought in a dog. These Combat Troops loved it!

Trouble was, the Soldiers would open up and actually tell the dog all their traumatic experiences, and told the clinicians to “Eat shit and die”. Pissed all the shrinks off! But the Troops loved the dog being there and were actually happy, so was the dog.

So if you don't like humans much, like I used to, maybe go and volunteer at an animal shelter or sanctuary, get a dog or two from the local animal control folks, or start up an animal rescue place of your own. Somehow the money always seems to come. That is, when you're workin for others, and not bein a greedy son of a bitch, taking advantage of the weak or disadvantaged.



Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy for PTSD

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

For thousands of years horses have been mystical, magical creatures playing the role of transportation, gladiator, companion, entertainer and more. Now they are also playing the role of psychotherapy assistant through a discipline known as Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) which is increasingly being used to treat war veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs estimates that Post Traumatic Stress afflicts as many as one-quarter of the troops returning from the Middle East, or about 300,000 men and women. The growing field of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy is showing great promise in treating veterans and their families who suffer from the nightmares, anxiety, depression, anger, irritability and other debilitating effects of this invisible, yet very real disability.

Preliminary Studies Validate EFP for PTSD

Equine Assisted Therapy for PTSD has garnered the attention of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, who has provided contracts for practitioners to run equine assisted therapy groups with returning troops from Afghanistan and Iraq. Preliminary results are favorable, suggesting statistically significant rates of change.

Animal-assisted therapy has shown evidenced-based efficacy in patients including war veterans with PTSD, depression, anxiety, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorders, dissociative disorders, and other chronic mental illnesses.

Why Horses?

According to Dr. Laurie Sullivan-Sakeada, a Utah based Clinical Psychologist, *horses are prey animals, and, like those who have been to war, rely on their heightened senses for survival. They react to and mirror the emotions of visitors directly, without words. Horses respond negatively to negative emotions. They respond positively to positive emotions, and they have no ulterior motives.*

“They are just there,” says Sakeada, “providing non-verbal feedback.” The horses are therapeutic and interactive tools that speed up the therapy process substantially. Dr. Sakeada notes that one session of Equine Assisted Therapy in the barn is equal to five sessions “on the couch.”

Equine Therapy for Emotional Healing

In Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy, horses are used as tools for military veterans to gain self-understanding and emotional growth. It recognizes the bond between animals and humans and the potential for emotional healing that can occur when a relationship is formed between the two

species. In most cases, the horses are not ridden, and usually are not tethered in the arena, but allowed to roam free. Exercises can be as simple as giving the client a halter, and letting them figure out how to approach the horse and put it on.

Confidence:

The learning and mastery of a new (horsemanship) skill--enhances patients' confidence in their ability to tackle new projects, such as recovery, and leads to improved self-esteem.

Self-Efficacy:

Learning to communicate and achieve harmony with a large animal promotes renewed feelings of efficacy. A motivated "I can do it!" replaces feelings of helplessness, de-motivation, by empowering the person to take on new challenges in other areas of recovery.

Self-Awareness:

Riding helps participants to develop a more realistic view of themselves through awareness of their size in relation to the horse. This is especially important in treating patients with eating disorders as well as those with interpersonal aggression problems.

Communication:

Horses' sensitivity to non-verbal communication assists patients in developing greater awareness of their emotions, the non-verbal cues that they may be communicating, and the important role of non-verbal communication in relationships.

Trust:

Learning to trust an animal such as a horse also aides in the development, or restoration, of trust for those whose ability to trust has been violated by difficult life experiences such as wartime experiences, physical or sexual abuse, abandonment, neglect, or marital infidelity.

Perspective:

Through grooming activities and other types of care for a specific horse, patients are able to put aside the absorbing focus of their mental illness, such as depressive ruminations, and instead to direct their attention and interests outwardly toward safe and caring interactions.

