

# **HEALING STRESS WOUNDS**

**A RECOVERY WORKBOOK**

**Healing The Hidden Emotional & Spiritual  
Wounds of War**

Joel Osler Brende, M.D.

# HEALING STRESS WOUNDS

## A RECOVERY WORKBOOK

**Healing The Hidden Emotional & Spiritual Wounds of War**

For Military Personnel Returning from  
Afghanistan, Iraq, and Other Conflicts

And For Professional Counselors & Chaplains

Copyright 2012 by Joel Osler Brende, M.D.

Printed in the United States of America  
All Rights Reserved

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
Hidden Casualties of War .....	3
Psychological Casualties of War & Suicides.....	4
Divorces as Casualties of War.....	5
Brain Injuries, Pain, & Sleep Disorders.....	5
Sexual Trauma.....	6
Difficulties Seeking Treatment.....	6
Healing Warriors' Emotional & Spiritual Wounds.....	7
Assessing Your Post-Traumatic Symptoms.....	8
Severity of Traumatic Symptoms.....	10
12 Theme Post-traumatic symptoms.....	11
Introducing the Recovery Star.....	14
Developing A Specialized Program for Combat Veterans.....	15
Belief In A Higher Power and 12 Step Programs.....	15
Twelve Themes and Spiritual Steps .....	20
Post War History & Severity of Traumatic Events.....	22
Twelve Theme Symptom Assessment.....	25
Theme One Work Sheet.....	17
Discussion & Spiritual Step One.....	18
Theme Two Work Sheet.....	19
Discussion & Spiritual Step Two.....	20
Theme Three Work Sheet .....	21
Discussion & Spiritual Step Three.....	22
Theme Four Work Sheet .....	23
Discussion & Spiritual Step Four.....	24
Theme Five Work Sheet .....	25
Discussion & Spiritual Step Five.....	26
Theme Six Work Sheet .....	27
Discussion & Spiritual Step Six.....	28
Theme Seven Work Sheet .....	29
Discussion & Spiritual Step Seven.....	30
Theme Eight Work Sheet .....	31
Discussion & Spiritual Step Eight.....	32
Theme Nine Work Sheet .....	33
Discussion & Spiritual Step Nine.....	34
Theme Ten Work Sheet .....	35
Discussion & Spiritual Step Ten.....	36
Theme Eleven Work Sheet .....	37
Discussion & Spiritual Step Eleven.....	38
Theme Twelve Work Sheet .....	39
Discussion & Spiritual Step Twelve.....	40
Completing the Recovery Star.....	41
Author & References .....	46
Appendix I — Outline for Recovery Group Meetings .....	44
Appendix II — Combat Survivors Anonymous .....	45
Appendix III — Readings From The Koran .....	47
Appendix III — Meditation & Prayers.....	49
Appendix IV — Meditation on the Steps With Accompanying Scripture.....	50

## THE HIDDEN EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CASUALTIES OF WAR

*The barbarities of war are seldom committed by abnormal men. The tragedy of war is that these horrors are committed by normal men in situations in which the ebb and flow of everyday life have departed and been replaced by a constant round of fear and anger and blood and death. Soldiers at war are not to be judged by civilian rules.<sup>1</sup>*

– Breaker Morant

It has often been the lot of warriors who survive the struggle of war that they subsequently suffer from an aftermath of hidden emotional wounds, often lifelong. It is not surprising then that the warrior David described his lingering distress thousands of years ago in the 55th chapter of the book of Psalms:

*"My heart is severely pained within me,  
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.  
Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me,  
And horror has overwhelmed me.  
And I said, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove!  
For then I would fly away and be at rest.  
Indeed I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.  
I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest....  
I have seen violence and strife in the city.  
Destruction is in its midst.  
Deceit and guile do not depart from its streets."<sup>2</sup>*

David's postwar symptoms are not unlike those suffered by present day combatants and war veterans. During the past century, considerable research was directed toward understanding post-war symptoms, particularly those affecting American soldiers. Civil War combatants suffered from 'Irritable Heart' and other significant problems.<sup>3</sup>

Protracted artillery barrages and exploding shells occurring during World War I were found to cause 'Shell Shock' described as physical symptoms rather than emotional reactions: shakiness, trembling, pain, hearing loss, upset stomach, headache, perspiration, rapid heart rate, breathlessness, tightness in the chest, and loss of bladder and bowel control.<sup>4</sup> In spite of such a description Sigmund Freud believed World War I Veterans' postwar symptoms were primarily emotional, rather than organic, and coined the term 'War Neurosis.'<sup>5</sup>

During World War II 'Combat Exhaustion' was described as emotional, physical, and mental difficulties - more specifically irritability, sleep disturbance, withdrawal, depression, confusion, and eventual mental disorganization.<sup>6</sup> Postwar personality changes in World War II veterans, described by Kardiner and Spiegel, were characterized by the inability to adapt to civilian life and restricted capacity for emotional expression.<sup>7</sup>

As time elapsed after World War II, mental health professionals forgot the lessons learned from previous wars and failed to recognize that Vietnam veterans hospitalized during the 1970's had post-traumatic symptoms. Rather, these men were often diagnosed with personality disorder or Schizophrenia. This diagnostic failure was finally corrected in 1980 when Vietnam veterans' symptoms were given the diagnostic label of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) - characterized by three groups of symptoms in response to a life threatening stressor: 1) intrusive memories, emotions, images, flashbacks, and nightmares; 2) emotional numbing and avoidance of triggers and reminders, and 3) autonomic arousal including exaggerated startle reactions, hypervigilance, autonomic hyperarousal, and aggressive outbursts.<sup>8</sup> By the time the war ended an estimated 800,000 suffered from PTSD.<sup>9</sup>

**PSYCHOLOGICAL CASUALTIES:** Researchers have learned that 19% to 42% of soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have significant mental health conditions.<sup>10</sup> Of 289,328 veterans who entered VA care from 2002 to 2008, nearly 37% had mental health problems, including PTSD (about 22%), Depressive Disorders (roughly 17%) and Alcohol Abuse (about 21%).

The results of a 3-year study of 2,665 female National Guard soldiers deployed to Iraq that began in 2008 has revealed that women have more than twice the risk of developing combat-related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than their male counterparts, 18.7% vs. 8.7%. Women soldiers, with the same level of combat exposure, are also much less likely than men to feel prepared for combat (14.3% vs. 32.2%) or to take advantage of unit cohesion, which are the two most important protective factors against PTSD.

**SUICIDES:** Suicides in American soldiers and veterans have been particularly troubling. As of Dec 12, 2007, 2,100 soldiers had made suicide attempts and 132 had killed themselves.<sup>11</sup> The suicide rate rose to 140 in 2008, then to 160 in 2009 and 301 in 2010, and 468 in 2011 (more deaths than those killed in combat). An additional troubling statistic is the higher rate of suicides in reserve soldiers. Among National Guard soldiers on inactive status in 2010, there were 101 confirmed or suspected suicides, more than double the 48 deaths among Guard members on inactive duty in 2009. A report in January 2011, stated there was an increase in suicides among National Guard which accounted for a 24% increase in Army suicides in 2011.<sup>12</sup> Among those who have left military service, an average of 18 veterans have committed suicide every day<sup>13</sup> and five of those are already getting treatment according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). In 2010, more than 134,000 people made calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Of those callers, 61 percent identified themselves as veterans. Veterans have committed suicide at the rate of between 18.7 to 20.8 per 100,000, compared to other Americans, who did so at the rate of 8.9 per 100,000. Figures released by the VA in 2010 show a dramatic increase in suicide among veterans aged 18 to 29 years old although one age group stood out: veterans aged 20 through 24 who had served during the war on terror.

“A third of the confirmed suicides are committed by troops that had never deployed,” Army Secretary John McHugh recently told a House panel. But the other two-thirds killed themselves either in a war zone or after returning from one. Army leaders say that broken personal relationships seem to be the most common thread linking suicides.

Predicted suicides for 2012 are as follows: the Air Force 73 suicides, the Marines 42 and the Navy 62. Those three services have a combined total force equal to the Army's but their number of suicides are nearly equal to the Army's 186. No one knows why it's worse among the Army other than the fact that it's the biggest branch of service.

**DIVORCES:** Repeated deployments of American soldiers to Iraq and Afghanistan have taken their toll not only on the troops themselves but also their families. The numbers of soldiers whose marriages ended in divorce had steadily increased since 2003. There has been a 10-fold increase in domestic violence and a sharply rising divorce rate, particularly among officers. In 2004, 3,325 Army officers' marriages ended in divorce and 7,152 enlisted personnel obtained divorces.<sup>14</sup> An Army survey conducted in July 2009 revealed that 17% of soldiers in combat units faced divorce or separation. Information disclosed by the Pentagon to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee revealed that visits by family members of active-duty military personnel to therapists have increased at a compound annual growth rate of 15% over the past 10 years.

**BRAIN INJURIES, PAIN, SLEEP DISORDERS:** According to official Defense Department figures, 332,000 soldiers have suffered brain injuries since 2000, although most independent experts estimate that the number is over 400,000. Most head injuries in soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are caused by explosive devices. In fact, from October 2001 until January 2005 explosive devices (IEDs) were responsible for nearly 80% of all casualties. Unfortunately, the diagnosis of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is often missed although injuries causing chronic pain, insomnia, and substance use disorders are fairly common. TBI has been associated with chronic pain (43% of the time) and sleep problems (50% of the time), including sleep apnea, episodic limb movements, and narcolepsy.<sup>15</sup> Researchers from Walter Reed Army Medical Center reported in 2010 that 54% of veterans with symptoms of PTSD also had sleep apnea. Hearing loss and hearing impairment - including persistent ringing and buzzing in the ears - are also common effects of harmful noise from gunfire, heavy weapons, noisy engine rooms and aircraft.

Chronic pain has been a disturbing problem for many soldiers who have served in combat. According to a study in the *Journal of Pain*, about 100,000 veterans of the Persian Gulf War nearly 20 years ago reported chronic muscle pain. Just over half of all veterans' post-deployment health visits address lingering pain in their backs, necks, knees or shoulders. Other studies have found that of the million military personnel deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, approximately 21,000 have been wounded and 46% of these medically evacuated because of wounds and other injuries mostly caused by blasts from IEDs which are

often associated with both acute and chronic pain which requires physical rehabilitation.

**SEXUAL TRAUMA:** In addition to PTSD, depression, stress disorders, and sleep impairment, there is a new category of disturbance referred to as military sexual trauma, as reported by the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Center for Health Care Evaluation, VA of Palo Alto, California. Women and men who reported military sexual trauma were significantly more likely than those who did not to also be diagnosed with PTSD, other anxiety disorders, depression, and substance use disorders. In addition the study shows that the co-occurrence of military sexual trauma and PTSD is substantially more frequent among female soldiers than among males, suggesting that military sexual trauma may be a particularly relevant gender-specific clinical issue in PTSD treatment settings.

**DIFFICULTY SEEKING HELP:** Only 35% of veterans with behavioral problems and post-traumatic symptoms have sought psychiatric treatment, ostensibly fearing that it would jeopardize their military careers.<sup>16</sup> Soldiers tend to find it easier to accept treatment for medical problems than emotional problems. Consequently, as an attempt to avoid being marked a psychiatric patient, many soldiers have visited military chaplains for psychological counseling.

Why do so many soldiers fail to seek help for symptoms of PTSD? The truth is that soldiers during combat rarely 'feel' their emotions. Warriors often 'enjoy' the Adrenalin-charged 'highs' that suppress fear and activate readiness for attack. After returning to civilian life soldiers tend to keep emotions in check, remain emotionally guarded, have difficulty sleeping, 'overreact' to sudden noises or unexpected movements, become explosive, feel emotionally and spiritually detached. They often become alienated from society and cannot easily relate to wives and children, as reported by one lieutenant returning from Iraq.<sup>17</sup>

*"Although [it seemed] as if I'd only been gone for a few days, not everything has been so easy to resume. Much to my surprise, it's been difficult readjusting to routine things. My first few days back, I found myself reaching to check the safety of my weapon, which for the past 89 days had been literally attached to my hip 24/7. I felt a little uncomfortable without it. Returning to work ... has been hard. I am finding that I have less patience for things than I did before, less tolerance for whiners and complainers. I guess part of me is bothered by the lack of toughness in some of the non-deployed [soldiers]. I have noticed that this deployment has changed me mentally. I can't place a finger on what exactly has changed, or what caused the change, for that matter. I just don't feel the same. I have found it hard to talk about the things that I saw or experienced over there, even with my wife and closest family, despite the fact that I was never involved in direct combat. Maybe it is the realization of how fragile life can be, or how easily it could have been me staring down death in An Nasiriyah or Al Kut. I think the question of 'Why not me?' will be one I struggle with for some time"*<sup>18</sup>

## HEALING WARRIORS' EMOTIONAL & SPIRITUAL WOUNDS

*"Killing another human being is something that must be trained into healthy men and women... The damage to soldiers who have killed and seen others killed may take several forms. Some will choose to become mercenaries after they've been discharged from active duty because they have become accustomed to the edgy thrill of war and grow numb to the qualities and skills that are needed to succeed in family and community life. Others may become emotionally and physically disabled. In both cases, there is often a protracted sense of personal guilt and alienation from God that is generally not talked about."*  
- Stephen Muse<sup>19</sup>

Primitive societies have long recognized that, because war alters the minds and bodies of combatants, there must be a type of purification ritual or ceremonial cleansing to prepare them for the return to communities and families. This would enable warriors to 'regurgitate' and feel cleansed of disturbing memories and emotions in safe environments surrounded by like-minded peers. Unfortunately soldiers leaving Vietnam in the 1960's said they never had the opportunity to feel cleansed of their war memories and they felt unclean and ashamed. These 'bad feelings were intensified by the 1975 abandonment of the South Vietnamese when the war was over and by the continuing sense of betrayal they experienced when their country and their families failed to welcome them home after returning from Vietnam.<sup>20</sup>

Could the warriors fighting in the Middle East be facing a similar situation 30+ years later? Many anti-war protesters during the Bush Administration believed that the war in Iraq paralleled the one fought in Vietnam.<sup>21</sup> Pro-war advocates believe there are significant differences between Vietnam and Iraq which has been borne out as American troops are withdrawn from Iraq. The mission in Iraq (promoting the formation of a democratic government in the midst of an Islamic Middle East) differed from the purpose of the mission in Vietnam which was to support the South Vietnamese in order to prevent a Communist takeover of Southeast Asia based on the 'Domino Theory'. The original purpose - helping South Vietnam fend off a North Vietnamese takeover - was lost when the South Vietnamese government fell. American GI's in Vietnam then lost their sense of purpose when not allowed to invade North Vietnam but told to measure success by 'body counts'. Fortunately the situation in Iraq is not the same, relationships with Iraqi people continued to improve,<sup>22</sup> and the quality of medical care and treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain injuries has improved significantly.<sup>23</sup>



## ASSESSING YOUR POST –TRAUMATIC SYMPTOMS

The first step in helping you find healing is to determine the nature of your post-traumatic symptoms. On the following pages is an assessment with two components that will help you to determine the causes and severity of those symptoms. The first component is an assessment of your severity of combat or post-war related stress.

