

PREFACE

The authors are two Vietnam-era combat veterans. Both are survivors in long term PTSD recovery. One author has many years of licensed professional experience in the treatment of trauma. The other author has studied the history of war and combat trauma for over sixty years.

This is a book of hard-earned wisdom, written for warriors trained to kill and to care for their fellow comrades – soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coastguard men and women, active, reserve, and national guard; and for police and all first responders – fellow survivors everywhere.

In this book we provide an overview of PTSD and its ancient roots, and briefly outline suggested answers to haunting issues like these:

- Why you may feel the way you do.
- Why you feel that you don't belong, that you don't fit in.
- Why the world seems screwed up and in such a mess.
- Why life may seem to have little or no meaning or purpose.
- Ways to find the purpose you were made for.
- How to get rid of feelings about the past – bad dreams, terrifying nightmares.
- Is there such a thing as true freedom, or is it just more BS?
- How to overcome sadness with random acts of kindness daily.
- How to handle life's pressures, even if it seems life is almost over.
- How to resist temptations when cut off from friends and family.
- How to set yourself free when hurting and lonely.
- How to overcome anger with courage by doing what is right even when it is hard to do.
- How to stop worrying and thinking of the past, wasting precious time and energy on things you cannot control.

Our book was designed and published to be provided free to suffering PTSD survivors, with copies made available through military and Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals and support networks, as well as to jails and prisons, throughout the United States.

To do this, we have formed a Minnesota nonprofit corporation, Veterans Empowered, Inc., with the following mission: To inform, educate, assist, and convey information to U.S. veterans, caretakers and others who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Veterans Empowered, Inc. was formed to raise funds for the purpose of assembling, writing, publishing, and distributing PTSD materials and information free of charge to veterans throughout the U.S. Solicited funds are used exclusively for this purpose. All related work is accomplished by unpaid volunteers.

This is important work – open this book to any page – trauma is a fact of life and has been a product of the human condition from the earliest records of the human species on this planet.

In our book we highlight the following:

- PTSD can happen to anyone.
- PTSD and substance abuse co-occur at a high rate.
- PTSD increases the risk of relapse from substance abuse by a factor of 10 times.
- Since the ancient Greeks, and for thousands of years before, soldiers have used alcohol and drugs to ease and numb their physical and psychological pain from mortal combat.
- Since 9/11, tens of thousands of U.S. veterans have committed suicide and thousands more are homeless, or in jails and prisons, suffering from untreated PTSD.
- Memories of traumatic events triggered by PTSD can be overwhelming.

- Without awareness and treatment, PTSD and addiction combine with disastrous results.
- Divorce rates and incarceration rates are higher for veterans with PTSD than for civilians.
- Children suffer, too.
- For these reasons, it is often hard for many veterans to find and hold civilian jobs.
- Since 9/11, over 7,000 veterans have died in combat; but more than 5 times that number have committed suicide and the actual number of suicides may be as high as 120,000.

Veterans Empowered, Inc. strives to increase awareness and knowledge of the societal impact of untreated PTSD, and of the opportunity and potential for a better life through awareness and treatment. As fellow combat veterans in recovery, the authors and founders of Veterans Empowered, Inc. are committed to giving back to our brothers and sisters in combat, and to PTSD sufferers everywhere.

The book you are about to read tells of the devastating effects of PTSD, today and over centuries of time. It is designed for the common soldier and is organized in three parts with many illustrations. Part I is a simple clinical description of PTSD; Part II covers a brief history of PTSD; and Part III is an analysis of trauma in my earlier book, *“God’s Angry Man: The Incredible Journey of Private Joe Haan,”* written in 2010 before I understood PTSD, dissociation, and derealization.

“Veterans in Crisis” offers knowledge and hope for millions of veterans, and for others who suffer the debilitating effects of PTSD. We show the effects that war has had on soldiers from the beginning of time, well before the Bible was written, even before the written word, and all the way to the wars of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Ukraine and potential for nuclear war.

Historically, war has been a central institution in human civilization, with its history going back to the beginning of time. Over the ages, the combat soldier is essentially the same, whether slashing and thrusting with a sword, throwing a spear, shooting a musket or rifle, or fighting in a modern battle tank, ship, or airplane, or controlling a satellite, missile, or combat drone.

The key to military success in battle is the efficient deployment and maneuvering of forces to kill and neutralize the enemy. In the process, many soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines die and are wounded. Some return home with invisible psychological wounds and don't understand what's wrong. We salute these courageous men and women and seek to broaden awareness about "*the beast within, the demons earned*" when traumatized combat veterans return home from war.

