

BARRY ZWORESTINE

WHICH WAY IS YOUR WARRIOR FACING?

An operational manual
for current serving and veterans transitioning
into civilian life



WHICH WAY IS YOUR WARRIOR FACING?

*An operational manual for current serving and
veterans transitioning into civilian life*

– Barry Zworestine –



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What People Are Saying About *Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?*

Which Way is Your Warrior Facing is a home run! Barry uses terminology that resonates with transitioning military members and veterans - military terms that translate well to the transition process. He also leans on both his personal experience and the experiences of countless other veterans with whom he's worked. If you're a transitioning service member or a veteran, this will definitely hit close to home, and Barry provides tools to prepare, heal, and succeed in your next and most important mission - YOU! With utmost respect,

**– Jon Macaskill, Macaskill Consulting, Navy SEAL
Commander (Ret.).**

The journey of service to the nation presents us all with physiological, psychological, and social challenges. Everyone who has deployed on operations overseas will have experienced some degree of combat stress. Transition from the military can also be daunting. Through personal experience, Barry Zworestine understands, just as you conduct thorough battle preparation before a Mission, you should transition from Defence by undertaking similar processes. This work provides practical tools to assist you in this process. It is communicated in a clear and concise manner that all veterans

will appreciate. The expertise detailed in these pages will exceed your expectation.

– Colonel Greg D DSC, AM – former Commanding Officer –
The Australian SAS Regiment).

Barry understands the dichotomy of service and the true meaning of selflessness where veterans will give their lives for those they never knew. In his book he captures the essence of how being in service, no matter in what capacity, can truly change you at your core. Barry has defined a map and compass of the territory that can support you to understand and manage the impacts of your service as you struggle to help yourself. He has identified how difficult it can be to tear down the protective walls that veterans and service members build to stay safe. In "Which Way is Your Warrior Facing" Barry invites you to use the book to gain insight to support you to effectively navigate back into your social world and family. The book embodies an operationalised journey that will support your ability to bring the strengths and values of your warrior back home with you, and by doing so, create positive change. Which Way is Your Warrior Facing asks the hard questions and brings reality to the face of those who would look away from it-veterans and those supporting them. Barry speaks the truth of self-awareness and accountability many need after years of trauma and suffering. This book is a good wake up call for those still in the dark. Change is coming. Are you in control of it? Which Way is Your Warrior Facing will help you

move from the passenger seat of your vehicle into the driver's seat.

– **Tom Satterly**, CSM (R), Delta Force, Co-Founder/CEO All Secure Foundation.

*When we experience loss, we are often told – in subtle and overt ways – to “say goodbye and move on.” Veterans whose identities have been shaped within the crucible of military service, whose military Tribe has become family, are given the same message. Zworestine’s book *Which Way is Your Warrior Facing* spins on the axis of this essential truth – that successful transition is about reconnecting with the warrior within. As a combat veteran and psychologist, Zworestine keeps it real, making seamless adaptations of military concepts and language to help warriors thrive after their post-military lives. Full of powerful bites of wisdom, *Which Way is Your Warrior Facing* offers practical value to those in transition, including those stuck in limbo following a partial transition from the military Tribe.*

– **Doc Shauna Springer**, Best-selling author of *WARRIOR: How to Support Those Who Protect Us* and *BEYOND THE MILITARY: A Leader’s Handbook for Warrior Reintegration*.

The military does a great job of training soldiers how to go to and win wars; however, they are lacking when it comes to training soldiers how to go back home and re-integrate into civilian life following years of military life. Barry has cracked that code in this regard! And he does so with the heart of a true warrior, and the brain of a licensed psychologist who has been there and done that! Right up front, Barry reminds warriors who are battling demons of the core values they once learned while serving in the military, framing the entire book so one is in optimum receive mode and ready to embrace the warrior spirit within. The questions posed by Barry in this book force the reader to critically think through their individual circumstances in order to realize the opportunities that can still be possible. His operational lingo relates to the target audience and easily facilitates simple understanding of neuroscience concepts. This book should be standard issue to every military member transitioning from service... Barry is the real deal!

– **Sammy Villela**, U.S. Army Counterintelligence.

Barry Zworestine in his book, “Which Way is Your Warrior Facing” eases into your living room, sits down invited, and calmly and compassionately provides insight into your questions before you even know what to ask or think. It’s as if he is not only in your head, but he also knows what you need before YOU even realize you need it. Barry has a gift. An unremarkable gift of giving to those in need. After serving in a

warzone, he has faced death like many of us. As a psychologist, he doesn't just live in an intellectual world. Instead, he gives compassionate and poignant answers you know you can trust because he is one of us. If I were in a foxhole, scared to death, I would want Barry right beside me. Humble, kind, brilliant, and a realist, Barry helps the veteran not only know that he or she is going to be alright, no matter what, but that they too have a gift. Reading this book is one of the best gifts I could ever give myself. Thank you, Barry. Thank you for letting me into this wonderful tribe you have created.

– Lt Col Dr. Rev David F. Tharp,
CEO, Project Healing Heroes.

*A warrior's journey home is never complete, lacking a final destination at which point one might say "I'm finally there." Rather it is a series of engagements along the way that helps train the warrior's focus on how to live the next chapter of life more fully and purposefully. Barry Zworestine captures that approach beautifully with *Which Way is Your Warrior Facing?* as a highly engaging workbook. Barry weaves hard-won lessons learned and warrior stories from his own personal journey, as well as those of others, into a practical guide for your own successful transition into the unstructured world of civilian life. No matter what rank you achieved, what military*

job you had, or how much or how little combat action you've experienced, this book is for you. Thank you, Barry!

– **Jeffrey B. Kendall**, Brigadier General, USAF (Retired).

In working with numerous transitioning veterans in the Special Operations community, there are common themes - fear of loss, lack of community (the brotherhood), cultural shifts, etc. Barry Zworestine helps the reader unpack some of the "inner stuff" that is sometimes not addressed when transitioning alone or without a plan. An excellent read offering relevant models to help a vet (or coach of a vet) address the emotional side of transition. Some veterans do not transition well. This can then lead to depression and poor decision making. Barry's deep concern and passion for veterans has enabled him to write a piece of work that could potentially save lives - NO exaggeration! Grateful for Barry and his insight!

– **Joe Lara**, Previous Director of Programs at The Honor Foundation, U.S.A.

I have known Barry for 47 years. He is a great friend. We met in basic training in the Rhodesian Army Medical Corps. We lost contact for 40 years and thanks to social media, recently became re-connected. Being from the same 'tribe' it was like we were never apart. I consider it an honour to be asked to

review his book. It is one thing to have the knowledge on a subject, it is another thing altogether to also have the personal related experience. When these two attributes are combined with good judgement, that is my definition of wisdom. Barry possesses all three, knowledge, experience and good judgement and has combined them into a practical work of art that is “Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?” A must read for anyone transitioning.

– **Nigel Dickinson**, Ex Combat Medic, Rhodesian Army, now a businessman and entrepreneur.

DISCLAIMER

This book is to help support your personal growth and transformation. It should not be taken or used as a substitute for appropriate professional assistance such as assessment, diagnosis, therapy, or medical support. How readers apply the information, insights, lessons, and tools in this book is their personal choice. By exercising this choice, readers assume full responsibility for their interpretations, understandings, and impact of the information. The author assumes no responsibility for the preferences or actions of the reader.

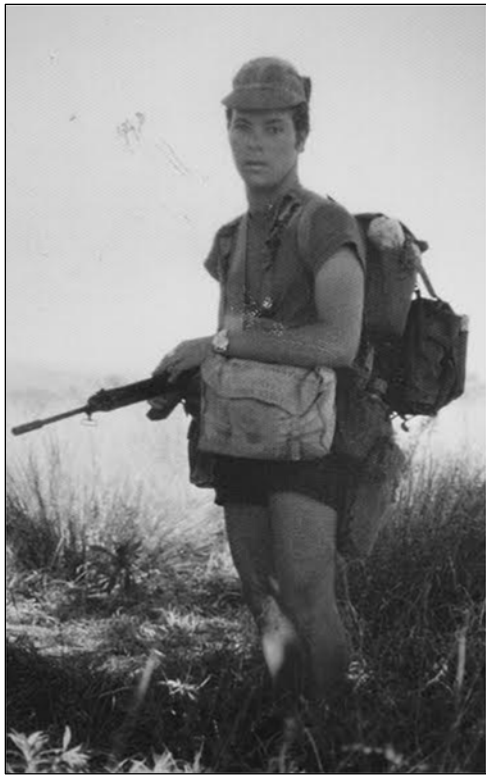


Figure 1 - The Author, Rhodesian Bush War 1976



You should not be leaving your Warrior behind as you transition into civilian life. Yes, it would help if you learned to adjust and adapt to civilian territory. Still, the core values of the Warrior and the wisdom gained from the military will not only inform and guide the civilian part of you but will make you a better Man or Woman. Who you were can and should become a part of who you are now. It should not be about getting stuck in the past but allowing the past to inform your present.

WITH THANKS

To my wife, Cristina

With great thanks, care, love, and respect for everything, you have brought to my life. Without you, this book never would have happened. It was worth the long reconnaissance to find you.

To my children, Seth, and Liam

Each of you is a truly fine warrior. You and your journeys are inspiring and have enriched my life – thank you, and my deep love goes to each of you.

To all the Veterans

I have had the privilege of meeting and sitting with, in my practice—as much as I may have supported you, you have also enriched my life and made me a better man.

“

*You carry the wisdom, strength, and endurance of the warrior.
You will need to reclaim who you were and allow that part of
you to COEXIST wherever you may now be in life.*

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BACKGROUND

1976/7 The Rhodesian Bush War

Within three weeks, I transitioned from 7 months patrolling in the Rhodesian Bush War back to university.

I felt fine.

That I was waking up constantly throughout the night and had body aches and headaches felt odd.

But I felt fine.

I had not been in constant contacts as other units had been in. I felt I had been a very average soldier. Yes, our four-man stick had patrolled in areas with terrorists walking in very large groups. Constant alertness and hypervigilance were normal after a while.

I still felt fine.

I had on one occasion pulled a man burning to death out of an ambush but,

I still felt fine.

I had come within a millisecond of killing 4 “terrorists” who were, in fact, farmworkers.

I still felt fine.

Then the rest of my life followed - a series of good journeys but also disasters that impacted me. A few years ago, I found my university student photo. It had an impact on me. I did not look fine at all. I asked an old friend what his experience was of me at the time. He described me as “hyped up, tense and vigilant”.

Today I cannot separate what is war-related and life-related in terms of aspects of what I carry. Yet I have learned one thing- there is no such thing as an unwounded Veteran.

Whether you were operating on the ground, in base camp, contacts or none - it's not the killing or fighting that defines being a Warrior. It's entering the territory of the military.

Don't close your eyes to adjustment challenges. Don't trivialise what you are facing. You no longer need to lock stuff away. It takes courage to meet your new journey as a civilian.

In the 70's we just pushed forwards, and now we have a generation of Wounded rather than healed Warriors. This need not be your journey. Make choices that reduce the possibility of negatively impacting your life and relationships.

Remember that your ability to see yourself and track yourself may not be your best strength.

I wish you all a successful transitioning process. You are already everything that you need to be. Stand proud as a Warrior. The world needs more of your kind.

PRELUDE

A Call To Action

There is a calling deep within the genetic coding of the caterpillar that its time has come to transform and leave the restrictive confines of the Chrysalis. That emergence and transformation rely on sustaining the rigours of the struggle awaiting. Returning to the security of its chamber or giving up is not an option.

Veterans or current serving- your time to transition will arrive. You may walk into it by choice, or it may walk into you. To transition and transform will demand, at times, an intense struggle to reform and emerge from who you were and find whom you need to be.

You can blame and rage at those around you or the system, or you can channel and focus your will and intent to only that which serves your transformation. The choice you make will either imprison you in rage and blame or free you to transition into a new beginning.

Struggle, despair but do not step back or give up. Rest, but return to your calling.

PREFACE

How To Use This Book

I began by writing a book, a simple book that would be informative and useful. However, along the way, what came to me was to create not just a book that would invite you to “turn the pages” but a process that would create opportunities for self-reflection and that this, over time, would become a record of your journey.

“Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing” invites you to read and digest what you have read as well as pay attention to what it means to you. It invites you to pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and memories. It invites you to document and map out your process as you navigate your way through your transitioning territory.

This book may have begun with what I wrote, but it will ultimately become the book you and I have written together as a team. Your book will allow you to go backwards and forwards through your process and reflect on how your journey of transition changes and evolves to meet the variations of your territory.

This book will, in the end, become your map and compass of your life. It will be your story, not mine. It will be something that you can share with selected others, whether it be through conversation or reading together. It has the potential to move from my book to your book and then the book that others around you can contribute to in the process as you invite them in.

Remember that a good patrol is determined by the knowledge of the map you carry, your internal compass (your values and judgement), the resources you equip yourself with to manage and survive, and, most importantly, the presence of others in your group or Tribe. The rules remain the same—teamwork, knowledge, and the willingness to take the first step.

As with any good journey, or patrol, travelling with others can increase capability and effective completion of the mission.

This book, is therefore, your Mission.

CHAPTER 1:

The History Behind The Book

Around 2012 I began to contact several Rhodesian military groups on Facebook since I am a veteran of the Rhodesian military. It soon became apparent that these veterans and their families had a real need for support. Through Skype, email, and contributing articles and checklists to the various groups, I supported several soldiers and their partners worldwide. However, time restrictions soon made it clear that it was impossible to support more than a minimal number of people.

From this was born the vision of writing this book so that as wide a range of veterans and their families (not just from the Rhodesian Bush War) could benefit from the insights, understandings, and strategies that I have used over the years.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Rhodesian Bush war, the war began around 1964. It ended in 1979, after which the country transitioned to a new black-majority government under Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. In 1980 the country was re-named Zimbabwe under Prime Minister Robert Mugabe.

Why the title?

What came to me was that, so often in times of transition (from military to civilian life) or with the impact of trauma, much of our behaviour tends to become self-destructive, either inwardly towards ourselves (alcohol, lifestyle, stress, depression) or

outwardly towards others and the territory we occupy. The goal would be a constructive and positive movement towards relating to ourselves, others, and our world in a way that respects and cares for who they and we are.

So often, Veterans are advised, “to move on. It’s all in the past, just let go.” The quality of service and self-sacrifice has defined every individual I have sat with. You should not be letting go of whom you were but instead reclaiming those extraordinary parts and values of your Warrior.

**The question is, at this moment,
which way is your Warrior facing?**

I believe that the initial strategy is to go back (on a rescue mission) and reclaim the positive attributes that define you. You are then in a stronger position to navigate forward, drawing on your insights, values, and tools. From this point, you will be better equipped with an appropriate map and compass to integrate into your new life as a civilian.

This book is not an academic or researched text. Nor is it a replacement for appropriate diagnosis and management. It’s a book based on endless hours of sitting with men from the Australian military and the Rhodesian Bush War, from World War II through Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan.

It’s a book based on my insights from being a combat veteran and “fighting medic” of the Rhodesian Bush War to the many messes and losses I faced during my post-war journey.

It's based on my experiences witnessing the veterans' deep pain, loss, and grief and their depression, stress, anxiety, anger, and everyday struggles to adjust to the unpredictable complexities of civilian life.

It's based on the universal and timeless experience and shared comradeship of veterans gathering with veterans, no matter whether they come from special forces units or regular units.

It's based on the stories of veterans' partners and children as they have desperately tried to find ways to understand and bridge the traumatic silence so typical of many veterans, as well as to deal with the war that returned home—the rage and reactivity, the alcohol, and flashbacks.

It's based on the deep feelings of loss, grief, disconnection, and despair that veterans have felt as they've tried to reconnect with those they love.

It's based on supporting veterans and their families to create a map and find a compass that will help them operate in the bewildering and unpredictable confusion of civilian life.

Finally, this book is based not just on the trust and insights that have emerged between myself and these remarkable people, not just on the deepening of my skills in treating trauma but also on my healing journey. As much as I have had an impact on those I have been privileged to sit with, they, in turn, have enriched, affected, and left me a wiser and better man, veteran, father, friend, husband, and psychologist.

I have drawn on operational lessons, principles, and military training. I have linked these factors to create a map and resource that veterans can draw on when transitioning to

civilian life. I have translated the brain and neuroscience into operational terms. Through this book, I hope you will become clearer about moving from an ambush mode to what I call an OP (observe, plan, think, and organise) mode. (An OP is also an observation post, where the terrain and those moving across it can be monitored without being visible.)

You will learn tools and insights to choose which way your Warrior faces. You will find language to support you to communicate with your partner, friends, children, and family. You will find help in identifying tools to learn to do your pull-throughs, keep your personal “barrel” clean, and avoid stoppages.

My wish is that this book will equip you with tools and understanding to initiate an immediate “cock, hook and look” when you find yourselves in a tight situation. (This is an immediate action drill to assess, and then clear a cartridge stuck in the breech of a weapon).

There is no rocket science in anything I have written. I leave the academics for others. This is an on-the-ground, in-territory, dusty, sweaty, practical book. I do not suggest anything that I have not personally used and continue to use to this day.

I wish you well on this journey and hope that, along the way, you find the peace you deserve and the connections with others that are important to you in whatever territory you currently find yourself.

I want to stress that you may be recently out of operations, or forty years may have passed since you were on active duty. But it is *never too late* to get help to change and heal.



What do you wish to get out of this book? Document what comes to you. If nothing, you can always return to this at a later stage.

“The challenge of change is to create your opportunities.”

CHAPTER 2:

Some Thoughts As You Begin The Journey

To heal and adjust from military to civilian life is about embracing the soldier, re-finding the warrior in the present, and drawing on the positive aspects from the past. Healing and adjusting to civilian life is about acknowledging grief, guilt, loss, and shame and respecting who you are. Transitioning out of the military need not be just the end of a good life, but the beginning of an even better life firmly grounded in the wisdom, learning, and experience of who you were and still are. I wish you well in your road ahead and that this book will be a positive part of your journey. Although most veterans I have sat with in my practice have been men, I have tried to adopt a gender-neutral perspective, as this book applies to both female and male veterans.

To create change, consider whether you would be willing to move from the space where you are currently standing. No matter how stuck you may feel, it is essential to believe and understand that you can do a few small things. As veterans, you were trained to remain focused, no matter how challenging, complex, or seemingly hopeless (and at times life-threatening) the situation appeared. You never lost sight of the need to take care of your weapons. Like weapons, you also need a regular “pull-through,” which I will get into later. (The glossary at the end of the book includes definitions of potentially unfamiliar military terms).

To clarify for those unfamiliar with the term “pull-through,” this defines the action of pulling an oily rag through the barrel of a rifle to clean it. This pull-through may be a focus on your well-being, both internally and externally/physically. Do you exercise? Is your weight a problem? What is your eating like? What is your sleep like? Do you smoke or use alcohol?

Too many veterans I have seen have tended to neglect their well-being as they dive into unhealthy eating patterns and tobacco and alcohol use to numb the pain and the grief. This is a recipe for a stoppage (when a weapon fails to fire, often because it is not cleaned). It is initially far easier to set healthier life-balance goals than, to begin with, the more complex trauma issues.

Another factor is your attitude that you will bring to change. Are you willing to do what it takes to recover? Are you ready to learn strategies to enjoy a more balanced relationship with your partner and children? If you are reading this book, I would ask that part of your agreement now with yourself will be that you are worth investing in. No matter how out of control you have experienced your behaviour towards yourself and others, no matter how deep your depression may have been at times (and may still be), no matter how exhausting you experience surviving each day to be, I’d like you to remember that you are still, and always will be, a warrior. Without exception, every warrior I have sat with has embodied trust, loyalty, dependability, and reliability. Very few have travelled your road. Your present circumstances do not define who you are.