### POST-WAR HISTORY & SEVERITY OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Please complete this survey of possible traumatic events occurring in relationship to war related activities. On a scale of 0 to 4, rank according to severity, the emotional after-effects by circling a number (0 = none, 1 = mild, 2 = moderate, 3 = severe, and 4 = devastating):

Traumatic Event	Severity of emotional after-effects:
1. Serious financial problems at home _____	0 1 2 3 4
2. Family members emotionally distraught _____	0 1 2 3 4
3. Receiving a 'Dear John' letter _____	0 1 2 3 4
4. Friend or relative seriously ill at home _____	0 1 2 3 4
5. Comrade killed by enemy combatants _____	0 1 2 3 4
6. Witnessing violence between Americans _____	0 1 2 3 4
7. Comrade killed by 'friendly fire' _____	0 1 2 3 4
8. Witnessing violence perpetrated by civilians _____	0 1 2 3 4
9. Wounded by 'friendly fire' _____	0 1 2 3 4
10. Killing a woman or child _____	0 1 2 3 4
11. Distressed by traumatic memories _____	0 1 2 3 4
12. Being detained or captured away from base _____	0 1 2 3 4
13. Holding a friend as he was dying _____	0 1 2 3 4
14. Using excessive alcohol/drugs _____	0 1 2 3 4
15. Fighting in hand-to-hand combat _____	0 1 2 3 4
16. Killing the enemy from a distance _____	0 1 2 3 4
17. Sudden death of family member at home _____	0 1 2 3 4
18. Witness to suicide/homicide bombing _____	0 1 2 3 4
19. Wounded by suicide/homicide bombing _____	0 1 2 3 4
20. Wounded by rocket or mortar fire _____	0 1 2 3 4
21. Afflicted by serious illness _____	0 1 2 3 4
22. Viewing dead bodies _____	0 1 2 3 4
23. Accidental wounding of fellow soldier _____	0 1 2 3 4
24. Engaging combatants disguised in civilian garb _____	0 1 2 3 4
25. Surviving a vehicular accident _____	0 1 2 3 4

26. Surviving incident of 'friendly fire'	_____	0	1	2	3	4
27. Charged with illegal/unacceptable behavior	_____	0	1	2	3	4
28. Abandoned by friends/family at home	_____	0	1	2	3	4
29. Witnessing exploding bodies	_____	0	1	2	3	4
30. Loss of home in USA	_____	0	1	2	3	4
31. Victim of sexual assault	_____	0	1	2	3	4
32. Participating in bombing civilian habitat	_____	0	1	2	3	4
33. Witnessing civilians wounded by firefight	_____	0	1	2	3	4
34. Receiving emergency medical care	_____	0	1	2	3	4
35. Surviving aircraft crash	_____	0	1	2	3	4
36. Wounded by a civilian	_____	0	1	2	3	4
37. Loss of marriage or significant relationship	_____	0	1	2	3	4
38. Work related accident	_____	0	1	2	3	4
39. Violent death of loved one	_____	0	1	2	3	4
40. Tortured by enemy personnel	_____	0	1	2	3	4
41. Identifying dead bodies	_____	0	1	2	3	4
42. Aggressive outbursts to a family member	_____	0	1	2	3	4
43. Victim of robbery or theft	_____	0	1	2	3	4
44. Accidentally killing a non-combatant	_____	0	1	2	3	4
45. Killing the enemy in hand-to-hand combat	_____	0	1	2	3	4
46. Placing dead comrades in body bags	_____	0	1	2	3	4
47. Providing emergency medical care	_____	0	1	2	3	4
48. Receiving emergency medical care	_____	0	1	2	3	4
49. Serious conflicts among family members	_____	0	1	2	3	4
50. Witnessing an assault against a civilian	_____	0	1	2	3	4
51. Driving ambulance and/or helping wounded	_____	0	1	2	3	4
52. Other _____	_____	0	1	2	3	4

Number of War-related Traumatic Events \_\_\_\_\_ Total Trauma Score: Add \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Rank the numbers of your ten worst traumatic experiences from 1 to 10:

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_\_\_ 8 \_\_\_\_\_ 9 \_\_\_\_\_ 10 \_\_\_\_\_

You can compare your own scores with those of other soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan to whom I administered this assessment. Listed below are their most severe traumatic experiences ranked by the most severe at the top:

## **Severity of Traumatic Experiences**

Viewing dead bodies of civilians  
Numbers of deployments  
Aggressive outburst to family member  
Comrade killed by enemy combatants  
Witnessing violence perpetrated by civilians  
Witnessing exploding or mutilated bodies  
Witnessing civilians wounded by fire  
Witnessing injury or death of child  
Loss of marriage or significant relationship  
Serious conflicts among family members post-deployment  
Witness to suicide/homicide bombing  
Killing the enemy from a distance  
Family members emotionally distraught  
Driving ambulance and/or helping wounded  
Distressed by traumatic memories not previously mentioned  
Engaging combatants disguised in civilian garb  
Identifying dead bodies  
Recovering dead or burned bodies  
Infidelity by you or spouse  
Receiving or providing emergency medical care  
Serious financial problems at home  
Wounded by rocket or mortar fire  
Feeling a loss of purpose  
Friend or relative seriously ill at home  
Fighting in hand-to-hand combat  
Abandoned by friends/family at home  
Unexpected death of family member at home  
Holding a friend as he was dying  
Surviving a vehicular accident  
Witnessing an assault against a civilian  
Action for using alcohol/drugs  
Afflicted by serious illness in theater  
Witnessed or accidentally killed a non-combatant  
Not receiving e-mail or care packages from home  
Victim of robbery or theft  
Participating in bombing civilian habitat  
Loss of home in USA  
Wounded by suicide/homicide bombing  
Birth of a child at home  
Accidental wounding of fellow soldier  
Comrade killed by friendly fire  
Death of child at home  
Non-combat related accident  
Violent death of loved one  
Wounded by a civilian  
Wounded by friendly fire

## TWELVE THEME POST-TRAUMATIC SYMPTOM ASSESSMENT

The following assessment can be used to determine the severity of PTSD symptoms as well as the severity of theme specific problems. Please answer each of the following questions by circling the number (0 to 4) which comes the closest to describing your symptoms.

	0	1	2	3	4
	Never	Occasionally	Some of the time	Most of the time	Nearly all the time
1. I can't stop the disturbing 'flashbacks' that seem to control my mind.	0	1	2	3	4
2. The trauma was so upsetting that I wonder, 'why did this have to happen to me?'	0	1	2	3	4
3. My disturbing memories make me feel shameful and bad about myself.	0	1	2	3	4
4. I have 'blackouts' or lapses of consciousness and do things without remembering what I did.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I feel anger more than any other emotion when I think about what happened.	0	1	2	3	4
6. I have rapid heart rate, chest tightness, upset stomach, and other symptoms that upset me.	0	1	2	3	4
7. I have guilty memories and dreams about what I did or should have done.	0	1	2	3	4
8. I stay numb and avoid people because I don't want to cry or have other feelings.	0	1	2	3	4
9. I have urges to hurt myself.	0	1	2	3	4
10. I have thoughts and dreams about hurting whoever was responsible.	0	1	2	3	4
11. I have lost my purpose in life and wonder what will become of me.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I often think that someone wanted this to happen to me.	0	1	2	3	4
13. I feel like a victim and am afraid it's going to happen again and again to me.	0	1	2	3	4
14. I often feel confused and have difficulty concentrating on anything.	0	1	2	3	4
15. I may trust persons that can't be trusted or distrust those who want to help.	0	1	2	3	4
16. It can seem like the traumatic event never happened.	0	1	2	3	4
17. I am easily provoked and can go into a rage.	0	1	2	3	4
18. I am hypervigilant, 'on guard' most of the time, and loud noises or sudden moves startle me.	0	1	2	3	4
19. I feel guilty that I survived and think, 'it should have been me instead of...'	0	1	2	3	4
20. Sometimes I feel numb and other times I can't keep from crying.	0	1	2	3	4

21. I feel sad, fatigued, listless, depressed, and have thoughts I'd rather be dead.  
 0                      1                      2                      3                      4
22. I am bitter and feel like hurting or killing those who were responsible.  
 0                      1                      2                      3                      4
23. I feel alienated from God for what happened and detached from contact with Him.  
 0                      1                      2                      3                      4
24. I feel distant or cut off from other people and have trouble getting close to anyone.  
 0                      1                      2                      3                      4

Having answered the questions as honestly as possible, you can now determine your score.

Add up all of the numbers you have circled: TOTAL SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_

To determine the severity of your symptoms, see where your score fits, as follows:

Most severe (Red):	70 - 96	Less Severe (Yellow):	20 - 39
Fairly Severe (Black):	40 - 69	Minimal (Green):	0 - 19

To determine twelve theme scores, write individual scores in the blanks below and add them:

1+13, 2+14, 3+15, 4+16, 5+17, 6+18, 7+19, 8+20, 9+21, 10+22, 11+23, and 12+24

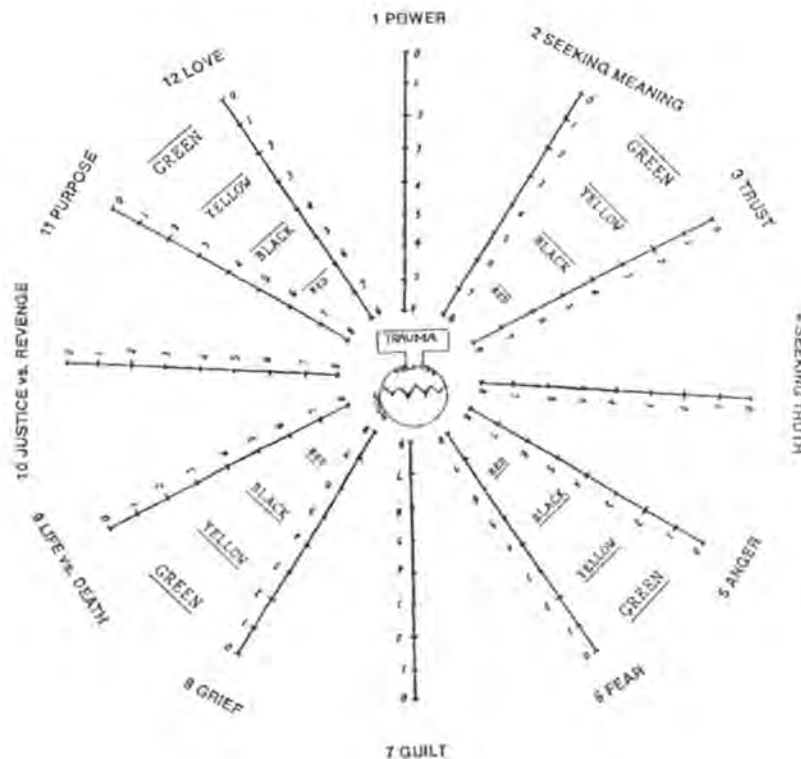
1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    11    12

13   14   15   16   17   18   19   20   21   22   23   24

Add Totals:

Themes    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    11    12

Place each of your twelve number scores on the appropriate location on each of the twelve 'spokes' of the matrix. Connect each of the twelve scores with a pen or pencil to see your overall pattern. You will be able to determine the severity of our symptoms by looking at the position of the lines connecting each of the twelve spokes in the matrix. Lines drawn near the center - red zone - indicate the most severe symptoms. Lines in the black zone indicate moderate symptoms. Lines in the yellow zone indicate mild symptoms. Lines in the green zone indicate that symptoms are not significant.



You can compare your own scores with those of other soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan in 2008 to whom I administered this PTSD symptom assessment.

### **POST TRAUMATIC SYMPTOMS**

(Ranked by the most severe at the top.)

- I am hypervigilant, 'on guard' most of the time, and loud noises or sudden moves startle me.
- I feel anger more than any other emotion when I think about what happened.
- I have guilty memories and dreams about what I did or should have done.
- I am easily provoked and can go into a rage.
- I stay numb and avoid people because I don't want to cry or have other feelings.
- I feel distant or cut off from other people and have trouble getting close to anyone.
- I often feel confused and have difficulty concentrating on anything.
- I have rapid heart rate, chest tightness, upset stomach, and other symptoms that upset me.
- I can't stop the disturbing 'flashbacks' that seem to control my mind.
- My disturbing memories make me feel shameful and bad about myself.
- Sometimes I feel numb and other times I can't keep from crying.
- The trauma was so upsetting that I wonder, 'why did this have to happen to me?'
- I have thoughts and dreams about hurting whoever was responsible.
- I have 'blackouts' or lapses of consciousness and do things without remembering what I did.
- I may trust persons that can't be trusted or distrust those who want to help.
- I have lost my purpose in life and wonder what will become of me.
- I feel alienated from God for what happened and detached from contact with Him.
- I feel guilty that I survived and think, 'it should have been me instead of ...'
- I am bitter and feel like hurting or killing those who were responsible.
- I feel sad, fatigued, listless, depressed, and have thoughts I'd rather be dead.
- I often think that someone wanted this to happen to me.
- I feel like a victim and am afraid it's going to happen again and again to me.
- It can seem like the traumatic event never happened.
- I have urges to hurt myself.

### **RECOVERY POINTS**

The following diagram is meant to provide a visual means for gauging recovery using a 12 point scheme. Points 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 correspond to the soldier or veteran's interaction with the external environment and responses to stress.

Point 1 refers to the source of power from outside of oneself such as a commanding officer, weapons, and survival skills.

Point 3 refers to seeking to trust comrades and individuals in power positions.

Point 5 refers to afflicting aggression on the enemy.

Point 7 refers to taking ethical responsibility for one's actions.

Point 9 refers to the desire and ability to stay alive.

Point 11 refers to seeking a purpose and believing in a Higher Power as the means for finding that purpose.

Points 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 correspond to the soldier or veteran's internal qualities and responses to stress.

