In this lecture, we'll be building on the basic cultural competency piece to discuss a culturally informed approach to working with Veterans in trauma and crisis. This lecture will have several personal stories or stories inspired by actual events.

When I first began working with Veterans I would meet them out in the community. My work was to connected them to resources, to assess & triage their crisis.

Often this was emergency financial support, or ordering military records, or finding housing or counseling.

In doing this work, I had a strict personal policy of not meeting Veterans in their homes, my work involved a more at risk and often significantly greater proportion of Veterans with mental health challenges. I could meet them at my office, but it was a mental health agency I worked for and I found it easier to engage a more natural discussion outside of the office. I would usually meet Veterans at Starbucks or a local library or such; buy them a coffee and listen.

One of the most paradigm shifting conversations that I've ever had with a Veteran happened about five years ago in a mall Starbucks.

It was the Veterans idea to meet there, at the mall Starbucks.

After a quick introduction and description of what I do (or did), We got to talking about the details of the Veterans story. Why did they reach out for help? We started with the basics. When did the Veteran serve, how did the Veteran serve (what was their job or role in the military), how long was the Veteran in, what the Veteran been doing since leaving service, where was the Veteran now in life, what's their plans for the future? This is a basic approach I work with on all my clients.

The basics the Veteran told me was that they were in the Army and served for four years from about 2002 until 2007. The Veteran was a truck driver while in and since discharging, had been experiencing mental health challenges and homelessness in a recurring cycle.

The Veteran had been going to the VA for mental health but didn't like the counselor or case manager there. I asked, "why?" in the most un-judgmental and empathetic way I could have. What I received as a response to the question I asked.

"Why don't you like your counselor or case manager?" was

"I was raped and that's why I got out of the Army, I don't do well with men who want to provide me support and I can't handle going to the VA to tell my story in a group."

"I was raped and that's why I got out of the Army, I don't do well with men who want to provide me support and I can't handle going to the VA to tell my story in a group."

Consider again the setting and the characters and words the Veteran used in this story – A busy Starbucks, middle of the day, a Veteran sitting across from me, I'm providing support but also stumbling my way into some very considerable discussion topics. And now, I have opened up a conversation I didn't expect or honestly have the ability at the time to understand.

I'm immediately thinking of the implications of the Veterans declaration, I'm not sure how to respond and I'm wondering if I'm a good person to assist. The Veteran had just disclosed they don't do well with men who want to provide support." Is this why the Veteran wanted to meet in a busy Starbucks? Safety in numbers, safety from me? Was the Veteran saying they want my support or that they will never trust me to help them?

Why did the Veteran tell me this, and potentially open themselves up to their perception of further potential victimization, ridicule, or judgment?

This is the cautionary note of this tale, when we claim to relate to Veterans, and we focus on building our businesses on the relationships we are uniquely able to build with Veterans, we are building trust. Trust is when someone will tell you in a crowded room they experienced a traumatic sexual assault, or sitting across from you in your office and telling you about having shot someone. If you work with Veterans long enough, these things will happen.

You can prepare yourself for these conversations by having a clearer understanding of the experiences & traumas of Veterans as well as having some tools to utilize when those moments come up.

EXPERIENCE V TRAUMA

As we're looking to understand experiences and traumas, we should clearly differentiate between an experience and a traumatic experience.

Let's bring this to the 30,000-foot view. We've talked about cultural competency before, how our understanding of Veterans culture allows us to better connect and understand Veterans. In that framework we have to understand the journey Veterans take when entering the military

They go through the crucible of recruit training, serve in whatever capacity they've chosen, then discharge into the general population and re-assimilate as best they can. The journey between civilian to military, then between military to veteran, then between veteran to the person we might see today is marked by experiences, these are the way stations on their life journey.

If you broke down the stories of the 21.5 million Veterans alive today and categorized the significant markers in these stories, that is, things that stood out as informative to you, interesting, telltale items. You would see these categorized stories begin to come together into groups, groups that reflect shared experiences.

No two Veterans share the same story we know this – because no two people share the same story, but as a whole, every Veteran shares similar experiences. Knowing these is helpful to us as Veterans supporters because it gives us an understanding of the individual Veterans background, and ultimately how they came to be working with us.

TRAUMA

Let's switch over to trauma or traumas. One might say a trauma is an experience, and in this they wouldn't be incorrect. But there's more to this.