This book results from the collaboration between veterans and me as we shared conversations over the years. It encapsulates the core insights, lessons, and tools that have emerged between us during that time. This book is the result of many years of finding the adequate balance between the two parts of myself—psychologist and veteran—and discovering that both, working together, benefitted those I sat with. I'd like to invite you to walk with me as you move through the book. Be discriminating and see what resonates and works for you. Try stuff out; give things a go.

In 1990, I decided to run the 84km uphill Comrades ultramarathon. Although my intent was clear, I had not expected the demands of training to be as rigorous and time-consuming as I had imagined. At times, I was looking for any excuse to opt-out. I began to resent the demands of the person who was training me. I lost faith in myself. But the combination of a determined mentor and my willingness to do whatever it took— no matter how challenging both the training and the race itself would be—eventually got me over the finish line. I hope that, in whatever small way, this book supports you in crossing your finishing line.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Integrate and recognise the strengths of who you were.
- Acknowledge and respect whatever emotions you feel.
- Transitioning out the military can be an opportunity for new beginnings.
- You are only as stuck as you feel.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



Where are you in your transitioning journey
at this very point in time?

“Never lose your fire. Hold your discipline in whatever way you can. Your wars and struggles need not define or diminish you. Reach out. Lend a hand and take a hand. In Tribe, we are strong. In Tribe, we belong.”

CHAPTER 3:

Transitioning To Civilian Territory - The Next Operational Front

So, you may be considering transitioning out of the military or in the process of transitioning, or you may now be working out how to operate in civilian territory. You may have already worked out that calling in an airstrike, setting up a complex operation or being responsible for millions of dollars of equipment and other men's lives may not exactly score up your desirability factor. You've probably noticed that the Military does not have any detailed maps of Civilian territory either!

Successful transitions rest not just on adjusting your strengths to present challenges. These can face you with a difference in fit between where you were and where you currently are. To hold on to the past too tightly will restrict your capacity to open to your present. Every step of the journey will require adaptation and flexibility. Change can be challenging. Your power lies in how you receive and perceive what is facing you. Becoming fully who you are is also about letting go of parts of who you were.

It's your attitude, not your situation, that determines how you progress forward. Before you enter change, take time to regroup and assess and identify the challenges ahead of you. Allow time for preparation at all levels- physically, psychologically, and emotionally. When you finally commit to moving forward, do so with focus and determination. Be

flexible and willing to adjust and adapt as required. Your belief in yourself needs to be clear. Identify and release anything holding you back or to the past.

Remember: ATTITUDE determines ALTITUDE!

Your intention needs to be clear and completely focused on the end goal of successfully transitioning between thinking and successfully doing change. Intention fuels the ability to maintain movement in the face of adversity. It fuels your drive to settle for nothing less than what you desire. It sustains you in moments of doubt and despair and keeps you moving through the long night. Without the ferocity of intention, the fires of change burn low.

Increasingly over the years I have been working with Veterans and current serving, the need to address the complex layers of transitioning out of the Military has become critical. Debriefs before discharge and even many current modalities or understandings around transition fail to grasp and address the potential complexity impacting Men and Women as they begin to think about and work towards leaving the Military.

Over the years, I have sat with competent and well-trained Warriors struggling to redefine themselves, find employment that fits who they are and recreate a sense of belonging and purpose.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Every step of your journey will require adaptation and flexibility.
- Your power lies in how you receive and perceive what is facing you.
- It's your attitude, not your situation, that determines how you progress forward.
- Your belief in yourself needs to be clear.
- Without the ferocity of intention, the fires of change burn low.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



Breathe in for 5, hold for 5, out for 5, hold for 5. Do this five times. Now think about what small actions of change you are willing to commit to. What parts of you could get in the way?

Write these down below.

*“Every obstacle is an opportunity.
Every challenge is a possibility.”*

CHAPTER 4:

The Warrior Acronym

Note: This chapter is critical. It allows you an opportunity to create your map and orientate your compass. How you navigate forward will be supported by the time you are willing to give to understand your territory. “Slow is smooth, smooth is fast”.

Let’s begin with a self-reflective exercise, as this will form the foundational awareness and your internal and relational map for you to progress with. Here’s a bit of self-reflective practice. Before beginning this journey with me, reflect on the questions below: what I call the warrior acronym.

W — What is your will to change?

A — What is your ability to adjust and adapt?

R — What is your respect for others and yourself like?

R — What is your responsibility to yourself like?

I — What is your integrity like?

O — How observant rather than reactive are you?

R — How willing are you to repair negative relationships with others and yourself?

What may help you begin this journey is to create a map of your territory. Divide a page into three columns. The first column will represent territory you are very familiar with and resolved about working on. These are areas you have targeted and dealt with. In the second column, you could label “Work in progress.” This column would identify things that you are

currently working on that are still on the way to being resolved. These could be personal fitness and lifestyle balance, stress, or relationships. You may be dealing with these alone or with appropriate support. You could keep track of your consistency, commitment, and efforts and note what is working and getting in the way. This book can support you as you navigate through this territory. In time, you'll move some of these column two items to column one once you've resolved them.

Finally, column three contains the “big ones”—the things you don't want to approach for whatever reason. Examples of these could be alcohol use or traumatic memories. This bit of territory is unlikely to be resolved by your effort (or, for that matter, this book). You will more than likely require professional support with this. As I noted earlier, avoidance is often a vital issue here. The challenge is that these areas will not just go away independently. They can have a profound effect on your healing and progress. Creating your map can help direct you forward as you progress through this book.

Before undertaking change or transitioning to a new territory, the core challenge and requirement is to map out your journey and ensure that your internal compass is in good working order. I encourage you to take the time to think about the reflective questions that follow.

Be honest with yourself, and if it helps, make a few notes.



What is your WILL to change?

- 1) How serious are you about wanting to create change?

- 2) What can you identify inside yourself that could impact your progress forward?

- 3) What are the external factors around you that could impact your progress forward?

- 4) In what way is your goal aligned with your core values?
Are there any tensions or contradictions that you need to be aware of?

- 5) What are the costs (to yourself and others around you) in creating this change?

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?

- 6) What are you willing to do to deal with the costs, and how would this look?

- 7) What are you currently tolerating that requires changing for you to progress forward?

- 8) What is the strength of your intent to create this change?

- 9) How has the strength of your will endured in the face of adversity in the past?



What is your ability to ADJUST and ADAPT?

- 1) What factors, challenges, and situations may you need to adjust and adapt to?

- 2) What are your strengths and habits that you can draw on from where you currently are and who you are?

- 3) In what ways could this impact you?

- 4) What would you need to put in place to ensure effective adaptation?

- 5) What would be the first three challenges facing you?

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?

- 6) What would you do as the first step in progressing towards and meeting your goal?

- 7) How do you plan on sustaining a positive and constructive forward momentum?

- 8) How do you cope when frustrated or angry with others and situations?

- 9) What would you need to work on that could negatively impact your transition to Civilian life?

- 10) What can you identify within yourself that can impede your ability to progress forward effectively and flexibly?



What is your RESPECT like for others and yourself?

- 1) Identify your core strengths?

- 2) What could impact you adjusting to civilian mindsets both personally and professionally?

- 3) What may your challenges be in adapting to others who do not hold the same or conflicting values?

- 4) List qualities you value in Civilians.

- 5) List qualities that frustrate you with Civilians.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?

- 6) What do you feel you would be losing in your transition from Warrior to Civilian?

- 7) Why would you be losing these?

- 8) In what ways could you reclaim this?

- 9) List your personal qualities that could negatively impact others in the process- impatience, intolerance etc.

- 10) What are you willing to do to understand and resolve these issues?



What is your RESPONSIBILITY to yourself like?

- 1) What can you identify that will support you to self-care and effectively pace yourself?

- 2) What are you currently tending to neglect regarding self-care and well-being?

- 3) What can you put in place to resolve this?

- 4) What aspects of your Warrior may impact your ability to pace yourself - remember transitioning to Civilian life, although sharing many qualities of the challenges you have faced in the Military, need not become a personal “Hell Week.”

- 5) What may external challenges impact your being able to remain coherent and motivated? Remember, Civilian life and those in it are not necessarily going to treat you any differently because of your status and skill as a Warrior



What is your INTEGRITY like?

- 1) What are your core values and habits?

- 2) What are the core values and habits that you expect from Civilians? And are these realistic?

- 3) What are you currently not respecting about yourself right now?

- 4) How do you cope with those that hold values that conflict with yours?

- 5) What do you need to identify within yourself and learn from to adjust your behaviours towards others?

- 6) What comes up for you when you think about being just another person in the job competition line-up?

- 7) What thoughts and feelings come up about the possibility that your background, skillset, and experience may not be sufficient to define who you now need to be and adjust to?



How OBSERVANT rather than reactive are you?

- 1) How do you react to situations that do not meet your expectations?

- 2) How do you react to others that do not meet your expectations?

- 3) What do you need to identify to manage these situations and others more effectively?

- 4) In the past, how have you behaved in non-military environments?



Are you willing to attempt to REPAIR negative relationships with others and yourself?

- 1) In your transition to civilian life, what are possible factors that could trigger you?

- 2) How have you reacted in the past when in similar territory?

- 3) What will be challenging for you to adjust and adapt to?

- 4) What do you feel you can do to manage this?

- 5) What might you require support and mentoring for?



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- The core challenge and requirement before undertaking change or transitioning to new territory, is to take time to Map out your journey and ensure that your internal compass is in good working order.



List the core points to keep visual from the “mapping out your territory” exercise.

“There is no such thing as an unwounded Veteran. However, these wounds, when healed, can be doorways into wisdom and strength.”

CHAPTER 5:

Operational Neuroscience

One of the most valuable tools I use with veterans is explaining how the brain and trauma work. Just as a map and compass and an awareness of the territory to be covered are critical to a successful patrol, so, too, is understanding the terrain of the brain. Understanding how you think, feel, and react will make more sense. The two operational areas I will focus on are the brain's front and back.

To keep things simple, we can understand the front part as the “smart” brain and the back as the “impulsive” brain. The front can think and reason and make sure that it faces outwards when you set up your Claymore mine. It thinks, plans, and strategises. The back is likely to set up an ambush, with the Claymore facing inwards towards you or destructively outwards towards those you care for. This part of the brain immediately responds when things go wrong. It is continuously in action and with high states of hypervigilance, in what is known in military lingo as being in contact and using fire force. (A contact is the action of becoming engaged with the enemy, while fire force is the deployment of helicopters both to place troops on the ground in contact and to engage from the air with weapons; the use of fire force as a military tactic was developed during the Rhodesian Bush War.)

Trauma results in significant overactivity in this part of the brain. The high levels of fear response activate symptoms of alertness, scanning, and anticipation of an attack. Under typical

situations, blood flows from the back of the brain to the front. As long as this flow is regular, we can think about what we are experiencing and plan an appropriate response. So, if we are in a restaurant in civilian life, we can understand that we are safe and that there is no need to scan and sit facing the door. But for veterans with post-traumatic stress (PTS) and high levels of trauma, the brain is still at war, no matter how many years may have passed. The high levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and trauma kick up the arousal levels in the back of the brain. As a result, the blood flow to the front of the brain decreases, which in simple terms is the equivalent of being on patrol with no radio, map, or compass. We retreat and function at high levels of alertness to protect ourselves and others around us. So, with the back of your brain running its show without the capacity to reason or think clearly, it's not surprising that we hit the dirt when a car backfires, we exhaustingly scan when we're in shopping centres, we always need to face the doorway, and we react excessively and immediately and then have great difficulty recovering quickly.

I remember once in training, a soldier with a MAG (machine gun) had a "runaway gun," where the weapon continued to fire on its own volition. At that point, he was in such a high state of fear that there was no longer any blood flow to the front of his brain, resulting in him beginning to turn around while still holding the runaway MAG. Many veterans arrive home with their brains still in operation mode. As a result, even though the war may be long over or recently concluded, they continue to operate at home as if they were still on operations. As the soldiers had done on operations, their

partners and children now live in high states of alertness, fear, and uncertainty at home because of the soldiers' behaviour. Their brains, remaining fully operational, leave the soldiers' loved ones feeling as if they were in the middle of a field of land mines scattered by their trauma and PTS.

Whereas we can react with aggression in operations and contacts, these trained and wired-in behaviours at home and in civilian life can have disastrous effects on those we love. As a result, too many veterans turn to alcohol to release, escape, and relax. But this is a form of R&R (rest and relaxation) that has no positive outcome. We become hostage to our trauma, driven deeper and deeper into despair as we unsuccessfully attempt to navigate our way through the unpredictability of civilian territory.

As one vet put it, "It was so much simpler in the military. I knew where I stood, I depended on and trusted the men around me, and they, in turn, respected and trusted me. We were a family, a team. We stuck together. Rank defined codes of conduct. In civilian life, there are no such systems. Everything's unpredictable. I can walk into a supermarket, and someone will give me a hard time. I'll be driving my car, and another driver will cut me off or fly into a rage at me. I don't have my friends, my team, my brothers to back me up."

To tie all this together, let's look at the back of the brain from an operational point of view.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- We can understand the front part of the brain as the “smart” brain and the back as the “impulsive” brain.
- The front of the brain can think and reason. It thinks, plans, and strategises.
- The back of the brain is quite likely to set up an ambush, with the Claymore either facing inwards towards you or destructively outwards.
- Many veterans arrive home with their brains still in operation mode and, as a result, bring the war within them into their home territory.

1. The Relay Station/OP

This part of the brain collects information coming in from the external environment. It rapidly evaluates what needs to be attended to, be kept under observation, or immediately responded to. It is the rational, thinking, planning, observant part of ourselves.

The more we can remain in OP (observe, plan, think, and organise) mode, the more likely we will accurately assess situations and effectively manage them. When we step out of OP mode, the outside world can be perceived as dangerous and a real threat—other drivers, a cardboard box on the side of the road, or a chaotic shopping centre. This part of our brain has perspective and can think, plan, and coordinate. Without this part of our brain functioning properly, we lack perspective, and as a result, we cannot think or plan clearly. Without this perspective, we run the risk of friendly fire, which in civilian terms equates to unnecessary and excessive reactivity to situations that do not place us or those around us at risk at a realistic and rational level.

An example of this is a veteran who describes placing weapons around the house. The family has been trained to observe arches of fire and to triple check that all windows and doors are secured. At night, they will constantly wake up to listen and recheck. Any lapses in vigilance and safety protocols on the part of the family members can often be met with frustrated rage based on the anxieties and fears about the risk of attack.

Our challenge is to use this part of our brain and learn to stand down the other parts of our brain in civilian life. By “stand down,” I do not mean that we switch off the parts of the brain that instinctively react should a car lose control and drive at us, should our young child fall in the pool, or should a snake rear up in front of us on a hike. By standing down, I mean that we begin to activate the thinking parts of our brain so that we no longer hear every backfire as a shot or view every object on the side of the road as a potential IED.

2. The Trip Flare

This is the brain’s early-warning system. It expects threats and danger to be around every corner. It is from this position that the Claymore mine is triggered. The trip flare plays a significant role in anxiety. That part of our brain is always alerted to changes in our environment. That part of our brain lies in ambush, constantly alert to unusual sounds and the potential for the enemy to walk into the killing zone. When the trip-flare position is acute, blood flow to the relay station/OP part of our brain is significantly reduced. This restricts our capacity to think, plan, assess, and interpret. It can and does result in behaviours that can be destructive to ourselves and others. The consequence of a shutdown OP and activated trip-flare state can result in a “contact,” as noted earlier—never an effective choice in civilian life.

3. The Contact Sequence

This part of our brain prepares us to react and initiates a response. That part of our brain carries the HE (high explosive) and phosphorus grenades, Claymores, MAGs, mortars, and everything else. Remaining in contact mode results in casualties in civilian life. The impact of this level of arousal and reactivity on well-being at high levels can be very toxic. It can increase the likelihood of self-destructive behaviours such as anxiety, stress, and alcohol abuse.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- *The Relay Station/OP-* This part of the brain collects information from the external environment. It rapidly evaluates what needs to be attended to, be kept under observation, or immediately responded to.
- The more we can remain in OP (observe, plan, think, and organise) mode, the more likely we will accurately assess situations and effectively manage them.
- Without this perspective, we run the risk of friendly fire, which in civilian terms equates to unnecessary and excessive reactivity to situations that do not place us or those around us at risk at a realistic and rational level.
- *The Trip Flare-* This is the brain's early-warning system. It is that part of our brain that lies in ambush. The consequence of a shutdown OP and activated trip-flare state can then result in a "contact."
- *The Contact Sequence-* This part of our brain prepares us to react and initiates a response. The impact of this level of arousal and reactivity on well-being at high levels can be very toxic. It can increase the likelihood of self-destructive behaviours such as anxiety, stress, and alcohol abuse.



Think about how you operate and navigate through your territory. Do you control and define your arc of fire and maintain your OP, or do you tend to respond with trip flares and a contact sequence? See what comes to mind and record below.

“A runaway mouth is as destructive as a live round.”

CHAPTER 6:

The Military versus The Civilian Brain

There are roughly two modes in which the military brain will operate - Ambush (alert, aggressive, reactive) or OP (calm, observing).

There is a flow-through between the two territories in the Veteran Brain. Even under situations of extreme threat and reaction, there is the ability to remain calm, aware, focused, and react with directed aggression. This mode is perfectly designed and appropriate to operational functionality. The potential challenges only arise within the Civilian environment where that constant state of alert, hyper-vigilance and the behaviours that go with it (while driving, in restaurants, busy shopping centres and at home) can have a negative impact on both the veteran and those around them. It's like having an app constantly running in the back of your brain.

Watch an animal eating quietly in the wild. Their constant watchful alertness and body tension is no different to the veteran, even in moments of apparent relaxation. This state is even more challenging for those currently serving and moving between the two territories of being on operations and time out at home. Remember that the military brain does not change or adjust to a transition to civilian territory. It maintains the same wiring. Civilian territory is just another operational zone but potentially more complex and hazardous for the military brain because focused reactivity is not an option. There is often little understanding of this in the civilian world, where there is an

expectation that a uniform change should equal a change in the brain. Therefore, it is not surprising that veterans walk into many ambushes on arriving in or returning to civilian worlds. Tragically, this lack of understanding can lead to pathologising highly adaptable and trained behaviour.

Yes, both sides need adjustments and adaptations, but to label the individual is a significant concern. Learning new job skills is essential for the veteran or current serving, but these will not rewire the brain. Where appropriate, help is often required to create more adaptable wiring to navigate effectively through the new territory. The brain will not simply just change. Old wiring appropriate to one situation will not automatically rewire to the new situation. It will take time. Support must also be given within the military that allows the use of neuroscience as well as brain and body based modalities that begin the process of rewiring. Therefore, this complex transition takes time and is the shared responsibility of all.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- There are roughly two modes in which the military brain will operate - Ambush (alert, aggressive, reactive) or OP (calm, observing).
- Remember that the military brain does not change or adjust to a transition to civilian territory. It maintains the same wiring.
- Civilian territory is just another operational zone but potentially more complex and hazardous for the military brain because focused reactivity is not an option.
- Therefore, this complex transition takes time and is the shared responsibility of all.

CHAPTER 7:

Loss Of Tribe

Tribe is at the core of military life. It defines individuals through the close connection to each other. Who “I” am, is an extension of who “WE” are. Shared meanings, values, language, and experience allow a framework of connection.

In the Military Tribe, we move from selfishness to selflessness. Core values- dependability, reliability, and self-sacrifice – maintain connection and survivability. To so many Veterans, Civilian life is a random and unpredictable matrix that focuses more on the individual and the superficial rather than the collective. They struggle to understand how the territory operates and redefine who they are. They feel dislocated. However, despite these challenges, we know that transition can be and is being successfully achieved, and Tribe in a different way can be accomplished. But it requires coaching and mentoring and, at times, healing, and counselling.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Tribe is at the core of military life. It defines individuals through the close-knit connection to each other.
- In the Military Tribe, we move from selfishness to selflessness
- Transition can be and is being successfully achieved, and Tribe in a different way can be accomplished.

