

HOMECOMING

THE COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR REINTEGRATING VETERANS RETURNING FROM THE WAR

88TH REGIONAL READINESS COMMAND
COMBAT/OPERATIONAL STRESS CONTROL TEAM
FORT SNELLING, MN

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Welcoming Home our Citizen-soldiers Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraq Freedom (OIF)

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan"
A. Lincoln

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WHY A BRIEFING ON REINTEGRATION?

History has taught REUNIONS can be more stressful than separations:

- ✓ People grow and change
- ✓ Expectations are Different
- ✓ Experiences were different

It takes a community to reintegrate successfully!!!!

Some of the Hard-ships of Deployment

PHYSICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heat• Dehydration• Illness• Cold• Sleep deprivation• Injury
COGNITIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boredom• Being hyper-focused• Lack of information• Information overload
EMOTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fear of death/injury• Fear of failure• Feeling devalued• Loyalty conflicts
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being away from loved ones and friends• Loss of personal space• Isolation
SPIRITUAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of clarity about life's purpose• Loss of innocence• Loss of trust

Some of the Hardships of Homecoming

PHYSICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traffic• Crowds• Being unarmed• Access to alcohol and drugs
COGNITIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not knowing how much to tell family, friends• Loyalty conflicts• Boredom
EMOTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawal from the rush of battle• Feeling unsafe• Helplessness
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being separated from buddies and leaders• Being overwhelmed/misunderstood by family
SPIRITUAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty making sense of what happened• Guilt• Conflicting values

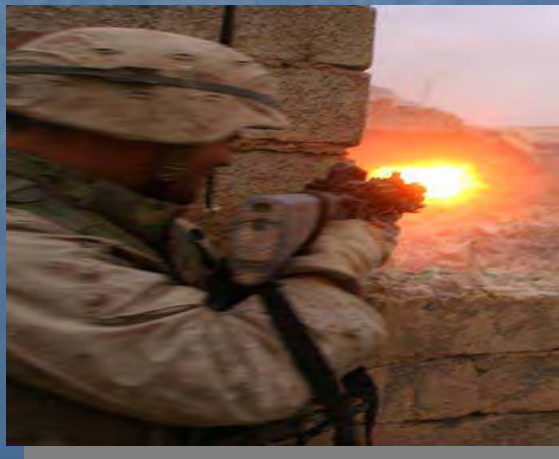
How Does Military Service Change People?

- War Zone Skills are not the same skills we need at home.
- “Normal” behavior for a service member is often not understood by family, friends, co-workers, or our communities.
- Service member needs 2 sets of skills:
 - WAR/Survival Coping Skills
 - HOME Skills

Mission Oriented

■ WAR

- Once a mission is assigned other, unrelated tasks are unimportant
- Decisions need to be quick, clear, accurate
- No time for discussion



■ HOME/JOB/SCHOOL

- Multiple competing tasks cause confusion
- Get angry with those who get in the way of mission
- Difficulty participating in cooperative decision making
- Frustration with others

Safety & Trust

■ WAR

- Vigilance pays off
- Never Relax
- Assume everyone is the enemy



■ HOME/JOB/SCHOOL

- Avoid getting involved
- Suspicious of everyone
- Test people to earn trust
- Always on guard
- Isolative

Emotions/Anger

■ WAR

- Control emotions
- Numbing
- Anger useful, protective, is a survival skill



■ HOME/JOB/SCHOOL

- Insensitivity to others
- Decreased ability to read others emotions
- Decreased emotional enjoyment
- Increased irritability and defensiveness
- Increased aggression
- Increased alcohol/drug use to avoid feeling emotions

Authority

■ WAR

- Little room for choice
- May have had much authority
- May not have faith in authority



■ HOME/JOB/SCHOOL

- Reluctant to let others have authority
- May take on too much authority/or want none at all
- Increased confrontations

Closeness

■ WAR

- Intense relationships
- Strong bonds, depending on each other for survival
- If losses, learn to avoid getting close



