



VETS AND FRIENDS: A UNIQUE TEAM / RETREAT APPROACH

*Cultivating Post-traumatic Growth from the
Battles with Post-traumatic Stress Injuries and
the Ripple Effects*

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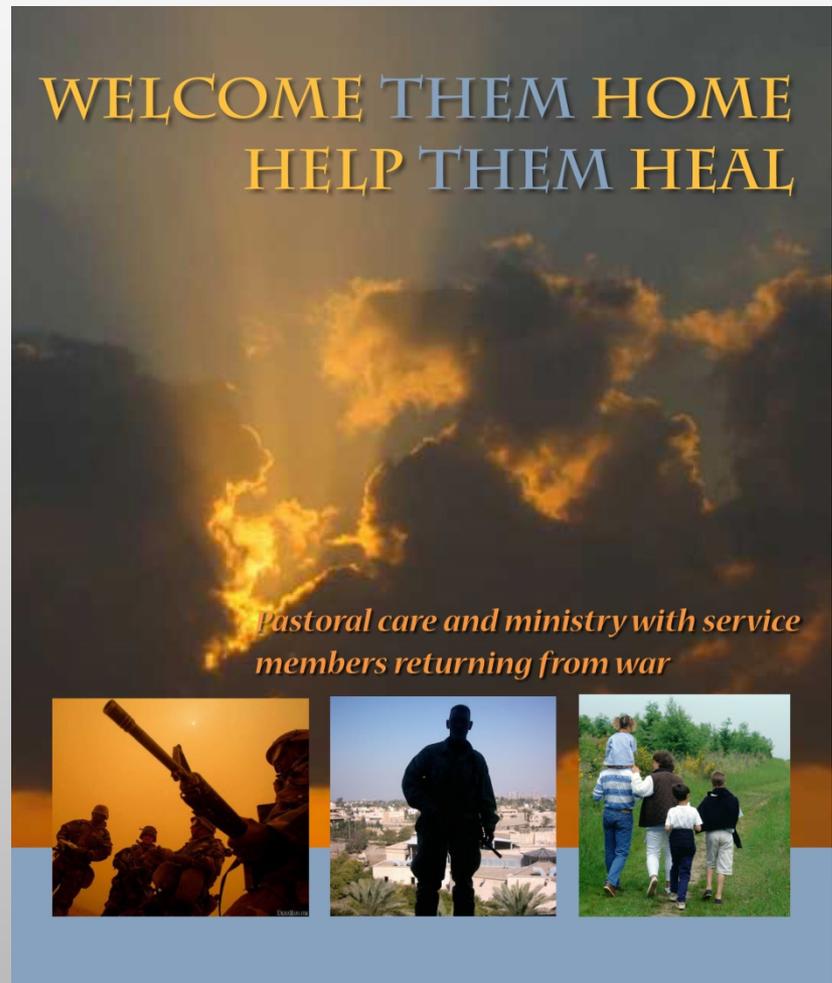


Webinar Outline

- I. Background and Definition of Terms**
- II. Introduction to Vets and Friends**
 - I. Who are we?
 - II. Why do we exist?
 - III. What is our goal?
 - IV. What is our research project?
- III. Vets and Friends Retreat Team Training**
 - I. Retreat and Group Guidelines
 - II. The Value of a Diverse Group
 - III. The Value of a Diverse Team Approach to Leadership
 - IV. Focus of Team Training
 - V. Post-traumatic Growth at Retreats
- IV. Back Home – Growth Over the Long Term Continues Through Local Groups**

Background

- WELCOME THEM HOME - HELP THEM HEAL
- VETS & FRIENDS RETREAT TEAM TRAINING



Definition of Terms

1. Post-traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI)
2. Ripple Effects
3. Post-traumatic Growth



PTSiNJURY



Ripple Effects

Ripple Effects: the aftershocks of PTSIs on veterans and their relationships.

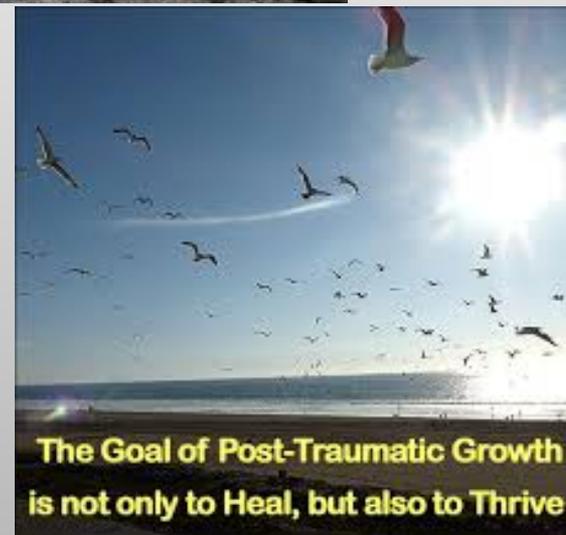
- Substance abuse
- Problems getting help
- Marital / family discord
- Secondary PTSD
- Compassion fatigue
- Loneliness & isolation
- Holding a job,
- Legal entanglements



Post-traumatic Growth

Post-traumatic growth: meaningful change that come as a result of joining with others in the battles with PTSIs and the Ripple Effects.

- More confidence
- Deepening friendships
- Greater interest in life
- Spiritual growth





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Who are we? A Network of Veterans, Families, and Friends

- **Vets and Friends Retreat Training**
 - For “grunts” and their families
 - Train non-professional, local support group leader teams
 - Provide R&R for veterans, families and friends
 - Week-long and occur twice a year
 - Non-sectarian
 - Not therapy, but supports and reinforces therapy
- **Vets and Friends Local Groups:**
 - Long Term Support
 - Autonomous
 - Team led
- **Vets and Friends Motto – *Leave No One Behind.***

WHY DO WE EXIST?