Traumas are characterized by traumatic experiences, but the trauma in and of itself is not the experience. It's easy to think of combat, or sexual assault, or other traumatic events as trauma in and of itself, but ultimately – not all those who experience combat have Post Traumatic Stress, nor does everyone who's ever been assaulted have recurring trust, Post Traumatic Stress, or coping challenges.

Traumas are the challenges that stick with us from experiences. A mentor of mine - likes to say: You visit a memory: a trauma visits you.

"You visit a memory; a trauma visits you."

I worked recently with a Veteran in an issue with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA was denying service connection for injuries to his lower back and neck. This Veteran used two knee braces to walk, has impairments in both shoulders, significant dental damage & hearing loss. Accompanying this host of physical challenges was Post Traumatic Stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health barriers. The Veteran asserted that these injuries relate to a parachuting crash landing that occurred while serving as an Airborne soldier.

As we're sitting in front of the hearing officer, argument in hand, as well as Doctors' opinions, legal rebuttals, the whole nine-yards. We begin to make our case that the Veterans current constellation of conditions is related to his military job – more specifically to the crash landing he was involved in

Halfway through our statements the VA representative stopped us and stated.

"I didn't know you were a parachuter, can you verify this? It's not on your DD214…"

In one simple statement, this gentleman had demonstrated his lack of military cultural competency by failing to understand the fundamental story present in the Veterans records and extensive testimony. This Veteran was crushed by that one statement and all that it implied.

I tell this to demonstrate that as we seek to support Veterans we HAVE to understand that their experiences and any traumas resulting from those experiences are incredibly important to our ability to effectively interact. Moreover, they will help us to establish credibility as Veterans friendly businessmen and women.

This veterans experience was a crash landing. His traumas are the ongoing physical problems, and mental health challenges.

The cultural aspect of stories like this are very important. Insights in Veteran culture help us to gain perspective on these experiences and gives us common footing to jump into conversations that we otherwise might not be comfortable in.

As we discuss experiences and traumas, put yourself in the shoes of the Veteran. If you've never served, that's OK. You've been through training, maybe it's not basic training, but we don't come out of the womb knowing what we're doing. Basic training, is exactly what it sounds like, BASIC training. One might consider it analogous to a very strict kindergarten for adults.

Maybe you've been in traumatic events, it's not combat, but your body didn't know the difference, the physical responses are the same. Feel the event emotionally and physically, as well as understanding it with your mind. Veterans are not so different that you cannot build bridges from shared culture and experiences.

EXPERIENCE

As we move further into this discussion about experiences and trauma we will be covering the typical experiences that many or most Veterans will have been through. These are things you can use to begin to build that relationship that is so important to our work. And of course, it begins with Boot camp.

Boot camp is a scary place. 100% of those who have served have had to go through some form of organized indoctrination in the form of a boot camp, a basic training, or some other similarly titled and intended right of passage. Typically the purpose of the basic military training is to create basically trained Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, & Airmen.

This is perhaps the best known, if not the least understood, event in the journey of a Veteran. We've seen boot camp scenes in movies like Full Metal Jacket, Jarhead, Stripes, and countless other films…

The purpose of boot camp is fairly clear, to basically train troops. This is the entry point for military service and as such it is where recruits are first exposed, or thrown into the deep-end – learning the basic aspects of basic military culture and military service in a pressure cooker. They get a new language, a new identity, a new title, a new role, in many ways – much of their previous self is left behind (or at the least tucked away for the time being).

It's a shocking experience, definitely traumatic at the time. I can recall, we had to stand guard in the squad bay where my platoon lived during boot camp. It's called Firewatch. In the middle of the night, recruits would sit straight up in bed and yell, "eye eye, sir" then fall back prone and go back to sleep. This is not something you are used to seeing before joining the military, and it symptomatic of the kind of stress placed on recruits entering military service.

Boot camp lasts forever in the moment but is only the blink of an eye in hindsight. I can only think of one other time that I've ever learned so much in such a short period of time, when I was in Iraq. This isn't hyperbole, and it is not meant to set me apart, it is pure fact. In fact, most if not all of the training we do in the military is designed to prepare us for the eventuality that we will or may be exposed to certain challenges in a combat situation.

Most of us don't see combat, and you can see that if you look at the breadth of jobs done in the military. In fact, even most combat jobs never see "combat." So what are we training for?

Two things:

> To keep the giant military machine moving - think support roles – supply, Motor-T, shop keepers, medical professionals, administration, etc.
>
> To support the mission vis-à-vis our own unique skillsets – whether that be communicators, infantry or some other piece we bring to the fight

It's been said that in war, nothing happens except for the few times that it does. You remember next to nothing specific about war except the few major events you participated in. It's funny, but serving in the military when you're not in a combat zone – or as we call it, in Garrison, is actually very similar.