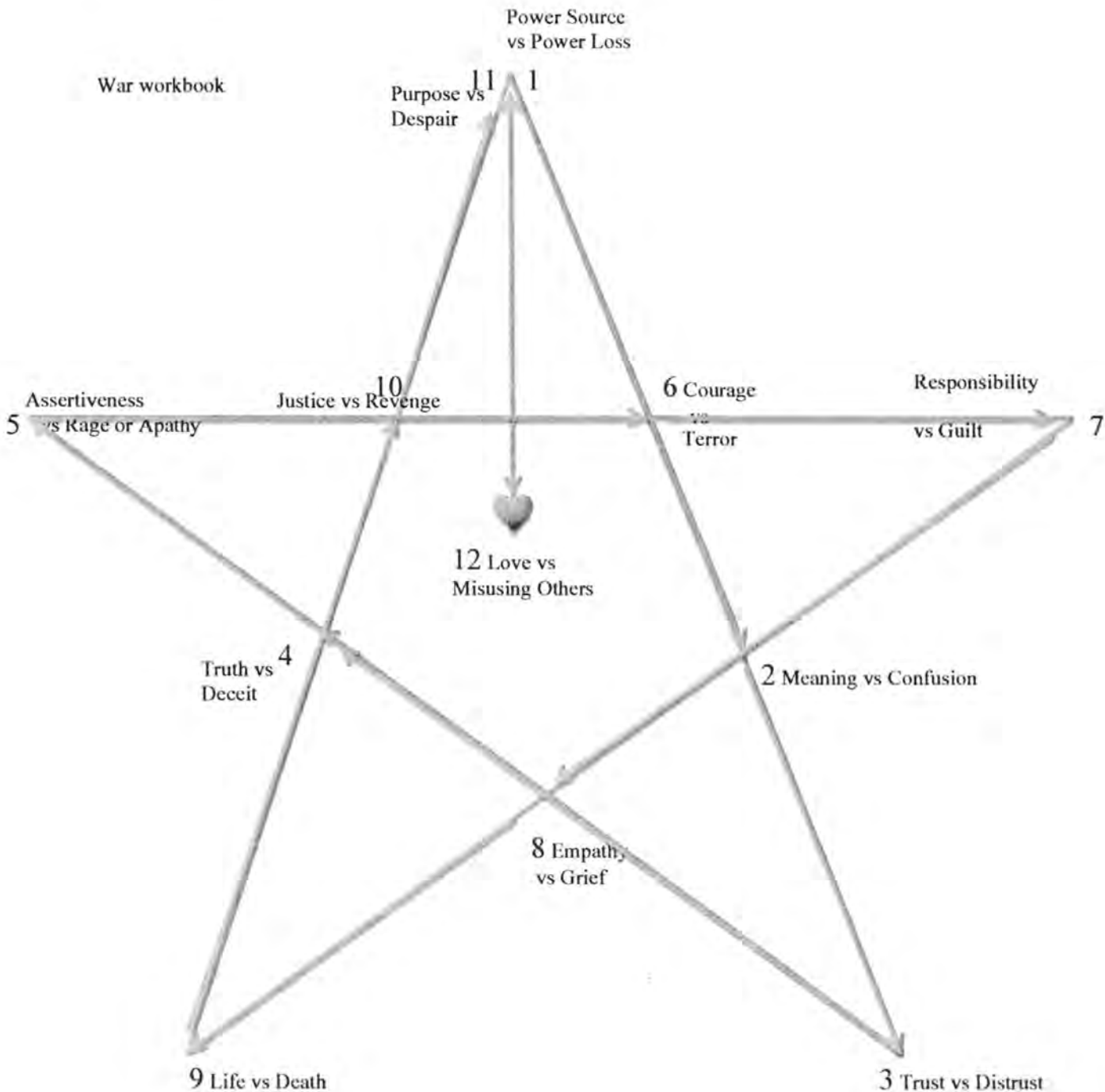
Point 2 refers to seeking meaning for stressful circumstances

Point 4 refers to seeking truth during and after stressful circumstances

Point 6 refers to seeking courage during stressful circumstances

Point 8 refers to being empathic and capacity for grief resolution following stressful circumstances  
 Point 10 refers to seeking justice and forgiveness rather than revenge.

Experiencing healing from the wounds of stress involves moving through the steps sequentially, by following the arrows in the star. Complete the worksheets and use the results to proceed through the points on the star. Mark in red those numbers where you have still have significant problems, mark with a yellow marker if you have partially resolved your problems, and mark in green if you feel you have successfully resolved your problems.



## **A SPECIALIZED RECOVERY PROGRAM FOR COMBAT VETERANS**

I developed a structured 12-step approach for interested combat veterans while working in the VA system during the late 1980s which integrated some of the principles from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) 12-Step Program such as:

- \* Recovery is an on-going and life-long process.
- \* Recovery is more effective when participants share their problems with one another and are willing to help others with similar problems.
- \* Recovery is more effective when participants acknowledge they are powerless to overcome their addictions and are willing to ‘surrender’ to a ‘Higher Power or God, as individually understood.

### **Belief in a Higher Power & Twelve Step Programs**

The first 12-step program, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), was founded in 1935 and has become the blueprint for similar 12-step programs for thousands, perhaps millions of persons addicted to alcohol, drugs, food, sex, gambling, and other self-destructive behaviors. The principles of 12-step programs include anonymity of the recovering person, the importance of ‘surrendering’ to a ‘Higher Power’ (God, as individually understood), self-examination, and helping other recovering persons. As with other 12-step recovery programs, our unique 12-step program for combat veterans with PTSD encouraged participants to believe and ‘surrender’ themselves and their problems to their Higher Power.

The word ‘surrender’, an unacceptable word for combat veterans, means ‘letting go’ of attempts to control one’s self-destructive behaviors and ceding control to a Higher Power. It means surrendering one’s bad behavior to God who replaces the powerful compulsion, addiction, or obsession with the freedom and power to choose something much better.

The principle of faith and surrender did not originate with the founders of 12-step programs. Faith and surrender to the will of God are major teachings within the three monotheistic religions - Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. The concept of surrender is widely accepted as a key ingredient of religious faith. For example, Muhammad, who founded Islam in 610 A.D., preached a message of submission and surrender to the will of God (Allah). In fact, the principle meaning of the word Islam is ‘surrender’ or ‘submission’.

Abraham, considered to be the father of both Islam and Judaism, demonstrated his willingness to surrender to God’s request – that he sacrifice his first-born son. Only after Abraham demonstrated his obedience did God honor his act of surrender and provide a substitute lamb for a burnt offering.

Submission to God’s will is a core belief of Christians, as exemplified by Jesus Christ who submitted himself to God, His Father and became the sacrificial ‘Lamb of the world’ only to be resurrected from death by crucifixion three days later.



Submission to God's will, according to the Torah, does not allow an individual to be sacrificed for the sake of society. Rather, the entire community will surrender and relinquish their lives to protect an individual.

"If [enemies surrounding Israel] demand, 'Surrender one of yourselves to us and we will kill him; otherwise we will kill all of you,' they all suffer death rather than surrender a single Israelite to them."

Following the principle of Karma, many followers of eastern religions and increasing numbers of adherents to 'New Age' spirituality believe in reincarnation or the transmigration of the soul. It is known that ancient Egyptians believed the soul transmigrated from body to body while modern adherents to Hinduism and Yoga believe that souls pass through a series of rebirths in order live to a more positive Karmic future than the current life. Yoga recognizes the existence of a Jiva or individual soul who is reborn but Buddhism denies the existence of a soul and says that rebirth is just the continuance of a stream of karma.

We asked participants to consider one of the following options for defining Higher Power:

- \* Defining Higher Power as an internal spiritual strength or the power of the therapist or group to provide support and guidance.
- \* Believing in God in a more formal or mysterious fashion, according to the language of specific religious faiths or denominations.
- \* Identifying God in a specific gender - either He or She - or as the object of worship of a specific ethnic group or race.
- \* Believing in a personal relationship with God.

We devised recovery principles specific for combat veterans, which included education to help them learn to control target PTSD symptoms. We set up group meetings to share traumatic emotions and memories and discuss ways of coping. And, with the help of combat veterans and others, we developed a 12 themes and spiritual step program. The following recovery worksheets contain references to Higher Power or God. They also contain selected scriptures on which the participant may or may not want to meditate.

## **RECOVERY WORKSHEETS**

For soldiers or veterans using this workbook for their own benefit, the worksheets can be completed either as desired for individual use or as part of a recovery group. Meetings can include group discussions related to the worksheet pages. Although most participants will focus on individual problems, memories, and emotions there may be times when they will wish to discuss spiritual issues and their individual beliefs in God, as individually understood. To help this process there is a spiritual step and accompanying scripture taken from the Bible at the end of each worksheet. The duration of the group process for all 12 themes can vary according to the amount of time available and is best accomplished by progressing sequentially through each over a specified period of time.

## THEME ONE WORKSHEET: SEEKING POSITIVE POWER

Perhaps you have been trying to adjust to civilian life since returning from one or more deployments. Although you may not want to recreate combat conditions you might consider maintaining your skills by going to the firing range and enhancing your physical condition by going to the gym to work out and lift weights. Such activities can also help to maintain self-esteem, a sense of personal power, and a readiness to deal with threatening situations. And you can expect there may be potentially threatening situations that could arise. For example, what would you do if, while outside your home one evening, a car drove by and someone yelled obscenities. You reacted angrily by yelling back, only to be hit by a bottle that came flying out of the car window as the vehicle sped away.

Please circle the numbers below that best correspond to what you might do. Add up your scores for each of the four sections and rate yourself according to the written guidelines.

### RED: Destructive Power

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You would react defensively with lightning speed as you've been trained.	0	1	2	3
You would instinctively fire a weapon at the vehicle.	0	1	2	3
You would run to the house, grab a set of car keys, and chase the car.	0	1	2	3
Against your better judgment, you vow to hunt the down the occupants of the car.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### BLACK: Less Destructive

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You decide to have several weapons available in case this happens again.	0	1	2	3
You decide to spend more time doing weapons training and weight lifting.	0	1	2	3
You decide to stay in the house to avoid being a target.	0	1	2	3
You decide to keep a loaded gun in your belt when you are in the yard.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### YELLOW: Seeking Resolution

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You are open to learning new ways of coping with feelings of powerlessness.	0	1	2	3
You will avoid being defensive when your wife confronts you.	0	1	2	3
You will seek more positive ways of enhancing a sense of power in your life.	0	1	2	3
You will seek help from your Higher Power, to provide what you need.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

### GREEN: Positive Power

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You will talk with someone you trust about dealing with future possible incidents.	0	1	2	3
You decide not to continue to overreact with any kind of 'power play.'	0	1	2	3
You will discuss with friends appropriate non-destructive ways to respond.	0	1	2	3
You will report this threat to the police and request more patrols.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**ASSIGNMENT:** Keep a daily diary of times you feel powerless and react. Begin to learn new ways of gaining positive power in your life. Practice positive methods of seeking positive power which might include meditation, exercise, helping others, accepting help, activities, hobbies, prayer, and readings.

**MEDITATION:** Reflect on the significance of the spiritual step. Say it aloud, & make it personal.

**SPIRITUAL STEP ONE:** *I acknowledge that I often feel powerless to gain control of post-traumatic symptoms and seek the help of God, as I understand God to be, as a source of positive power.*

## THEME ONE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Review your theme one assessment and worksheet scores and then, on a blank sheet of paper, draw a situation that includes two other people, during which you felt powerless. Share this drawing, scores, and thoughts about this subject with someone you trust. Then read aloud the material on this page, either alone or with someone you trust, and share your thoughts. Read the scripture below and close by reading the spiritual step at the bottom of this page. (If you are in a group, participants can read this together.)

### Coping with Powerlessness

Even though we had the strength to survive against the worst of combat conditions, we must admit we often feel defenseless to survive against a new enemy - our memories, flashbacks, and combat instincts.

Some of us feel helpless to control sudden impulses to lash out when we feel vulnerable.

We may feel powerless to control verbal or even physical outbursts directed toward those who offend or confront us.

In our sense of powerlessness, we may withdraw, isolate ourselves or push people away (including friends and family members) so that they may tend to avoid, dislike, or even hate us.

We may feel powerless as we futilely attempt to live meaningful lives and cope with post-traumatic symptoms.

We may feel powerless and want to retaliate when certain dominating people want to control us.

When we react against feeling powerless our behavior may hurt others or hurt ourselves.

**Recovering:** Our first step is to accept that, in many respects, we lack the power to change our non-productive or destructive ways and post-combat reactions.

### Scriptures

*"My eyes are ever looking to the Lord for help for He alone can rescue me. Come Lord and show me your mercy for I am helpless, overwhelmed, in deep distress - Save Me!" (Psalm 25:15).*

*"He gives power to the weak and to those who have no might, He increases strength... But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:29-31).*

### Spiritual Step One (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)

We acknowledge that we often feel powerless to control post-traumatic symptoms and to manage our lives as we would like. God, we seek You, as a source of positive power in our lives.

## THEME TWO WORKSHEET: SEEKING MEANING

You are suffering from recurring nightmares and memories of a battle in which several of your comrades were killed. This tragedy has been too distressing to talk about in any detail and you've tended to keep it to yourself. Furthermore you haven't resolved your grief nor have you been able to appreciate the fact you survived and are treated as a hero by some people. Although your comrades gave their lives on behalf of their country, there are times when you find it difficult it is to find meaning from this tragedy.

Please circle the numbers below that best correspond to you. Add the scores for each of the four sections and rate yourself according to the written guidelines.

**RED: Meaninglessness**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You can't keep from thinking 'why did it have to happen?'	0	1	2	3
You take very dangerous risks to gain some sense of meaning from life.	0	1	2	3
You feel your life has been utterly meaningless since returning home.	0	1	2	3
You are often confused. Your mind is scattered and lacks focus.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem    5-8 Moderate problem    9-12 Serious problem

**BLACK: Resolution seems blocked**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You try but can't find meaning - as if your attempts are always blocked.	0	1	2	3
Maintaining weaponry & defense skills provides your only sense of meaning.	0	1	2	3
Your experience seems so meaningless that it negates any positive memories.	0	1	2	3
I have no sense of meaning in taking military responsibilities once again.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem    5-8 Moderate problem    9-12 Serious problem

**YELLOW: Seeking resolution**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You acknowledge to someone you trust about your difficulty finding meaning.	0	1	2	3
You want to discuss with that person ways that you can find meaning.	0	1	2	3
You acknowledge to your Higher Power all difficulties in finding meaning.	0	1	2	3
You pray for a way to find resolution for your problem with meaninglessness.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress    5-8 Moderate progress    9-12 Excellent progress

**GREEN: Finding meaning**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You learn 3 or more new ways to cope with meaninglessness.	0	1	2	3
You seek professional help to find ways to cope with meaninglessness.	0	1	2	3
You read about others (books, articles) who have found meaning for their lives.	0	1	2	3
You seek help from God for meaning through prayer and study.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress    5-8 Moderate progress    9-12 Excellent progress

**ASSIGNMENT:** On a clean sheet of paper write down or draw with crayon a traumatic experience you believed to be meaningless. On a second sheet or paper, write down or draw a traumatic experience which eventually was resolved by something positive happening in your life.