■ HOME/JOB/SCHOOL

- Long term intimacy more complicated
- May expect same level of intensity of intimacy at home
- May push loved ones away

Intelligence

■ WAR

- Restrict any information that may be used against you

■ HOME/JOB/SCHOOL

- Give little information
- Keep to self
- Avoid talking
- Social chatter a waste



TALKING

■ WAR

- Difficulty talking
- Little or no time to talk about powerful events
- Can change world view and of self (may be unable to articulate changes)

■ HOME/JOB/SCHOOL

- More comfortable talking with battle buddies
- Fear others may judge
- Being unable to talk may keep him/her from feeling a part of home life



Predictability

■ WAR

- Predictability makes you more vulnerable to enemy

■ HOME/JOB/SCHOOL

- Avoid familiar places
- Keep a low profile
- Not be where expected to be
- Late, unexpected arrivals
- May be difficult to make and keep appointments



Response Tactics

■ WAR

- Act first think later
- Maximum application of force and or



■ HOME/JOB/SCHOOL

- Think first act later
- He/She may insist things not be out of place
- May find self training the family to survive in a war zone
- "I am not one of your troops!"

**War may be hell...
but home ain't exactly heaven, either.**

**When a combat warrior
comes home from war,
he finds it hard...**

...to listen to his son whine about being bored.





**...to keep a straight face when
people complain about potholes.**

...to be tolerant of people who complain about the hassle of getting ready for work