Much of the time you're not training, you're waiting for some other class, or training event to happen. These are the things that we remember as Veterans. Things like:

- Exceptional events on the rifle range
- Firing new weapons
- Attending courses – if not the material of the course
- Shenanigans - to break up the monotony

Every Veteran has been through basic training – that however, was not the extent or even majority of their training. It was certainly hard and shocking and left a permanent impression on us, but that's' because it was the first time. The rest of our military existence is defined by the courses we go to and the training we receive.

Military Life & WAR as an Experience

As advocates, we should understand that when we ask someone what they did while in the military, their job is only the outer most layer of the onion that is their skillset- and not even reflective of most of what they actually did while serving.

Most of these skillsets were developed for the purpose of committing to and winning battles and wars. War is a tough thing to describe as an experience – it is certainly traumatic. I'll go out here and say that as I describe my experience it is not exceptional.

The most scared I've ever been was in the C-17 on my way from Kuwait to Al Asad, Iraq. We'd trained and refreshed on our rifles, machine guns, communications protocol, first aid. We'd been issued the latest body armor and packs. We'd been given "safety rounds" and briefings while waiting for our "stick" to be called in Kuwait.

We'd been through Rear Area Security, Convoy Security, Enemy Prisoner of War, Improvised Explosive Device, Casualty, Combat, Weapons, Martial Arts, Desert Survival, Combined Arms Exercises, Urban Combat, SE Asia Intelligence, Land Navigation, Language, Anti-Terrorism, Swim Qualification, Vehicle Recovery, Close Air Support, and other training in the 6 months prior to deployment.

Being a trusting pragmatist I assumed this would be all the training I would need. It seemed like we were training for every eventuality.

Once there, and settled in to our FOB (forward operating base), I discovered the nature of most war – that it doesn't happen all at once.

My biggest fear from that day was the three days we had to train with those we were replacing and later on the three days I had to train those who replaced me. Quite literally, the worst part of the whole thing was the anticipation.

I did participate in some traumatic events, at least I considered them traumatic. But I was never really scared like I was prior to getting there – it was more of a serene focus on what I'd already known how to do. To this day I use a practice, practice, practice mindset I used to overcome fear – this is something I've learned, thanks to having been in war as a Marine.

When you work with Veterans, they are going to be bringing learned behaviors into your discussion as well. Some of those behaviors are survival skills: having a weapon nearby, double checking everything you do, having absolute knowledge of something and/or questioning your confidence in your knowledge. Much of this comes from either going to war or training to go to war, in other words, the military experience.

While we are many years into a Global War on Terrorism, a large number of Veterans and those who are serving today have never or will never be sent to a combat zone. Identifying and classifying combat & war vs non-combat, or peace time Veterans, is a lame duck. It doesn't help us to understand how to better support Veterans and it frankly doesn't make that much of a difference.

I'm not saying that someone with a purple heart, combat decorations, and a Medal of Honor won't have a different perspective on life than someone who manned a desk in Tennessee for the entirety of their military service. I am instead pointing out the root of many myths about our military and the danger of assumptions.

Namely, that there is such a thing as peace & war time. For every decade of American History, America has been at war somewhere. Or more appropriately, her military has. Prior to the turn of the 20th century this was perhaps a little easier for people to grasp as the majority of our wars were on American soil. The revolution, the war of 1812, the civil war, the plains wars, the Spanish American war, the Mexican American war. And so on.

For our forefathers it was a forgone conclusion that serving in the military meant serving in war. Nowadays it's quite a bit different, most people don't serve. But those who do, they still deploy and fight at the same rate we always have. The big difference being, now we do it overseas, instead of our own back yard.

Let's go back and revisit what we already know. Boot camp indoctrinates us to the military mindset. Verbiage like, "kill," "roger," "check," become part of our lexicon. We practice shooting our weapons at people shaped targets, and learn what we can about the tactics of our stated or perceived enemies. We continue this in further training to operate effectively as a team in different environments, to lead in combat and in garrison, to become technically and tactically proficient.

There is in fact no difference in this preparation between "wartime" and "peacetime" Veterans. The only difference is the number of folks "downrange."

You can never judge from a Veterans time in service what their experiences are and as we will discuss shortly what their traumas may have been and may continue to be when they come home.