**MEDITATION:** Turn your memories of suffering over to your Higher Power and also turn over your questions to your Higher Power as to how you can find meaning from those experiences.

**SPIRITUAL STEP TWO:** *We seek to find meaning from having suffered but also from having survived and open our minds to the help of God, as we understand Him to be, so that we can find meaning.*

## THEME TWO GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Coping with Meaninglessness

Victor Frankl, who survived the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, exemplifies how a survivor finds meaning from the most severe of traumatic experiences. He has written: "If one cannot change a situation that causes his suffering, he can still choose his attitude. Meaning is available in spite of - nay, even through - suffering." (V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 1946)

Review your theme one assessment and worksheet scores and then, on a blank sheet of paper, draw a situation which left you with a feeling of meaninglessness. Share this drawing, scores, and thoughts about this subject with someone you trust. Then read aloud the material on this page, either alone or with someone you trust, and share your thoughts and memories. Read the scripture below and close by reading the spiritual step at the bottom of this page. (If you are in a group, participants can read this together.)

We struggle for meaning; but how and where will we find it? In killing an adversary? In drugs or alcohol? In surviving dangerous situations? In taking excessive risks? In provoking fights? No. Rather, we must find meaning in ways that will lead to a more fulfilling life.

Are we seeking freedom from nagging thoughts telling us that we should have lost our lives just as our comrades gave up their lives?

War taught us to kill the enemy, protect our comrades, and keep from being killed. Is it possible to use those experiences as a source of meaning now that we are no longer in combat?

Would we like to seek meaning in being alive? Can we hope to find life a privilege rather than a burden?

Some of us would like to return to combat where there is unfinished business. Is it possible to transform the battlefield's unfinished business into something meaningful at home?

### Recovering

We now seek ways to find meaning out of adversity and look to those who wish to help us accomplish that.

We seek help to discover meaning in previously hidden creative and positive aspects within ourselves.

We seek God's help to find meaning from disturbing experiences that have dominated our lives and His help for freedom to pursue our goals, plans, and positive actions.

### Scriptures

*"Show me the path where I should go, Oh Lord. Point out the right road for me to walk. Lead me. Teach me. For you are the God who gives me salvation. I have no hope except in you." (Psalm 25:4)*

*"Lord, I lift my hands to heaven and implore your help. Oh, listen to my cry." (Psalm 28:2)*

### Spiritual Step Two (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)

We seek meaning from having suffered and from having survived. Now we open our minds to You, God, so that we can find that meaning.

### THEME THREE WORKSHEET: TRUST vs DISTRUST

You have felt depressed because of a particular memory that keeps coming back to mind about an incident that happened. You witnessed an event that involved a ranking military officer who misused his authority. You tried to intervene but were unable to do so. You were very distressed about it and talked to a friend who warned you of the consequences that might take place if you reported it. None-the-less you decided to report this to a superior officer who listened but then told you not to be concerned and also warned you not to talk about it to anyone. Feeling betrayed, you've concluded you can't trust anyone in your line of command and have begun to have sleepless nights and feelings of shame and distrust. You are particularly angry because of the officer's failure to intervene and his desire to cover up this matter.

Please read through the following items and circle the numbers that best correspond to your possible reaction. Add the scores for each of the four sections, and rate yourself according to the written guidelines.

**RED: Destructive Response**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You would plan destructive force toward the offending officer.	0	1	2	3
You would plan destructive force toward others who want to cover it up.	0	1	2	3
You feel helpless, ashamed, and have self-destructive thoughts.	0	1	2	3
You would react angrily and want to hurt those who refuse to report it.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

**BLACK: Blocked Response**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You would decide to keep quiet and avoid the officer.	0	1	2	3
You would harbor feelings of shame and become depressed.	0	1	2	3
You will no longer talk openly with officers because they have let you down.	0	1	2	3
Your distrust has become so strong that it interferes with your functioning.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

**YELLOW: Planning ways to seek help**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You would consider having a meeting with someone else to talk about it.	0	1	2	3
You decide to share your experience confidentially with someone you trust.	0	1	2	3
You seek professional help to cope with your feelings.	0	1	2	3
You inquire about the wisdom of reporting the assault to a legal officer.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**GREEN: Seeking to Trust**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
You talk with a trusted friend and develop a response plan you can live with.	0	1	2	3
You decide you can trust a chaplain to listen and provide a new response plan.	0	1	2	3
You decide to report the assault to a trustworthy AG official.	0	1	2	3
You pray and turn this problem over to your Higher Power.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**COMMITMENT:** In order to gain freedom from lingering feelings of distrust, or lingering feelings of shame and doubt, I seek help from God and those who wish to help me.

**SPIRITUAL STEP THREE:** I seek your healing, God, from distrust, shame, and doubt. I seek Your leadership to help me regain my sense of trust.

## THEME THREE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Coping with Shame, Doubt, & Distrust

List those things you regularly do which are based on trust. \_\_\_\_\_

List some ways to help you improve your trust with individuals you care about: \_\_\_\_\_

List those disturbing or shameful memories you would like to turn over to God for 'healing'. \_\_\_\_\_

With crayon, draw a shameful experience in your life and include 2 other persons in the drawing. Then make a second drawing of how you would like to resolve the experience.

Review your theme three assessment scores and theme three worksheet scores. Discuss pertinent worksheet items and your drawings with someone you trust.

Read aloud the material on this page, share personal experiences with someone you trust, and close by reading the spiritual step aloud. If you are in a group, participants can read it together.

Some of us may have a sense of shame about a troubling event about which we feel responsible.

Some of us have been hurt or betrayed by someone we trusted so that now we have difficulty trusting.

Some of us may not be willing or are unable to openly talk about painful memories to anyone.

Some of us may find it hard to trust in God or those who wish to help us.

Some of us may have rejected those who want to help us or walked away from someone who has offered to help us.

**Recovery:** We are tired of feeling shame, doubt, and distrust and we seek to be whole, to be able to trust, and to be trustworthy.

Although we have not previously trusted others to receive the assistance we have needed, we now desire to open ourselves to receive help.

We ask friends, family, professionals, and God to help us become free of shame, self-doubt, and distrust.

### Scriptures

*"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning?" (Psalm 22:1)*

*"Create in me a clean heart Oh God and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 5:10)*

*"Trust the Lord completely instead of trusting yourself. In everything you do, put God first. He will direct you and crown your efforts with success." (Proverbs 3:56)*

### Spiritual Step Three (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)

We seek Your presence in our lives for healing of mind, spirit, and emotions that we may become free of distrust, shame, and self-doubt.

## THEME FOUR WORKSHEET: SEEKING TRUTH

You have never felt the same after returning home from your deployment. Your wife has worried about how much you have changed. She has noticed you are more irritable and even explosive at times, causing you to feel guilty and unwilling to talk about your feelings. Although you appear self-confident to others you have lost your sense of self-confidence and sometimes you make unwise decisions. Your wife has also mentioned you are more suspicious of others and often stare off into space. When she asks if anything bad happened while you were deployed you brush her off and deny there is anything wrong. Other members of your family and friends have also noticed you have changed. Unfortunately you tend to reject constructive criticism and if anyone asks if you should seek counseling you get angry and deny there is a problem. Please complete the self-inventory.

### Assess Your Capacity for Truth and Openness:

	No	Maybe	Probably	Yes
Do you suffer from memory gaps or amnesia for some portion of your past?	0	1	2	3
Do you have secrets that you won't reveal for fear of the consequences?	0	1	2	3
Do you have disturbing memories that you avoid or do you distort the truth?	0	1	2	3
Do you become cold and withdrawn from family members?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### Assess The Quality of Your Relationships:

	No	Maybe	Probably	Yes
Do you knowingly or unknowingly hurt others?	0	1	2	3
Would talking about disturbing memories hurt your relationships?	0	1	2	3
Is it hard for you to accept constructive criticism or compliments from others?	0	1	2	3
Do you think crying and/or expressing 'feelings' reveals weakness?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### YELLOW: Making a Self Assessment

	No	Maybe	Probably	Yes
You are willing to make a list of all of your negative traits.	0	1	2	3
You are willing to make a list of all of your positive traits.	0	1	2	3
You are willing to seek professional help to improve negative traits.	0	1	2	3
You will seek feedback about yourself from someone you trust.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

### GREEN: Self Improvement

	No	Maybe	Probably	Yes
You talk with a trusted friend about ways to improve your relationships.	0	1	2	3
You share with your wife and/or trusted friend those faults you want to change.	0	1	2	3
You decide to apologize to someone you've hurt or offended.	0	1	2	3
You pray and turn your problems over to your Higher Power.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**List compliments & constructive criticisms you've received:**

---



---

**List those individuals to whom you would like to apologize or make amends:**

---



---

**SPIRITUAL STEP FOUR** (for personal meditation): I will make a searching self-inventory, acknowledge my positive and negative traits to You, God, and someone I trust & seek Your help to accept my positive qualities and change the negative ones.



## THEME FOUR GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Review your theme four assessment scores and theme four worksheet scores, discuss pertinent worksheet items and, if comfortable, share whatever might be helpful.

On a plain sheet of paper, use a crayon to draw memories or thoughts that you haven't felt comfortable talking about. Include in your drawing two other people that were present. Then on a second sheet of paper draw an outcome you would like to see take place. After this, discuss your drawing with someone you trust or with other participants if you are in support group.

Read the material on this page, share personal experiences, give one another feedback then close the meeting by reading the spiritual step. If you are in a group, read it together.

### **Coping With Difficulties With Self-awareness and Relationships**

Are we ready to do a self-inventory and deal with whatever we might discover – both negative and positive?

Are we afraid to reveal some memories, thoughts, and feelings for fear of negative consequences?

Are we aware that unpleasant memories we are convinced are true may not be completely accurate? <sup>24</sup>

Do we know that if we can't remember accurately we can't honestly assess what has happened to us?

Do we realize that self inventory means assessing strengths as well as failings?

Do we tend to exaggerate what makes us feel good and avoid what makes us uncomfortable?

Or do we have a tendency to minimize our positive qualities and exaggerate our negative ones?

Have we had more + (positive) than – (negative) experiences and do we possess more + than - traits?

**Recovery:** Believing that 'the truth shall make us free' we will begin to seek out the truth as it applies to our lives.

In order to evaluate both desirable and undesirable qualities, with God's help, we will make an honest self-inventory and be open to feedback – both positive affirmations and constructive criticisms.

### **Scriptures**

*"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit and has lost self-control is like a city broken down without walls."*  
(Proverbs 25:28)

*"Cross examine me Oh Lord... Test my motives and affections" (Psalm 26:2). "Cleanse me from hidden faults, and keep me from deliberate wrongs." (Psalm 19:12-13)*

*"For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord. Walk as children of light."*  
(Ephesians 5:8)

### **Spiritual Step Four (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)**

**We will make a searching self-inventory, reveal hidden painful memories, acknowledge our shortcomings, seek help from God to accept our positive qualities and change our negative ones.**

**THEME FIVE WORKSHEET: ANGER vs RAGE or APATHY**

Anger should be considered a normal emotion but you may be concerned that your anger has become a problem for you, your family, and sometimes your co-workers. When you were in a combat zone your anger served a purpose. It energized your fighting spirit and enabled you to be a more fierce combatant. But after returning to a civilian life style your anger may have become detrimental. Perhaps you can't keep from exploding at times. If so you are likely to withdraw from your family because you are afraid of losing control and hurting someone. Wouldn't you like to be able to direct your angry feelings in a normal way or be assertive in a calm manner? If you can't express anger constructively you may be too unemotional, passive, or even apathetic; or you may bottle up all your anger to the point that you often feel like exploding. Either of these extremes is destructive to you or others. So what can you do? You may want to seek out situations where you can let down your guard. But if so, you must avoid going to bars, drinking too much, or getting into brawls. Maybe it is time to learn better ways to cope with destructive anger. Please answer the following questions and write down the total for each group of responses. High scores for red and black indicate more serious problems while high scores for yellow and green indicate more positive responses.

**RED-DESTRUCTIVE:**

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Does your rage cause your mind to freeze and your body to lose control?	0	1	2	3
Do your outbursts cause destructive consequences toward others?	0	1	2	3
Are you afraid you're a time bomb and could easily hurt somebody?	0	1	2	3
Do you go to barrooms or other places where you get into brawls?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem                      5-8 Moderate problem                      9-12 Serious problem

**BLACK-BLOCKED:**

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Do you hold back your feelings because you're afraid of exploding?	0	1	2	3
Do you walk out of rooms when people irritate you?	0	1	2	3
Do you believe your outbursts have become an unsolvable problem?	0	1	2	3
Do you become angry to block feelings like fear, grief, guilt, or affection?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem                      5-8 Moderate problem                      9-12 Serious problem

**YELLOW-GOALS & PLANS:**

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Would you like to assert yourself more effectively without losing your temper?	0	1	2	3
Would you like to understand how to express anger constructively?	0	1	2	3
Would you like to be aware of your anger earlier, before it explodes?	0	1	2	3
Would you like to understand and express other emotions your anger blocks?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress                      5-8 Moderate progress                      9-12 Excellent progress

**GREEN-POSITIVE ACTION:**

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
You are learning to assert yourself.	0	1	2	3
...learning to recognize and express lesser degrees of anger like mild irritability.	0	1	2	3
...learning to listen to someone who disagrees without retaliating angrily.	0	1	2	3
...learning to understand and express other feelings blocked by your anger.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress                      5-8 Moderate progress                      9-12 Excellent progress

**ASSIGNMENT:** Ask someone you trust to let you know when your anger is out of control or that you use anger to cover over other feelings such as fear, guilt, or grief. Practice expressing your disagreements calmly rather than allowing anger to get out of control.

**MEDITATION:** Reflect on the significance of the spiritual step. When alone, say it aloud, & make it personal.

**SPIRITUAL STEP FIVE:** *I acknowledge my problems with anger and seek Your help, God, to understand its sources and effects on others. Help me control destructive anger and teach me to express it constructively.*

## THEME FIVE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

In what situations is it important for you to learn to assert yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

In what situations are you most likely to lose control over your anger? \_\_\_\_\_

Identify one or more emotions (fear, guilt, grief, affection) that you avoid or which you suppress with feelings of hostility: \_\_\_\_\_

With crayon, draw an experience in your life that has caused feelings of intense anger and include two other people in the drawing. Then make a second drawing of how you would like to resolve the experience. Discuss your drawing and how it fits in with your theme five assessment and worksheet scores.