...to be understanding when a co-worker complains about a bad night's sleep

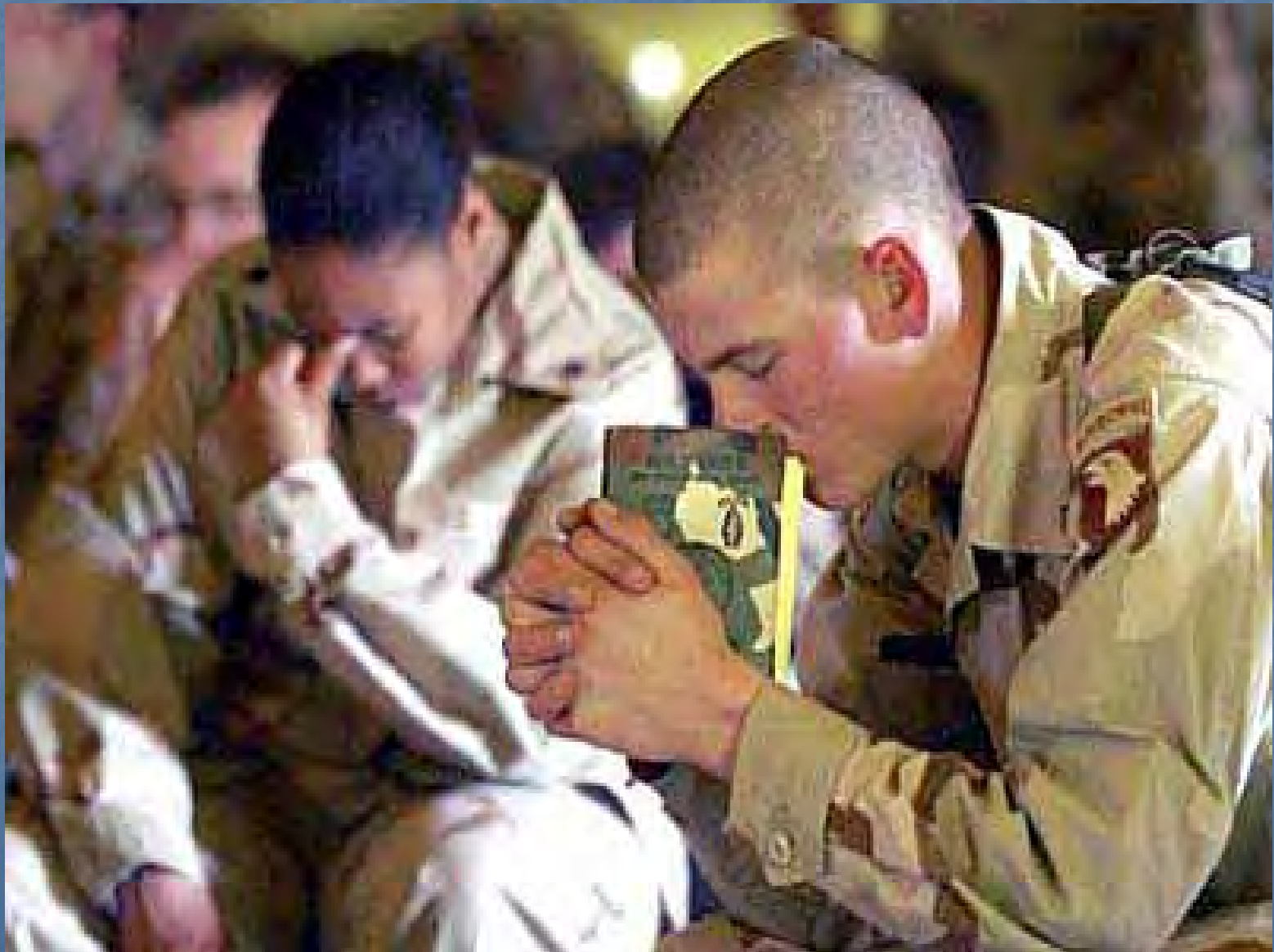


...to control his panic when his wife tells him he needs to drive slower

...to be grateful that he fights for the
freedom of speech.



**...to be silent when people pray to God
for a new car.**



**...to be compassionate when a
businessman expresses
a fear of flying.**





...to not laugh when anxious parents say they're afraid to send their kids off to summer camp.

**...to not ridicule someone
who complains about hot weather.**



...to control his rage when a colleague gripes about his coffee being cold.





...to remain calm when his daughter complains about having to walk the dog.

...to be civil to people who complain about their jobs.





...to just walk away when someone says they only get two weeks of vacation a year.



...to be happy for a friend's new hot tub

...to be forgiving when someone says how hard it is to have a new baby in the house.



...to not punch a wall when someone says we should pull out immediately.





**The only thing harder than being a
combat warrior...**



is loving one.

The background of the slide is a blurred American flag, with the stars and stripes visible. The text is overlaid on this background.

**A gentle reminder to
keep your life in perspective.**

**And when you meet one of our
returning Soldiers,
please remember what they've been through
and show them
*compassion and tolerance.***

Thank you.

**CPT Alison L. Crane, RN, MS
Mental Health Nurse Observer-Trainer
7302nd Medical Training Support Battalion**

**WAR ZONE SKILLS DO NOT
AUTOMATICALLY CHANGE
WHEN A SERVICE MEMBER
COMES HOME.**

WHAT IS STRESS?

- Any challenge or demand placed on the body or mind is always both:
A danger or threat and/or an opportunity
- Can be **ACUTE** or **CHRONIC**
- Provokes (requires) an adaptive response (we are never indifferent to it.)
- Is continuous and necessary
- Problems arise if stress is too intense or lasts too long

Combat/ Operational Stress Reactions are *EXPECTED* reactions to *ABNORMAL* events.

- 30-50% of all returning wartime veterans have some level of COSR
- Predictable symptoms and syndromes occur after trauma or prolonged stress
- Vast majority of wartime veterans return with no permanent negative effects.
- The bravest warrior experiences wartime stress.

Combat/ Operational Stress Reaction (COSR)

Definition

Combinations of physical and mental stressors which can temporarily interfere with performance.

- **Anyone can react to Operational Stress**
- **NOTE: Operational stress can also produce positive behaviors.** Negative effects diminish or resolve given time and positive support.
- **However, under continuous unaddressed stress the positive behaviors are the first to go.**

POSITIVE PERSONAL CHANGES

- New leadership skills
- New sense of purpose
- Increase in patriotism
- New decision making skills
- Changes in perspectives and perceptions
- May have new spiritual/moral values
- New ways of communicating
- New ideas about commitment
- New priorities



How have family members changed

- More independent
- Used to making their own decisions
- New friends/relationships
- Children may be significantly different
- New routines
- New perspectives
- Changes in the environment

KIDS' REACTIONS TO CHANGES IN FAMILY DYNAMIC

Remember Children are going through changes too.....