THE DISCHARGE & "COMING HOME"

Through the years there have been different ways to "come home."

After WWII troops serving in Europe and the pacific theater took ocean liners to get home. Their journey home was weeks long when their mission was finished. However, beginning with some in Korea and especially those in Vietnam – the process of "rotating in and rotating out" and coming home was sped up significantly.

Consider the challenge of having one mindset, a way of doing things that is your safety net. Something you are in control of and that you rely upon to support yourself physically and mentally, perhaps even to save your life. And in less than 24 hours those same behaviors that are so supportive to you, are all the sudden not needed or in some cases absolutely inappropriate, as you've been pulled from a war zone and thrust into a not at war America in less than a day.

When we get home, it is often just as much or more of a shock to us, as it was leaving in the first place. We have to re-discover our place in our family, our community, and our life, which has to our bewilderment has carried on in our absence.

This doesn't just apply to war. Most service members don't serve where they grew up. When they separate, they too often "go home." To find life has moved on in their absence.

It's unsettling and counterintuitive to wake up and realize that your whole support structure is gone just because you've "come home."

Coming home from war, from abroad, or from the military often involves the process of being discharged. While serving, you spend a lot of time thinking about how much time to have left to serve. However, no matter how hard you wish for that separation day – or perhaps how hard you try to hold on, everyone who serves is going to leave the service.

Nowadays there are longer lead times for most service members. Some of the branches spend 6 months to a year preparing the service members for discharge. Service members are required to go to financial planning courses, employment assistance courses…course after course after course. Hopefully taught by someone who has actually discharged themselves in the past .

This, though, is only the process for active duty – those that serve in the National Guard and Reserve often get a condensed or non-existent version of these courses. Sometimes, it's all done in one weekend.

The purpose of the military, the primary mission at the end of the day is Mission Accomplishment – to WIN wars. There are other administrations set-up to "Serve those who've served" – Namely, The Department of Veterans Affairs. In this last point you can see an enormous support gap. The military provides for those currently serving, and the VA provides for those who have served. For those in transition – neither's stated mission is to help those troops out.

The discharge process is a letting go. Akin to the last day of a job, when you walk out the door and realize that whatever is going to happen from this day forward will occur without your signature.

You are now a Veteran – and it's on YOU to figure out how to take care of yourself from now on.

PREPARING YOURSELF

We know that the experience of joining and being in the military is characterized by a conglomeration of stories ranging from Bootcamp to Training to Deployments & operations, even discharges.

With many of these experiences come certain hallmark traumas. If you recall, traumas are like experiences or memories, except we don't choose to recall them, they force themselves upon our memories and emotions, and bodies.

Remember the conversation I had with the Veteran in Starbucks? I was not prepared at all. The Veteran told me they had been sexually assaulted…raped, and my mind went blank. What do I say? "I'm sorry"…"I understand"…"Oh no…"

If you don't consider these things, and you communicate to Veterans they can trust you, you may end up like me, lost for words and absent of thoughts and action. This is not a desirable place to be.

In order to head off some of that, I want to introduce you to a few of the more common traumas faced by Veterans and give you a couple tips for how to respond if you're put in a situation where this information is shared with you.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Post Traumatic Stress or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is s a generally a learned or trained response to stimuli. A friend of mine and another mentor likens it a phobia of a memory. We're going to go pretty quick through this topic, though we will delve deeper into the subject in future workshops.

At the root level, we talk about Post Traumatic Stress being a response to a traumatic event. It can be a passing set of symptoms brought on by sights, smells, sounds and other stimuli or a it can be prolonged and persistent long term aversion, risk seeking, hyper vigilance and/or other behaviors.

Most Veterans support advocates will not be diagnosing PTSD as part of their everyday work, and yet some of you may.

Think for a moment about how you might react to a traumatic event. A car accident, an assault, a death. For most, a significantly increased level of fear, excitement, adrenaline, freezing, anxiety, frustration, and feelings of helplessness will cycle through your consciousness.

How will or would you react in a survival situation? How do Veterans react?

Survival is first and foremost on peoples' minds If it's not in their conscious mind, it's most certainly in their subconscious mind. We've all heard the terms: fight or flight. In reality this is not the way people respond to extraordinary events. In most cases it actually becomes a FREEZE, FLIGHT, FIGHT response. Veterans though are trained to respond differently from the first day of boot camp.

We talked about the experiences of boot camp, training, & war/combat as a precursor to this point. Veterans are trained to NOT freeze in response to stimuli. In fact, they are conditioned to FIGHT, FLIGHT, but never freeze.