Anxiety Reduction:

Many studies of human-animal interaction indicate that contact with animals significantly reduces physiological anxiety levels. Some patients are initially afraid of horses. But horses' genuineness and affection allay these fears, helping patients to embrace exposure therapy for their anxiety issues.

Decreasing Isolation:

For many individuals with mental illness, there is a long-term or recent history of feeling rejected by, and different from, other people. Mental illnesses are intrinsically isolating experiences. The horse's unconditional acceptance invites patients back into the fellowship of life.

Self-Acceptance:

Many patients are initially concerned that they will do something embarrassing while learning about or riding the horses. Yet patients quickly learn that the other participants are engaged in their own equine experiences, and they observe the comfort of the horses in their own skin. Fears of embarrassment in public are thereby often reduced and self-acceptance increased.

Impulse Modulation:

Particularly for those whose mental illness involves the experience of lost control over impulses, the need to communicate with a horse calmly and non-reactively promotes the skills of emotional awareness, emotion regulation, self-control, and impulse modulation. Research clearly indicates that animal-assisted therapy reduces patient agitation and aggressiveness and increases cooperativeness and behavioral control.

Social Skills:

Many individuals with mental illness are socially isolated or withdrawn. A positive relationship with a horse is often a first, safe step toward practicing the social skills needed to initiate closer relationships with people.

Assertiveness:

Communicating effectively with a horse requires the rider to demonstrate assertiveness, direction, and initiative; important skills that enable the patient to express their needs and rights more effectively in other relationships.

Boundaries:

Many patients have experienced prior relationships as controlling or abusive. Healing takes place as patients discover that riding occurs within the context of a respectful relationship between a rider and a horse, and that, although physically powerful, each horse typically operates within the boundaries of this mutually respectful relationship.

Creative Freedom:

Many persons with mental illness have been emotionally inhibited or over-controlled, and have lost some measure of spontaneity. The playful aspects of riding and team equine activities can help restore spontaneity and ability for healthy recreation and play.

1,200 Pounds of Lie Detector

Jennie Hegeman, an equine rehabilitation specialist as well as a professional horse trainer is another proponent of Equine Assisted Therapy for PTSD. She is creator of The Hegeman Method, a patented, cross-discipline equine bio-kinetic training and rehabilitation method based on the muscle structure and bio-mechanics of the horse. She has worked with Dr. Sakeada in treating children with physical, emotional and mental disabilities at the National Ability Center in Park City, Utah.

Ms. Hegeman refers to horses as “1,200 pounds of lie detector.” Her role is to interpret the horse’s body language, such as flicking ears, wide eyes, or a dropped shoulder that will provide feedback for the therapist and the veteran.

So Why Horses?

Horses also possess a variety of “herd dynamics” such as pushing, kicking, biting, squealing, grooming one another and grazing together. In the process of describing the interactions between horses, clients can learn about themselves and their own family dynamics.



This site displays over 260 raw, unscripted videos of veterans and separate videos of the family members. They share what has gone on in their lives and what has helped them. *PHR Victory for Veterans* has DVDs of these people sharing their lives. Encourage Veterans and their families and friends to visit **[MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net)**.

Many of our Nation's Veterans—from those who served during World War II to those involved in current conflicts—leave the military and face an array of life challenges, including difficult experiences, transitions, troubling symptoms, and mental health conditions. The Make the Connection public awareness campaign is key to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) efforts to support Veterans and encourage them to access the support and care they deserve and earned.

The success of *Make the Connection* depends on support from everyone who interacts with Veterans: friends, family members, and people in communities nationwide as well as Veterans Service Organizations, community-based groups, and local health care providers that have direct contact with Veterans every day. We need your help to build greater awareness of [MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net) and the numerous other resources that are available and improving the lives of our Nation's Veterans.

We also want to hear from Veterans who have sought and received mental health support—from any source, including VA, community providers and faith-based organizations—and are in a better place today because of it. If you know someone who is willing to share his or her story, please email info@MakeTheConnection.net.

