

Empowering Veterans:

Addressing Addiction, Substance Use, & Suicide by *Embracing Growth and Purpose*

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Why this presentation?

- 1. 18.8 Million Veterans in the US (7.5%)
 - 1. >650k in education
- 2. 200-250k more each year
- 3. Veterans 200% Greater Risk for SUD
- 4. 57% Greater Risk Suicide (and growing)
- 5. Transition Brings New Threats
- 6. Veteran Student Attrition 28.4%
- 7. Veteran Employee Turnover 60%@1yr, 90%@2yr







Who's in the room?

- 1. Veterans?
- 2. Loved Ones?
- 3. Work w/ Veterans?
- 4. What do you want to get?







CONNECTION

AUTHENTICITY

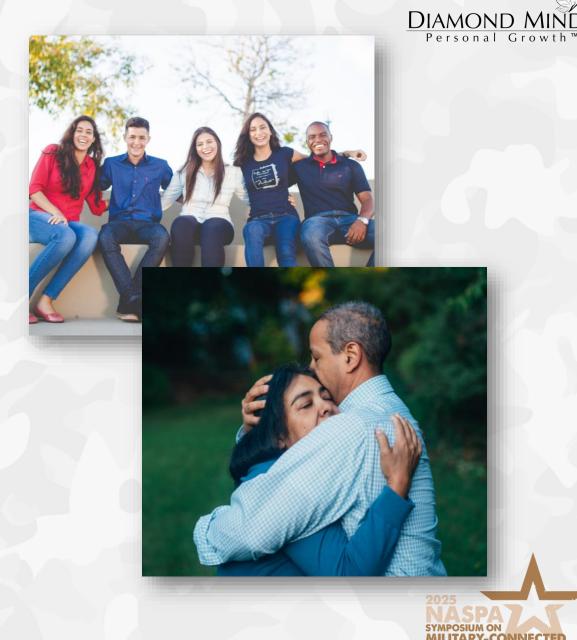
MEANING



Basic Needs for Emotional Wellbeing

1. Connection

- Safety and Security
- > Emotional Regulation
- > Health & Wellbeing
- > Smile







2. Authenticity

- Secure Being True Self
- > Safe Future Connection
- > Self-Esteem & Efficacy

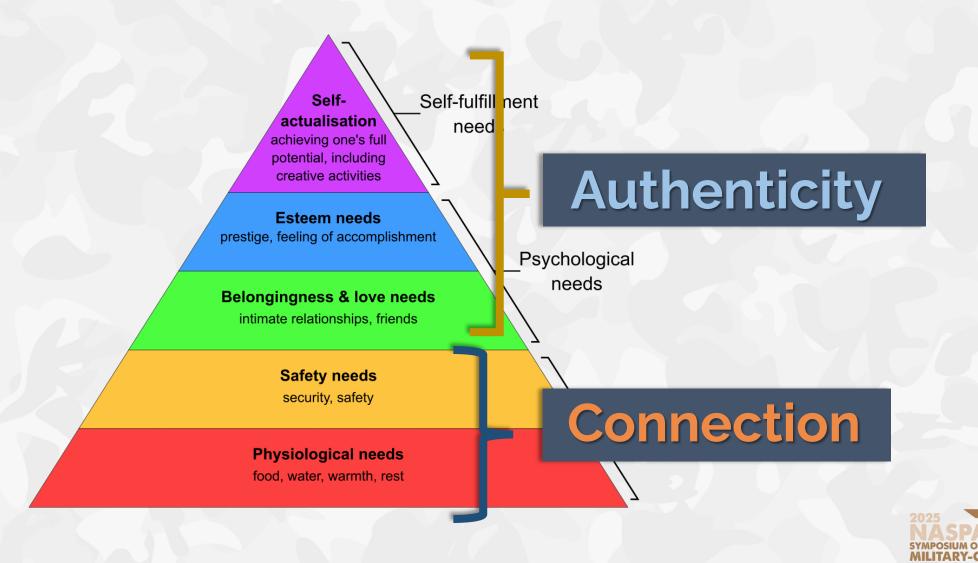














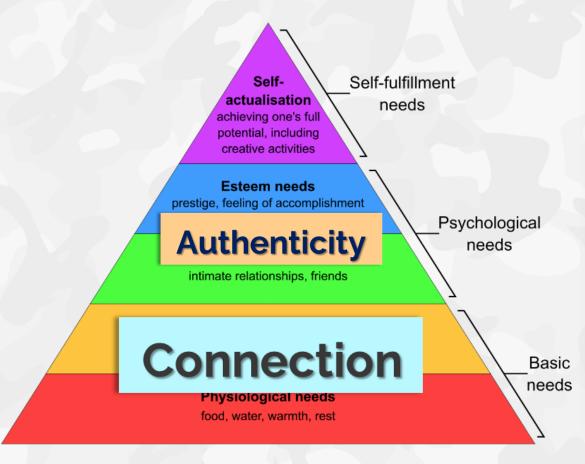
What Path Do We Choose?







What Path Do We Choose?





SYMPOSIUM ON MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS









Basic Needs for Emotional Wellbeing

1. Connection

- 2. Authenticity
 - > Deludes Benefits
 - > Promotes Fear + Shame
 - ➤ Limits Receiving of Love?











To What End?

Unfulfilled

Meaning?

Want?

Fear

Able to say no?

