

## Combat Veteran's Guidebook | 1 | Who Are You Now?

Combat is a transformative experience.

You are not the same person now as you were before.

And that's okay. You're not meant to be.

We hear so much about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which, of course, is a legitimate diagnosis. It is a *natural reaction to trauma* – not a mental illness.

What we hear less about is Post Traumatic Growth.

Post Traumatic Growth is what we are aiming for now, and is the intent and focus of this guidebook series.

You don't have to have a diagnosis of PTSD to feel changed by war. Or wounded. Or broken. Or lost.

You don't have to have PTSD to pursue Post Traumatic Growth.

The mere energy of war is destruction and death.

We destroy and kill other humans and in doing so, in return it destroys and kills parts of us.

But in the greater picture of Life, destruction and death are always necessary for newness to emerge.

So, here you are. Feeling that parts of the former you are destroyed, missing, dead.

And here you are. Looking for newness. New life, new ways of being, new beliefs.

It's in finding the newness that Post Traumatic Growth happens.

Your mission now is to turn inward.

To explore who you are now. To decide who you want to become and to *remember who you truly are*, underneath all the layers that Life and War has buried you beneath.

On this path, huge parts of your Self will shift and change – not to the Prewar Version of you but to a deeper, truer version of who you are at your core. The You that came into this world – a being of Love and Power.

You're going to learn how to use both your innate Love and your innate Power to reclaim your true Self and to create a life you feel is still worth living.

Don't worry if you don't know who your true Self is right now.

That's what you're here to explore. At any time that you're working through this guidebook, feel free to reach out to me via Facebook or email (see [lifeafterwar.org](http://lifeafterwar.org) for contact details) and I will walk with you.

Take your time. Be patient. Be kind to your Self. Don't give up.

Explore the following questions in writing, if possible. Call on the Divine to help you. Ask for guidance. Your soul will speak.

You are held in Love and you belong here.

Newness awaits.

1. Before the war, I was more....
2. Before the war, the following things/ideas/beliefs really mattered to me...
3. What matters most to me now?
4. What did I lose about myself because of combat?
5. What did I gain in myself because of combat?
6. How am I a better person because of my military experience?
7. What don't I like about myself or my behavior now?
8. Imagine someone you love has been through all that you have been through – the hardship, the loss, the heartache, the grief, the trauma – knowing that, would you judge, hate on, criticize for being angry, not having it together, failing to keep a job, losing a marriage/relationship? Or would you feel compassion and understand?
9. Can you feel that same compassion for your Self? You deserve your own love.
10. If you could reinvent yourself, what kind of person would you be?

No doubt, as you work through these questions, your feelings will rise and fall. Dark and negative thoughts will spin in your mind, berating you, making you feel bad about yourself.

Meet the Inner Critic.

The Inner Critic is a safety mechanism designed to keep you from risk. It doesn't care how you feel, it only cares about keeping you where it's familiar, safe and non-threatening. The fact that you're considering how to change from where you are now, to where you'd like to be feels too risky to the Inner Critic.

It will do its best to convince you that you are not worthy, you're too fucked up, you can't change, it's too late for you, you're beyond hope, you don't deserve to be happy or feel good

about life, you're unlovable --- etc. It will say ANYTHING to keep you from stepping into the unknown.

The Inner Critic's voice is NOT YOU.

It is an ancient survival mechanism. When you start railing on yourself, berating yourself, being harsh and mean to your Self – that's the Inner Critic. It may sound like someone from your life who was harsh and mean to you, or it may sound like your own voice.

But the Inner Critic is not the real you.

And the Inner Critic does not have the power to stop you from changing your life.

Start recognizing the Inner Critic for what it is. And when you hear this voice belittling you, thank it for its concern for your safety and let it know that you are strong and you've got this.

Because you do.