- Predictable overall
- Vary by age of child
- Acting out will pass if a big deal is not made
- Shouldn't be taken personally



Acute Stress

- **Body readies for “fight or flight”**
 - ◆ Electrical changes in heart and **sympathetic nervous system**
 - ◆ Increased production of hormones & sugars
 - ◆ Immune system changes; blood pressure increases
- **Experience:**
 - ◆ Thrill
 - ◆ Exhilaration
 - ◆ Adrenaline rush
- **Results in:**
 - ◆ Focused attention
 - ◆ Heightened strength
 - ◆ Feeling of competence
 - ◆ If stress is unmanaged, can result in ‘burnout’



Effects last at least 90 minutes

Post Traumatic Stress Response (PTSR)

■ Definition

- Symptoms exist or remain for a varying, extended period *after removal* from a situation
- **Symptoms are stronger in intensity and duration than an Operational Stress reaction**
- Symptoms worsen over time
- **Symptoms do not resolve without professional intervention**
- If left untreated, ability to tolerate additional trauma or stressful situations is compromised

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- Sleep disturbances
 - Irritability (more than usual crankiness or grumpiness)
 - Loss of energy (not just “tired”)
 - Appetite disturbances (eat too much, eat too little)
 - Lack of pleasure in favorite activities
 - Anxiety (butterflies or knots in belly)
 - Feeling helpless or hopeless
 - Inability to concentrate or remember simple things
 - Sadness for little or no reason
-
- Being depressed is a physical condition.
 - **Depressed people are not mentally ill or “crazy”**



**Traumatic Brain Injury -
*another war to fight***

Many Disorders Mimic Each Other

	Depression	Operational Stress	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	Traumatic Brain Injury
Hopelessness	X	X	X	X
Helplessness	X	X	X	X
Worthlessness	X	X	X	X
Anxiety		X	X	X
Physical Symptoms	X	X	X	X
Anger/Irritability	/X	X/X	X/X	X/X
Sleep Disorders	X	X	X	X
Re-experiencing			X	
Avoidance/Numbing	X/X		X/X	
Arousal/Agitation		X/	X/X	/X
Memory Problems	X	X	X	X
Alcohol/*Drug Abuse	X	X/	X/X	X
Personality Changes	X	X	X	X
Grief/Guilt	X	X	X	X
Spiritual Turmoil	X	X	X	X

READJUSTMENT

OLD

Detour

NEW!

BETTER

- No definite time period
- Can take weeks or months depending on length of separation, experiences, resources.
- Requires

NEW WAYS OF THINKING

Specific Emerging Issues

- Relationship Issues/Divorce
- Anger related Issues
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Reintegration difficulties (Workplace/School)
- Violence
- Child/Spouse abuse
- Alcohol/Drug abuse/addiction
- Job Loss
- Suicide
- Other stress related issues
- Medical issues
- Sexual Harassment/Assault

What you can do....

- Keep alert for information on Service Members in your community, workplace, family, Church...
- What unique skills do **YOU** have to support service members and their families throughout the emotional cycle of deployment?

Understanding is the first step

- That changes have occurred
- The difference/connection between Combat Stress Reactions vs PTSD and other behavioral health symptoms
- The signs of reintegration difficulties and what to do
- The needs of the service members and their families
- Available Resources and how to access

Recognize What May Have Changed

- Service member may feel discounted or disrespected
- Family members may have new power and responsibilities
- May feel they have been displaced
- May have new priorities for their lives
- May have achieved a new level of maturity
- Children and friends have grown and changed
- "Culture shock"/Problems Driving
- Workplace has changed; or may have no workplace
- Service members who have seen combat - old work/job may seem dull by comparison
- May not be interested in things they were interested in before they left