CHAPTER 8:

Belonging

The territory of Veteran Transitioning could be encapsulated in this word- BELONGING. Have a read below and note any thoughts and feelings that come to you.



- 1) **Belonging** is at the core of feeling located in Tribe. Think about your vision around this as you transition out of the military. In what ways are you being challenged to adjust and adapt as you move into a different Tribe and territory? What is your connection like within your family Tribe? What is your experience, feelings, and thoughts around the loss of your Military Tribe?

- 2) **Be** – Who and what do you wish to be? Any visions or plans around reforming who you are? What impacts this both positively and negatively or in challenging ways?

- 3) **Longing** – What do you long for, yearn for, ache for, grieve for?

- 4) **Long** – creating change (internally and externally) in the transitioning process takes time, patience, perseverance, discipline, trust, and effort. Real change is generally not a short process. It can meander and wander, and at times you may feel lost. Learn the correct skill sets to navigate effectively. How do you deal with feeling lost? What's your patience like?

- 5) **In** – simply reading the books or talking the talk from the edges of the territory is most likely insufficient. You need to step in, get dusty and dirty and do the work one step at a time. How are you becoming proactive in creating the change you wish? How are you with becoming comfortable when experiencing discomfort?

“The challenge of change is to create your own opportunities.”

CHAPTER 9:

Integrating The Warrior And The Civilian

Draw on your Warrior attributes. Remember that you were trained to excel.

Excellence is defined by your willingness to exceed your perceived limitations. It is achieved by your acceptance and motivation to step out of your comfort zone. It is maintained by your capacity to process and transform the challenging and often stressful demands on you physically, mentally, and psychologically. It is not measured by ranking to others. This should not define or limit you. Every success is an invitation to become better. There are no failures, only opportunities to learn and improve.

This is the mindset that will be needed along the transitional process.

The challenge in transitioning from Military to Civilian territory is first to identify your skill sets and strengths that can accompany you. It's not about leaving yourself behind. Assess the demands and challenges of this new territory. Consider the adjustments and adaptations that will be required. Identify new learning and new ways of operating that may not yet be within your circle of influence. Prepare and practice. Constantly reassess, re-evaluate, and adjust. Teamwork is critical.

At no point should your Warrior be left behind. This part of you forms the core of your values and strengths to support you in transitioning into civilian life. The Wounds that you carry do not define the Warrior. Your work is to call back and integrate

these parts of yourself no matter what it takes. You would have laid down your life to protect a brother. At all times, your focus was not on yourself but the safety and wellbeing of your group. Reliability and Dependability were your core values.

Transitioning into Civilian life is about maintaining these core values and learning to direct them towards yourself. Whatever burdens you may be carrying, you need to be willing to acknowledge them and deal with them. You are as important as your brothers around you. To successfully navigate civilian territory, you will need to navigate your internal terrain.

You've earned the right to carry yourself!



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Excellence is defined by your willingness to exceed your perceived limitations. It is achieved by your acceptance and motivation to step out of your comfort zone.
- At no point should your Warrior be left behind. This part of you forms the core of your values and strengths to support you as you transition into civilian life.
- Your work is to call back and integrate these parts of yourself no matter what it takes.
- To successfully navigate through civilian territory, you will need to navigate your internal terrain.
- You've earned the right to carry yourself!

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



Think about what skill sets and strengths you can take into your transitioning process. How do you adjust and adapt to being out of your comfort zone?

“How you progress forward will be determined by your ability to draw on your operational tracking skills-eyes open and watch how you move through your territory. Adjust and adapt as needed.”

CHAPTER 10:

Mapping Out Your Civilian Territory

Understanding the complex aspects of learning to operate in Civilian territory effectively supports transitioning the best of who you are and allows effective adaptation and adjustment.

Take time to explore all aspects of your potential transitional territory. These may include reintegrating back into your family, professional and personal goals, job hunting, retraining etc.

The more you map out your territory, including your strengths and areas of deficit, the more successful you will be.

No goal can be achieved without prior preparation and rehearsal.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



How would you currently assess your ability to map out your transitioning territory? Document your strengths and challenges below.

“You will need to find your resources for those times when your journey can be long and exhausting.”

CHAPTER 11

The Space Between Leaving And Arriving

You learnt to operate in the military. Remember that you were initially challenged to adjust to a more regimented life. You had to take on and learn new skills. You had to re-form a new identity.

All these skills apply to transitioning to civilian life. However, this time around, you have the core attributes and values of the Warrior to drive you forward. There will be challenges as you adjust, adapt, and form your new identity. Take your time. Maintain coms with those that can support you. Build a map to help you navigate. Maintain situational awareness and go OP to observe your new territory when in doubt, stress or overwhelm.

Everything you need to have to adjust is already within you. You would place your life on the line for another. Yet many veterans tend to leave themselves behind when transitioning into civilian territory. You are under the same obligation to bring yourself back.

Your trauma and struggles are no different from or lesser than those carried by others. They deserve attention, support, and care. The attributes that form who you are and willingly give to others also apply to yourself. Do whatever it takes. Go back. Give yourself a hand. Allow others to walk with you.

How you transition into civilian life will be determined by your ability to track your progress- your wellbeing, mental state, impact on others and use of pull through tools. If you

ignore the tracks you make, you could be heading into your own ambush. At regular intervals, stop and think about how you are doing.

This is no different to your operational skills set. Remember that the territory between leaving and arriving can take time. The civilian world is not necessarily waiting to welcome you with open arms. Your rank and experience may have little currency value in your new life. Reforming yourself may be well out of your circle of understanding. Be willing to ask for help, whether it be a coach, mentor, councillor etc. Be ready to learn new skills and adapt and adjust as required.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Everything you need to have to adjust is already within you
- The attributes that form who you are and that you willingly give to others also apply to yourself. Do whatever it takes. Go back. Give yourself a hand. Allow others to walk with you.
- Use the core attributes and values of the Warrior to drive you forward.
- Be ready to learn new skills and adapt and adjust to those you already have.



Take a moment and think about who you are willing to ask for support. Are you part of the problem or the solution to ensuring effective transitioning? Can you identify what you are contributing to the problem and the solution? See what comes to mind and document below.

“At the moment, your challenges may feel massive. With support, this can change. Never give up. It’s not necessarily the terrain that’s the problem, but your attitude to what lies in front of you.”

CHAPTER 12:

Moral Injuries

Here I want to focus on moral injuries associated with traumatic experiences from within one's organisation. I will also note impacts from within civilian territory.

Increasingly, numbers of Veterans I have seen, have shared the traumatic impact of being removed from their Unit/Tribe and rapidly transitioned out of the military because of injuries or bullying and discrimination. These can have a very traumatic impact and need to be dealt with. They can erode your sense of self and feeling competent as a member of the Military.

The core values of mateship, reliability, and dependability on the ground within your Tribe may not always be the same that drives the organisation forward. Politics, personal ambitions, and power can replace these core values. The expectation of fairness, trust and care can therefore become compromised. This can potentially traumatise the individual.

At this point, one's organisation can feel like the enemy. The felt betrayal of family and Tribe can wound deeply as they compromise and contradict core values. The experience of this can impact the Warrior profoundly. It is possible that these experiences can result in the loss of lives not driven by operational impacts.

The Warrior journey is thousands of years old. Inherent in it and critical to it at the core is the hunting of and killing others and the willingness to do this. What is the meaning of

violence in this territory? It is the skill and capacity to focus and direct lethal aggression. In the context of this territory, this is neither distorted nor abnormal. Warriors have an intimate relationship with death and, as a result, an appreciation of life. However, values and judgements can be placed on these skills, mindsets, and individuals in civilian territory.

Ignorance based on a vision that fails to see the importance of creating rituals to welcome our Warriors back results in a culture that judges, labels, and distorts. Homelessness, suicide, disconnection, and despair are to an extent a reflection of the battleground within the home territory that they return to. What currently exists to bridge the return is far from satisfactory. There is a dire need to step back and out of our management models and genuinely see and welcome these individuals and value them for their strength and wisdom.

All territories have a shared responsibility to look critically at this process.

No Warrior should ever return home to die!

CHAPTER 13:

7 Lessons For Operating In Relationship Territory

How many partners of Veterans note that their husbands or wives seem to have a more intimate connection within their Military Tribe than within the family. For Veterans and current serving, Tribe is based on unconditional support through adversity and suffering. It is a deep bond forged through the military ritual of being broken down and reformed. It is about the shared memories of Operations, often unspoken but deeply etched into the marrows of the bones. This bond is not something that can be easily grasped or understood by others. It can erode the foundation of connection with partners if not spoken about.

Over the years, partners I have spoken with have continually noted how the veterans they love bring the war back home. They describe their reactivity, moodiness, need for control, hypervigilance, isolation, ease of being triggered, difficulties navigating through intimacy, and challenges in communication. They note that their veterans seem to be wired for the fight-or-flight instinct. They struggle with the deep bonds they have with their fellow veterans, which often feel more intimate than those between themselves and their partners.

I am not a relationship expert, nor do I work with couples. This book is therefore not an in-depth exploration of couple work. But many of the lessons (the constructive ones that fit

into civilian terrain) learned in the military and on operations can also be applied to your relationship.

I once worked with a veteran who was aware of his reactivity to his wife. In situations of disagreement or whenever he felt he was being criticised, he would become dismissive, aggressive, or just walk away. I asked him how he'd behaved when patrolling through a village, where the women of the village had been verbally and physically aggressive towards him. He noted that he'd paid no attention to them and had maintained a controlled and neutral position. I then asked him how, when his wife wanted to communicate her frustration and feelings towards him, he reacted as if she were the enemy and were armed. I reminded him that if he could demonstrate self-control in these situations, he could again learn to achieve more constructive ways of communicating with appropriate support.

I would like to stress that the brain at war does not differentiate territories. It will behave in civilian life the same way it does in military life. But you have all learned the discipline of self-control. If the challenges of what you've been through at war have impacted the positive qualities of being a warrior, please see someone and get help. You are not short of courage. Draw on the resources in this book and your friends, supporting professionals and veteran organisations in your own country. You owe it to yourself as well as to those who love and care for you.

As a contribution to becoming more effective in connecting with your significant others, I have identified seven protocols that can support you while also getting the support you need.

RELATIONSHIP LESSON 1:

Keep Your Safety On

“I don’t know what happens every time my partner brings an issue or a concern to me about the relationship. I immediately feel like no matter what I do, I’m going to get judged or blamed and that it’s always going to be my fault. I get irritated, frustrated, and worked up. I can see that I’m becoming abrupt and argumentative. As things escalate, I start to feel out of control, to the point where I either get out of the room or start becoming aggressive. They feel like the enemy to me at that point. We often just end up screaming at each other till one of us burst into tears.”

You can try a few things to avoid getting to this point:

1. As you enter any potentially tricky communication, just breathe. This will bring down the back of your brain.
2. Have a drink of icy water (carry a bottle in your back pocket or nearby), which also helps change the blood flow.
3. Don’t see this as an attack. Adopt the position of first wanting to listen so that you can understand. Ask your partner to tell you more about why they feel this way. Remember that the other person’s story is real, but it may not be your experience. But your partner has the right to be listened to.
4. Go into OP mode. If your “inner child” is taking it personally, then step away from and invite your adult

in. Listen and breathe. In the end, it's often not so much about a scoreboard of who is right or wrong but just the experience of somebody respectfully listening to you. Remember that listening is all about keeping your safety on and ensuring that you are not locked and loaded.

5. Before getting into tricky territory, if you become quickly overwhelmed, find a quiet time with your partner, and negotiate that you will take a brief time out to focus and centre and then return to the conversation. As one partner of a veteran once said to me, "It doesn't matter what I do. If I try and communicate how I'm feeling without blame, he immediately takes it personally and gets uptight, defensive, and aggressive. I feel like I'm always walking on eggshells and having to be hypervigilant around him. I love him, but I end up feeling so alone. I just wish he could learn to listen. He doesn't need to fix things, and I'm not trying to attack him."



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Manage your safety through communicated time out, breathing, having a glass of cold water, or having a cold shower as an emergency protocol.
- Adopt the position of first wanting to listen so that you can understand.
- Remember that listening is all about keeping your safety on and ensuring that you are not locked and loaded.
- If you become quickly overwhelmed, then find a quiet time with your partner and negotiate that you will take a brief time out to focus and centre and then return to the conversation.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



Take a moment to breathe and self-reflect. What comes to mind as you read lesson 1? Document below.

“Your loved ones are not the enemy.”

RELATIONSHIP LESSON 2:

Respect

“There are times when I look into his eyes when we’re having a tricky discussion, and all I see is hate or coldness. It’s like if I would just disappear, he’d be happy. I see no care for how I feel. It’s exhausting. Everything is about his needs and his difficulties from the war. But what about me?”

If your anger, anxiety, and reactivity are not within your control, then ask for help to get you to the point of becoming more on top of your feelings. Your partner is no different from the soldiers you operated with or those who outranked you. Unless your partner is abusive towards you, they have earned the right to be respected. Veterans often bring the war home, resulting in the family walking on eggshells around them. If your partner has demonstrated care and a willingness to love and support you, you also need to understand how challenging it can be to care for a veteran. As much as you struggle, so do the others in your life. They have earned the right to respect. Your responsibility is to use the tools the professionals who are supporting you have given you, as well as those in this book. To get from point A to point B in a different way, you need to find a way to change how you approach situations.

Every day wake up and look at the person lying next to you. Do the same when you head to sleep at night. Think about what this person has brought into your life and the qualities you value in them. Think about the good times you’ve had, and while you’re holding and feeling the memories and emotions,

just breathe gently in and out. If you like writing, then at the end of the day, identify and write three positive things you noticed during the day in connection with your relationship. Do this every day. You could do this together with your partner. The one way to change behaviours that feel stuck is to identify what you are grateful for. The more you do this, the more you will create brain and neural change. It will eventually become real if you fake it long enough. Just remember that it can initially feel very artificial doing this. You may have to “fake it till you make it.” The brain does not change overnight.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- If your anger, anxiety, and reactivity are not within your control, then ask for help to get you to a point of becoming more on top of your feelings.
- The one way to change behaviors that feel stuck is to identify what you are grateful for. The more you do this, the more you will create brain and neural change. If you fake it long enough then it will eventually become a real feeling.
- Your partner is not the enemy.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



Take a moment to breathe and self-reflect. What comes to mind as you read lesson 2? Document below.

“Trust, care, respect, and love-let these values guide you forward.”

RELATIONSHIP LESSON 3:

Self-Control

“I always try to go in with good intentions, but as soon as things crank up, I just lose self-control. I hate seeing myself like this. I used to stay calm and focused in all situations when on operations. My guys always commented on how safe they felt around me because they trusted me. I felt good about myself. Now I see myself getting dismissive, aggressive, and cold. I see fear in my partner’s eyes.”

I find that it can help if, when we become triggered, we do not see the other as the problem but instead as a “messenger.” The messenger is bringing attention to a part of ourselves that needs to be dealt with. Why attack the messenger? The messenger is not the enemy. The messenger is simply delivering a message. Someone else at another time and place will do the same thing. If that part of you were not there, then you would not be triggered. What is it in your personal history that is being triggered? What are the emotions that are arising? What are your thoughts? The more you can see and feel the other as neutral energy, the less likely you will be to attack.

If you are at a point where you become aware of the possibility of losing control, then briefly walk away to regroup. Breathe as soon as you become aware that your stress levels are rising. Listen and continue to breathe. It’s OK to say, “I’m finding this stressful, and I just need to take time out for ten minutes.”

You may have a lot bouncing around inside of you but work on creating a gap between the thought and the behaviour. Use your tools to increase your ability to manage how you feel and exercise respectful choices about what you do with what you think and feel.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- It can help if, when triggered, we do not see the other as the problem but rather as a “messenger”.
- The messenger is not the enemy. The messenger is simply delivering a message.
- If you are at a point where you become aware of the possibility of losing control, then briefly walk away to regroup.



Take a moment to breathe and self-reflect. What comes to mind as you read lesson 3? How would you assess your safety protocols and your ability to define and manage your arcs of fire? Do you struggle with AD's and a runaway mouth? Have an honest look at yourself and document your thoughts and realisations below.

“We can learn to choose what our internal weather is like that we bring to those and the situations around us. It takes work, but hard work never killed anyone.”

RELATIONSHIP LESSON 4:

Clarify

“I remember when my wife used to start a discussion about how unsupported she was feeling, I immediately used to get fired up. I was doing everything I could to hold part-time work. I’d been trying to cut down on my drinking and had been seeing a counsellor. The more defensive I became, the more frustrated she would get. It was all downhill from there. It was only when I realised that it was not about justifying or defending my position, but rather asking for more information and allowing her to talk, that we began to make progress.”

You never rushed into any unmapped territory. You took time to observe, look at a map, and identify points of risk. So why rush in blindly into a conversation? Ask for more information. Ask for clarification. Use questions such as, “Can you tell me more about what you’re saying? Can you give me some examples of what you see me doing? What would it look like for you to see me as being more supportive?” The very asking of these questions allows the other person an experience of being listened to. It also creates a stopgap to regroup, breathe, and ground yourself. Often, as soon as we feel listened to, we are more likely to feel supported. Mission achieved.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- You never rushed into any unmapped territory. You took time to observe, look at a map, and identify points of risk. So why rush in blindly into a conversation?
- Ask for more information. Ask for clarification.
- This creates a stopgap for you to regroup, breathe, and ground yourself.



Take a moment to breathe and self-reflect. What comes to mind as you read lesson 4? What comes to mind when you reflect on your ability to clarify or understand the other before you expect to be understood. Document your trigger points as well as your strengths, areas to manage, and successes achieved.

“Others may at times face us with deeply challenging encounters. Although we may not be able to change or control what is in front of us, we have the power to decide how we receive these challenges.”

RELATIONSHIP LESSON 5:

Arcs of Fire

“There were so many moments when I just used to lose it. I’d go off at my family, friends while driving on the road and at my co-workers. I was like a runaway gun, just shooting my mouth off at anything and everyone.”

Arcs of fire are there for the sole purpose of not placing others at risk. (In military parlance, an arc of fire is the area of the ground a unit or individual is responsible for covering). It’s critical to identify your boundaries and not allow yourself to be abused or used. These behaviours and the setting and communicating of limits are well within your arcs of fire. Start to identify these arcs in all situations. Identify who and what fits into the arc and what is outside it. Learn to step back from what is outside your area of responsibility. Learn to communicate effectively and clearly with what falls within your area of influence. Learn tools to regulate your emotions. Remember, “cock, hook, and look.” Take a moment, breathe, and create a space between the situation as you perceive it and your triggered reaction. First, use the “cock hook” in this space and then have a good look. For a moment, try and go into OP mode. Step back and get out of the killing ground. What you are going to do will define who you are and can be.

You are entitled to feel what you want, but you are responsible for what you do with those feelings. Maintaining arcs of fire takes discipline and an awareness of others around you. Your spouse, children, friends, other drivers, people on

the street, and co-workers are part of your unit. They are not the enemy.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Arcs of fire are there for the sole purpose of not placing others at risk.
- Learn to communicate effectively and clearly with what falls within your area of influence.
- Learn tools to regulate your emotions.
- Step back and get out of the killing ground. What you are next going to do will define who you are and can be.
- Maintaining arcs of fire takes discipline and an awareness of others around you.



Take a moment to breathe and self-reflect. What comes to mind as you read lesson 5? Assess your arcs of fire. Note below your strengths, successes, and challenges. Identify one or two things you are willing to work on. Perhaps get feedback from your partner or friends. What strategies will you commit to?

“You have a choice to either create positive change proactively and on your terms or allow change and others to deal with you.”