ACCENTUATED EMOTIONS

- BIG ANGER
- BIG LOSS
- BIG SHAME
- BIG GUILT
- BIG FEAR
- BIG STRESS
- BIG CONFUSION



WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

Establish a Vets and Friends Community that

- Understands PTSIs and the Ripple Effects
- Has the know-how to cultivate Post-traumatic Growth
- Provide safe places to make mistakes, to learn and to grow

BIG GROWTH over the long haul



What is Vets and Friends Research?

- Community Health Collaborative Grant from UMN CTSI
- Study group training and support procedures
- Data collected through sequential interviews:
 - Master trainers
 - Group team leaders
 - Group members
- Met with four groups – 2 active, 2 inactive
- Analyzing data now
- Results will be used to improve retreats and ongoing support for groups
- Stay tuned!



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Vets and Friends Retreats – 5 so far



Camp Vermilion (2x)
Fortune Lake
Luther Point & Camp Knudsen
**Next Retreat: Lutherdale,
an hour north of Chicago**



Camp Vermilion Retreat, 2015

Insert Video Clip called Vermilion Short. If we use this slide we delete the previous one.

VF Retreat Wellness Guidelines

- Be gentle and take care of yourself.
- Rest or nap when you feel tired.
- Eat healthy, sleep in, and get plenty of exercise and fresh air.
- Take a walk; Listen to some favorite music.
- Hug your children; Play and explore.
- Attendance at any session is optional.





Group Meeting Safety Guidelines

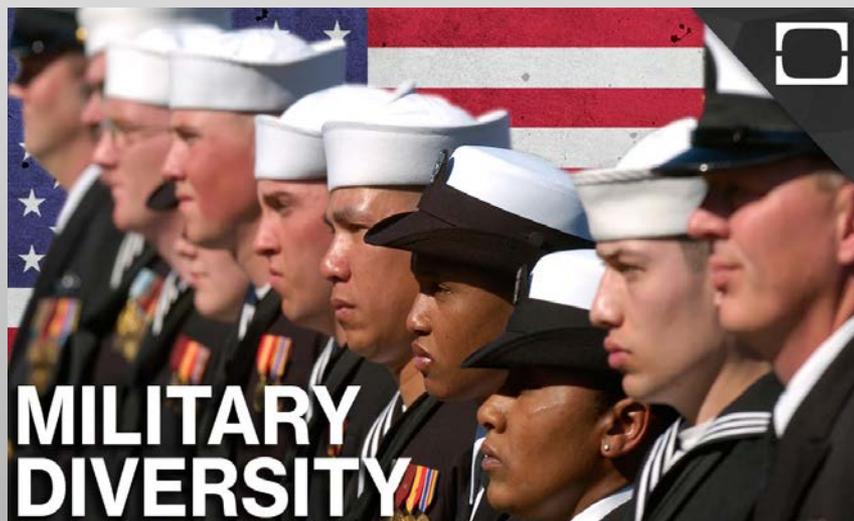
- Just sit back and listen for as long as you want.
- Don't feel you need to talk.
- Take your time.
- Go at your own pace.
- Maintain your boundaries. For example, when in doubt, don't share confidential stuff until you figure out who you can trust.
- Don't get in deeper than you are comfortable.
- Feel free to leave if you get stressed.
- Give others a chance to speak.
- Maintain confidentiality.



MILITARY DIVERSITY

Vets and Friends Diversity

- Intergenerational
- Military / Civilian
- Different branches
- Different wars
- Racial / Cultural



What is the value of a Team-Approach to Leadership?



- I. Different “energies” and “voices” connect with different people in the group
- II. Models connection rather than isolation
- III. Provides safety
- IV. Divides the work load (administrative tasks)
- V. Offers a back-up in case a team leader gets sick, becomes symptomatic or gets triggered
- VI. Increases sense of camaraderie, fun, and laughter within the group

The Focus of Team Training

- PTSI, a normal reaction to abnormal events
- Build trust and relationships
- Assume folks want to improve
- Reinforce positives
- Advocacy
- Teach vulnerability & admit mistakes
- Family component to address ripple effects
- Vernacular and metaphors
- How to back people off when they dominate group
- Educate, reinforce and problem solve



Post-traumatic Growth

- Increased friendship connections vs loneliness and isolation
- Better sleep (naps), 3 good meals and snacks, fresh air, exercise (good R&R) vs sleep deprivation, poor eating habits, etc.

Spiritual Growth

- More peace
- More hope
- More love
- More joy
- Interest in life





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POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH ...

The Journey Continues Back Home

- Deepening friendships
- Learning to “reach out and call or text” rather than isolate
- A safe place to keep sharing with people who “get it”
- Increased self-compassion
- Improved communication, acceptance, and patience with self and loved ones
- Calmer chemistry, more hope and healing



The Journey Continues...



VETS AND FRIENDS

Website: vetsandfriends.com

Next retreat: April 22-27, Lutherdale, Elkhorn, WI (Just North of Chicago) Register at: <http://tinyurl.com/vetsandfriendslutherdale>

Resources:

- *Welcome Them Home – Help Them Heal* by John Sippola, Amy Blumenshine, Don Tubesing and Val Yancey
- *Blind Devotion* by Sharlene Prinsen

POCs for retreat information: Cindy Macaulay at macaulay@cpinternet.com; Donna Rutten at drut10@gmail.com; John Sippola at johnsippola2@gmail.com