To our fellow veterans and thousands of PTSD therapists, counselors, and comrades around the world, "*Thank You for Your Service.*" To those who continue to suffer we say, "*Hang in There,*" for in the darkness of depression there is light at the end of the tunnel, with hope for recovery through understanding and knowledge. Our mission is code-named "**Big Willy-Won**" – try to do a "Willy" every day.

Steve Lansing (the "Doc") and Wayne Quist (the "Colonel")

Veterans Empowered, Inc.

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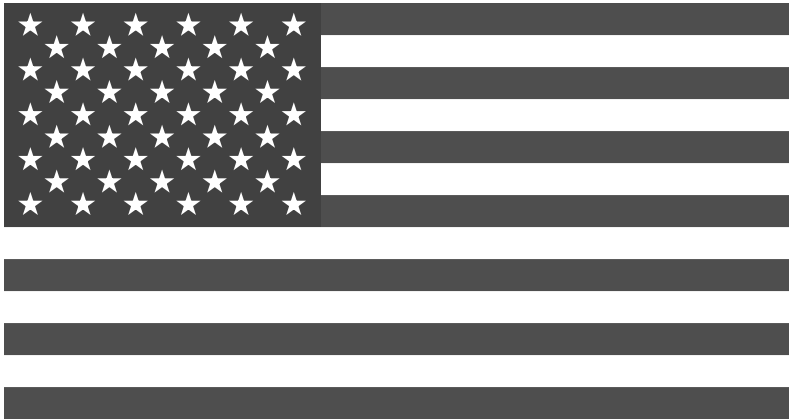
www.vetsempowered.org

***“For unto whomsoever much is given,
of them shall be much required.”***

Luke 12:48

“AND DEATH SHALL HAVE NO DOMINION”

Paul to the Romans 6:9



TO BE EMPOWERED, THE DOC SAYS...

Be Honest With Yourself.

Be Impeccable With Your Word.

Don't Take Anything Personally.

Don't Assume the Worst.

Always Do Your Best.

The Disabled Veterans National Foundation DVNF provides critically needed support to disabled and at-risk veterans who are wounded—physically or psychologically—after defending our safety and our freedom.

PART I

**WHAT IS
PTSD?**

SOME WOUNDS AREN'T VISIBLE

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

OUR WORD “**TRAUMA**” HAS GREEK ORIGINS
THAT MEANS “**WOUND.**”

**Albert Einstein once asked
Sigmund Freud, “Why war?”**

The famous psychoanalyst was unable to answer.

**War has bedeviled humankind at least since the beginning
of recorded history.**

TRAUMA & POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

The human species has proved to be extremely resilient throughout history – wars, natural disasters, violence, betrayal.

- Trauma leaves marks on people, their culture, their history.

Trauma also leaves traces on human minds and emotions, biology, and immune system, and on the capacity for joy and intimacy.

- Trauma affects those directly exposed, and their wives, children, families, and close friends.

Soldiers often return from tours of duty in combat zones with rage and an absence of emotion – *thousands have committed suicide.*

- Wives of soldiers with PTSD tend to become depressed, children insecure and anxious – *but help is available.*

Veterans with PTSD expend tremendous amounts of energy just to keep functioning.

- They often have persistent memories of terror, shame for showing weakness and vulnerability, nightmares, flashbacks.

They feel out of control, fear they are permanently damaged beyond redemption, emotionally numb, distant from people.

- Aimlessness is countered by intense involvement in work and projects to keep busy and avoid the PTSD demons.

Since the 1990s brain imaging tools have shown what actually happens in the human brain when exposed to traumatic stress.

VETERANS CRISIS LINE DIAL 988, PRESS 1

Since its launch in 2022, America's suicide prevention hotline — 988 — has fielded millions of calls, texts, and chats, a number that represents many lives saved. The 988 option was added to make it easier for people to remember, providing an alternative to 911 for situations that don't require police or emergency services. With \$1 billion funding from the government, the new line has invested more in text and chat functions, which have seen an exponential increase in use.

TO BE EMPOWERED, THE DOC SAYS...

The key to healing is getting started, no matter how difficult or painful – that can sometimes be the hardest part, to get started.