Read aloud the material on this page and share personal experiences with someone you trust and/or in your support group. Additional discussion may follow the scripture reading. Read the spiritual step and if you are in a support group, close the meeting by having participants read it together.

### Coping With Difficulties Expressing Anger

Those of us who have been in the midst of war know that anger fueled our fighting spirits. Now we are no longer in a combat zone and we find ourselves getting angry over things that didn't upset us much before. Unfortunately even the littlest things might make us mad and cause us to explode.

We know that we must find a way to be less angry. But, are we ready to 'let go of' angry feelings because we felt more alive when we were angry?

Although we would like to let-go of our anger, that could be frightening, particularly if we use anger as a defense against feeling helpless or experiencing undesirable emotions and memories. Thus we must ask ourselves: would we rather feel anger than feel grief, fear, guilt, or affection?

Are we afraid that giving up the rage within will cause us to lose the source of motivation that kept us going?

Do we need to recognize that there are times when expressing a controlled degree of anger is desirable, like being assertive? We must find a way to express a meaningful alternative besides uncontrollable anger or passivity.

**Recovery:** We recognize that we need to seek help and gain insight into reasons we are angry; to 'let go' of the deep-seated rage inside; to find ways to use anger constructively; to uncover other feelings which anger blots out; and be free from the anger that blocks us from our goals, plans, and positive actions.

#### Scriptures

*"Listen much, speak little, and don't become angry." (James 1:19)*

*"Be angry, and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26)*

*"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit and has lost self-control is like a city broken down without walls." (Proverbs 25:28)*

*"For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from His wrath." (Romans 3:25)*

### Spiritual Step Five (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)

We acknowledge our problems with anger and seek Your help, God, to understand its sources, to control its destructive effects, and to express it constructively.

## THEME SIX WORKSHEET: COURAGE vs TERROR

During basic training you learned how to survive and techniques to defend yourself in the face of life-threatening dangers. You mastered the ability to remain calm in the midst of combat and other dangerous situations. You learned to control your fear and to be alert to threatening situations by developing your sensory perceptions, muscle strength, and motor reactions. You learned survival skills, evasive actions, weapons use, and hand-to-hand fighting techniques so that they became second nature in combat situations. But you did not expect, upon returning to civilian life, that these conditioned responses might become a liability rather than an asset. All of your conditioning – once necessary for survival – are in danger of becoming symptoms that frustrate you and members of your family. These symptoms include always being on guard, not being able to sleep, and extreme sensitivity to noise, sudden movements, or people that seem suspicious to the point you have become almost paranoid. Your nightmares may cause you to be a danger to others so that you can't sleep with anyone else. Please investigate this important subject by answering the following questions. Write down the total for each group of responses. High scores for red and black indicate more serious problems while high scores for yellow and green indicate more positive responses.

### RED-DESTRUCTIVE:

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
Do you react to potential danger reflexively as if it is a life or death matter?	0	1	2	3
Have you hurt someone because you lashed out reflexively?	0	1	2	3
Do you take dangerous, life-threatening risks in order to feel alive?	0	1	2	3
Do you have nightmares that cause reflexive combative actions at night?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### BLACK-BLOCKED:

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
Have you become paranoid and suspicious of people you used to trust?	0	1	2	3
Do you suffer from panic attacks, racing pulse, and shortness of breath?	0	1	2	3
Do you over-react to sudden movements or noises?	0	1	2	3
Does your anxiety prevent you from doing certain things you used to do?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### YELLOW-GOALS:

	No	Maybe	Probably	Yes
Would you like to better understand the source of your unrealistic fears?	0	1	2	3
Would you like to express suppressed feelings that you were afraid to express?	0	1	2	3
Would you like to understand how to overcome special fears or phobias?	0	1	2	3
Would you like to understand the fear and helplessness that has been blocked?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

### GREEN-POSITIVE ACTION:

	No	Maybe	Probably	Yes
Are you learning to share fears and anxieties with someone you trust?	0	1	2	3
Are you learning that prayer and a belief in God can conquer fear and anxiety?	0	1	2	3
Are you learning how to transform excessive fear into courage?	0	1	2	3
Are you learning to do things you had previously been afraid to do (within the limits of appropriate safety), either alone or with someone you trust?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**ASSIGNMENT:** List personal examples of destructive or positive outcomes from facing danger:

Dangerous Situation	Destructive Outcome	Positive Outcome

**SPIRITUAL STEP SIX:** *I seek Your help, God, to relinquish 'the wall' around my feelings. I ask that You will provide comfort to me during moments of terror, and courage to take risks in constructive ways.*

### THEME SIX GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

With crayon, draw an experience in your life that caused feelings of intense fear and included one or two other people. Then make a second drawing of how you would like to resolve the experience. Discuss your drawing and how it fits in with your theme six assessment and worksheet scores. Read aloud the material on this page and share personal experiences with someone you trust. Close the meeting by reading the spiritual step. If you are in a group read it together.

#### Coping With Difficulties Pertaining to Fear

It is important to realize that fear is normal. It is at the root of our capacity to avoid or cope with dangerous circumstances. If we are thrust into life-and-death situations, our bodies will respond with increased levels of stress hormones and energizing neurotransmitters. Our senses will become hypervigilant, we will be hypersensitive to potential threat, and we will respond with either a fight, flight, or fear response. If our fear persists after the danger is over we can be left with 'anxiety' caused by increased levels of stress hormones, neurotransmitters, and autonomic nervous system hypersensitivity. Post-traumatic symptoms associated with persistent and subconscious fear responses include hypervigilance, nightmares, night terrors, panic attacks and exaggerated startle responses to noise or sudden movement.

We are warriors - trained to kill the enemy before he kills us. The warrior instinct ingrained in our bodies made us soldiers but complicates our lives in a civilian society. We tend to over-react to threats, real or imagined, big or small; and we are afraid of the destructive things we might do.

Some of us have learned to control fear and anxiety by participating in highly stressful survival activities. We may like the Adrenalin rush and we might even experience a sense of calmness and capacity to think clearly in the midst of stressful experiences. But seeking out highly stressful situations can become potentially dangerous if we take foolish or excessively dangerous risks.

**Recovery:** If we've left the war zone let's learn to relax our vigilance. Let us talk to someone we trust about our fears, apprehensions, and risk-taking behaviors or with others if we are in a support group. Let's learn to take risks in acceptable rather than highly dangerous ways. Let's contemplate how prayer, meditation, and a belief in God can help to conquer excessive fear and anxiety.

#### Scriptures

*"Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)*

*"God is our refuge and strength. He is a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed ... mountains be carried into the midst of the sea... waters roar... [and] the mountains shake with its swelling." (Psalm 46:1-3)*

*"I will pray to the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." (John 14:16)*

#### **Spiritual Step Six (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)**

God, we seek Your help to relinquish 'the wall' around our feelings, open the doors to the past, and reveal to You and another person whom we trust our frightening, traumatic memories. We seek Your help to provide comfort to us so that we can withstand moments of terror, and give us the courage to take risks in constructive ways.

## THEME SEVEN WORKSHEET: RESPONSIBILITY VS GUILT

You are a survivor. But there are many who did not survive, some who you knew personally. Perhaps they were killed by road-side bombs, grenades, direct fire, or ambushes. Maybe you survived a mortar attack that killed other members of your squad. Maybe you are the one who courageously rescued others and were commended for your bravery, yet you keep thinking you should have been killed. Or maybe you made a questionable decision that put others in jeopardy and some did not survive. In any case, you suffer guilt feelings – for surviving when others were killed or for making a poor decision that led to casualties. If you continue to experience guilt feelings that won't go away please answer the following questions. Write down the total for each group of responses. High scores for red and black indicate more serious problems while high scores for yellow and green indicate more positive responses.

### RED-DESTRUCTIVE:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Do your guilt feelings cause you to wish you were dead or make you suicidal?	0	1	2	3
Have you deadened your conscience, making it easier to hurt people?	0	1	2	3
Have you lost your emotional and ethical sensitivity about right and wrong?	0	1	2	3
Do you blot out your guilt feelings and memories with alcohol and/or drugs?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### BLACK-BLOCKED:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Do you wake up at night with guilty memories and/or nightmares?	0	1	2	3
Do you have guilt feelings that cause you to feel depressed?	0	1	2	3
Is it impossible to admit when you've failed or asked someone to forgive you?	0	1	2	3
Have you lost your conscience and/or are you alienated from God?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### YELLOW-GOALS:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Do you seek relief from excessive guilt and sorrow?	0	1	2	3
Do you seek to rediscover your conscience and ethical behavior?	0	1	2	3
Do you seek to more sensitive to other people's feelings?	0	1	2	3
Do you seek to be more responsible for your behaviors?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

### GREEN-POSITIVE ACTION:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Are you willing to talk about guilt feelings with someone you trust?	0	1	2	3
Are you willing to ask for forgiveness if you've hurt someone?	0	1	2	3
Are you willing to talk with a counselor about being more responsible?	0	1	2	3
Are you willing to seek God's help to get relief from your guilt?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**ASSIGNMENT:** Make two lists: 1) situations that have caused you to feel guilt or self-blame (example – slapping your spouse) 2) situations where you have asked a person for forgiveness (example – asked your spouse to forgive you) 3) situations where you would like to ask God's forgiveness.

Situations causing guilt & self-blame: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Situations about which you would like to ask forgiveness. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SPIRITUAL STEP SEVEN:** *God, help me to face my guilty secrets and to reveal them to someone I trust. I ask and accept forgiveness from You and ask for Your help to forgive myself.*

## THEME SEVEN GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

With crayon and blank sheet of paper, draw an experience in your life that has caused feelings of guilt and include two other people in the drawing. Then make a second drawing of how you would like to resolve the experience. Discuss your drawing with someone you trust and how it fits in with your theme seven assessment and worksheet scores. Read aloud the material on this page and share personal experiences with someone you trust or members of your support group. Read the scripture reading and if you are in a group, read it together.

### Coping With Difficulties Pertaining to Guilt

For many of us, persistent guilt feelings are a source of distress.

We may harbor guilty memories about being alive when others have died.

We may feel guilty, thinking we were directly or indirectly responsible for the deaths of others.

We may feel guilty for moving to a safer location while our friends remain behind, still in danger.

We may feel guilty because we left before the task was completed.

We may feel guilty because we enjoyed killing the enemy; or didn't care that civilians were killed.

We may feel guilty for becoming insensitive to loved ones and acting irresponsibly and hurtful to others.

**Recovery:** We seek to resolve our guilt feelings in order to regain or maintain integrity, a more sensitive conscience, emotional sensitivity, the capacity to accept personal responsibility, and the desire to do the right thing.

We ask for forgiveness from God and a person whom we trust (friend, spouse, colleague, or chaplain) for committing, participating in, or knowing about actions that resulted in undue suffering and grief – whether during combat situations or after returning to our families and communities.

We will seek and accept forgiveness. We will forgive ourselves. We will continue to seek and accept forgiveness in the future.

### Scriptures

*"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)*

*"Jesus the Son of God is our great High Priest who ...understands our weaknesses, since He had the same temptations we do... So let us come boldly to the very throne of God and stay there to receive His mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)*

*"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)*

### Spiritual Step Seven (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)

We face our guilty secrets and are willing to reveal them to someone we trust. We ask for and accept forgiveness from You, God, and ask Your help to forgive ourselves.

## THEME EIGHT WORKSHEET: EMPATHY vs GRIEF

You may have lost a close friend in battle but have not been able to resolve your feelings of grief. Perhaps you've dealt with this loss by blocking out all of your emotions and memories of the attack which killed your best friend. If so you may still feel emotionally numb, avoid close relationships, feel depressed or angry, and lack empathy for others who are grieving. This reaction to loss has been called 'impacted grief' and can occur when individuals have lost friends or family members and been unable to resolve their feelings of loss. Unresolved grief can also take place after other kinds of losses, i.e. the loss of a meaningful future, the loss of health, the loss of innocence, or the loss of trust. If you fail to resolve your grief you will have difficulty maintaining meaningful relationships and experiencing empathy for others who are suffering. It is important for all soldiers and veterans to be able to 'work through' their unresolved grief which means progressing through predictable phases - anger, guilt, depression, and finally acceptance. If you need to complete your grieving process and find ways to resolve your 'impacted grief' please answer the following questions and discuss them in your counseling or group sessions.

### RED-DESTRUCTIVE:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Do your memories of a significant loss trigger depression and suicidal thoughts?	0	1	2	3
Have you become detached from loved ones and do you 'push them away'?	0	1	2	3
Do you stop yourself from crying because it is too painful to shed tears?	0	1	2	3
Do nightmares and flashbacks about the dead interfere with your functioning?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### BLACK-BLOCKED:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Do you continue to block tears when it would be better for you if you cried?	0	1	2	3
Do you still find it very hard to accept that your loved one died or was killed?	0	1	2	3
Does your despair keep you alienated from God?	0	1	2	3
Do you avoid establishing close relationships again?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### YELLOW-GOALS:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Would you like to know if you're stuck in one of the phases of grief resolution?	0	1	2	3
Would you like help to deal with disbelief or denial?	0	1	2	3
Would you like help to deal with depression?	0	1	2	3
Would you like help to deal with anger?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

### GREEN-POSITIVE ACTION:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Are you willing to talk to someone about your grief?	0	1	2	3
Are you open to shedding the tears that you've bottled up?	0	1	2	3
Can you relinquish your feelings of grief to God?	0	1	2	3
Can you say 'goodbye' to whoever or whatever you have lost?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**ASSIGNMENT:** Make a list of losses: persons, physical health, emotional health, and missed opportunities. Then go through the grieving process for each and turn these losses over to God.

**LOSS OF  
PERSONS**

**LOSS OF  
PHYSICAL HEALTH**

**LOSS OF  
EMOTIONAL H'LTH**

**LOSS OF  
OPPORTUNITIES**


**SPIRITUAL STEP EIGHT:** *I seek Your help, God, to grieve whomever or whatever I have lost, face my painful memories and emotions, and let my tears heal my sorrows.*



## THEME EIGHT GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

What significant person(s) in your life have died \_\_\_\_\_  
and you have remained 'stuck' in one or more of the following emotional phases:

Denial \_\_\_\_\_ Anger \_\_\_\_\_ Guilt \_\_\_\_\_ Depression \_\_\_\_\_

List one or more lost relationships for which you need to complete the grieving process in order to have memories free from emotional pain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Review your theme eight assessment scores, worksheet scores, pertinent worksheet items and share this information in a group or with someone you trust. Read aloud the material on this page alone or in your group and share personal experiences. Read and discuss the scripture reading and finish by reading the spiritual step aloud. If you are in a group, close with the group reading the spiritual step together.