Identify how they may feel

- They may have little patience for “nonsense”
- Their sense of humor may have changed
- They may feel uncomfortable being a “Civilian”
- May feel uncomfortable in a crowd
- They often want to take on more job responsibilities
- They may feel unneeded at work or that they do not belong
- Their thoughts may still be overseas with Soldiers who are still serving over there
- Lose the sense they had of being “heroes” or are embarrassed to be thought of as Heroes
- Feel that no civilian could ever understand their experiences
- “Head space” still in the war zone: a sense of disconnectedness in present environment: forget names, old tasks, etc.
- May be fearful of future deployment/may not want to plan for the future (ex. School, job advancement, family planning, etc.)

The Role of the Church Community

- ✓ Encourage your congregation to be “Military-Friendly” through education about how Veterans and their families serve our country.
- ✓ Reach out to the “Deployed Family” through a low-key ministry of presence:
 - Be there for the family
 - Assist the family with practical help
 - Refer the family to appropriate services when applicable
- ✓ Reach out to the Deployed Veteran with care packages, church news and your prayers, for example.
- ✓ Welcome Veterans back to the Congregation if they permit you to do that with either a public recognition or a general celebration of Service to Country.
 - Offer support if needed
 - Watch for adjustment problems and family difficulties
- ✓ Listen and don’t judge or condemn. Help Veterans see their Church as a place of confession and a heart of compassion and healing.
- ✓ See it through – problems often do not appear until 6-12 months after re-deployment.

What NOT To Do For The Veteran

- Don't isolate/segregate
- Don't treat like he/she is crazy
- Don't act like his/her problems are unimportant
- Don't try to force veteran to talk about their experiences
- Don't make excuses for the behaviors or ignore potential underlying issues

POINTS TO PONDER

- “No One Comes Back Unchanged”

(COL (DR.) Tom Burke, DOD, Director of Mental Health Policy)

- War changes persons for the better too!!!!
- Operational Stress Responses will resolve with time, patience, support.....
- Help is available
- Service members/VETS are us, our family, friends, neighbors, & coworkers.

Summary

- Each service member's military experience and self concept is unique
- To feel good about themselves, veterans must continue to feel like honorable warriors
- Not all stress problems are mental illnesses
- Not all stress injuries are PTSD

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Eleanor Roosevelt

THANK YOU FOR CARING



Books

Keith Armstrong, LCSW, Suzanne Best, Ph.D.,
Paula Domenici, Ph.D., *Courage After Fire;
Coping strategies for troops returning from Iraq
and Afghanistan and their Families*, Ulysses
Press, 2006

Bridget C. Cantrell, Ph.D. and Chuck Dean, *Down
Range to Iraq and Back*, WordSmith Publishing,
Seattle, Washington, 2005

Resources

- OEF/OIF Program VA Medical Center, Minneapolis MN
612-467-3757
<http://www.VA.gov>
- VAMC Military Onesource
<http://www.Militaryonesource.com>
- Excel spreadsheet that list many organizations statewide with email addresses and categories
<http://4militaryfamilies.com/>
- Minnesota Veterans <http://www.Minnesotaveteran.org>
- National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov>
- Minnesota National guard "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon"
http://www.dma.state.mn.us/returningtroops/btyr_overview.php

Resources

- Wounded Warrior Program
<http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
<http://www.samhsa.gov>
- Brain Injury Assoc. of Minnesota
<http://www.braininjurymn.org/>
- Army's Hooah 4 Health <http://www.hooah4health.com>
- All branches of the military
<http://www.4militaryfamilies.com/about.htm><http://www.neuroskills.com>
- TBI info. <http://www.tbims.org/combi/>

Resources

- 88th Regional Readiness Command Combat & Operational Stress Team Phone: 1-800-THE-ARMY (ext 3254, 3255)
- Military One Source phone: (800) 342-9647
<http://www.militaryonesource.com>
- American Red Cross: <http://redcross.org>
- Army Knowledge On-line (AKO):
<http://www.us.army.mil>
- TRICARE: <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>
- Employer Support of the Reserve and Guard
<http://www.esgr.org>