RELATIONSHIP LESSON 6:

Accidental Discharge

“There was a moment sitting around the table with my family when I lost it. The kids were fighting, and my wife was exhausted and was screaming at them and me to sort it out. The next thing I knew, I had a knife at her throat and threatened to kill the children unless they shut up. There was this pause. It felt like a picture frozen in time. All I could see was sheer fear in my wife’s and children’s eyes. They were looking at me as if I was a monster. It was like I had gone into automatic.”

All accidental discharges (ADs) are potentially life-threatening situations. Part of taking responsibility for an AD is recognising that you need support. This not only can have an impact on your healing but will also demonstrate an intent to those you love that you are willing to change. Remember, you are not “damaged.” You are a fine veteran whose brain struggles to differentiate between war and civilian life. Too many traumatised veterans bring the war home with them. The family becomes hyper-vigilant and walks on eggshells. Those you love are no different from the soldiers you operate with.

As much as your focus in the military was to bring everyone home alive by excelling in who you were, the same is valid with those you love. Your intent is not to harm them. Your attitude to your healing needs to be that no matter how tough it could get, you are willing to do whatever it takes to protect others in your territory.

The strength of your attitude to create healing and change is where it all begins, and it is who you were and still are!



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Part of taking responsibility for an AD is to recognize that you need support.
- This not only can have an impact on your healing but will also demonstrate an intent to those you love that you are willing to change.
- Your attitude to healing needs to be that no matter how tough it could get, you are willing to do whatever it takes to protect others in your territory.



Take a moment to breathe and self-reflect. What comes to mind as you read lesson 6? How would you assess your ability to master your AD's? What contributes to your ability to control your AD's? What does this look like? What strategies have worked? What are you willing to do to create change?

Document your thoughts below.

“Are you in the driver’s seat or the passenger seat of your car?”

RELATIONSHIP LESSON 7:

Keep Your Barrel Clean

“It’s never been easy to adjust after I left the military. I felt safer on operations than I’ve felt in civilian life. I couldn’t deal with the noise, the unpredictable and self-directed behaviours, the chaotic roads, the busy shopping centres, and trying to figure out who I was outside of uniform and away from my brothers. I saw endless psychologists but was not motivated to do anything they suggested. It’s like I would talk to someone and feel better for a while, but slowly the stress and the chaos would filter into my bones and brain. I only realised this when I lost it in some way. It took a lot before I realised that if I was going to change, I needed to bring the same disciplines of soldiering to my civilian life—self-discipline, daily practice, and repetition till my behaviour became instinctive and automatic. No matter how out of it I felt, I could still exercise, keep my space tidy, eat healthily, and use the tools that professionals suggested. The ability to remain in the driver’s seat needs to be earned by sheer intent and effort, no matter how small the steps are.”

As this veteran’s statement attests, the bottom line is that transitioning to successfully operating in civilian life and relationships can be highly challenging. To not pay attention to these challenges is precisely the same as neglecting to do your “pull-through,” as discussed in previous chapters, to keep your barrel clean. At some point, you will experience a stoppage. Your core drive will be to identify the contents of your toolbox

that you draw on daily. Every day is an opportunity for a pull-through. A clean barrel equals potentially less fallout.

In this book, I talk you through several pull-throughs that many people have found extremely useful. Try them out and give them a chance. Change takes time. Between the intent and the experience of change is a journey.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Transitioning to being able to operate in civilian life successfully can be extremely challenging.
- Every day is an opportunity for a pull-through. A clean barrel equals potentially less fallout.
- The ability to remain in the driver's seat needs to be earned by sheer intent and effort, no matter how small the steps are.”
- You need to bring the same disciplines of soldiering to civilian life—self-discipline, daily practice, and repetition till your ability to change your reactions becomes instinctive and automatic.



Take a moment to breathe and self-reflect. What comes to mind as you read lesson 7? What pull-throughs do you use? Are they productive or destructive? Have a look at the chapter on pull-through tools. Which would you be willing to give a go? Do you feel you are in the driver's seat of your car? If not, why not?

“Do what it takes to remain in the driver’s seat, ensures the safety of your passengers.”

Summary



7 Lessons For Operating In Relationship Territory:

- Lesson 1 – Keep your safety on
- Lesson 2 – Respect
- Lesson 3 – Self Control
- Lesson 4 – Clarify
- Lesson 5 – Arcs of fire
- Lesson 6 – Accidental discharge
- Lesson 7 – Keep your barrel clean

CHAPTER 14:

The Letter

Many veterans over the years have talked about how difficult it was for them to communicate with their families. Often, I would find myself supporting them to create a script. I eventually wrote the letter below as something veterans could use to structure their thoughts and communication. Feel free to modify, add, and delete so that this fits what you want to say. Let the other person read it first, and then see if you can bridge into shared understanding.

Letter from one veteran to another (Veteran, Friend, Partner, etc).

Dear _____

Even though too much of where I've been and what I've seen cannot be spoken, and even though my present feels like such a struggle at times, both for you and me, I remain a proud veteran who still believes in loyalty and who's willing to put my life on the line for others. Many times it felt as if my brain remained on the battlefield. The sound of a car backfiring became the enemy coming in contact with me. Hitting the ground may have been a joke to you and others, but it was life and death to me. The flashbacks felt too real, and every corner was a potential ambush. I know that insisting that I sit in restaurants with my back against the wall was difficult for you

to understand or that trying to talk to me in a shopping centre when I was scanning everyone walking past was irritating. I know that at times you felt that after all these years, I should have moved on.

I wish things were that simple, as I was desperate to move on. But every day was another day at war - of being vigilant and of struggling with depression, stress, anxiety, grief, and trauma. For me, there has been no escape. My nights are full of nightmares, and my days find me wanting to escape to safety and silence. I've not given the best of myself to you all, and I've never rested well with this.

I know you've struggled with the bonds I still have with the soldiers I served and that, at times, this bond has felt more connected than the bond I have with you. I know you've felt frustrated by my refusal to talk about that time of my life. It's not that I don't want to share; it's that I can't. There are things that I've never talked about and that haunts me every day of my life. These are memories that I don't even share with other veterans. But I also have memories that I can't share with anyone who hasn't been there. I've tried to talk to civilians in the past, but the look in their eyes showed me how complex—in fact impossible—it was for them to understand me. I know my silence has hurt you, and for that, I am sorry. It isn't personal. I know you've said that you're willing to listen, and I've been grateful for that, but these are stories that I cannot share with you. Please understand.

At times, it feels as if I have a room full of memories that I've locked away not only from others but from myself. They still affect my mood, sleep, and ability to connect with others.

But I know and feel that my deepest fear is that if I ever began to open this box, I wouldn't be able to control what would come out. It's hard enough just dealing with the surface of it all.

I promise you that I will do whatever it takes to become a better partner, parent, and friend. I know that the ways I've tried to cope with the memories and experiences haven't always served me and others well. I'm willing to look at what I can do to heal and find more peace. Please try not to judge or push me into change. It's hard enough for me to begin to open up to my suffering, grief, and anger.

My moods have never been easy for you. I have times when I feel on edge for no apparent reason or feel down. Again, this is not personal. What I need is some time and space just to be alone to catch my breath.

I am grateful for the years in which you've stood by me and done your very best to support me, even when I behaved in ways that made life difficult for you. They say that there's no such thing as an unwounded warrior. We were young then, and we felt immortal. We never understood the price we would eventually pay for everything we did, saw, and experienced.

Age has not diminished the pain. If anything, the pain has only become more intense. But I am willing to change.



Write your letter

Having read the Letter, think about whether you would like to write your own letter. Think about what you would like to say but have struggled to do for whatever reason. Your letter can be your legacy. It can be the bridge to find your voice, heal your pain, create shared understanding, and reconnect with those around you. Take time to reflect and find your words. Create a few draft letters until you have found your words. I hope your journey through this book will support you with this mission. I have left you several pages. Take your time.

My Letter

My Letter continued...

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?

My letter continued...

My letter continued...

CHAPTER 15:

Understanding And Embracing Emotions

All your training has rewired you to manage potentially traumatic experiences but remain coherent. You have the ability to damp down on your feelings. Many Veterans I have sat with have confirmed an experience of having a more muted emotional cycle. It's not that they don't feel. It's not that they don't feel deeply connected to and responsible for those they care for and love, and it's not that they don't grieve losses. However, the expression of this is different.

Over the years, I have done many debriefs with partners and families around this. Over many years, veterans I have sat with describe cycles of, at times for no apparent reason, of just feeling edgy and uncomfortable. In these moments, being with others can feel overwhelming and irritating. Trying to work out why can be a futile exercise. Many boxes can account for this feeling- the loss of military tribe, stretching into and adjusting to civilian life, the edges of traumatic memory, grief and pain making its way to the surface of your awareness, present-day challenges, ageing and the loss of capability- these are just a few.

Try doing the following when you are aware of this feeling- begin by just respecting the energy in your body. Bring your awareness to it. Feel what comes up. Open your heart. Let the tension, edginess and irritation in your body move- stretch, breath, exercise, and yoga are some of the body-based modalities you can use. Just let it roll. Accept its presence. What do you need? - time out, some solitary space? Communicate your needs so others don't take them personally. Don't judge your experience. Quiet your internal chatter and just listen to your body. My sense over the years is that as

Veterans, we carry memories and emotions that, if not attended to, can drain resources. Imagine the impact of constant hyper-vigilance on the body? Begin with your body first. See how you go.

In over 15 years of working with Veterans, the one experience that I have consistently witnessed is the profound depth of their grief. It has always moved me to see these extraordinary Warriors pay tribute to brothers lost as well as lost parts of themselves experienced over time on operations. Grief ignored numbs the heart, stills the capacity to feel, and fires up anger. When a Warrior is willing and ready to feel, remember, and grieve, only then do the doorways to his heart open and bring the beginning of peace and resolution. Through feeling and grieving, the shadows of those lost are brought to life and affirmed. This moment where the aching heart is allowed to be is when the Warrior can stand tall by the fallen and listen and remember.

Remember that your struggle is understandable. Just try not to close your heart. There can be no healing with a closed heart.

Your grief respects and remembers your mates. Why shut it away? They long to remain in your heart.

As noted, Veterans have an understandable and necessary capacity to damp down or dial down emotions.

Lieutenant Dave Stedman (Rhodesian Bush War) notes the following:

“After the contact, I was aware of ‘coming down to normal’. Did what ‘had to be done’ having functioned on a different plane. We moved out and came back later that night to set up an ambush in case of any terrors (terrorists) returning – to no avail. That functioning and “doing what had to be done” has been the centre of my life in many situations, e.g., motor

accidents. I've always believed that I'm a 'cold fish', that I battle to express emotions and feel inadequate to express feelings adequately. It's easier to tell my dog how much I love him than my family. I always think that I'm doing a poor job of expressing emotions. I'm feeling them very deeply but expressing them is something else. I often retreat into a shell in an argument and flip a switch, thus functioning very differently to normal.

Very aware of 'shutting down' when in arguments.... usually taken as disinterest by those involved. In an argument, I often retreat onto 'a different plane'. Try to get emotion out of the air. This frustrates others because I'm so focused on logic and 'the point'. When emotions do get through – and that may be beyond my control – then it's like a release, a wave. Perhaps I then overcompensate. It is almost automatic the flip the switch in some situations; it's a very sterile situation. Everything is clear and precise.”

Many veterans and their partners (my wife would also probably be looking at me at this point) talk about their veterans as having a generally more muted emotional range. As Lieutenant Stedman noted, veterans can come across as “cold” and struggle to express emotions and feelings. They often describe their frustrations around the emotional disengagement that can occur in the face of potential conflict or arguments.

Take a moment to reflect on whether this resonates with you.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- All your training has rewired you to manage potentially traumatic experiences but remain coherent.
- You have the ability to damp down on your feelings. It's not that you don't feel. However, the expression of this can look different.
- Some of the situations that can contribute to feelings of loss and grief are the absence of military tribe, stretching into and adjusting to civilian life, the edges of traumatic memory, grief and pain making its way to the surface of your awareness, present-day challenges, ageing and the loss of capability.
- Grief ignored numbs the heart, stills the capacity to feel, and fires up anger. When you are willing and ready to feel, remember, and grieve, only then do the doorways to your heart open and bring the beginning of peace and resolution.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



Think about what situations have contributed to you feeling the way you do. List the feelings you experience and some of the situations (you feel safe enough to write down) that have contributed to this.

“Healing takes courage and commitment. Better to feel than to numb out or push down.”

CHAPTER 16:

A Note To The Partners Of Veterans

1. The Military is a highly regulated Tribe that, apart from aggression and focus, does not generally encourage excessive displays of emotion, whether it be fear, sadness etc. Self-discipline, containment, and endurance take precedence over feelings such as vulnerability, fear, sadness, anxiety etc.
2. The very process of being conditioned to kill and manage combat requires the ability to switch off or mute the emotional response. This wiring does not necessarily rewire once transitioning to civilian life. Remember that the brain at War does not differentiate between operational and civilian territory.
3. The impact of potentially any traumatic experiences can profoundly impact emotional energy and mood. It is like an internal app that can capture the veteran's life force.
4. In over 20 years of sitting with Veterans, I have always been moved by the depth of feeling that at times surfaces. Veterans do feel deeply. They are, in their way, deeply driven to connect.
5. On the positive side, Veterans generally have a deep sense of loyalty. They can be protective and manage diverse and challenging situations with focused intent. This is a bit of a generalisation and may not apply to your specific situation.

6. The transition to Civilian Life can be a bewildering, confusing, and frustrating experience for Veterans as they attempt to locate themselves in community, redefine who they are, and deal with the loss of who they were.
7. Veterans - your dial down can become more of a dial-up with support and a willingness to create change. Listening, communicating, expressing emotion, and effectively coping with disagreement is not out of your potential skill set. The transitional journey is not just about redefining territory but also about learning new ways of operating emotionally. The ability to progress forward demands that you learn to communicate honestly and respectfully. It helps if whatever is said can be received not as criticism but as an attempt to create shared territory and connection.

CHAPTER 17:

The SEAL Acronym

Finally, try reflecting on the SEAL approach as you consider or are working with transitioning:

SUCCESS: define and visualise your goals- what it looks like and feels like. Identify your strengths and operationalise how you will use these to attain success. Identify your potential weak links and challenges in the transition process. Define what you plan to do to resolve these.

EXTEND: be willing to move out and stretch beyond your area of comfort, learn new skill sets, start again.

ADJUST and ADAPT: stay flexible in the process. Release what does not work anymore in this new territory. Explore your territory and gain knowledge.

LEARN: consolidate all the above. Become better at who you already are. Understand the new mindset and how civilian territory and relationships within it work. The challenge of change is to create your own opportunities.



Your SEAL Exercise

You have a page for each of the above to allow you to self-reflect and document your thoughts:

SUCCESS: define and visualise your goals- what it looks like and feels like. Identify your strengths and operationalise how you will use these to attain success. Identify your potential weak links and challenges in the transition process. Define what you plan to do to resolve these.

EXTEND: be willing to move out and stretch beyond your area of comfort, learn new skill sets, start again. What are your challenges and goals? What are you willing to commit to, to extend out of your comfort zone? These can be small actions, such as a regular walk around the block. Keep it achievable.

ADJUST and ADAPT: stay flexible in the process. Release what does not work anymore in this new territory. Explore your territory and gain knowledge. How are you adjusting and adapting to the demands of your transition? What are you struggling with? Why? What are you willing to do? Define some goals.

LEARN: consolidate all the above. Become better at who you already are. Understand the new mindset and how civilian territory and relationships within it work. The challenge of change is to create your own opportunities. Think about how you are progressing forwards. Don't be hard on yourself. Learn, adjust, adapt, and take small steps forwards.

CHAPTER 18:

Reframe Your Perspective

To create change, to need to shift your mindset. As you think, so you will be. If you are stuck, you have two choices: go Victim and remain where you are or fully commit to doing whatever it takes to move forward. It's like being at the 64km mark of an ultra-marathon, and every part of you is screaming to find a way to drop out. The thing is that life is not going to come running up to you with a hug and a kiss and a bucket load of understanding. In life, if you choose not to dust off and get up, nobody can help you. So, begin with the correct attitude, even if that is a recognition that you are stuck and cannot shift your mindset or situation. Be willing to ask for help. So now you are ready to consider shifting your attitude and be open to thinking that you may be as much a part of the problem as you are a part of the solution.

Are you on the stage living the story and believing you are one of the characters, or can you climb down, even if only for a moment, and create some distance and sit in the audience and watch the show? Changing the place you view, and experience things from, can have a positive impact. And yes, there is always a risk. As they say, no pain, no gain. How can you move forward if you are unwilling to address, feel, understand, and heal those wounds, grief, pain, anger, or other Claymores locked away behind closed doors? Everything lives in your body. So, when your body whispers to you- "Listen to me, hear my grief, feel my sadness, understand my loss, care for my

pain”-if you abandon the wisdom of your body, how can you expect others to do for you what you avoid doing.

It's not easy experiencing your feelings but see it as energy held and encapsulated from a long time ago. It cannot kill you. It can hurt but slowly move through the tunnel of your past, and if necessary, with appropriate help and guidance, it will eventually take you back into the light.

To you Veterans out there, it's simple, no pull-through results in a stoppage. Are you willing to strip and clean your moving parts, or are you choosing to run into a stoppage? There are many out there who are waiting to run with you, but there are very few, if any, out there who will drag you over the 84kms while you choose to sit by the side of the road.

The Healing process is not simply a fluffy crystal laying, didgeridoo massaging, chanting session where you lie back, and everyone does the work for you. Be great if we could experience change while remaining passive on the massage table.

We all have doors to unlock and open rooms to clear. These can be dusty, dark rooms with shapes lurking, snarling or sobbing in the corners through lifetimes of neglect. Start to pay attention to yourself. Watch your sleeping, eating, exercise and drinking. Be honest with yourself.

Avoidance is a ticket to a movie you would not be willing to pay to see.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- To create change, to need to shift your mindset.
- If you are stuck, you have two choices: go victim and remain where you are or fully commit to doing whatever it takes to move forward.
- Begin with the correct attitude, even if that is a recognition that you are stuck.
- Changing the place you view and experience things from can help. Try going OP.
- It can hurt but slowly move through the tunnel of your past, and if necessary, with appropriate help and guidance, it will eventually take you back into the light.
- Start to pay attention to yourself-your sleeping, eating, exercise and drinking. Be honest with yourself.
- Avoidance is a ticket to a movie you would not be willing to pay to see.



Where are you feeling stuck? What's contributing to this?
What are your thoughts? What are your goals to create the
change you need? Document your ideas below.

*“When struggling with a situation, step
back and take time to breathe.”*

CHAPTER 19:

Introduction To 13 Lessons To Successfully Operate Into Civilian Territory

I missed a certain edge after leaving the military. I began to run, and with time I was eventually running marathons and ultramarathons. I felt at peace when I ran, and pushing through the “wall” left me feeling alive, until one day when someone asked me, “What are you running away from?” Ouch! This made me reflect on my running, and from that experience, I also pulled together several running-related life lessons that eventually formed the thirteen lessons that follow.

On a side note, and a challenging personal experience, while writing this book, I continued to run and push myself to the limits on the trails. I ran in extreme heat, pushing my body hard and my heartbeat to 200 beats a minute on many occasions. In November 2021, I irreparably ruptured my meniscus. I was no longer able to run. I had to face the end of 32 years of running. The lesson, hard realised, was that I had been running stupid. I had pushed myself too hard. I had not taken time to become informed and to pace myself. I was, and probably still am, addicted to that high, that hit of dopamine and “the edge.”

So, as you work through this book and your journey in managing your transition into civilian life, make sure that you are informed and not running on “stupid.” My aim is that this book can support you to become more informed and integrate

into new territory and reform your sense of identity and mission in a way that sets you up for success.