### Coping With Difficulties Pertaining to Grief

Many of us continue to harbor feelings associated with unresolved grief which may include anger at those who left us alone, guilt about surviving while others were killed, remorse for failing to save people who died, and yearnings to join those who have passed into another life.

The hurt may come back in our dreams, in our reluctance to become emotionally involved with others, and in the 'stone walls' with which we block our emotions and keep others at a distance.

We may remain numb and without tears, crying inside and never letting it show. Or we may cry easily and feel ashamed because we can't control our tears.

We may be afraid to let our tears flow because we think the dam holding back our tears will break and there will be no way of stopping our outburst of feelings.

**Recovery:** We seek help to find the strength necessary to complete the grieving process for those who have died. We seek understanding about the link between grief and other feelings associated with loss. We would like to be free to shed tears without being lost in unending grief.

We ask for help from God and others to let down our walls and finally shed tears without shame and be able to complete the grief process for those who have died and those we've left behind and to be able to experience a renewed empathy for others.

### Scriptures

*"Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, 'See how He loved him?'" (John 11:35-36)*

*"Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)*

*"Blessed be God, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our tribulation." (2 Corinthians 1:3)*

*"And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. All of that has gone forever." (Revelations 21:4)*

### Spiritual Step Eight (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)

We seek Your help, God, to grieve those we have lost, face our painful memories and emotions, let our tears heal our sorrows, and feel empathy for others who are grieving.

**THEME NINE WORKSHEET: LIFE vs DEATH**

Although you are a survivor you may still find it hard to enjoy being alive. Some soldiers, in fact, have been unable to celebrate being alive and some have even felt more like dead men going through the motions of being alive. If you are a survivor but cannot enjoy the fact that you are alive, you may be doing self-destructive things such as drinking too much, using drugs, mistreating your body, or destroying close relationships. Instead of relishing your life you may continue to feel depressed and undeserving of being alive. Rather than feeling aligned with life forces you may be a captive of the forces of death and remain a 'victim' of depression, self-destructive activities, suicidal thoughts, and addictions. Such a downhill course could end up fatal. Please answer the following questions and discuss them with someone you trust and/or during counseling or group sessions. High scores for red and black indicate more serious problems while high scores for yellow and green indicate more positive responses.

**RED-DESTRUCTIVE:**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
Do memories of past traumas and losses trigger suicidal thoughts?	0	1	2	3
Do you have thoughts about taking your own life?	0	1	2	3
Do you think about a plan to kill yourself if all else fails?	0	1	2	3
Do you abuse drugs, alcohol, pain pills, or prescribed medications?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

**BLACK-BLOCKED:**

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
Do you have obsessive thoughts or behavior about sex or pornography?	0	1	2	3
Do think you are a slave to your bad habits or addictions?	0	1	2	3
Do you think about dying even though you have no plan to kill yourself?	0	1	2	3
Do you feel seriously depressed and think about preferring death?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

**YELLOW & GREEN-GOALS & POSITIVE ACTION:**

Please list your bad habits, destructive activities, and addictions. Also list your plans to gain freedom?

<b>Bad habits:</b>	<b>Plan to gain freedom:</b>
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Destructive activities:</b>	<b>Plan to gain freedom:</b>
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Addictions:</b>	<b>Plan to gain freedom:</b>
_____	_____
_____	_____

**ASSIGNMENT:** Write a plan of positive action and ask God to help you surrender all of the destructive forces, bad habits, or addictions you have listed, to Him, and believe He can provide you a way to freedom.

**SPIRITUAL STEP NINE:** *I surrender to You, God, all remaining addictions, self-destructive wishes, unhealthy desires, bad habits, and, with Your help, make a commitment to life.*

## THEME NINE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Review your scores, discuss pertinent worksheet items and, if comfortable, share what might be helpful. Read aloud the material on this page and share personal experiences with someone you trust. If you are in a support group, discuss the scripture reading and close the meeting by reading the spiritual step together.

### **Coping With Difficulties Pertaining to Depression and Self-Destructive Behaviors:**

Depression can manifest itself in a variety of forms: continuous depression with fatigue, hopeless lassitude, periodic depressions, rapid mood changes every day, irritability, changes in appetite, inability to sleep, destructive behaviors which hide depression, and moods that swing from high to low.

Some of us may have suicidal thoughts, behaviors, or impulses to kill ourselves directly or indirectly.

Some of us may be abusing drugs, alcohol, nicotine, or food. Or we may be engaging in compulsive pornography and sexual activity including internet use.

Some of us may harbor suicide plans in the back of our minds and not want to relinquish these plans even if they interfere with enjoying life fully.

**Recovery:** We want to expose and purge all negative forces within us which block a commitment to life.

\* After having made an honest self-evaluation we are willing to reveal to ourselves, to God, and to someone we trust and members of this group, all remaining suicidal or self-destructive wishes.

\* We are willing to reveal our negative thoughts, compulsions, bad habits, and addictions.

\* We will discuss the possibility of joining a 12-step program if we are addicted to substances or destructive activities.

\* We will discuss how prayer and a belief in God can overcome destructive behaviors and death forces which have hurt others and ourselves.

\* We will discuss methods of replacing death wishes with a commitment to life and make this very important decision: *'We want to live!'*

\* We are willing to rely on Him Whose strength we will seek daily to provide us with the power to embrace life and we will discuss the following scriptures and discuss which may be applicable to us.

### **Scriptures**

*"When you were dead in your sins and your sinful nature, God made you alive in Christ." (Col. 2:13)*

*"Through Jesus' death, the power of your sinful nature was shattered. Your old sin-loving nature was buried with Him by baptism when He died, and when God the Father, with glorious power, brought Him back to life again, you were given His wonderful new life to enjoy. For you have become a part of Him, and so you died with Him, so to speak, when He died and now you share His new life and shall rise as He did." (Romans 6:3-5)*

*"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11:25)*

*"I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loves me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:2)*

### **Spiritual Step Nine (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)**

We surrender to You, God, all remaining self-destructive wishes, addictions, unhealthy desires, bad habits, and, with Your help, make a commitment to life.

**THEME TEN WORKSHEET: JUSTICE & FORGIVENESS vs REVENGE**

You may have been a victim of some kind of criminal activity or been a witness to a crime. Consider the possibility you were assaulted and your girl friend was raped during an off-duty weekend. You both received medical help but your anger continued to simmer because authorities seemed unwilling to investigate the case and even suggested you were partly to blame because of venturing into a dangerous part of the city. Under such circumstances you had become victimized not only by the perpetrators but also by 'the system.' Perhaps you decided to take matters into your own hands, obtained information about the alleged perpetrators, and considered ways of obtaining revenge against them. If you or someone you knew were in a situation like this or different but similar situation that aroused feelings of revenge how would you answer the following questions? High scores for red and black indicate more serious problems while high scores for yellow and green indicate more positive responses.

**RED:**

	<u>No</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Yes</u>
I would develop a foolproof plan to get revenge against all perpetrators.	0	1	2	3
I would also plan a way to get my revenge against the investigators.	0	1	2	3
I would feel completely justified if I were to kill the perpetrators.	0	1	2	3
I will get revenge no matter what the consequences might be.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

**BLACK:**

	<u>No</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Yes</u>
I think about a plan for revenge but am fearful of the consequences.	0	1	2	3
I have murderous thoughts but no clear plan to obtain revenge.	0	1	2	3
I am enraged and can't stop thinking about the failure of the justice system.	0	1	2	3
I feel doubly victimized – by both the perpetrators and 'the system'.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

**YELLOW:**

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
I would like to learn to maintain self-control when I have murderous thoughts.	0	1	2	3
I want to learn to 'let go of' revengeful thoughts before they get out of hand.	0	1	2	3
I want to pursue justice without seeking revenge.	0	1	2	3
I am most concerned about helping the victim cope with her symptoms.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**GREEN:**

I am concerned and want to discuss my revengeful ideas with someone I trust.	0	1	2	3
I believe it would help me to discuss the consequences of harboring hatred.	0	1	2	3
I would like help to 'let-go-of' revengeful thoughts and turn them over to God.	0	1	2	3
I would like to learn if and how forgiveness could apply to this situation.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**ASSIGNMENT:** Do you have a plan to rectify an injustice affecting you, your family, or your friends?

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe a situation where justice has not been carried out. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe when it would be helpful to forgive someone who has wronged you. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SPIRITUAL STEP TEN:** *I seek Your help, God, to pursue the cause of justice, to gain freedom from my revengeful wishes and plans, and to be a channel of forgiveness to those I once hated.*

## THEME TEN GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

What was the problem with the justice system in the case described above?  
Were you and the victim doubly victimized?  
If the perpetrators had been found, how should justice have been obtained?  
If you or the victim carried out a revenge killing what should be the consequences?  
Is revenge ever justifiable?  
What is the difference between justice and revenge?  
What are social, physical, and emotional consequences of harboring hatred?  
How can you regularly 'let-go-of' your bitter thoughts, memories, and feelings and turn them over to God?  
When would it be helpful to forgive someone who has wronged you?

Please read over the following statements. If you are in a support group, share personal experiences, read the following questions aloud, discuss the scripture reading, then close the meeting by reading the spiritual step together.

Do we still feel bitterness and rage toward an enemy that hurt us and killed our friends?

Do we feel anger about feeling abandoned by leaders, or friends, or spouses, or God?

Do we continue to harbor the 'warrior' within us who could kill anyone who threatened us or our family members?

Are we aware that there are consequences facing us if we continue to harbor bitterness and thoughts of revenge - broken relationships, isolation, illness, drugs, violence, and even prison?

Have we been angry for so long that we'd feel strange if those angry feelings were gone? Are we aware that if we do not relinquish this persistent anger it will become our real enemy?

**Recovery:** Are we ready to 'let go' of that bitterness? If so, we must find something to replace it. Can we seek and accept the presence of God in our lives to neutralize the bitterness within us? If so, we will feel a sense of peace previously eluding us.

We seek the help of God to pursue the cause of justice rather than revenge, to turn away from hatred, and to be channels of forgiveness to those who have wronged us.

### Scriptures

*"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)*

*"Love your enemies. Do good to them which hate you." (Luke 6:27)*

*"Be gentle and ready to forgive, never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you can forgive others." (Colossians 3:13)*

### Spiritual Step Ten (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)

We seek Your help, God, to pursue the cause of justice, to gain freedom from our revengeful wishes and plans, and to be a channel of forgiveness to those we once hated.

## THEME ELEVEN WORKSHEET: FINDING A PURPOSE vs DESPAIR

After leaving military service you have had problems finding a purpose in life. You spent many good years in the service and were highly regarded as an expert in your field. But now you wonder what to do with the rest of your life. You first tried working a position you were skilled at but after three years you became fed up with the lack of professionalism you saw around you. Then you decided to go back to school and become a teacher but became disgusted when you found there was little or no support provided teachers who believed in disciplining disruptive students. You found a job working in an insurance company but lacked enthusiasm for the work. Now you have become depressed, you are drinking too much, and your marriage is not going well. Complete the following worksheet. High scores for red and black indicate serious problems while high scores for yellow and green indicate more positive responses.

### RED:

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
I'd become a mercenary.	0	1	2	3
I'd find lucrative but somewhat unethical, ways to make money.	0	1	2	3
I'd tell my wife she has to suffer with my anger because I cannot change.	0	1	2	3
I'd take a job as a bouncer in a bar known for its violent clientele.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### BLACK:

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
I'd keep struggling to find work and try to keep from drinking too much.	0	1	2	3
I'd remain depressed because life is dull and unexciting.	0	1	2	3
I'd quit working and tell my wife she could be the breadwinner now.	0	1	2	3
I'd ask my wife to consider divorce so she wouldn't have to put up with me.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### YELLOW:

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
I'd begin to realize that I need help.	0	1	2	3
I'd begin to think about getting marital counseling.	0	1	2	3
I'd begin to look for any kind of good paying job I can find.	0	1	2	3
I'd begin to wonder what other people would do in a situation like mine.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

### GREEN:

	No	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
I'd start praying to God to help me find a purpose in life.	0	1	2	3
I'd suggest to my wife that we should find help to work this out together.	0	1	2	3
I'd seek vocational counseling and consider more education.	0	1	2	3
I'd get help for my depression and my drinking.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**ASSIGNMENT:** Which of the following might you consider as you seek a purpose in life? Obtain more training or education? \_\_\_ Improve your marriage? \_\_\_ Change professions? \_\_\_ Seek spiritual renewal? \_\_\_

What activities can provide you with a greater sense of purpose in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your goals for the next year? \_\_\_\_\_

For the next five years? \_\_\_\_\_

**SPIRITUAL STEP ELEVEN:** I seek knowledge, direction, a renewed purpose for my life, and ask You, God, for help to find it.

## THEME ELEVEN GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Soldiers who have been impaired by post-traumatic symptoms can find greater purpose for their lives. Many of our most successful and productive leaders were POW's or suffered in other ways during their military service. In spite of this, or possibly because of it, they were able to transform their sufferings into positive, productive, and purposeful lives. Many national action groups or movements for positive change have been started because the founders were themselves victims of pain and suffering. Consider these examples of how tragedy was transformed into organizations with purpose:

John Walsh and his wife lost their six-year-old son Adam, to a child murderer in 1981. They transformed their grief into action and helped to pass the Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984, which created the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which became the national clearinghouse for information on missing children and the prevention of child victimization. John is now well known as a television spokesman for America's Most Wanted and the Amber Alert for missing children.

'Colorado Military Survivors' is a support group for grieving military families & widows, described on the Internet: "Since my [husband was killed] life has been nothing but chaos, like a storm that keeps crashing in... But the winds have calmed down and the rainbow shines bright in the distance. The Lord has blessed and comforted me with an incredible group of women who know exactly what I am feeling and I can count on each one daily to lift my spirits, give an encouraging word or just let the tears flow until there are no more. These women are like family, sisters that are the bravest, strongest individuals that I know..."

Discuss these and similar organizations that have transformed tragedy into purposeful action.

Discuss how it can help your sense of purpose to be of service to others who are having difficulties.

Discuss how it can help your sense of purpose to be part of an activity or movement greater than you.

Discuss how it can help your sense of purpose to have meaningful relationships.

Discuss how it can help your sense of purpose if you were to commit yourself to God's will.

Consider the following and read aloud:

Now, having been freed from burdens which have kept us from meaningful lives, we are ready to find a renewed purpose for our lives - replacing old meaningless patterns with positive life styles, making new friends, learning new information, developing new skills, and being of service to others.

Recognizing that God can be a source of renewed purpose for us, we will daily seek freedom from old burdens and new problems through prayer, meditation, and a daily surrender to God. By surrendering ourselves to God's leadership each day, each of us can continue the daily discovery of His will and purpose for a rewarding and exciting life.

Read the following scripture to see if it is applicable to you.