Alone

Stress

Disease

Lost

Disconnected

Missing?





Basic Needs for Emotional Wellbeing

- 1. Connection
- 2. Authenticity
- 3. Meaning
 - Meaning Seeking Creatures
 - Purpose & Direction
 - Existential Void
 - > Ends Suffering

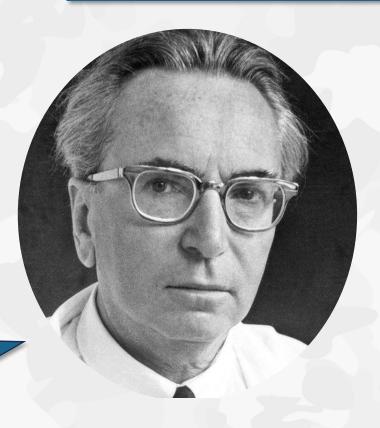




"Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose."

"In some ways **suffering ceases** to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice."

Meaning



DR. VIKTOR FRANKL



Veterans in Transition...





1. Connection

- Internal Void
- Unsafe/Unsecure
- Alone Chamber Event



Veterans in Transition...





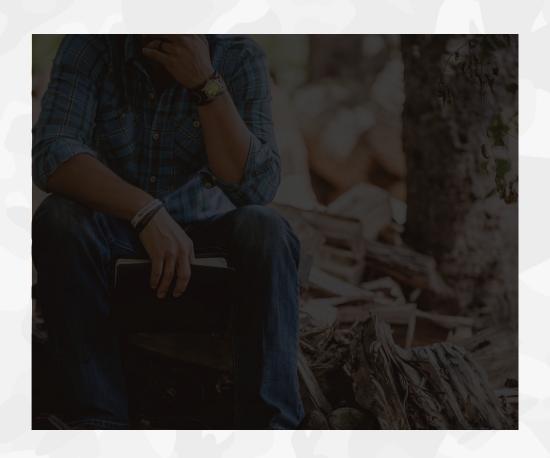
2. Authenticity

- Masks/Shame
- Defective?
- Party Experience









3. Meaning

A true warrior fights not because they hate what's in front of them, but because how much they love what's behind them.







- **1.** Connection
- **2.** Authenticity
- **3.** Meaning





Trauma is...

- Is Individually Defined

- Prior Assumption Shattered

- No Return to Baseline
- Altered View of World
- Altered View of Self
- Change Values & Beliefs





May Experience as...

- 1. World Not Safe As I Am.
- 2. Still Need Connection & Meaning
- 3. Exchange Authenticity for Security
- 4. Find New Meaning in Avoiding Pain





How Is This Related?

Veterans: PTSD (1:5) SUD/MH (200%) SI (57%)

> Battlefield? Mil Sexual Assault?