LESSON 1:

Giving Up Is Never An Option

No matter how difficult the journey may feel at times, it is essential to remember that everything has a beginning and an ending. Giving up is never an option. If you need to sit down, then do so, but then get up, dust yourself off, and keep moving. Never give up. Instead, stop at times to take a breath and regroup. Pace yourself. Going backwards is not an option. Self-discipline and repetition of strategies and tools will keep you in the driver's seat.

I had spent several difficult months training for my first two ultramarathons. My first 64 km race went well (32km downhill and then back uphill). It felt effortless, and I completed the race in an excellent time. I then began the serious training for the uphill 87.5 km Comrades Marathon in South Africa. The training was exhausting and demanding. My body was tired for ongoing periods, and it was far from an enjoyable experience. I wanted to give up numerous times. If I had been on my own, I might very well have found a reason to quit, but I had committed to a trainer who refused to allow me to opt-out and continually stressed that our agreement was binding and that giving up was not going to be an option he would support. I disliked him at times but being accountable to someone for having regular check-ins was the main reason I got to the starting line. When working with veterans, I suggest they text me as needed to update me on their progress. We form a partnership on the road to healing and maintaining discipline and focus.

I eventually got to the starting line. All I could see was eighty-seven kilometres of slow-rising hills disappearing into the distance. My confidence based on my previous race began to feel like uncertainty. But as everyone does and should do in committing to a challenge, we all drew on one another for encouragement. Try to find friends who can encourage and support you on your journey to change. Find friends who won't judge you but, when necessary, will give you a kick in the butt and refuse to allow you to give up.

At around the sixty-seven-kilometre mark, my knee started to act up. Every step was beyond painful. At that point, I still had twenty kilometres to go, and my body was falling apart. The encouragement and support of others and the first-aid station helped, but I was either going to have to find a way to step back from the pain or give in to it. I remember reminding myself about my commitment—that I had bought the badge, cap, and everything else—and that not crossing the line was never going to be an option. I would crawl if I had to. The combination of support from others, positive self-talk, my commitment to my goal, and moving with the pain got me over the line. Not a great time, but it was my best race, in that I faced and rose above my perception of personal limitation and pain.

On your journey, do the following:

- Find someone to be responsible to.
- Find friends who will listen to and encourage you.
- Strengthen your will through discipline and effort.
- Fully commit to your right to heal.
- Acknowledge that giving up will never be an option.

**The right attitude plus appropriate support will get you
across the finish line.**



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- No matter how difficult the journey may feel at times, it is important to remember that there is a beginning and an ending to everything.
- Giving up is never an option.
- Self-discipline and repetition of strategies and tools will keep you in the driver's seat.
- Find someone to be responsible to.
- The right attitude plus appropriate support will get you across the finish line.

LESSON 2:

Take Small Steps And Begin Somewhere

No matter how immobilised you may feel, it's all about your willingness to take the first step to change, no matter how small. Each step forward will bring you closer to change. If you can't run, then walk. If you can't walk, then crawl. Just begin somewhere.

“Dan,” like many of the veterans I had worked with, had experienced many setbacks in his life. He defined these as personal failures and, as a result, tended to anticipate failing. Before even beginning the change process, he was defeated. His mindset was working against him. He had tried to reduce his drinking but had then gone on a binge. He had tried to improve his fitness but then became discouraged and gave up. It all felt too complicated and overwhelming for him. It was easier to allow his life and world to collapse inwards. Dan started to make progress when he began with small steps—going out every day to check his mail, taking a short walk around the block, making his bed and keeping his apartment clean. By creating order in his life in small, achievable ways, Dan began to feel that he was back in the driver's seat and feeling more in control of his life. He documented these bits of progress each day and shared them with his close, supportive friends and me. Slowly he dug himself out of the hole he'd been in.

Wherever you are in life as you are reading this, begin somewhere. It doesn't matter whether you run, walk, or crawl. What are you willing to do in your living space? What

strategies/tools from this book, or your counselling are you prepared to use daily? Make a call to your veteran organisation or check in with your doctor. Each small step will progress you forward. It's like ascending an OP—the more you move forward, the higher you get, the greater and clearer your vision and understanding of the territory you are in will be. Set small, achievable goals and reward yourself in constructive ways. Learning to strip and assemble your weapon in any condition, even blindfolded, took hours of practice and perseverance. Learning to change your life is no different—one thing at a time. Get up, dust yourself off, and start again.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- No matter how immobilised you may feel, it's all about your willingness to take the first step to change, no matter how small.
- If you can't run, then walk. If you can't walk, then crawl. Just begin somewhere.
- It's like ascending an OP—the more you move forward, the higher you get, the greater and clearer your vision and understanding of the territory you are in will be.
- Set small, achievable goals and reward yourself in constructive ways.
- Learning to strip and assemble your weapon in any condition, even blindfolded, took hours of practice and perseverance. Learning to change your life is no different.

LESSON 3:

Better To Choose Change – Than It Choose You

Change takes effort, discipline, commitment, and sometimes a fair bit of sweat. It is not simply given to us on a plate. You need to hunt change, fight for change, and adjust and adapt when required.

The fact that you are reading this book would suggest that a part of you wants to change and that you are looking for ways, insights, and support in this process. Recognise this and remember it. This book may or may not support you, but it says something that you were called to give it a go. I always maintain that it is better to hunt change than have change hunt you. Moving forward is not always going to be easy. Parts of you may jump up and try to ambush you. Stay alert, maintaining situational alertness around these parts of yourself. You may have to fight against these parts at times. You may need to adjust your goals as needed and adapt to changing territory. If you want to remain where you are, this book may have little or no impact. Without you having the will to change, change will not happen.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Change takes effort, discipline, and commitment and sometimes a fair bit of sweat.
- You need to hunt change, fight for change, and adjust and adapt when required.
- Without you having the will to change, change will not happen.

LESSON 4:

Choose Your Tools

Identify what tools you need to help you on your way, whether it's good nutrition (the "rat pack," short for ration packs) or learning healthy ways to manage your stress, depression, and anxiety.

I had read lots of books on running marathons and ultramarathons. I had read and created training schedules and eating plans. I'd bought the right gear. It felt good, but what I had not yet committed to was action – getting my feet in the territory and accumulating kilometres, building my endurance, getting dirty and dusty, and developing a good mindset and ability to hit and move through the "wall." It's good to identify the tools you need. You should become more knowledgeable and insightful through reading this book, but knowledge is never a substitute for committed and disciplined action.

This book may not be enough for you to identify the tools you need. If so, get the support you need to help you to get on your way. Change will not wait for you, nor will it turn back and come towards you.

Try out some of the tools. Don't give up on them right away. Change does not happen overnight, and neither do miracles. It takes time. Be prepared to keep doing what you have chosen to do and keep going through the territory when things appear to remain the same.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Identify what tools you need to help you on your way, whether it's good nutrition or learning healthy ways to manage your stress, depression, and anxiety.
- Change does not happen overnight, and neither do miracles. It takes time.
- Be prepared to keep doing what you have chosen to do and keep going through the territory when things appear to remain the same.

LESSON 5:

If You Can Walk, Don't Expect Others to Carry You

Others may run with you and encourage you, but you alone are responsible for putting one foot in front of the other at the end of the day.

“Bill’s” friends and his wife were excited and supportive of his desire to create change in his life. He began well but could not sustain the challenges of change. He had a supportive network. They encouraged him to see someone and get help. They recognised and affirmed the small steps he was taking. But in the end, Bill kept choosing to sit on the side of the road. Gradually, others became frustrated by his immobility and refusal to do something small and ask for appropriate help. His friends started to step away, and his wife began to experience a sense of hopelessness that created a distance between herself and Bill. Bill began to feel abandoned by everyone. He felt like a casualty.

The bottom line is that a time clock can be ticking away in the background. Others will give you 100 per cent, but that will change over time if you do not meet these people and walk towards them. Nobody can carry you over the finishing line. They will walk beside you, but you need to be willing to walk with them. I’ve worked with veterans whose first step was to acknowledge their inability to move and admit themselves into a program or clinic, or speak to a doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, veteran organisation, or 24-hour crisis line – there’s always something you can do.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Others may run with you and encourage you, but you alone are responsible for putting one foot in front of the other at the end of the day.
- Nobody can carry you over the finishing line. They will walk beside you, but you need to be willing to walk with them.
- Others will give you 100 per cent, but that will change over time if you do not do your share of the work.
- If you are immovably stuck, you can still choose to speak to a doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, veteran organisation, or 24-hour crisis line—there's always something you can do.

LESSON 6:

Life Can Be an Obstacle Course

On the way to healing, you may encounter hills and obstacles. Stay focused on the journey, on the small steps, and remember that you were trained to go well beyond your comfort zone. The wiring is still there to draw on. Who you were as a warrior remains who you still are. So, respect yourself because life and others will not give this to you at times. Remember that you are never too old or wounded to deal with an obstacle course that life may bring to you.

“Dave” had been a special forces operator. As a result of an injury, he had been rapidly sidelined to a desk job. The trauma he experienced was not because of his operational experience but because he felt discarded and abandoned by his tribe. He lost his connection with his “brothers,” and he struggled to redefine who he was. His was in many ways a moral, not an operational, injury. He felt betrayed by his “family.” This went against everything he believed and stood for. It was only a matter of time before he was medically discharged and found himself completely lost and unprepared for civilian territory. A sense of failure and aloneness haunted him. From managing complex operational demands and diverse thinking and the high-risk multi-tasking typical of SF operators, he was now accepting jobs well below his skill set.

Over the years, I have always remained profoundly concerned and frustrated around the management of competent veterans as they attempt to transition into civilian territory. In no way do I underplay the immense challenges of these

adjustments. I have learned that they cannot be done on your own. Even reading this book is insufficient. Through appropriate support, you will be more able to reclaim who you were, respect and value those parts of yourself, manage the transition challenges you experience, and in time find a way for your warrior to coexist with your civilian. It can be a very daunting obstacle course, whether you're currently transitioning or have just become aware forty years later of the impact of that time of your life on your present. All the veterans I have sat with, no matter how traumatised they have been by their journeys, have embodied qualities that I deeply value, care for, and respect. We need more men and women with these values in civilian life. Others can learn from you. You've been to places that most people cannot even get close to understanding. You carry the wisdom, strength, and endurance of the warrior. Part of your healing will be to reclaim parts of who you were and then allow that part of you to coexist, wherever you may now be in life.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- On the way to healing, you may encounter hills and obstacles.
- Stay focused on the journey, on the small steps, and remember that you were trained to go well beyond your comfort zone.
- Through appropriate support, you will be more able to reclaim, respect and value who you were and now are, and in time find a way for your warrior to coexist with your civilian.

LESSON 7:

Learn to Tolerate Discomfort

As you create change, don't always stay within your safety zone. Push yourself to extend your limits. Remember that the changes you want for yourself lie beyond your field of comfort. Focus your will and determination on your ability to sustain discomfort.

In running, I learned that the most powerful place was at the edge of my perceived limits, at the "wall." It was not where I was breathing easily and enjoying the race; it was where I had to dig deep and rise above the self-limiting thoughts and feelings. At this point, I began to understand that no matter what the territory was like, I could control my attitude and draw on resources and training to move through and not just collapse.

You will most likely experience moments when you don't simply progress evenly into change but rather stretch into change. This is no different from your earlier experiences of training, selection, and operating. You may be called to move out of your comfort zone with your counsellor as you process feelings and memories. Getting fit, reducing your alcohol intake, changing behaviours, dealing with relationships, navigating your way into and through civilian life, and dealing with your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours – these can all be uncomfortable and challenging. Think about your willingness and personal commitment to do whatever it takes to create change within yourself and your life.

The feelings, thoughts, memories, frustrations, and challenges you may currently be facing will not kill you. Remember that the “safety” of your comfort zone can become your contact zone and that remaining where you are does not serve constructive movement forward. If you’re reading this, a part of you is already willing to extend into new territory. It’s no different from going to the gym for the first time. As your muscles creak and groan, the aches and pain are part of the journey. You are trained to set graduated targets to allow your body to strengthen and become more flexible. Life and relationships are no different.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Don't always stay within your safety zone as you make a change.
- Push yourself to extend your limits. Remember that the changes you want for yourself lie beyond your field of comfort.
- Focus your will and determination on your ability to sustain discomfort.
- You will most likely experience moments when you don't simply progress evenly into change but rather stretch into change.
- You may be called to move out of your comfort zone with your counsellor as you process feelings and memories.
- Getting fit, reducing your alcohol intake, changing behaviours, dealing with relationships, navigating your way into and through civilian life, and dealing with your thoughts and feelings—these can all be uncomfortable and challenging.
- Remember that the “safety” of your comfort zone can become your contact zone and that remaining where you are does not serve constructive movement forwards.

LESSON 8:

Commit to the Terrain

The more you fully engage in your commitment to change, the more emotionally and psychologically fit you will become at sustaining the rigours of the journey.

When I asked “George” what had brought him to counselling, he noted that his wife had had enough of his bad moods and outbursts and had threatened to leave if he did not get help. I asked George how personally committed he felt to creating change and whether he felt he needed to change. George acknowledged feeling uncertain. He said that he’d had no problems in his relationships with other veterans and that he thought it was up to his wife to learn how to understand veterans and be more accepting of his difficulties. He was angry about being told what to do, being told he was the problem, and he was mad that he always caved into his wife’s demands. In time, it became clear to both of us that George’s commitment to dealing with his relationship challenges, whether it was in individual or couples counselling, was very ambivalent. He made little progress and terminated after a few sessions.

Take some time now and think about why you are reading this book. What is happening in your life that is challenging you? Is your need to enter the terrain of change based on others’ expectations, or is it driven by your commitment to yourself? Or a little of both? The greater the strength of your commitment, the more successful you’ll be at navigating your way through the territory. This and other books and appropriate

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support will offer you tools and training to draw on that you will need to use to sustain your commitment.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- The more you fully engage in your commitment to change, the more emotionally and psychologically fit you will become at sustaining the rigours of the journey.
- The greater the strength of your commitment, the more successful you'll be at navigating your way through the territory.
- Better to run into the territory rather than have your territory run into you.

LESSON 9:

Keep Moving No Matter What

Initially, the resources you carry to support you on your journey may feel overwhelming. However, as you strengthen and start to use them, the load will become lighter. At times, you may find yourself sitting down by the side of the road, miserable, frustrated, and angry. You may be hitting a wall at every turn in the road. By “keep moving,” I mean have your moment but then get up, dust yourself off, and keep going. Your pack may be heavy with all the things you are carrying from your life. If the weight feels overwhelming, then control your pace and take breaks. You no longer need to push yourself to the breaking point. Small steps will get you across the line. The farther you travel, the more competent you will feel and progress faster.

If you’re having a rough day as you read this and just want to go AWOL (absent without leave), then take a few minutes and use some of the tools in the book. They may help you find a clearer, calmer place in your body. Think about one thing you may be willing to do today, one person you would be willing to call, and one task that you may be ready to complete. Try to get out the front door, breathe, and go for a short walk. Just keep moving.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Initially, the resources you carry to support you on your journey may feel overwhelming. As you strengthen and start to use them, however, the load will become lighter.
- By “keep moving,” I mean have your moment but then get up, dust yourself off, and keep going.
- Small steps will get you across the line.
- The farther you travel, the more competent you will feel and progress faster.
- Think about one thing you may be willing to do today, one person you would be willing to call, and one task that you may be willing to complete.

LESSON 10:

OP Mode Can Save Your Skin

At times, you may need to behave as if you're on an observation post (OP) where you simply keep your mouth shut and your head down. Listen, observe, monitor, and learn. Shoot your mouth off, and the double-tap you next hear may be directed straight at you. Remaining observant, identifying your arcs of fire/behaviour, and keeping situationally alert can keep you safe. Your relationship with others and yourself, depend on this.

“Phil,” a Vietnam veteran, noted that “I cannot tolerate fools. If they're not doing things the way I think they should, or they're going about it too slowly, I end up getting frustrated, angry, and reactive. This creates tension and stress for me with my kids, wife, friends, and co-workers. I can see myself shooting my mouth off, but I just can't stop myself.”

Does this sound familiar? Having a “runaway mouth” will never be constructive. You may have read the chapter on Operational Neuroscience. If not, read it now, or here's a quick summary: When you are triggered, the back of your brain (the emotional centre) will kick up with stress, anger, irritation. As a result, the blood flow to the front of your brain (the thinking, planning, and organising part) is reduced. The more reduced the blood flow, the less likely you will be to think clearly. You will find yourself driven and almost trapped by the emotion. A part of yourself may even know that this will not work, but you find you can do nothing to change. You may feel like a “runaway gun.”

Having someone tell you to calm down will not work when you are in this position. First, you need to bring down the back of your brain to allow you to get into OP (observe, plan, think, and organise) mode. At this point, you need body-based tools such as breathing, tapping (this is a technique where you tap on specific points on the body, which then provides relief from anxiety and stress), drinking cold water, and other tools (detailed in this book). If you need to, put yourself under a cold shower – that should do the trick and get you out of runaway mode. You will need to learn to create a stopgap between the emotion and the behaviour to allow your body to slow down and for blood to get to the front of your brain. It may be helpful to explain to others that sometimes you may need to take time out to calm down and then return.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Remaining observant, identifying your arcs of fire/behaviour, and keeping situationally alert can keep you safe.
- Your relationship with others and yourself, depend on this.
- You will need to learn to create a stopgap between the emotion and the behaviour to allow your body to slow down and for blood to get to the front of your brain.
- It may be helpful to explain to others that sometimes you may need to take time out to calm down and then return.

LESSON 11:

Blame Is Dead Weight

Every day is a gift, whether you are with your military buddies or with family and other friends. Assess whether you are taking anyone for granted or whether you are taking things personally and reacting. Treating others as the enemy and blaming them won't keep you alive. People around you may be giving you a hard time. Civilian life may be pushing your buttons. Your boss may be in your face. This is not easy, but the minute you move into the victim-and-blame mode, you begin to dig a hole that can be challenging to climb out of. Acknowledging and respecting that parts of your life may not be easy is fair enough. But feeling persecuted by everything and everyone will load your pack with enough weight to immobilise you.

If you can identify those parts of yourself that blame others and feel victimised in your current situation, then the next step is to be willing to get support to allow you to reduce this destructive load.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Treating others as the enemy and blaming them won't help.
- The minute you move into the victim-and-blame mode, you begin to dig a hole that can be challenging to climb out of.
- Acknowledging and respecting that parts of your life may not be easy is fair enough. But feeling persecuted by everything and everyone will load your pack with enough weight to immobilise you.

LESSON 12:

Pull-Through or a Stoppage

Of critical importance is your regular pull-through, or PT. (As noted earlier, a pull-through is where a soldier pulls an oily rag through the barrel of a rifle to clean it.) Keep your barrel clean. Remember that life challenges and whatever else you carry will leave residues. If you neglect to pull through, you will eventually get a stoppage.

This concept/principle is probably one of the most effective lessons I use with veterans and those currently serving. It's the one thing that always makes sense to the people I sit with. Whether you are a veteran or a civilian, a husband or wife or anything else, life affects us in either positive or challenging ways. Life, our histories, and ageing will all leave a residue. A stoppage will eventually occur if we ignore the residue and fail to do a pull-through as well as strip, clean regularly, and oil all moving parts. This stoppage may be a burst of anger, a bout of depression, a panic attack, or overwhelming and high-stress levels. Whatever it is, the common denominator will be that it does not work constructively for you. Good nutrition, sleep, exercise, lifestyle balance, and getting appropriate support and tools to use daily will all support you in keeping your barrel clean. As a veteran, you have learned the importance of cleaning your weapon regularly. It is just as important to remember to keep the many parts of yourself clean and well oiled.

In this book, you will find several Pull Through tools that I have used with veterans over the years and that they have

found effective. I encourage you to look at these and discuss them with the professionals working with you. An endless number of tools are available out there. Look around and research them. My choices need not be your choices. But at the end of the day, make a choice and start putting into practice your daily pull-through.