*"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with Thanksgiving; For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in Him who is the head of all principalities and powers." (Colossians 2:6-9)*

### **Spiritual Step Eleven (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)**

We seek knowledge and direction from You, God, and seek Your leadership in order to find a renewed purpose for our lives.

## THEME TWELVE WORKSHEET: LOVE vs MISUSING OTHERS

Consider this possible scenario: You have found it difficult to maintain your marriage commitment and your wife is threatening divorce. Your marriage has been on shaky ground for a long time because of your PTSD symptoms and your wife's increasing unwillingness to put up with your broken promises. You are moody, sexually demanding, and lack capacity for emotional intimacy. Your wife is angry because you lack emotional intimacy, you cannot control your outbursts of rage, and you seem unable to sustain a commitment. Sometimes she is afraid of you, sometimes she cries, and sometimes she is angry. How would you answer the following questions related to your relationship with your wife? Write down the total for each group of responses. High scores for red and black indicate more serious problems while high scores for yellow and green indicate more positive responses.

### RED:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Will you get angry and seek sexual release outside of your marriage?	0	1	2	3
Will you be despondent about your failed marriage and contemplate suicide?	0	1	2	3
Has abusing your spouse become a habit that you can't stop?	0	1	2	3
Will you tell your wife to seek a divorce because you've given up?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### BLACK:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Will you remain emotionally detached from her?	0	1	2	3
Will you withdraw from her when she tries to be affectionate?	0	1	2	3
Are you feeling so alienated from her that it causes you to feel depressed?	0	1	2	3
Do you believe it's too risky to become emotionally intimate with her?	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Potential problem      5-8 Moderate problem      9-12 Serious problem

### YELLOW:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
I want to be able to commit to and maintain sexual fidelity with my spouse.	0	1	2	3
I want to be able to trust my own judgment about making healthy relationships.	0	1	2	3
I want to become more open to receiving love and affection.	0	1	2	3
I want to become more open to receiving God's love.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

For your marriage to survive you and your wife need to listen, forgive, and be patient with each other. You should be willing to learn to improve their communication, understand each other better, renew your marital commitment, and reestablish a mutually acceptable sexual relationship. It will also be important for you and your wife to build on your religious faith together, pray together, and seek God's love and direction for your marriage. If you were going to improve your capacity to love your wife in these ways, how would you complete the following items?

### GREEN:

	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Yes</u>
With help I will make a commitment to maintain sexual fidelity with my spouse.	0	1	2	3
With help I will become more open to receiving love and affection.	0	1	2	3
With help I will seek to be receptive to God's love.	0	1	2	3
With help I will show concern to someone about whom I used to be indifferent.	0	1	2	3

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4 Some progress      5-8 Moderate progress      9-12 Excellent progress

**ASSIGNMENT:** Who do you know who is easy to love? \_\_\_\_\_

Whose love do you take for granted? \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you know who is hard to love? \_\_\_\_\_

**SPIRITUAL STEP TWELVE:** *I seek your love, God, in my life and Your help to renew my commitment to my friends and family, to be a channel of your love toward those I find difficult to love, and to help those who have been victims as I once was.*



## THEME TWELVE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Coping With Difficulties Pertaining to Love & Relationships

Discuss how you can become more open to receiving love and affection from someone important to you.  
Discuss how you can improve your expression of love toward someone whom you used to take for granted.  
Discuss how you can show care and concern to someone about whom you used to be indifferent.  
Discuss the following three groups of people in your life and what they mean to you - *easy to love, love taken for granted, hard to love.*

Discuss how you can practice giving and receiving love and, when appropriate, to be able to say, "I love you" to the special people in your life.

Discuss how you can become a channel for God's love by reaching out to those who are hard to love.

Consider the following and read it out loud:

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of all 12 steps, we seek to carry this message and to help all those who've suffered as we have suffered.

We seek to understand the true meaning of love, to become open to accept the love others have for us, and to renew our commitment to friends and family.

Thus, we ask for God's help to renew our commitments, love those we have found difficult to love, and help those who have been victims as we once were.

Finally, we would like to spread the message of hope to those who served our country during war - that freedom from victimization can be found in a day-to-day spiritual step program.

### Scriptures

*"Above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts." (Colossians 3:13-15)*

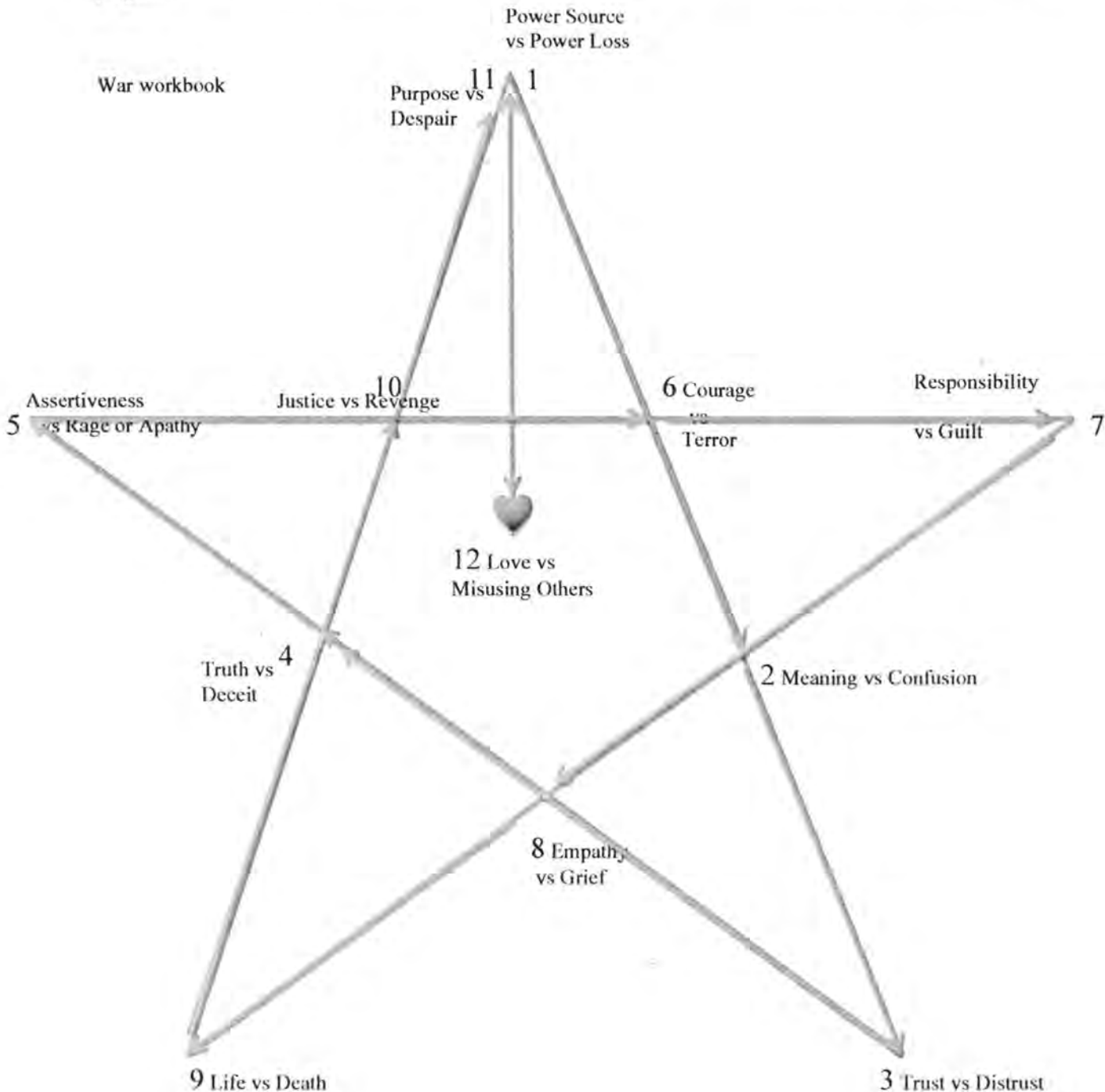
*"Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. There are three things that remain - faith, hope, and love - and the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13)*

### **Spiritual Step Twelve (If you are in a support group read this spiritual step together)**

**Having experienced a spiritual rebirth we seek your love, God, in our lives and Your help to renew our commitments to our friends and family, to be a channel of your love toward those we find difficult to love, and to help those who have been victims as we once were.**

## MEASURING PROGRESS ON THE RECOVERY STAR

After having completed the worksheets for the preceding twelve themes, use color markers on the lines connecting each number on the star to indicate the severity of your problem or level of progress for each theme. To indicate the severity of your most serious problem (designated in red) draw on the line beginning from the affected theme - a ½ inch line with a red marker for a moderate and a 1 inch line for a serious problem. To indicate the severity of your next most serious problem (designated in black) draw a ½ inch line with a black marker for a moderate problem and a 1 inch line for a serious problem. To indicate the level of moderate progress you have made draw a solid line with a yellow marker half way between the numbers and you have made excellent progress draw the line the entire distance between numbers if. To indicate the level of excellent progress, draw a line with a green marker for a distance of half way between the numbers if your progress is moderate and the entire distance between the numbers for the best progress.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Psychiatrist Joel Osler Brende is Professor Emeritus and former Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at Mercer University School of Medicine, Macon, Georgia. He received his M.D. from the University of Minnesota Medical School and completed psychiatric residency training at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas. He worked within the VA system for 18 years in three different medical centers – Topeka, KS, Montrose, NY, and Bay Pines, FL. He also spent more than two years working as a psychiatrist in military settings including Fort Benning and Fort Leavenworth. He has provided individual and group therapies and psychotropic treatments for veterans, performed research and written extensively about post-traumatic stress syndromes and co-authored the book, with Dr. Erwin Parson, *Vietnam Veterans, The Road To Recovery*. Plenum Press, NY, 1985.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Breaker Morant, the movie.
- <sup>2</sup> Psalm 55:4-11, Old Testament, The Holy Bible, Revised King James Version, Thomas Nelson, N.Y. 1984.
- <sup>3</sup> Smith, J.A. A Review of One Hundred and Twenty Years of the Psychological Literature on Reactions to Combat from the Civil War through the Vietnam War. Duke University Press, Durham, N.C. 1981.
- <sup>4</sup> Brende, J.O. & Parson, E.R. *Vietnam Veterans and the Road to Recovery*. Plenum Press, N.Y. 1985.
- <sup>5</sup> Freud, S. Introduction to Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses (1919) In: *Complete Psychological Works*, Standard Edition, (Ed) J. Strachey, Hogarth Press, London, 1959.
- <sup>6</sup> Bartmeier, L. Kubie, L.S., Menninger, K.A., Romano, J. and Whitehorn, J.C. Combat Exhaustion, *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 104:358-389, 1946.
- <sup>7</sup> Kardiner, A. and Spiegel, H. *War Stress and Neurotic Illness*, Hoeber, 1947.
- <sup>8</sup> *Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (DSM-III)*, American Psychiatric Association, 1980.
- <sup>9</sup> Kulka, R.A. *National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study*, Research Triangle Institute, N.C. 1988.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Rising Cost of War: Military Sexual Trauma*. September 22, 2010 by Dr. Z in *Stress & Health* [icasualties.org/oif](http://icasualties.org/oif)
- <sup>11</sup> Gregg Zoroya, *USA Today*, December 20, 2011.
- <sup>12</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/MindMoodNews/fort-hood-shooting-puts-spotlight-soldiers-suffering-post/story?id=9055082#.Tud8b5h4W-I>
- <sup>13</sup> The Miles Foundation reports a ten-fold increase in Domestic Violence Hotline calls - from 50 to 500 calls per month since the start of the Iraq War.
- <sup>14</sup> Bruce Capehart and Dale Bass, *The Aftermath of War*, *Psychiatric Times* XXVIII No. 7 p 32, July 2011.
- <sup>15</sup> The New England Journal of Medicine's report (2003) and the Journal of the American Medical Association's findings (2006).
- <sup>16</sup> *War Changes Perspective for Soldiers, Families* By S. Thorne Harper, *Ledger Enquirer*, Columbus, Georgia, June 22, 2003.
- <sup>17</sup> Bankoff, Lt. Jonathan, *Letters Home by 8th Communication BN Surgeon U.S. Navy, II Marine Expeditionary Force*, June 15, 2003.
- <sup>18</sup> Muse, Stephen, *Fit for Life, Fit for War: Reflections on the Warrior Ethos*, *Infantry*, pp 11-15, March-April, 2005.
- <sup>19</sup> Grossman, Dave, *VFW Magazine*, August, 2003.
- <sup>20</sup> There were anti-war pickets in certain parts of the country during the Bush Administration, anti-war blogs on the Internet, anti-war articles in the national media, and strong anti-war language emanating from the Democratic Party. The New York Times, with its anti-war editorial bias, has been accused of slanting their front-page news reports against the Bush administration and cultivate national opposition against American military's war efforts. Conservatives viewed this rabid anti-war activity as a manifestation of an ideological war that is creating divisiveness and reducing support for American GI's. Those who supported the president's action and American soldiers in Iraq maintained that there were significant variances from Vietnam and that as long as terrorists continued to kill Iraqi civilians, attempted to block the formation of Iraqi's Democratic government, and perpetuated violence to trigger a civil war, our soldiers should not abandon the Iraqi people.
- <sup>21</sup> American military personnel have been involved in helping civilians, working with children, and doing many positive things for indigenous people that have been largely unreported by the press, activities that have contributed to a building relationship between Iraqi civilians and American troops.

---

<sup>23</sup> Traumatic Brain Injury, or TBI, may come to characterize this war just as Agent Orange did with the war in Vietnam. Doctors screening soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center who were wounded in explosions, vehicle accidents, or gunshots to face, head, or neck and have found TBI in 60% of cases. The high incidence of TBI (and PTSD which has some common symptoms affecting memory) has prompted Army bases to establish special recovery units for 'Warriors in Transition' who need time to recovery from TBI and other wounds.

<sup>24</sup> Holy Bible, RSV Edition, Gospel of John, 11:25.

<sup>24</sup> Judism versus Islam, Paul Eidelberg, Director, Foundation for Constitutional Democracy & Professor at Bar Illan University in Israel.

<sup>24</sup> Masada, a symbol of Israel's national courage is an enormous isolated rock where 960 surviving Jewish revolutionaries fled from Roman troops in the year 70 AD and held out for three years. As the battering rams and catapults were about to breach Masada's walls, rather than surrender to certain death, torture, or slavery, they made a decision to take their own lives. Two women and five children who managed to hide and survive the invasion, recalled their leader Eleazar's speech. "Since we long ago resolved never to be servants to the Romans nor to any other than God Himself, Who alone is the true and just Lord of mankind, the time is now come that obliges us to make that resolution true in practice. We were the first that revolted against Rome and we are the last that fight against them, and I cannot but esteem it as a favor that God has granted us, that it is still in our power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom."