Trauma of Transition
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Addiction is manifested in **any behavior** that a person craves, finds temporary relief or pleasure in but suffers negative consequences as a result of, and yet has difficulty giving up."

- **Dr. Gabor Maté**, In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts

Why The Pain?



Connection



The opposite of addiction is connection.

- JOHANN HARI, TED SPEAKER





Authenticity



The reward for conformity was that everyone liked you except yourself.

- RITA MEA BROWN



Meaning

66

Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose.

DR. VIKTOR FRANKL





From Awareness to Action...





1. Connection - Self

- -Capacity for Love and Connection
- -Wins & Successes
- -Innate Strengths
- -Breath





1. Connection

- Active Duty Difficult
- Veteran Service Organizations
- Veteran Center & Social Groups
- Be the friend















2. Authenticity - Self

- -Know Your (New) Self
- -Want? Need? Enjoy?
- -Hide? Fear? Cost?







2. Authenticity

- Accept and Celebrate
- Comfort Comes in Time
- Bolster Emotional Resilience







3. Meaning

- -Be Intentional w/ Joy
- Follow Joy for Purpose
- New Ways to Serve







Mentorship





Meaning

POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH (PTG)

- 1. TRAUMA IS...
- 2. TRAUMA IS NOT... (DR. MATE)

"Post-traumatic growth is the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises."

- CALHOUN & TEDESCHI





Meaning

POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH (PTG)

Finding <u>meaning</u> for the traumatic events in one's life is often the difference between experiencing PTSD or PTG. <u>Such as the meaning for the suffering.</u>

Post-traumatic Growth (PTG) is not simply a return to baseline—it is an experience of improvement that for some persons is deeply profound.



UnspokenTrauma.vet



Be the connection



Express your truth Seek more joy



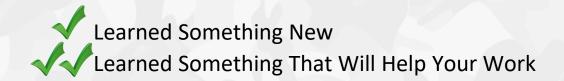














Take out your phone







4 15-Min a Day WARRIOR RESET

- ✓ Improve Self-Esteem & Sense of Control
- **✓** Develop Authenticity & Resilience
- ✓ Promotes Emotional Regulation
- ✓ Encourages Positivity & Growth Mindset





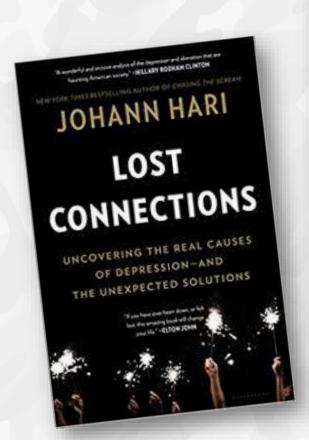
4 15-Min a Day WARRIOR RESET

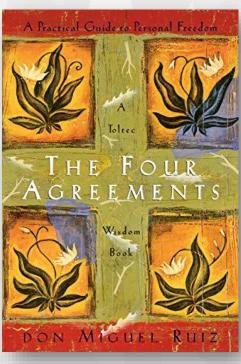
- > RECORDED LESSONS
- > 10-DAY WORKBOOK
- > GUIDED BREATHING
- DAILY REMINDERS (10-DAYS)

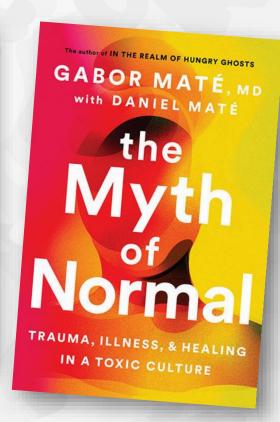


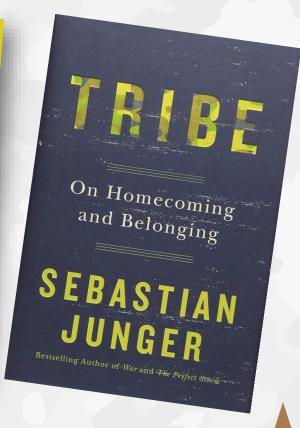


Recommended Reading











Questions & Sharing

Helping Veterans Express Their Full Potential!

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