Remember that a Pull Through consists of becoming informed and taking focused, rehearsed, and disciplined action.



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Remember that life challenges and whatever else you carry will leave residues. If you neglect to pull through, then you will eventually get a stoppage.
- Life, our histories, and ageing will all leave a residue. If we ignore the residue, if we fail to do a pull-through as well as strip, clean regularly, and oil all moving parts, a stoppage will eventually occur.
- This stoppage may be a burst of anger, a bout of depression, a panic attack, or overwhelming and high-stress levels.
- Good nutrition, sleep, exercise, lifestyle balance, and getting appropriate support and tools to use daily will all support you in keeping your barrel clean.
- As a veteran, you have learned the importance of cleaning your weapon regularly. It is just as important to remember to keep the many parts of yourself clean and well oiled.

LESSON 13:

Take Time for a Good Brew

Take time on the way to enjoy the sights. It's not all about hard work. Pay attention to the positives in your life and enjoy the journey. Change and transformation without a good laugh now and then can leave you discouraged.

This is a simple lesson, and very little more needs to be said about it other than this: take time for a good brew- whether it's a beer (non-alcoholic!) or herbal tea or a strong cup of coffee enjoyed with friends and enjoy the ration pack special "dog biscuits."



Short, sharp, and easy to remember:

- Take time on the way to enjoy the sights. It's not all hard work. Pay attention to the positives in your life and enjoy the journey. Change and transformation without a good laugh now and then can leave you discouraged.

It's time to pull together the 13 lessons. I have included them as points below. Take time to self-reflect on each point and see what comes to you. Creating change is also to generate your commitments and action plans to make changes with each lesson. I have left a page for each lesson to record your thoughts. See what strengths come up. What are your challenges? Any plans or ideas to manage these? Any goals?

There is no rush. Take your time.



13 Lessons to successfully operate into civilian territory:

1. Giving up is never an option.
2. Take small steps and begin somewhere
3. Better to choose change, than it chooses you.
4. Choose your tools.
5. If you can walk, don't expect others to carry you.
6. Life can be an obstacle course.
7. Learn to tolerate discomfort.
8. Commit to the terrain.
9. Keep moving, no matter what.
10. Op mode can save your skin.
11. Blame is deadweight.
12. Pull-through or a stoppage.



**LESSON 1:
Giving up is never an option**

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LESSON 2:
Take small steps and begin somewhere



LESSON 3:
Better to choose change, than it chooses you

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LESSON 4:
Choose your tools



LESSON 5:
If you can't walk, don't expect others to carry you

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LESSON 6:
Life can be an obstacle course



**LESSON 7:
Learn to tolerate discomfort**

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LESSON 8:
Commit to the terrain



LESSON 9:
Keep moving, no matter what

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LESSON 10:
OP mode can save your skin



**LESSON 11:
Blame is deadweight**

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



LESSON 12:
Pull-through or a stoppage



LESSON 13:
Take time for a good brew

CHAPTER 19:

How Do I... A Poem

This poem encapsulates many years of veterans sharing with me the deepest part of their struggles, both about what they hold as well as their challenges in bridging the “unspoken” between themselves and those that love them.

Part of the reason behind writing this book is to support veterans and those around them to find a voice that opens hearts and creates healing.

How Do I

How do I make my peace with the killing?

How do I find peace from the nightmares that haunt my sleep and dreams?

How do I forget the lifeless eyes of the child or my brother lying still and bleeding in the grass?

How do I silence the sounds of screaming and pain that still haunt me?

How do I talk of the fear that continues to this day?

How do I switch off the hyper-vigilance that exhausts me?

How do I find a moment of peace away from the war that still rages in my brain?

How do I numb the pain that has closed my heart to everyone I love?

How do I awaken my heart from the numbness that has stilled my feelings?

How do I make you understand the grief, the pain, the loss, the fear, the rage?

How do I ask for help when there are no words to speak?

How do I ask for the help I need when help is the last thing I want?

How do I ask for forgiveness for the pain I have brought into your life?

How do I undo the damage that my rage has caused?

How do I break down the walls that I have built around myself to protect me from the world and others?

How do I break down the walls that I have built to protect others from the nightmares and rage that live within me?

How do I find hope during the moments when I wish to embrace death?

How do I find life in my memories of death?

How do I let go of the ghosts that live beside and within me every minute of my day and night?

How do I ask you to hold me when my heart is bleeding with pain?

How do I find my home in this place beyond the war?

How will I no longer need to drink the pain away?

How do I tell my story without the fear of seeing the horror in your eyes?

How do I?

How do?

I.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



Take time to read or re-read the poem. Feel the words. See what comes up in your body and your heart. Make room for your emotions. Just be mindfully present to what you are experiencing now. Write down what comes to you.

“Your pain and grief are understandable. No matter how tough it may be, there are those out there willing to stand by you.”

CHAPTER 20:

Combat

Training as a soldier and being involved in combat no doubt can be traumatic and can have far-reaching effects on one's living situation, relationships, mental state, and well-being. It is possible, though, that to see war and to think about combat from only the point of view of an experience that has resulted in PTS may be to ignore other less spoken about aspects of this experience that could be used to facilitate healing and the ability and right for all veterans to live healthy, productive lives.

What about the intensity of combat – the living on edge in the presence of others and the intimate reliance on others? It's that feeling of being alive, the high of the hunt, the power of the warrior within, the knowing where you are, the location in a community, the camaraderie – it's about a level of meaning and experience that can leave one yearning for a lifetime afterwards in what veterans often experience as the humdrum routine of civilian life and the daily routine and predictable pattern of work.

Many veterans I have spoken to have yearned for the time when they truly felt like soldiers when the intensely close and intimate connectedness with their fellow soldiers that had bonded through the blood rite of combat could almost transcend the intimacy of marital relationships.

It's not just about trauma and stress but also about loss and grief and the difficulty of finding meaning in a different, less intense world.

Therefore, to heal is to acknowledge this loss and grief at many levels. It's about understanding that the seductive intensity of combat, with its unique sounds and smells, does not need to leave one feeling lost, bereft, and dislocated. It's about understanding that the memory of the thrill of the hunt, the "contact" (in the military sense of encountering the enemy), and the long days of hyperalert patrolling do not mean that the veteran is maladjusted.

It's about the acceptance of these feelings without guilt. It's about re-creating new and constructive challenges in civilian life. These can be challenges such as maintaining personal fitness and well-being, taking up a sport, or setting goals that can extend one and bring one back into the presence of others – running a marathon, walking for charity, swimming, and the like. The "edge," the feeling of being authentically alive, of being challenged, and of being with others, is not the sole right of war.

Part of combat training is about being taught how to kill. It's about being rewired for life in a way that is counter to being human in an institution that sanctions the need for aggression and the ability to take life.

Veterans need to make their peace with this rewiring, with the deep and often shameful awareness that forty years later, as a husband and father or wife and mother, there is still the sense of that part of oneself that is capable of the unspeakable.

Healing is not about burying or forgetting this. It's about allowing veterans to acknowledge, own, and respect this part of themselves. Veterans can use many of the lessons of war and combat to move forward in their civilian lives. Healing is about helping veterans draw on their strengths and the constructive lessons of soldiering.

Life and relationships are very much like a patrol. You need to think about where you are going and what you will need in the days ahead. You need to plan and ensure that you will work as a team. You need to listen, and when you are lost or uncertain, look at a map. You need to pace yourself and, when under significant levels of stress, draw on your reserves and tap into supplies of resilience. You need to trust and care for those around you. You need to exercise judgement. The qualities of planning, listening, preparation, consultation, care, respect, resilience, effort, and trust are the foundations of being human.

War need not just be an experience relegated to the psychiatric or counselling encounter. It need not be just traumatically stressful. Yes, it can be all of these. Still, the soldier never dies – memorial gatherings will live on as soldiers continue to gather, grieve, connect, and walk the road of memory.

Healing is about embracing the soldier, re-finding the warrior in the present, and drawing on the positive aspects from the past: who you were and who you still are. It's about remembering that, as veterans, you can still stand tall. It's about acknowledging grief, guilt, loss, and shame.

Combat need not just be the end of a good life, but the beginning of an even better life firmly grounded in the wisdom, learning, and experience found in that place called war.

Successful transitioning demands an effective operation forward towards civilian territory. It demands planning, situational awareness, effective arcs of fire, the ability to understand the nature of the territory, and the necessity to adjust and adapt as needed. As important is the rescue mission back to collect your Warrior. You cannot leave yourself behind. This mission has two directives - the first is to bring your positive values and attributes back to your civilian. The second is to attend to any wounds and do what needs to be done to heal.

As you all manage to navigate your way through your transitioning territory, I wish you all a journey of healing, embracing your identity and finding your place and purpose.

Do not let others define you – stand firm within yourself. Stay faithful to your Tribe, your brothers, and sisters.

Watch out for each other.

CHAPTER 21:

Brothers - A Poem

This poem was born out of an experience that no matter when our time in the military occurred, no matter the differences in age or country, we are all connected through a shared experience both in memory and in our bodies.

Brothers

Side by side
They sat on the bench
One fresh from war
The other, weary and aged from battles long since passed.
Brothers
United by the rites of combat
Both sharing
Common memories
Memories of friends long gone
Grief
Buried deeply
Pain
Carried day by day through the
Long
Dark
Nights
Pain that has no end

Hearts stretched to breaking point
Eased only by temporary numbing
Stories spoken
But far more
Far more
Remain silent
Etched into the marrow of their bones
Like acid
Eating away
At any trace of happiness or peace
Haunted
Nights filled with the screams of brothers
The smell of blood
Still fresh to taste in memory
Burnt
Broken
Impossible to comprehend
One old, one young
Bound forever by the invisible
Wounds of war
Yet both share
A yearning
A yearning
To return to a time when they were Warriors
Brothers
Respect and trust were given
Both bonded together so
Intimately

That they would
Sacrifice their lives
For one another
A brotherhood of warriors
Grieving for a time of feeling
Alive
Connected
Powerful
Now lost
Abandoned in a world of unpredictability Where men will
destroy fellow men Where trust and respect are sold for
Lies and deception
Streets
Shopping malls
Are now the battleground
The enemy feels everywhere
Random
Chaos
The battles may be passed
But the war within lives
On and On
And on
New battles fought every day in
Dreams
Relationships
Alcohol
Battles that have no respect for age or gender

Side by side, they sit
Brothers
Bound together
In the silence of their
Grief and pain.



Take time to read or re-read the poem. Feel the words. See what comes up in your body and your heart. Make room for your emotions. Just be mindfully present to what you are experiencing now. Write down what comes to you.

CHAPTER 22:

Simple Pull Through Tools To Prevent A Stoppage

We can think about the journey, learn, and talk about it and practice, but eventually, we need to commit to **DOING** the journey. We need to put our feet in the territory. Eventually, we will reach the point where we are called to and need to move from learning and preparation to commitment and action. Part of this commitment may involve managing fear of failure, challenges, frustrations, and setbacks. We either get up, dust off, keep going, or remain where we are and generally where we should not want to be.

Here I will detail several tools I have used with Veterans and myself over the years. These tools are gathered from different approaches, whether phone apps or stimulating brain-based activities. You may prefer some to others, and if none catch your attention, it will be up to you to find and use other tools. No matter how small the steps may be, I strongly reinforce your commitment to action.

I generally keep these tools simple and limited in number as too much choice can be overwhelming. The goal is for you, through trying these out, to experience change and relief. Again, just to stress that these tools are not stand-alone. It is meant to accompany you and support you while addressing your issues with relevant professionals. I also encourage you to discuss these tools with them and ensure they are OK with you using them. They may also learn a thing or two as well.

The tools below are all body-based. Whatever you have been through is in your body- the emotions and feelings, as well as the memories. Whatever is in the body is in the brain

and vice versa. We cannot separate them or lock them off from each other. Think about being on operations - you did not just rely on a map and compass to guide you through the territory. You also depended on your body intuition, feeling something was not right. Combining both could make you more effective and more able to survive. To ignore one or the other could potentially negatively impact achieving your objective.

The Pull-Through Tools

1. **First come the fundamental lifestyle changes** – nutrition, diet, and exercise. You may have complex trauma or challenges with stress, depression, and anxiety. I strongly encourage you to contact Veteran services, your doctor, a psychologist, or any other appropriate professional. While doing this, the tools following may also be of use.
2. **Tapping/EFT** – soon after I was trained in this modality, I had a Rhodesian veteran attend his meeting with me. He was very anxious, uptight and stressed. I asked him if he was willing to try some strategies with me. I talked him through what we would be doing. He checked in to see there were no cameras in the room and that I was not trying to pull a fast one on him! We worked on the tapping sequence for 15 minutes, after which I asked him how his levels of stress and overwhelm were (he initially noted them as being 100/10). I remember him looking at me with an expression of sheer disbelief. He said that he could not believe how calm and back in his body he was feeling. On another occasion, I was working with a fellow Rhodesian Veteran overseas. He took to the tapping and made it a part of his daily discipline. Within a few months, he was describing a significant reduction of symptoms.

Tapping has been described as acupuncture without needles. It involves identifying and verbalising whatever is currently impacting you while tapping on specific points on the body. What appears to be happening is that by identifying and verbalising the situation, for example, “feeling stressed and overwhelmed at work,” you open the memory banks in the brain. As soon as you pull the file, it accesses any feelings or emotions attached to that memory. Tapping appears to work on resolving the connection between the problematic emotion and the memory. This can then get you to remember the situation but no longer experience the strength of the feeling.

Remember that when you are overwhelmed and stressed, blood flow to the front of the brain is reduced. Therefore, it is often almost impossible to think clearly and make effective decisions and judgments. Just to stress that Tapping is not a cure for everything, and it is not something I would recommend you use on your own when it comes to complex and traumatic memories. However, it can impact stress, frustrations, anger, anxiety, sleep, to name but a few.

I like Tapping because when the folk I see leave my room, they have a tool they can use. Tapping is used with Veterans all over the world. Please look at the following links, discuss these with the professionals supporting you, and decide whether you want to give them a go. Go to YouTube and type in Brad Yeats Tapping. He explains Tapping well and has several

clips you can tap along with him. Well worth the look. I often describe Tapping as a tremendous daily pull through.

3. **Breathing** – here are a few excellent breathing resources:

- Breathe2relax app.
- Tactical breather app.
- 4-7-8 breathing involves breathing in for four, holding for seven and breathing out for 8. Have a look on YouTube for demonstrations of this.
- HeartMath quick coherence breathing – I like the HeartMath quick coherence breathing technique because it is discreet. Tapping on a bus, train or while in a shopping centre could have some “interesting” results. This technique is great if you find yourself stressing out in a situation with another. It involves identifying your heart as being in the middle of your chest. You then begin to focus on this point while gently breathing in and out. At the same time, you think about something positive or that gives you a feeling of care and appreciation and breathe this in at the same time. It is essentially a three-phase process: Heart Focus – Heart Breathing – Heart Feeling.
- Box Breathing – one of my favourites. Imagine a box. Breathe into the count of five as you go up the left side. Hold for five as you go across the top.

Breathe out for five as you go down the right side and then hold for five as you go across the bottom.

4. **Cold Water** – a helpful tip before or while breathing is to drink or sip icy water. This can change the blood flow in the brain.
5. **Wim Hof breathing and cold-water showers** – I am passionate about this. However, as with all the tools noted, please discuss these with your Health Professional.
6. **5 Minute Daily Routine** – I came across this a while ago and suspended my “this is weird” thought and gave it a go. I personally really like them, and they make me feel fantastic and back in my body. Go to YouTube and type in “5-minute daily routine: Super Brain Yoga + a Donna Eden short version.” See what you think.
7. **Yin Yoga App** – I have never been enthusiastic about Yoga. I just don’t bend. I have run marathons and ultra-marathons and was a gymnast at school. But never stretched. A while ago, a Veteran I was working with (also a long-distance runner) suggested that I may want to give Yin Yoga a tryout. I downloaded the app and began to creak and groan into the positions. I have persevered over the years. My most profound and unexpected experience was how relaxed, and, in my body I felt after the sequence. It now forms part of my

regular “pull-through” routine. Again, please consult with an appropriate professional before giving this a go. You may have health issues, and you may also need a more controlled class. Have a search for the app Serenity Yin Yoga by Magdalena Mecweld.

8. **Mindful meditation** – I began meditating in 1973 and continue to this day. The scientific evidence is impressive. Do your research, speak to others, and see what they are using.

These tools comprise my daily pull-throughs. They help me clean the residue in “my barrel” and ensure that I am less likely to have an AD or a stoppage. They enable me to feel good and manage life challenges. Please do not jump into any of these tools without consulting your doctor or psychologist. Do your research, talk to others, get some guidance.

Committing to a discipline of around 15-20 minutes of pull-throughs can support you on your journey.



Summary

- Ensure good nutrition, diet, and exercise
- Tapping/EFT
- 4-7-8 Breathing
- Heart Focused Breathing
- Box Breathing
- Wim Hof Breathing
- Cold Water Showers
- 5 Minute Daily Routine
- Yin Yoga
- Mindful Meditation

CHAPTER 23:

11 Protocols For Psychologists And Coaches Working With Veterans And Current Serving

If you are an Allied Health Professional working with Veterans, below are eleven protocols that can support you to impact positively and collaboratively on the Veterans you are seeing.

1. You first need to educate yourself about Veterans and their territory. Ignorance will not get you through their front door.
2. Demonstrate trust and respect through being informed and understanding their language.
3. Ask yourself whether you plan to be a part of the problem or a part of the solution.
4. Listen and learn before you try preaching and teaching.
5. Assess the modalities you use. All veterans are different. One size does not fit all. Simply using one evidence-based modality with one size fit all approach will not work.
6. Try leaving your professional ego at the door. Get real. Get human.
7. Don't expect compliance to what you think is best practice. You haven't yet earned the right to rank.
8. Degrees may equal smart, but your behaviour and presence may still be anything but practical or valuable.

Who you are and the informed care and respect you demonstrate mean everything.

9. Who you are is more important than what you do. Sort out your people skills if necessary.
10. A veteran entering your room is entitled to sit facing wherever he wishes. Move or vacate your chair if needed.
11. Trauma is in the brain and body. Think about extending your training and skill set to include Brain, Body and Neuroscience based understanding and modalities. Veterans are flexible and adaptable and will expect the same from you.

CHAPTER 24:

7 Things To Consider When Planning On Entering Into Counselling Territory

If you are a Veteran reading this book, no matter how challenged you are by your journey, it is critical that you carefully assess how you feel when you walk through the door for your appointment. Do not lose your power in this process. Here are seven things to consider that may help you.

1. Any journey is first based on trust and respect. Take time to assess and work on your connection. Ask questions. Observe reactions. Is this someone you can work with?
2. Just as much as you maintain situational awareness in operations, you can also take time to assess this territory. You are under no obligation to open any areas of your life until you are ready.
3. Unlike the military power hierarchy, the title and qualifications of the health professional need not imply your compliance. You may be asked to go straight to your most traumatic memory. You have the choice, power, and the right to say no if this is your truth. You have the right to choose what you want to begin working on.

4. In the military, the territory determines the method. Ask about the modalities offered. If only one or two, do not be seduced by the “evidence-based” label. The fewer the modalities, the more potentially restrictive the framework.
5. Just because a professional presumes that they know what you need does not mean they are right. Exercise your right to question.
6. Assess whether the professional understands the military mind. Can you choose where you want to sit in the room?
7. Exercise your right to identify and communicate any behaviour or communication you are uncomfortable with.

CHAPTER 25:

I Don't Feel Good Enough

This is probably what I call the elephant in the room. I have therefore left this for last.

It lurks silently in the corners. It is rarely spoken of. It diminishes our sense of feeling worthy. It can even be experienced as shame or of feeling like an imposter.