<sup>24</sup> American Institute of Vedic Studies, Santa Fe NM, Vamadeva Shastri, Director

## OUTLINE FOR RECOVERY GROUP MEETINGS

**Using the workbook as a guide:** This workbook contains 12 themes and worksheets (2 pages for each theme) which individual soldiers or veterans and/or recovery groups can use to facilitate their recovery. The 12 different themes, worksheets, scripture references, and accompanying 12 spiritual steps can also be used to guide recovery group meetings and can be followed either sequentially or as desired. The 12 steps are unique and can also be used to supplement other step programs such as those found in the AA program.

**Worksheets:** Participants will benefit from completing pertinent worksheets before meetings and to use these completed worksheets to structure the group sessions. Each worksheet has two pages. The first page can be completed before a group meeting. When a drawing is requested, that can also be done before a group meeting.

**Meetings:** Meetings can begin with new member introductions before moving into group discussions related to the worksheet pages. Discussions can involve any aspect of post-traumatic symptoms as revealed in assessments or pertinent worksheets. The duration of the group process for all 12 themes can vary according to the amount of time available and is best accomplished by progressing sequentially through each over a specified period of time, ranging from 1 1/2 to 3 hours per theme and extending over a period of days or weeks.

**Leadership & building trust:** The leader should encourage participants to listen and support one another during discussions. It may take a number of meetings to develop trust in one another before participants can readily talk about their most painful traumatic memories.

**Encourage discussion of spiritual issues:** Although most participants will focus on individual problems, memories, and emotions associated with their post-traumatic symptoms, there may be times when they will wish to discuss spiritual issues and their individual beliefs in God, as individually understood.

**SELF-HELP GROUP OUTLINE FOR COMBAT SURVIVORS ANONYMOUS (CSA)**

**FORMAT:** "Welcome to CSA (Combat Survivors Anonymous). This is a self-help group program designed to help survivors of war with their post-traumatic symptoms and problems with living. There are no dues or fees and CSA is self supporting through the contributions of its members.

CSA is not allied with any sect, denomination, political organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

**INTRODUCTIONS** – Members, visitors, and newcomers should introduce themselves to the group.

**MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENT:** The primary purpose for participants is to stay free from victimization and help other survivors cope with their post-traumatic symptoms and find purpose and dignity. Open meetings are available to anyone. Close meetings should be limited to selected individuals who desire to become participants in a 12 step support group and are willing to make a commitment to attend regularly for the following reasons: 1) to seek continuing support from the members 2) to seek information and advice about maintaining freedom from disturbing symptoms and 3) to find meaning in daily survival.

**PICK A TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION:** This is a time for survivors to talk about important issues related to this topic and to share the ways they make each day meaningful. This is also a time to discuss any of the 12 recovery themes and spiritual steps, delineated as follows.

**TWELVE TRAUMA RECOVERY THEMES & SPIRITUAL STEPS**

**ONE: SEEKING POSITIVE POWER**

We acknowledge to You, God, that we are powerless to gain control over our post-traumatic symptoms and we seek Your help, God, as a source of positive power.

**TWO: SEEKING MEANING**

We seek to find meaning in our traumatic experiences and survival and open our minds to You, God, so that we can find meaning.

**THREE: SEEKING TO TRUST**

We seek Your presence, God, for healing of mind, spirit, and emotions that we may become free of distrust, shame, and doubt.

**FOUR: SEEKING TRUTH**

We will make a searching self-inventory of both negative and positive traits, acknowledge them to You, God, and someone we trust. We seek Your help to accept those which are positive and change those which are negative.

**FIVE: ASSERTIVENESS vs RAGE or APATHY**

We acknowledge our angry feelings and seek God's Power to help us understand the sources of our continuing rage, to control its destructive effects, and to learn to express it constructively.

**SIX: COURAGE vs TERROR**

We seek Your help, God, to relinquish 'the walls' around our feelings, to withstand moments of terror, and courage to take risks in constructive ways.

**SEVEN: RESPONSIBILITY vs GUILT**

We face our guilty secrets and our willingness to reveal them to someone we trust. We ask and accept forgiveness from You, God, and ask Your help to forgive ourselves.

**EIGHT: EMPATHY vs GRIEF**

We seek Your help, God, to grieve those we have lost, face our painful memories and emotions, and let our tears heal our sorrows.

**NINE: LIFE vs DEATH**

We reveal to You, God, and someone we trust all remaining self-destructive wishes and make a commitment to life.

**TEN: JUSTICE vs REVENGE**

We seek Your help, God, to pursue the cause of justice, to gain freedom from our revengeful wishes and plans, and to be a channel of forgiveness to those we once hated.

---

**ELEVEN: FINDING A PURPOSE vs DESPAIR**

We seek knowledge and direction from You, God, and seek Your leadership in order to find a renewed purpose for our lives.

**TWELVE: LOVE vs MISUSING OTHERS**

We seek Your help, God, to renew our commitments to friends and family, love those we find difficult to love, and help those who have been victims as we once were.

**CLOSING**

**FINAL ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:** At the appointed time the Chairperson can begin to close the meeting by asking if anyone has a strong need to talk about anything else that is important to them. (If so, extend the meeting longer; if not, proceed as follows):

**PASSING THE BASKET:** Prior to closing the Chairperson may elect to pass a basket among the members.

**ENCOURAGING MUTUAL SUPPORT:** The Chairperson may encourage people to provide support for one another and to remind them that personal information shared in the group meeting should remain confidential. The members of the group may also want to develop a sponsorship program where selected members make themselves available to provide individual support to other members if need be.

**ASK FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CLOSING PRAYERS**

**MOMENT OF SILENCE:** In closing let us share in a moment of silence for all combatants and war veterans suffering from post-traumatic symptoms, their families and all who have lost loved ones.

**GROUP PRAYER:** Group participants may wish to close with the WAR SURVIVORS' SERENITY PRAYER.

*We humbly ask You God, help us cope with PTSD and problems associated with the trauma of war that affect us and our loved ones. Grant us the serenity to accept that which we cannot change, the courage to change what we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

An alternative closing may involve saying THE LORD'S PRAYER or one of the twelve spiritual steps together. (Form a circle and link hands).

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:** *Our Father Who Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread. And Forgive Us Our Trespases, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. Lead Us Not Into Temptation. And Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom, And The Power, And The Glory, Forever. Amen.*

## READINGS FROM THE KORAN\* \*\*

1:1-7 IN THE NAME OF GOD THE COMPASSIONATE THE MERCIFUL Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe, The Compassionate, The Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Judgment! You alone we worship. To You alone we turn for help. Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom You have favored, not of those who have incurred your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

3:17-19 God bears witness that there is no God but Him, and so do the angels and the sages. He is the Executor of Justice, the only God, the Mighty, the Wise One. The only true faith in God's sight is Islam.

71:1-5 We sent forth Noah to his people, saying: "Give warning to your people before a woeful scourge overtakes them." He said: "My people, I come to warn you plainly. Serve God and fear Him, and obey Me. He will forgive you your sins and give you respite for an appointed term. When God's time arrives, none shall put it back. Would that you understood this!"

71:9 "Seek forgiveness of your Lord," I said, "He is ever ready to forgive you."

99:1-8 When Earth is rocked in her last convulsion; when Earth shakes off her burdens and man asks, 'What may this mean?' - on that day she will proclaim her tidings, for your Lord will have inspired her. On that day mankind will come in broken bands to be shown their labors. Whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it also.

110:1-3 When God's help and victory come, and you see men embrace God's faith in multitudes, give glory to your Lord and seek His pardon. He is ever disposed to mercy.

112:1 Say: *God is One, the Eternal God. He begot none, nor was He begotten. None is equal to Him.*

113:1-5 Say: *I seek refuge in the Lord of Daybreak from the mischief of His creation; from the mischief of the night when she spreads her darkness; from the mischief of conjuring witches; from the mischief of the envier, when he envies.*

\*Dawood Translation, Penguin books, 1990.

\*\* Followers of Islam are free to choose readings from the Koran to supplement (or substitute for) those scriptures which were included with each of the 12 spiritual steps.



**MEDITATION**

Some hearts are full of gratitude and joy:  
They are overflowing with the happiness of love and the joy of life.  
They are eager to confront the day, to make the world more fair.  
They are recovering from illness or have escaped misfortune.  
And we rejoice with them.

Some hearts ache with sorrow:  
Disappointments weigh heavily upon them, and they have tasted despair; families have been broken;  
loved ones lie on a bed of pain.  
Death has taken those whom they cherished.  
May our presence and sympathy bring them comfort.

Some hearts are embittered:  
They have sought answers in vain; ideals are mocked and betrayed;  
Life has lost its meaning and value.  
May the knowledge that we too are searching, restore their hope  
And give them courage to believe that not all is emptiness.

Some spirits hunger:  
They long for friendship; they crave understanding; they yearn for warmth.  
May we in our common need and striving gain strength from one another  
As we share our joys, lighten each other's burdens,  
And pray for the welfare of our community.

Lord our God, You are our unfailing help.  
Darkness does not conceal you from the eye of faith,  
nor do the forces of destruction obscure Your presence.  
Above the fury of human evil and the blows of chance  
You abide, the Eternal God.  
When pain and sorrow try our souls, grant us courage to meet them  
Undismayed and with faith that does not waver.  
Let not the tears that must come to every eye blind us to Your goodness.  
Amen.

\*From GATES OF PRAYER, Central Conference of American Rabbis, New York, 1975.

## MEDITATION ON THE SPIRITUAL STEPS WITH ACCOMPANYING BIBLE READINGS

Chaplains and pastoral counselors have often used Judeo-Christian principles including readings from Scripture to help interested Veterans resolve guilt and spiritual alienation. The following scriptures are organized according to the twelve themes and spiritual steps which are used in the recovery program:

### ONE: SEEKING POSITIVE POWER

I acknowledge to You, God, that I am powerless to gain control over my post-traumatic symptoms and I seek Your help, God, as a source of positive power.

"My eyes are ever looking to the Lord for help for He alone can rescue me. Come Lord and show me your mercy for I am helpless, overwhelmed, in deep distress - Save Me!" (Psalm 25:15). "He gives power to the weak and to those who have no might, He increases strength. But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:29-31).

### TWO: SEEKING MEANING

I seek to find meaning in my traumatic experience and survival and open my mind to You, God, so that I can find meaning.

"Show me the path where I should go, Oh Lord. Point out the right road for me to walk. Lead me. Teach me. For you are the God who gives me salvation. I have no hope except in you." (Psalm 25:4) "Lord, I lift my hands to heaven and implore your help. Oh, listen to my cry" (Psalm 28:2); "Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the father but by me" (John 14:6); "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved." (John 10:9)

### THREE: SEEKING TO TRUST

I seek Your presence, God, for healing of mind, spirit, and emotions that I may become free of distrust, shame, and doubt.

"Trust the Lord completely. Don't trust yourself. In everything you do, put God first. He will direct you and crown your efforts with success." (Proverbs 3:56); "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You [God] because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever. For the Lord is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:3-4)

### FOUR: SEEKING TRUTH

I will make a searching self-inventory of both negative and positive traits, acknowledge them to You, God, and someone I trust. I seek Your help to accept those which are positive and change those which are negative.

"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit and has lost self-control is like a city broken down without walls." (Proverbs 25:28); "Create in me a clean heart Oh God and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 5:10); "Cross examine me Oh Lord and see that I have kept your laws. Test my motives and affections" (Psalm 26:2); "Cleanse me from these hidden faults, and keep me from deliberate wrongs" (Psalm 19:12-13); "Therefore each one speak truth with his neighbor. (Ephesians 4:25); "For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord. Walk as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8)

### FIVE: ANGER

I acknowledge my rage toward those I feel abandoned or betrayed me. I seek God's Power to help me understand the sources of my continuing anger, to control its destructive effects, and to learn to express it constructively.

"Listen much, speak little, and don't become angry." (James 1:19); "Be angry, and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26)

### SIX: FEAR

I seek Your help, God, to relinquish 'the wall' around my feelings, to withstand moments of terror, and courage to take risks in constructive ways.

---

“Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4); “God is our refuge and strength. He is a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, waters roar...[and] the mountains shake with its swelling.” (Psalm 46:1-3). “I will pray to the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.” (John 14:16)

#### **SEVEN: GUILT**

I face my guilty secrets and am willing to reveal them to someone I trust. I ask and accept forgiveness from You, God, and ask Your help to forgive myself.

“But Jesus the Son of God is our great High Priest who understands our weaknesses, since He had the same temptations we do. So let us come boldly to the very throne of God and stay there to receive His mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16); “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9); “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1).

#### **EIGHT: GRIEF**

I seek Your help, God, to grieve those I have lost, face my painful memories and emotions, and let my tears heal my sorrows.

“Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him?’” (John 11:35-36); “Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4); “Blessed be God, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our tribulation.” (2 Corinthians 1:3); “And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. All of that has gone forever.” (Revelations 21:4).

#### **NINE: LIFE vs DEATH**

I reveal to God, and someone I trust all remaining self-destructive wishes and make a commitment to life.

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive in Christ.” (Col. 2:13) “Through Jesus' death, the power of your sinful nature was shattered. Your old sin-loving nature was buried with Him by baptism when He died, and when God the Father, with glorious power, brought Him back to life again, you were given His wonderful new life to enjoy. For you have become a part of Him, and so you died with Him, so to speak, when He died and now you share His new life and shall rise as He did.” (Romans 6:3-5); “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” (John 11:25); “I am crucified with Christ. it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loves me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20).

#### **TEN: JUSTICE vs REVENGE**

I seek Your help, God, to pursue the cause of justice, to gain freedom from my revengeful wishes and plans, and to be a channel of forgiveness to those I once hated.

“The nations fall into the pitfalls they have dug for others; the trap they set has snapped on them. The Lord punishes the wicked in their own snares.” (Psalm 9:15-16); “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:31-32); “Love your enemies. Do good to them which hate you.” (Luke 6:27); “Be gentle and ready to forgive, never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” (Colossians 3:13).

#### **ELEVEN: FINDING A PURPOSE**

I seek knowledge and direction from You, God, and seek Your leadership in order to find a renewed purpose for my life.

---

“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with Thanksgiving. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in Him who is the head of all principalities and powers.” (Colossians 2:6-9).

#### **TWELVE: LOVE**

I seek Your help, God, to renew my commitment to my friends and family, love those I find difficult to love, and help those who have been victims as I once was.

“Above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts” (Colossians 3:13-15); “Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. There are three things that remain - faith, hope, and love - and the greatest of these is love.” (I Cor. 13:4-7, 13)