This is how you stay alive in life-threatening situations, by jumping to 100% when the enemy has their sights on you.

I remember when I came home from Iraq, I was at my family's home for Easter, it was about 2-3 weeks after coming back stateside. My little brother was there, a petulant teenage boy at the time. We were joking around about something as the other adults were chatting at the dining room table.

For some reason he tossed a deodorant stick at me. Just a small deodorant stick and it sailed through the air towards my head. I can't explain why I reacted the way I did. I grabbed the deodorant stick in mid air, threw it back at him full speed and charged at him…

I got 2 steps away from him before my brain kicked in and I thought, "what am I doing?" Everyone in the house had gone silent, it was one of those situations where your little sister has mashed potatoes in her mouth, but her jaw has dropped and it falls out and off her fork.
People were giving me that look that said, "what the heck just happened?" These were my in-laws and they had essentially no exposure to Veterans prior to my having joined. But it is one of the things that reminds me most when working with Veterans, that I need to be aware that my reality may not be their reality.

This was not the only Post Traumatic type symptom I displayed, the impulsivity and instant aggression. I had issues with anxiety, to the point I thought I was having a heart attack one day, thrill seeking behaviors, emotional numbness, not being able to concentrate, absentmindedness, and others. Like many though, this has diminished over time. At it's worst, I would say that it was like going through puberty again.

All of the behaviors I listed prior to this brief anecdote or within the anecdote could be presented by anyone that walks through the door. Anyone we see every day on the street. In fact, many of you who have never served will experience a traumatic event in your lifetime and as a result you will probably display some of the symptoms I just mentioned.

Most of us have in-built or outside support systems that allow us to overcome these crisis points. And yet others, as a result of other concurrent crisis, or the way it imprints in your mind find it extraordinarily challenging and debilitating.

We know that it's not a matter of strength, intelligence, "mental fortitude." Everyone responds to these things differently.

Perhaps the most notable aspects of working with Veterans, or anyone, who are experiencing Post Traumatic Stress is asymmetrical response to stimuli. Meaning, they get angry when they should be annoyed, they cry or openly sob over minor events. Things where the response doesn't match the stimuli.

This can be for several reasons. Sometimes, people experiencing Post Traumatic Stress find themselves re-experiencing situations relating to that stress. This is when things are most acute and you should be aware of your environment and actions. With Veterans this can be re-experiencing combat, bombs, or other events.

Generally speaking, some things that you can do if you suspect a Veteran is experiencing Post Traumatic Stress include. Announcing your actions, especially when you may have to reach under a desk, behind a wall, somewhere your hands cannot be seen, or when approaching the Veteran.

Remember my story about the deodorant? My threat response was not a conscious decision, it often isn't. The key is to not make yourself a threat as best as you can.

One of the best ways to do that is to keep your hands visible. Reaching into your pocket, into a jacket, behind your back. These are things that potentially put Veterans in danger.

It's not that Veterans are more or less likely than anyone else to experience Traumatic events and subsequent Post Traumatic Stress. It's that veterans are trained to evaluate and mitigate threats.

Someone reliving an experience of a car accident is not as likely to be a danger to us as someone re-experiencing combat and who is conditioned to respond to those threats immediately with 100% commitment. Hiding your hands can be a threat.

For that matter so can assuming a non squared posture. Meaning turned to the side while your head is facing forward. This is a fighting stance or at least the basics of one. Often, folks take this stance when reaching for a weapon. Once again it's about mitigating your threat presentation.

You often will have a harder time though controlling your environment. Distractions are a challenge. Have you ever been around a Veteran that jumped after hearing a fire cracker? We bought our house in when I returned from Iraq. One night laying in bed, just about to drift off to sleep, I heard a loud crash in the living room. The kind that echoed through the house. Once again, it was an immediate threat response to me. My wife sat bolt up, but by that time, I was low crawling through the bedroom door with a heavy duty flashlight tucked in my hand to use as a weapon of opportunity. I was low crawling of course because everyone expects someone to run through a doorway upright. This is how many Veterans think.

It was only kids egging our house. My adrenaline was jacked so high, I washed the egg off the house in my tightly whites. I stood out there for an hour, bringing myself down. Environmental stimuli are incredibly unnerving for Veterans who find challenges with stress.