My first personal experience was on the ANZAC Day March (this is an event where participating veterans and the general public are given an opportunity to honour those who served in the defence of Australia) in 2003, in Sydney, Australia. I had been standing with the Rhodesian Veterans group, waiting to march off. The Rhodesian Light Infantry and the special forces SAS and Selous Scouts (reconnaissance unit) were present. As I looked around, I became aware of a deep feeling of discomfort. I felt that I had not earned the right to be there or even wear the medals as I had not operated as intensely as these special units had.

Over the years, with almost every veteran I have sat with, we have arrived at this place at some point. What surprised me was that many of these veterans were top tier special forces. I could see how even they were comparing themselves to others within their unit. There is generally a sense of discomfort when we walk into the edges of this.

What I have learnt over time is that when we make the elephant visible, even if this is only between ourselves and one other, there is an experience of relief and release.

As you read this chapter, I need to say that who you are as a veteran, your worth, values, and identity were solely determined by your willingness to enter the military and earn the right to wear your uniform. It begins and ends here. Your job or your unit does not define you. You are not defined by whether you were on operations. You are not defined by whether you killed. Each of you occupies a critical role in the organisation. You have earned the right to wear your medals. You have earned the right to stand proud. You have earned the right to hold “Thank you for your service.”

If shame, not feeling good enough and feeling like an imposter haunts you and diminishes your core identity, please raise this with your counsellor. It is a dead weight that needs to be resolved and discarded.

CHAPTER 26:

Final Words

Are the choices you are making feeding the problem or the solution? Is your behaviour opening or closing opportunities for success, well-being, and connection? Is the vision of your tomorrow reflected in the reality of today?

Allow your present moment to be tempered and guided by your goals. Introspection, reflection, and responsibility will create a vital bridge between your present and future. Don't settle for your yesterday. Your past personal best is simply an opportunity to excel. Get up and commit to being better, stronger, faster, more compassionate and connected, respectful and caring. Do not allow your past to define you. Complacency rests on this formula.

Every moment, step and word should be conscious, focused with discipline and motivation to make your tomorrow today's target. Disappointment is only an opportunity to get up, dust off and learn. What are you waiting for? The world and others in it are not waiting for you to arrive with bated breath. To move from where you currently are will take planning, training, learning, discipline, focus and work, and even then, there are no iron-clad guarantees.

It will be based on your willingness to step into the void- the place between leaving and arriving- and stay coherent and focused no matter what. You will need to adjust and adapt as you move.

On a personal note

It was 1976, my stick of four had come off patrol and was based up in a bush camp. At 0200, we were called to an ambush. Information was that two individuals from one of the services had been driving along the dirt road and had been attacked. We arrived and could see the Jeep burning in the distance. After clearing the surrounding hillsides with rifle grenades, we moved in. I located the one individual in a ditch with a gunshot wound and patched and dripped him up.

The second individual was burning across his entire body. I put out the flames and carried him to the vehicle. We returned to base. I was unsuccessful in getting a breathing tube down his throat. At around 0345, he breathed his last breath. It seemed to go on forever as it moved through the trees in the stillness of the night. That last breath remains etched in my memory despite the passing of 47 years.

War imprints on the Soul. It reminds us how fragile and yet how precious our lives are. Do whatever it takes to heal your wounds and embrace the time given to you. Our sacred duty is to watch out for each other. A time will come when each of us will breathe our last breath. Life is unpredictable. May you all live each day to the fullest, both within yourself and in your relationships with others.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?

I wish you all a successful transitioning into your new territory. Thank you for reading “Which Way is your Warrior Facing.” Thank you for journeying through the book with me. Thank you for your service.

With respect and care,

Barry

BITE-SIZED THOUGHTS FOR TRANSITIONING WARRIORS

I have included these easily digested thoughts for you to return to from time to time and draw on for inspiration as you transition between territories. I hope that they will inspire and support you.

From operations to civilian life, it takes motivation and determination, as well as an ability to adjust and adapt and manage discomfort.



Change does not come to us. It requires the willingness to hunt for it, fight and sweat for it. Warriors understand this. Remember who you were and still are, no matter how great your wounds, pain, and grief. Get up, dust off and start running. Cross the finishing line and take a well-earned break.



We are all capable of choosing what our internal weather is that we bring to the challenges around us. It takes work, but hey, hard work never killed anyone.

You were willing to crawl through the mud to become a Warrior. The same mindset applies to crawling through the burdens you carry. Like the mud and the strain, they will wash off as you lighten and heal.



Your struggle does not define who you are. Let go of self-judgement. Your pain and grief are understandable. No matter how tough it may be, there are those out there willing to stand by you.



There will be moments, events, occasions, and situations where your grief will knock on your door. Listen and open your heart. Those no longer with us are reaching out to be remembered. Take a moment and feel. You are not alone.



The Wounded Warrior has the right to return stronger and wiser. But only if the healing journey is approached with the strong will, focus, determination, and discipline that already exist within the Warrior. Your wars need not determine who you are. That is within your power. Step into, not away from your return.

Your Warrior has the capability for courage, endurance, dependability, loyalty, reliability, care, and love. Allow these to continue to guide you forward in everything you do and all of who you are.



There is a room in your brain (memories) and body where all the pain, loss, grief, despair, and anger are stored. It may be 50 years old or recent, but it lurks in the shadows of your heart. It whispers to you in the early hours of the morning. It cannot be forgotten, silenced, or locked away. It feels real in the present; however, rather try, and see it as energy stored in your body. It needs to talk to you. It needs to be listened to, and it needs to come to the surface of your heart and heal. Yes, it can be a painful journey, but healing takes courage and commitment. Better to feel than to numb out or push down. This journey down into the roots of your memory cannot be made on your own. Asking for help is a sign of strength. Your heart will open, and your body will heal.



You should not be leaving your Warrior behind as you transition into civilian life. Yes, it would help if you learned to adjust and adapt to civilian territory. However, the core values of the Warrior and the wisdom gained from the military will inform and guide the civilian part of you

and make you a better Man or Woman. Who you were can and should become a part of who you are now. It should not be about getting stuck in the past but allowing the past to inform your present.



Everyone, not just Veterans, has a room or rooms filled with explosive devices (the stored and reactive parts of yourselves) that can get triggered, resulting in damage to others and ourselves. This need not define who we are. We are not our trauma. We can learn to self-regulate and heal.



It is the most understandable experience to feel trapped by your trauma. It feels etched into your bones. It intrudes into every corner of your waking and sleeping life. Naturally, you want to escape and avoid. But we know that the brain can be rewired. We know that your painful memories, your trauma, grief, anger, loss and guilt can be allowed to speak and heal. The healed Warrior returns with great strength, compassion, wisdom, and heart. Call in who you were to support you to begin this journey. Small steps (sleep, nutrition, and exercise) lead to more significant steps. Allow your body to heal. It has wisdom and is waiting to walk with you.

Once a year, in Australia, Veterans and current serving gather to march and remember. Once a year, Warriors emerge and stand proud as they are respected and welcomed. May your next 364 days be your own personal march to heal, where you begin to integrate who you were then and who you are now. Respect to you all for the courage and commitment to make your peace with whatever you carry.



Understandably, so many Veterans avoid getting close to the core experiences that impact their lives. However, waiting for change to just appear and work its “magic” is generally not going to happen. Nor is expecting the stuff locked away in those rooms inside you to clear out of their own volition. However, you do not need to go crashing into the killing ground of your trauma. Step back to the perimeter. Identify something or somewhere you can begin (with appropriate support) that has some charge but feels manageable. That charge may be challenging, but it’s just old energy sitting in your body. Slowly as you progress, you will rediscover your strength and confidence around entering this territory. As you feel yourself heal and grow more robust, you will be readier to open those doors and clear those rooms. Combine this with self-care, life balance and appropriate techniques and “pull-throughs” as well as professional support; you can and are able to regather your

Warrior and adjust to the challenges in your life. Waiting is not an option for Warriors!



So many Veterans feel displaced and disconnected within and around themselves. You need not lose your identity as a Warrior or Veteran, and you can find ways to adjust to and navigate through civilian life and find meaning. Stay fit and strong. Challenge yourself.



Re-member and re-gather who you were and integrate this with who you now are.



For those who carry the burden of war or trauma, yes, there is a healing journey to focus on, but also remember to find time to play and connect with others. What are you going or willing to do this week to have some fun?



How you transition into civilian life will be determined by your ability to track your progress through your wellbeing, mental state, impact on others and use of pull through tools. If you ignore the tracks you make, you could be heading

into your own ambush. At regular intervals, stop and think about how you are doing. This is no different to your operational skills set.



Over the years, I have worked with Veterans who struggle with not feeling good enough. They were never given an operational posting or were in non-combatant positions. They are haunted and feel diminished by this. A veteran should not be defined or restricted to specific roles. The very act of joining the military places you in the territory. Stand tall. Wear your medals with pride.



You may be facing several challenges. Your connections with others may be thin on the ground. How you are reacting to what is meeting you may negatively impact others. Let's acknowledge that you are travelling through challenging terrain but let's also hold the possibility that you need not add to this by judging yourself. This is just dead weight. You are not defined by where you currently are. Begin by committing to minor change and self-care. You can respect and care for who you are no matter how deep you are in the mud. Every positive thought over time will and does create change.

Remember that you may not readily change your situation, but you can determine your internal weather that you bring to what is in front of you. We do not often simply glide into change. We may creak, groan, and stretch into change. It can be challenging and exciting. Be willing to step out of your safe zone, especially if that zone is detrimental to your wellbeing. Chase and hunt change if this is necessary. If life is about to double-tap you, move to new and better territory. It's a process, so stay focused, maintain your situational awareness and leap into new beginnings.



Life may, at times, feel like an SF selection course. However, at least with life, you have the possibility of looking at the “rocks” you carry on your backpack and assessing what is dead weight and what you are willing to let go of. There will be rocks that you can take out and drop on the side of the track. These just demand a conscious decision to let go or change (an old grievance, lack of exercise). Then there are those rocks you will need some support with (anxiety, stress, anger). And finally, there are those rocks you will need comprehensive management with (Complex PTSD, self-harm). Locate and identify the most accessible rock. Start with one. As your load lightens, your energy and motivation, confidence and self-esteem will improve. Have a good day and keep rocking!

Although we can never return to who we were, we can grow into and become fine, wise, and solid Veterans and Warriors. Don't give up on yourself. Don't let what is out there beat you down. Fight for who you are and what you need. Carry those who are down. Leave no wounded behind. Draw on the collective strength and resources of your tribe.



No matter how difficult the journey may feel at times, it's important to remember that there is a beginning and ending to everything. Giving up is never an option. If you need to sit, do so, but then get up, dust off, and keep moving. Pace yourself. Allow others to support you. Find friends who will encourage you. Strengthen your will through discipline and effort. The right attitude plus appropriate support will get you across the finishing line.



As much as discipline, focus, effort, and commitment are critical to creating change, so too is your need to rest, chill out and sleep. Good sleep is essential for wellbeing, brain functioning and ensuring you have the resources and energy to move forward.

Reach out when you need to. Take a risk and offer an open hand. There's never a guarantee. But you may be surprised by what you receive.



Sometimes you just need to find a quiet place in nature, away from the chaos and the noise and share a moment of connection with a mate or yourself.



If life were a Special Forces selection process, guilt would be the dead weight we load on ourselves. It weighs us down. It has no value. It prevents healing and haunts our waking and sleeping lives. It messes with our relationships and health. Time to open that backpack and chuck those “guilt rocks.” Create space to work on the real stuff waiting to talk to you.



My greatest moments have been my most challenging moments. Whether it was in running or challenging life changes and painful losses. There were many moments where there was nothing I could do to change or remove what was in front of me. The only control I had was around self-care at every level and working on my attitude to what was in front of me. For those facing painful loss, adversity,

and challenge, try not to neglect yourself and work on your attitude. Go slow. Letting go of yourself is letting go of life.



There are three approaches to life using the analogy of the ancient grain grinding stones. The first is with avoidance. Here the grinding wheels do not meet. They simply turn, and the grain remains the same. Nothing transforms. The second is conflictual, reactive, aggressive. Here the wheels grind so closely that they destroy the grain and the stone. Living life in this way will only negatively impact others and yourself. The third way is to live life with just the right amount of tension and grinding that can positively transform your journey. Here you constructively speak your truth, listen, respect, and set appropriate boundaries. You do not run away from challenges or adversity. Keep your wheels turning. Grind with care.



Are you getting caught up in minor, inconsequential issues? Are you wasting energy on the Little Rock's instead of dealing with the significant problems in your life? Why? Watch what you focus on because that's where the limited energy you have will go. Are you avoiding the big rocks? Life can rock at times. Just think about which ones you put into and carry in your emotional backpack.

Overwhelm, stress, and anxiety kick up the back of the brain and lock you into your ambush zone. This can result in your trip flare going and your claymore blowing. There will be casualties. Take time to breathe and use your pull-through tools to get the blood flowing to the front of your brain and allow you to navigate away from your killing ground to your OP, where you can think and organise your thoughts and behaviour.



Others may not support or affirm your dreams or your vision. Trust whatever it is that drives you forward. Others may join you on the way but be willing and able to sustain your effort and motivation. Whether you achieve your goal or birth your vision, stay focused and keep moving. If you need to take a break, remember to get up, dust off and begin again.



It's not whether we cross the finishing line but whether we fully commit to trying to make the impossible possible. Others may not support or affirm your dreams or your vision. Trust whatever it is that drives you forward. Others may join you on the way but even without them, be willing and able to sustain your effort and motivation.

Allow time to feel. Respect and attend to your grief or anger. These emotions are energy stored in your body that need to move. Don't neglect life balance and well-being while you are going through this. Exercise can have a tremendous impact. Do not become stuck in being a victim. At the same time, pay attention to what you have and can show gratitude towards. Even the small things count. Gratitude creates brain change and supports healing. Most of all, watch for those self-destructive patterns such as poor diet, no exercise and use of alcohol. Finally, whether you are moving into civilian territory, grieving the loss of a partner or being unemployed, you may be in new territory. You need to map out and understand this territory to navigate through it.



The core values of courage, mateship, endurance, and compassion will support you on your way to creating change. On the way, try the following, find someone to be responsible to; find others who will listen to and encourage you; strengthen your will through discipline and effort; fully commit to your right to create change and acknowledge that giving up will never be an option.

In running ultra-marathons, I learnt to not focus on the end goal. It was depressingly too far away in the distance. I learnt to focus on what I could see, one step at a time. One kilometre at a time. Every step was an achievement. Every step was a goal completed and an experience of motivating success. The same rules apply in your journey to change and heal. Small steps equal significant achievements. Every step, every hill climb adds to your motivational bank account. You will draw on this in your moments of hitting the wall. Today identify something you have been neglecting and that is achievable. Do it. Don't let another day pass. This weakens your resolve and erodes your will, one step at a time. Relax into the small achievements. Build on them and cross your finishing line.



Think about one thing that is weighing you down. It may be connected to the emotions of anger, resentment, hurt, betrayal, grief. While thinking of the situation, identify the emotion. Then locate where you feel it in your body. Rate how strong the body feeling is from 1-10. What is the shape and colour of the body feeling? Now just stay with what's in your body. Respect and care for that experience. Don't judge it. Think about something that brings joy, love, or care to your heart. Now gently breathe this in and out through that body location and allow your breath to wash through and release the energy. Allow your body to release what only weighs you down. Breathe in and out gently for

several minutes. Then close your eyes, take a deep breath and release. Let it go. Feel it go. Now reassess the body tension from 1-10. Any change?



Stay focused on your goal but have fun and enjoy your journey along the way.



All moments are gifts and deserve both gratitude and investment of time and presence. Think about the balance in your life. Is there anything you are neglecting or ignoring? Decide what you are willing to do to invite more balance, connection, joy, and wellbeing.



You would place your life on the line for another. Yet many veterans tend to leave themselves behind when transitioning into civilian territory. You are under the same obligation to bring yourself back. Your trauma or your struggles are no different from other's wounds. They deserve attention, support, and care. The attributes that form who you are apply to yourself as well. Do whatever it takes. Go back. Give yourself a hand. Allow others to walk with you and return.

If you are stuck in a challenging situation or relationship, try getting off the stage where it feels personal. Step into the audience and get some distance. Simply moving away from the emotional engagement can allow you to breathe and reframe. Distance can shrink the size and complexity of the issue. Find your OP (observation point) and just observe.



It's ok about having a vision around where you want to go. But to achieve your goal, keep your eyes on the track. One step at a time. Each step defines you. It's not whether you cross the finishing line. It's about your commitment and dedication to every step.



You may be feeling stuck, but your body can always move. You may be feeling helpless and trapped in a challenging situation. Step back and go into your body (run, walk, stretch, yoga). You'll find it easier to face, adjust, and adapt to the issue at hand.



There are moments where we can feel desperately imprisoned, whether in a relationship, work, life, or our bodies. We can experience a sense of life and situation

closing down in these moments and restricting any sense of personal freedom and choice. We may be holding the bars of our prison, staring out into possibility and life. However, we fail to recognise often that the door may seem locked, but if we reach into our back pocket, we will find a key. This key can open the door of our prison, which strangely enough was never locked. There is always some freedom of choice. You may not be able to exit your situation, but you can change your attitude to what is facing you. Fear is an attitude. It's not to say that choice is easy. Although seeming impossible, walking away, speaking your truth, and releasing fear can be achieved. By holding that we contain the key to personal freedom, change and transformation can take us from victim to empowered. Reach into your back pocket and simply hold the key. Feel its weight and possibility. At least now you have shifted attitude to hold the experience of choice and empowerment.



There may be times through adversity that your fire dies down. You may put on weight after always being fit. Your mood may impact your lifestyle and mental state. It's easy to slide downhill but so much harder to climb back out and return to who you were. Your internal fire feeds your will and determination to change. Carefully feed your fire. Get down and up close, one twig at a time, one achievable action and goal at a time. Tiny breaths will fan the flames.

Too much too early will put them out. Build on your successes as you reignite.



The only difference between verbal and physical aggression is the visible damage. Both are experienced as a frontal assault at the deepest parts of oneself. Whatever you have been through and whatever your wounds, they can never be an excuse for lack of control. Through personal responsibility to create change and the power of the brain to heal, there is always a choice, even if it means removing yourself for a while and doing the work. The ability to exercise self-control and constraint defines the Warrior.



It's not always about putting the other first, whether with a friend or a partner. There will always need to be those moments when we stop to take care of our own needs. This will call for clear boundaries. If we treat our lives as an open-door restaurant, it will be filled only with those needing to feed, not connect. And when all the supplies and food are gone, they will simply move off. Healthy relationships should have a right of admission reserved sign over the doorway. Like any restaurant, there must be times when you close the door and become your number one customer. All relationships thrive on this simple principle because it is only when our bellies are full that we have the

resources to care for and support others. Today, take a moment to make yourself your valued number one customer.



Are the choices you are making feeding the problem or the solution? Is your behaviour opening or closing opportunities for success, well-being, and connection? Is the vision of your tomorrow reflected in the reality of today? Allow your present moment to be tempered and guided by your goals. Introspection, reflection, and responsibility will create a strong bridge between your present and future.



Warrior attributes are in many ways in short supply in civilian territory. It is no wonder that veterans struggle to adapt when transitioning away from the military. It is not simply their responsibility alone to adjust and adapt. In turn, civilian territory needs to critically look at the values and attributes that guide it forward.



You learnt to operate in the military. Remember that you were initially challenged to adjust to a more regimented life. You had to take on and learn new skills. You had to re-

form a new identity. All these skills apply to transitioning to civilian life. However, this time around, you have the core attributes and values of the Warrior to drive you forward. As you adjust, adapt, and form your new identity, there will be challenges. Take your time. Maintain coms with those that can support you. Build a map to help you navigate. Maintain situational awareness and go OP to observe your new territory when uncertain. Everything you need to manage your challenges is already within you.