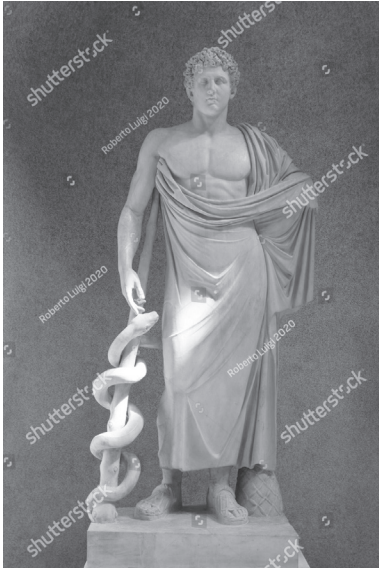
“Sobriety is one of the essential starting points for recovery from complex PTSD after combat.” (Shay, *“Odysseus in America”*)

THE HUMAN MIND IS A MOSAIC.

THE NAME “ODYSSEUS” IS LINKED TO THE GREEK VERB “TO SUFFER PAIN.”

**“WARRIORS DEAL WITH DEATH,
THE WORK OF THE GODS.”**

ASCLEPIUS Ancient Greek God of Medicine



**Statue of Asclepius,
Museum of Epidaurus Theater,
Greece**

Killed by his grandfather Zeus with a thunderbolt; not enough people were passing onto the underworld due to his skillful healing.

Today PTSD is no longer considered the wrath of vengeful and angry gods, but its effects on today's soldiers would be quickly recognized by ancient physicians like Asclepius.

Asclepius was venerated for his healing abilities. Over the centuries his status evolved from mortal to divine. He was vested with the unique ability to rise from the dead. Eventually, he became the most worshipped god in ancient Greece.

The Staff of Asclepius is a rough-hewn branch and snake representing the symbol of medicine and health care.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

- **Throughout history**, PTSD has been called many names – traumatic neurosis, nostalgia, hysterics, neurasthenia, war stress, shell shock, battle fatigue, combat exhaustion, malingering, among others.
- **“Nostalgia”** was first used in 1761 when soldiers reported feeling homesick, sleep disturbances, and anxiety after being in combat.

- **“Soldier’s heart”** was used in the American Civil War to describe PTSD symptoms blamed on cardiac problems as the source of anxiety and overstimulation.
- **“Railway spine”** explained physical causes for PTSD symptoms when railroad accidents became common in the 19th century and accident victims exhibited severe emotional distress.
- **Until recently**, military authorities labeled soldiers, sailors, and airmen as cowards, lacking moral fiber if they revealed signs of stress or psychiatric symptoms of trauma.

U.S. MARINE CORPS RIFLEMAN’S CREED

“I will learn its weaknesses, its strength, its parts, its accessories, its sights, and its barrel. I will ever guard it against the ravages of weather and damage as I will ever guard my legs, my arms, my eyes, and my heart against damage. I will keep my rifle clean and ready. We will become part of each other.”

HOW COMMON IS PTSD?

PTSD can occur after a shocking and dangerous event that you see or happens to you. You think your life or other lives are in danger.

- PTSD can happen to anyone – it is not a sign of weakness.
- About 60% of men and 50% of women experience at least one trauma in their lives.
- Men are more likely to experience accidents, physical assault, combat, disaster, or witness death or injury.
- Women are more likely to experience sexual assault and child sexual abuse.
- Several factors can increase the chance that someone will develop PTSD. If you were directly exposed to the trauma or were injured, you are more likely to develop PTSD.

- There are many forms of therapy, but many still have a diagnosis of PTSD after completing treatment. (Steenkamp, Litz, Hoge, & Marmar, 2015)

TRAUMA IMPRINTS BODY, MIND, AND SOUL

- Over 13 million people have PTSD in the U.S.
- Trauma physically affects the brain, causing anxiety, rage, loss of control, and inability to concentrate. Severe trauma is recorded in the gut (viscera); the mind keeps it a secret.
- Veterans, families, refugees, and others deal with the painful aftermath of trauma.
- Trauma literally reshapes the body and the brain with diminished capacities for engagement, self-control, trust, intimacy, and pleasure – robs a sense of being in charge.
- The mind tries to leave trauma behind, but the body keeps people trapped in the past – silent emotions and feelings – always on alert for danger, rejection.

TREATMENT OFFERS RECOVERY BY ACTIVATING THE BRAIN'S NATURAL ABILITY TO HEAL AND REGAIN SELF-CONTROL.

- This is the brain's natural neuroplasticity to regain control and be fully alive.
- New neural pathways are created by activities that engage the motor, auditory, and visual parts of the brain.