Smells, sights, sounds can immediately bring us back into certain frames of reference. My grandfather would dive under the kitchen table during the fourth of July, this is decades after the Korean war. It's a difficult thing, but if you're able, try to eliminate environmental distractions or stimuli, it's one less thing you have to be concerned with.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Similar in presentation but not necessarily in origin to PTS are Traumatic Brain Injuries, also known as TBI's. TBI's present similar to PTSD and are often concurrent with PTSD but are truly a separate challenge despite these similar attributes.

When someone has a brain injury, like a concussion or perhaps something that appears more severe. They lose brain function. This is something they cannot get back. You cannot grow back dead brain matter; it is a permanent change to the physical state of your brain. And to the way you think, emote, feel, remember, and are. This means is that any thoughts, emotions, memories you use that part of the brain for may be either wiped out, or altered.

The longer a Veteran served and the more times they've been deployed to a combat zone significantly correlates to their likelihood of having experienced (or suffered) a traumatic brain injury. Does this mean that Combat zone exposure, Deployments, and war cause TBI. Absolutely not! But it is something to keep in mind when working with Veterans.

I already told you that in many ways TBI's present the same way as Post Traumatic Stress. In fact, the two are often concurrent. The same traumatic even that likely caused the brain injury also resulted in PTSD or sub-diagnostic PTSD.

How do you know then if someone is presenting with a TBI and what should we do if we see this? After all, it's not really our field.

The challenge with TBI is that you can not tell in any way whether a Veteran has a brain injury, in most cases it cannot be absolutely determined until the Veteran dies and someone gets a closer look at their brain. And because so many of the tell tale signs double with other traumas has been exceedingly difficult to tell.

Our best course of action is often to do the following:

- Repeat yourself, over and over, as necessary. Sometimes, often, it is very hard for Veterans who have a TBI to "imprint" information. Repeating your actions, repeating your questions, repeating everything is not obnoxious, it is necessary.

  Understand that TBI can affect emotional or physical responses to stimuli. We're talking dead pathways here. Things that used to make someone laugh or cry may no longer have an effect. And because the brain is what we'd call, plastic – as it's relearning how to function, how to process emotions and stimuli, it is rewiring pathways through new brain territory.

- Announce your behavior
- Keep hands visible
- Stay squared up
- Eliminate distractions
- Stay calm and non-confrontational

MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA

Military sexual Trauma is a "trauma" that has been in the news a lot lately. Strictly speaking it is the genesis of trauma. The experience itself, the sexual assault often results in Post Traumatic Stress, and or other mental health, and physical challenges in the short and long term following the event or events. Military Sexual Trauma is another one of those made-up terms, like Traumatic Brain Injury. It is first and foremost a sexual trauma or more appropriately assault or harassment (verbal or physical) of a sexual manner.

You might find yourself in a position where Veterans feel they want to share this personal information with you. What should you do, what will you do?

Here are a couple ideas:

- Thank the Veteran for having the confidence to trust you with the experience.
- Don't re-victimize the Veteran – don't say, that must be so hard? What were you wearing? Did the perpetrator get caught, etc.

The next step is up to you, but I encourage you to ask it, even if it is to commit to making a good referral:

- Ask how you can help.

I know it's not something you may be comfortable with, but you have to realize the incredible courage the Veteran has and the absolute trust they have in you to share this information. Even if you ask to help, you can make referrals to folks who are able and experienced in providing longer term support.

In the end, this all boils down to a simple concept, have empathy about the Veteran you're assisting and be willing to commit yourself to taking action to help out.

CONCLUSION: THE UNKNOWN TRAUMA

Lastly, we must discuss the Unknown Trauma. This is the trauma you will be faced with most often. Veterans don't walk around with a badge that gives you information on these kind of things. They rarely are able to self diagnose what's been ailing them for months, years, or decades. Having gone through this workshop, you likely know more about what could be weighing on a Veteran, than many of them will know.

As we commit ourselves to working more closely with Veterans we have to remember that their experiences are what make them unique. Veterans have incredible experiences, if you get the chance, listen and ask. But you have to be aware that with some of those experiences come a greater potential for subsequent trauma.

Veterans are not to be feared. As a whole, they commit less violent crime than almost any other population. But you can breach their trust more easily and to be straight forward, if you're not careful you can re-victimize them or add to their challenges rather than being part of their solutions.

I know everyone taking this course has fantastic people skills, that's why and how we do what we do. Keep doing what works for you – I hope above all that the information shared in here helps you out. It is, I hope another step on your journey to better understand and better support Veterans.

…

Thank you for continuing your commitment to supporting Veterans.

Josh Penner
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Core Values Consulting
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