Grief ignored numbs the heart, stills the capacity to feel, and fires up anger. When a Warrior is willing and ready to feel, remember, and grieve, only then do the doorways to the heart open and bring the beginning of peace and resolution. Through feeling and grieving, the shadows of those lost are brought to life and affirmed. It is in this moment where the aching heart is allowed to be that a Warrior can stand tall by the fallen and listen and remember.



You would have laid down your life to protect a brother. At all times, your focus was not on yourself but the safety and wellbeing of your group. Reliability and dependability were your core values. Transitioning into Civilian life is about maintaining those core values and learning to direct them

towards yourself. Whatever burdens you may be carrying, you need to be willing to acknowledge them and deal with them. To successfully navigate through civilian territory, you will need to navigate your internal terrain. You've earned the right to carry yourself.



Encapsulating your trauma may feel like it protects you from your pain and memory. However, it increasingly disconnects you from yourself as well as those you love. Your healing is through that place and guided by a professional where necessary. Your body wants to heal and feel, to love and connect. Start at the edges of this territory. Start where you feel ok to begin and tolerate the discomfort. One step at a time. It is worth it.



If it's not enough that we send Men and Women off to War and return carrying the burden of their experiences, they then return home having to fight another war with organisations that, instead of easing their souls and bodies, increase their trauma. Lost, displaced, and broken, highly intelligent, responsible and skilled Warriors wander the streets homeless. Many are stuck in meaningless work, lacking purpose and connection with Tribe. Many, out of desperation, choose death. This is shameful and unacceptable. We need more organisations that uphold core

values and care. Warriors have earned the right to a worthwhile life away from War. They have earned the right to stand proud and contribute to their new lives as civilians. They have earned the right to the financial benefits they deserve. We are fortunate to have them live and work amongst us.



Don't settle for your yesterday. Your past personal best is simply an opportunity to excel. Get up and commit to being better, stronger, faster, more compassionate and connected, respectful and caring. Do not allow your past to define you. Complacency rests on this formula. Every moment, step and word should be conscious, focused with discipline and motivation to make your tomorrow today's target. Disappointment is only an opportunity to get up, dust off and learn.



Adversity is simply an opportunity to reframe your attitude. It invites you to hold on to yourself and strive to rise above the moment. In these times, through the willingness to walk through the fire, we reform our core and redefine who we are.

Life journeys and transitioning out of the Military can be a challenging experience as we navigate paths through relationships, work, finances, and our connections with ourselves. To be able to identify at least one goal and adjust and adapt as needed gives both a point in the future to aim for as well as an inner compass in the present that directs our movement. A goal identified can also contain and ground us when our terrain suddenly changes or becomes confusing and unclear.



Whatever is stored in your body cannot be forgotten. Why still the voice of that deepest part of yourself? Remembering is not, nor should it be, about re-traumatizing yourself. It's about allowing your body and brain to bring this voice to your awareness. Remember, that the territory of the struggle, pain, loss and grief are held and felt both in memory and in the body. Listen to your body. Meet that which is stored in your body with openness and respect. Listen to the thoughts and feelings that arise. Greet them. Welcome them and care for them. They are parts of who you are.



There have been long moments in my life when my world was in complete disarray. Breathing and meditating had little if any impact. What worked was to get back into my

body and nature by running and mountain-biking. I returned to myself in the company of trees and a rhythm of connection. For any struggling to collect the pieces of your life, activate your body (yoga, tai chi, running, walking) and connect with nature wherever possible.



Asking for help is never a sign of weakness but rather a strength. It is the realisation that no matter how tough and resilient you are, there are all points in one's life where the territory we need to cross demands others to walk with us and watch our backs. This is the reason that we all have defined arcs of fire. Together we are more effective and successful. We cover the ground far more efficiently. You do not just let go of your operating protocols when you face the challenges of adjusting to civilian life.



Not all psychologists, counsellors and other health care professionals have military and operational backgrounds. The academic training gives the tools, but unnecessary mistakes can be made without taking the time to learn about the territory veterans occupy. These can range from insisting that they sit in a designated chair in the room (which may not be facing the door), using modalities that, despite the evidence supporting it, may cause more harm than good, and expecting that the title Psychologist has

earned the right to expect that the Veteran will hand over their stories, pain and traumatic memories without question. You may be a professional, but you need to listen and earn trust and respect. You need to extend your knowledge to understanding the road veterans have walked and be open towards a flexible approach to what you think they may need. You'll only be given one opportunity. Break that trust through a demonstration of ignorance based on not taking time to become informed, rigidity around your set modalities, and first earning your right to work with them, you will generally not be given a second chance.



The challenge in transitioning from Military to Civilian territory is first to identify your skill sets and strengths that can accompany you. It's not about leaving yourself behind. Assess the demands and challenges of this new territory. Consider the adjustments and adaptations that will be required. Identify new learning and new ways of operating that may not yet be within your circle of influence. Prepare and practice. Constantly reassess, re-evaluate and adjust. Teamwork is critical!



Aiming for change requires clear focus. Visualise the change you are going to aim for. Maintain tension on the trigger. Think, analyse, plan. You cannot achieve your

target unless the focus around your motivation and critical thinking are present. This is not a time to sit back. Effort and discipline will guide you. Endurance and resilience will maintain the tension. Tension ensures alertness and focus to detail. Define your arc of fire, your circle of influence, what you can impact on and what lies outside this territory. Be ready to adjust as other factors intrude. Flexibility, not rigidity, will ensure ongoing adaptation.



The majority of Veterans I have sat with over many years describe cycles of, at times, for no apparent reason, of just feeling edgy and uncomfortable. In these moments, being with others can feel overwhelming and irritating. Often trying to work out why can be a futile exercise. Many boxes can account for this feeling, such as, the loss of military tribe, stretching into and adjusting to civilian life, the edges of traumatic memory, grief and pain making its way to the surface of your awareness, present day challenges, ageing and the loss of capability. These are just a few. Begin by just respecting the energy in your body. Bring your awareness to it. Feel what comes up. Open your heart. Let the tension, edginess and irritation in your body move. Stretching, breathing, exercise and yoga are just some of the body-based modalities you can use. Just let it roll. Accept its presence. What do you need? Time out, some solitary space? Communicate your needs, so others don't take it personally. Don't judge your experience. My

sense over the years is that as Veterans, we carry parts of ourselves that can drain resources if not attended to and managed. Consider the impact of constant hyper-vigilance on the body? Begin with your body first. See how you go.



Excellence is defined by your willingness to exceed your perceived limitations. It is achieved by your acceptance and motivation to step out of your comfort zone. It is maintained by your capacity to process and transform the challenging and often stressful demands on you physically, mentally, and psychologically. It is not measured by ranking to others. This should not define or limit you. Every success is an invitation to become better. There are no failures, only opportunities to learn and improve. To achieve excellence and to excel does demand the ability to endure.



Team excellence must be grounded in the ability and willingness to move away from the Me to Us. Your personal goals are now defined by how you excel and support each other into and through your zone of discomfort. You will form a strong tribe based on the group experience in this process. This transformation is the collective glue for further achievement and results in

individual growth as we learn to move beyond our agendas and adjust and adapt to the needs of others.



To successfully transition between thinking change and successfully doing change, our intention needs to be clear and completely focused on the end goal. Intention fuels the ability to maintain movement in the face of adversity. It fuels our drive to settle for nothing less than what we desire. It sustains us in moments of doubt and despair and keeps us moving through the long dark night. Without the ferocity of intention, the fires of change burn low.



There will always be moments when the challenges facing you are not just about achieving your personal best but also about your capacity to endure. Endurance demands the ability to maintain focus and ongoing movement in the face of dwindling resources and exhaustion. In these moments, it's not necessarily about excellence but about achieving personal victories in the face of insurmountable demands as well as emotional, physical, and psychological depletion. You will stretch into a stronger and more confident sense of who you are in these moments. It is the nature of some transitions that they will challenge your capacity to endure. No matter what you face now, just keep moving. Run, walk, or crawl. Just keep moving. Success is achieved by

the refusal to be defined by the odds stacked up against you in these moments.



“I’m not motivated” is a very poor reason for not achieving your target.



It’s your attitude, not your situation, that determines how you progress forward. Before you enter change, take time to regroup and assess and identify the challenges ahead of you. Allow time for preparation at all levels, physically, psychologically, and emotionally. When you finally commit to moving forward, do so with focus and determination. Be flexible and willing to adjust and adapt as required. Your belief in yourself needs to be clear. When you finally commit to moving forward, do so with focus and determination. Identify and release anything holding you back or to the past.



Remember: ATTITUDE determines ALTITUDE!

Successful transitions rest not just on the ability to adjust your strengths to present challenges. These can face you with a difference in fit between where you were and where you currently are. To hold on to the past too tightly will restrict your capacity to open to your present. Every step of the journey will require adaptation and flexibility. Change can be challenging. Your power lies in how you receive and perceive what is facing you. Becoming fully who you are is also about letting go of parts of who you were.



Transitioning from the Military to Civilian territory has several challenges that require attention:

- 1) Loss of Tribe and change in identity.
- 2) Integrating the Warrior and the Civilian.
- 3) Mapping out and understanding the military/operational brain as well as those parts that support you forward and those that can constrict and restrict.
- 4) Mapping out your Civilian territory and re-calibrating and re-orientating your internal compass to facilitate effective navigation and resolution around adjustment challenges.
- 5) Remaining coherent and focused in the space between leaving and arriving as you transition through the long dark night of crossing over.

Life and others may at times face you with deeply challenging transitions and encounters. While you may not always be able to change what is in front of you, you can retain the power to decide how you receive these challenges. Are you or have you been giving your power away? You need not be a victim. Others cannot steal your power. You need to be willing to hand it over. No matter what you are facing now, think about your ability to reclaim the strength of who you are. Choose to stand in the storm with a certainty of self. Now, regardless of the outcome, you are already a winner.



When facing challenging situations, you may often not have any control around changing the situation. It is as it is and meets you squarely head on. You can impact the internal weather that you bring to this territory. However, this level of internal adaptability is not just restricted to your attitude. You can also shift perspective and step back, up and out, even if this is symbolic. Gaining some distance from the emotion, fear and overwhelm will allow you to reframe and regroup. This can be challenging, but real change and mastering complex transitions require effort, flexibility, courage, and discipline. It is not for the faint-hearted as you stretch and creak into new territories. You will need to choose to either deal with change on your terms or allow change to deal with you.

Tribe is at the core of military life. Within it, we locate who we are. We agree to identify and share values that extend well beyond the individual need. We move from selfishness to selflessness. Core values such as dependability, reliability, and self-sacrifice, maintain connection and survivability. To so many Veterans, civilian life is a random and unpredictable matrix that focuses more on the individual and the superficial than the collective. They understandably struggle to understand how the territory operates and redefine who they are. The transition can be and is being successfully achieved, and Tribe in a different way can be accomplished. But it requires coaching and mentoring and, at times, healing, and counselling.



Every run, like every day I wake up to, offers me two choices- stay in my zone of comfort and remain static or every day choose to step that little bit out of my comfort zone by pushing my heartbeat up, going through the wall of resistance and breaking through to becoming better at what I can do and be. I cannot achieve this every time, and there are moments I feel like just sitting down and becoming a spectator to my life. But, no matter what, I have a choice. I choose not to embrace the victim. As long as I am willing to stretch into change and accept the discomfort, fear, or resistance, I will progress step by step. Befriend discomfort, embrace resistance, and trust you can survive.

Today, I ran a personal best. May today be yours. Leave tomorrow alone. Focus on the now.



The Warrior journey is thousands of years old. Inherent in it and critical to it at the core, is the hunting and killing of others and the willingness to do this. What is the meaning of violence in this territory? It is the skill and capacity to focus and direct lethal aggression. In the context of this territory, this is neither distorted nor abnormal. Warriors have an intimate relationship with death and, as a result, an appreciation of life. However, in the context of civilian territory, values and judgements are placed on these skills, mindsets, and individuals. Ignorance based on a vision that fails to see the importance of creating rituals to welcome our Warriors back results in a culture that judges, labels, and distorts. Homelessness, suicide, disconnection, and despair are to an extent a reflection of the battleground within the home territory that they return to. What currently exists to bridge the return is far from satisfactory. There is a dire need to step back and out of our models of management and see, truly see, and welcome these individuals and value them for their strength and wisdom. No Warrior should ever return home to die!

What are you waiting for? The world and others in it are not waiting for you to arrive with bated breath. To move from where you currently are will take planning, training, learning, discipline, focus and work, and even then, there are no iron-clad guarantees. It will be based on your willingness to step into the void, that place between leaving and arriving, and stay coherent and focused no matter what. You will need to adjust and adapt as you move.



Hitting the wall? At various points in your life, you will “hit the wall.” You may be called to move out of your comfort zone or face adversity or challenge. You will either end up sitting on the side of the road, or you will find resources to push through and redefine who you are. I remember running Comrades uphill 84km ultramarathon. At 60km, I faced a painful injury. At that point, the race truly began. I had run out of resources. In my mind, I was already beginning to see myself giving up. At that point, what came to me was that no matter how tough, challenging, or painful my situation was, I could reframe and transform my experience from overwhelm to overcome. I could remove my attention from the pain and exhaustion. I could choose to cross the finishing line no matter whether I ran, walked, or crawled. I only needed to focus on small sections, one at a time. Crossing the line was a greater victory than any other race I have run. I faced the wall and ran through it. This experience has walked

beside and inside me for most of my life. No matter what wall, challenge, or adversity you are currently experiencing, you are just a thought away from transforming overwhelm to overcoming. Go cross your finishing line.



If you want to achieve your outcome, be prepared to face it, make your presence felt, be assertive and communicate your needs. If you choose to take a passive role, life will pass you by.



Achievement takes endless patience, focus and determination. It takes hanging in there with absolute self-belief. At some unexpected point and often when you least expect it, you will find yourself on the other side of the wall of your limiting self-beliefs. Keep breathing!



You may be or have already transitioned out of the military. Do not leave yourself behind. Start with a vision. Begin somewhere. Be guided by your core values. It takes time and perseverance to consolidate new territory, recreate new teams and locate a place where the Warrior and Civilian can coexist.

There is no doubt that prior planning and preparation are critical components of effective transitions and change. However, life is not simply going to give you a smooth tarred road, an even surface, and no hills. You can only really find your core in your zone of discomfort. Think about how you behave in your family towards your partner or children when challenges and the potential for conflict arise. Think about what triggers you and how you behave in these moments. These define you and are evidence of your ability to walk your talk. It's in these moments that you face your internal dialogue. Do you pause in the face of doubt? Do you collapse in the demands of adversity? Do you react when challenged? How you behave in the fire of these moments will define you. Find your hills. Choose the road less travelled. Stretch into the sweat of your discomfort. Do this again and again till the hills and the heat become just a part of who you are.



In your zone of discomfort, who you are becomes visible.



Are you in the driver's seat or the passenger seat of your transitioning journey?

Excuses and avoidance are never an option. “I’m tired, too busy and have no time” are the servants of keeping you from moving forward. Feed your will, stretch your discipline, embrace discomfort, and remember who you are.



Don’t always train on the road. Life is going to throw you into uneven territory at times. You need to allow your body and mind to extend into the unpredictable and learn to flow and become comfortable with being out of your safe zone. Risk is part of life. Befriend it and find confidence in your skill to move through it.



There will be times when we journey alone. We may need to travel long distances and draw on our core strength, resilience, and internal resources. But at the end of the day, our journey becomes that much easier when we are in company of accepting and caring others. The combined strength of the Team/Tribe far outweighs that of the individual. Find your Tribe and make your voice heard.



The Wounded Warrior has the right to return stronger and wiser. But only if the healing journey is approached with the strong will, focus, determination, and discipline that

already exist within the Warrior. Your wars need not determine who you are. That is within your power. Step into, not away from your return.



In transitioning from the military, life will throw down a few challenges. Move through, not away from these. You have several options, but in the end, you need to make a choice, commit to action, and move forward.



There is a room in your brain (memories) and body where all the pain, loss, grief, despair, and anger are stored. It may be 50 years old or recent, but it lurks in the shadows of your heart. It whispers to you in the early hours of the morning. It cannot be forgotten, silenced, or locked away. It feels real in the present. Try seeing it as energy stored in your body. It needs to talk to you. It needs to be listened to, and it needs to come to the surface of your heart and heal. Yes, it can be a painful journey, but healing takes courage and commitment. Better to feel than to numb out or push down. This journey down into the roots of your memory cannot be made on your own. Asking for help is a sign of strength. Clear the roots that are tangled and struggling, and you will grow stronger. Your heart will open, and your body will heal. Healing is not an impossibility. It is a reality forged by choice and commitment.

The difficulty of the task is in direct proportion to the position you view it from. When facing challenging situations, you may often not have any control around changing the situation. It is as it is and meets you squarely head-on. What you can impact on is your internal weather that you bring to this territory. However, this level of internal adaptability is not just restricted to your attitude. You can also shift perspective and step back, up and out, even if this is at a symbolic level. Gaining some distance from the emotion, fear and overwhelm will allow you to reframe and regroup. This can be challenging, but real change and mastering complex transitions require effort, flexibility, courage, and discipline. It is not for the faint-hearted as you stretch and creak into new territories. You choose to either deal with change on your terms or allow change to deal with you on its terms.

Which Way Is Your Warrior Facing?



YOUR FINAL WORDS

How was this book of value to you?

APPENDIX

Glossary

Claymore: a Claymore mine, introduced for use in the US Army, is an aimable antipersonnel device that, when detonated, shoots metal balls into the kill zone of an ambush; it was named for the claymore, a two-handed sword used in medieval Scotland.

Cock, hook, and look: an immediate action drill to assess and then clear a cartridge stuck in the breech of a weapon.

Contact: the action of becoming engaged with the enemy.

Fire force: the deployment of helicopters to place troops on the ground in a “contact” (see above) and to engage from the air with weapons; the military tactic was developed during the Rhodesian Bush War.

Friendly fire: fire from a soldier’s side that can result in injury or death.

HE: high-explosive grenade.

IED: improvised explosive device.

MAG: machine gun.

OP: observation post.

Pull-through: the action of pulling an oily rag through the barrel of a rifle in order to clean it.

R&R: rest and recuperation.

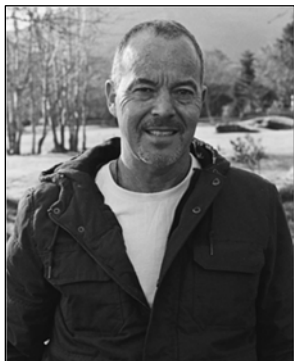
Rat pack: ration packs.

Runaway gun: a situation in which a weapon continues to fire on its own volition and is no longer in the control of the person firing it.

Stoppage: when a weapon fails to fire, often resulting from it not being cleaned.

Trip flare: a flare used as a warning device; it is attached to a wire that, when pulled, triggers the flare.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Barry Zworestine was born in Southern Rhodesia (in what is now Zimbabwe) in 1953. After uneventful schooling in which he focused more on sports than on academics, he went to university in South Africa, where he spent several years training in education.

In 1976 he returned to Rhodesia to comply with national service requirements and was involved in the Rhodesian Bush War. On leaving the war in 1977, he spent several years living and working in South Africa before emigrating to Australia, where he lived for several years before settling in England for a brief period. After unsuccessfully attempting to mountain bike from Great Britain to Israel in 1984, he flew there instead and spent four years developing the British Council English Language Centre. While in Israel, he developed a passion for marathon running, which extended to ultra-marathon running after returning to South Africa to qualify as a clinical psychologist.

He returned to Australia in 2000, where he has remained ever since. In 2002, given his military experience and psychological qualifications, he was accepted as a contractor with a veteran organisation. This has continued to the present day. He is

passionate about music and plays the African drum, American Indian flute, and the Australian didgeridoo.

He is married to an extraordinary woman and has three children.



Figure 2 - The Author and his wife



Figure 3 - The Author and his sons

THE END
AND
TO YOUR NEW BEGINNING