



WE HONOR VETERANS

Caring Professionals on a Mission to Serve.

WARRIORS, DEATH AND DYING

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

February 21, 2018

Welcome!



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Audio Settings ^



Chat



Raise Hand



Q&A



Leave Meeting

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SOLDIER'S
heart

Transforming the Heart and Soul Wounds of War

INVOCATION

You tribes behold me!

The chiefs of old are gone.

Myself, I shall take
courage.

Sitting Bull



Our Program

- Warriors and the Death Imprint
- Warriors, Death and Dying in Traditional Cultures
- Principles and Practices for Aging Warriors
- Q & A, Comments, Discussion

A WARRIOR'S AGING AND PASSING: HOW SHALL WE HONOR IT?



SPECIAL ISSUES REGARDING VETERANS IN SUPPORTIVE CARE

- The numbers of WWII and Korean War veterans in care will continue to rapidly decline
- Vietnam veterans are aging early and dying off at an alarming rate and at younger ages. They are increasingly becoming our homeless, retirement, assisted living and hospice populations
- Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars are dying young of many aftermath plagues. Though there are fewer of them, they may need care in increasing numbers at younger ages
- Veterans of unknown and secret wars and “lifers” are also aging, at risk and need care
- As veterans age and prepare to leave us, special issues can arise related to their military history, no matter how long ago

WHAT IS A WARRIOR?

A Universal Archetype with a Unique Spirituality



“HAVE YOU MET MR. DEATH?”

Brian Delate, “Soldier’s Heart: The Movie”

“Out there, we’ve walked quite friendly up to death.”

Wilfred Owen, WWI poet.

“Death has made me wise and bitter and strong
And I am rich in all that I have lost.”

Siegfried Sassoon, WWI poet.

“Our jobs were to meet on the battlefield and either kill or be killed.”

Gunny,” Combat Marine, Korea and Vietnam

“I touched more dead bodies in that single year than I have living people in my entire life.”

Ray, Vietnam combat medic

WARRIORS AND THE DEATH IMPRINT

To the Flathead people, the word *warrior* means “one who is tasked to kill or to take blood to protect the tribe.”

“My dear, you have no idea how much I have struggled day after day just to go on living.”

90 year old WWII Concentration Camp Liberator to his wife

War creates an “indelible death imprint” in the survivor that causes:

- *Anxiety
- *Guilt
- *Psychic numbing & suppression of feelings
- *Suspicion of the counterfeit & false nurturing
- *Inability to create order & meaning

Robert Jay Lifton, “Home From the War”

ANCIENT WARRIOR ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH

“A man sees death in things.”

Epic of Gilgamesh, 2,000 BCE

“To meet destruction or to come through
These are the terms of war.”

Homer, *The Iliad*, 800 BCE

“There are few die well that die in battle.”

Shakespeare, *Henry V*

“By going on the warpath we know that we have done something bad, and we wish to hide our faces from *Wakan Tanka*.”

Black Elk, Lakota Medicine Man

“No chance for me to live. Mother, you may as well mourn.”

A Song of Sitting Bull

“Anyone in battle, though it be in a righteous cause, must be prepared to be slain by his enemies, for that is the destiny of warriors.”

Buddhist teaching

MODERN WARRIOR ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH

“No matter what... it should break your heart to kill.”

Brian Turner, Iraq

“If we must kill, let us honestly suffer the agony involved ourselves.”

M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie*

“The warrior’s soul does not return... until he has made peace with the souls of the enemy dead.”

Prof. Roger Brooke, Paratrooper, S. Africa

“The cost of our ideals is the struggle to find meaning in our losses.”

Chaplain George Tyler, Afghanistan



THE FINAL MISSION

Warriors need missions. They need to die well, with purpose and honor, achieving reconciliation, believing that their sacrifice contributed to a greater good. This is their final mission.

What constitutes dying well with purpose and honor for you and your veteran?

How can we work together -- the veteran, family and community (friends, neighbors, health care, military, veteran and social service systems) to facilitate a good end for this warrior?

SPECIAL ISSUES FOR VETERANS

APPROACHING THE END OF LIFE

- I am a warrior. I am supposed to “take it.” What about this pain and loss? Can I let down a lifetime of defenses?
- I have never spoken of the war. Can I now?
- Was I a good and just soldier? Did I do right or wrong?
- PTSD and its related war imagery often intensifies during the terminal process. Am I at war again?
- Flashback or dementia? How do we manage it?
- How did the war impact my relationships with others? Do I need to atone?
To make amends?
- Death is an old friend. How can I meet him? Will I meet old friends or foes?
- Did my service mean anything? Did it do any good?
- The foxhole creates atheists. If there was a God this would not have happened.
- I believe in God. How will I be judged before the Heavenly Tribunal? Heaven or hell for me?
- What am I leaving behind?

SPECIAL ISSUES FOR VETERANS OF CONTROVERSIAL, FORGOTTEN OR SECRET WARS

- “Killed me in Vietnam [or Iraq, Afghanistan, secret wars] and I didn’t even know.”
- Was the war right or wrong, moral or immoral? Was I? Am I a warrior or a murderer?
- How do I reconcile with my country’s treatment, neglect a/o betrayal of me?
- My country does not even know of my service. How can I feel honored? How take my place in history?
- What did it accomplish? Was it worth the sacrifice?

SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION FOR VETERANS: Some Practices



- Honoring my Fallen: altars, rituals, memorials and prayer
- Honoring and grieving all losses
- Reconciliation: meetings with other vets, former foes, civilians, politicians; receive overdue awards
- Healing: therapeutic responses to flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive memories
- Philanthropy: transforming identity; making amends; leaving good behind
- Legacy: passing it on; it doesn't end with me
- Storytelling: remembrance and teaching
- Prayer and blessings: sanctifying service and sacrifice
- Taking your place in history: oral histories, donations, relics, museums
- Funeral & Memorial planning

COMPLETING TASKS OF GRIEF AND HONOR

Ritual, Guided Imagery and Imaginal Dialogue



“When you kill
an enemy warrior
you become
responsible for his soul.”

— General Grant, Lakota Elder

RECONCILIATION

“Brothers who survived the same hell.”



LIVING MEMORIALS



VIET NAM: Windy Tombs and Altars



AN EXCHANGE OF LOVE AT DEATH'S DOORWAY



LAST MESSAGES AND TEACHINGS

TO THE FAMILY

“Tell my father I did right.”

Sgt. Richard Kirkland, Civil War

TO THE NATION

“We helped to make history. We are the living witnesses... We should leave our testimony before we go.”

Civil War Survivor of Libby Prison

MARATHON

Public Memorials and Grieving Sites



DEATH SONGS, MUSIC AND POETRY

I am a man
And wherever I lie
Is my own

SITTING BULL'S DEATH SONG,
STANDING ROCK RESERVATION
DECEMBER 15, 1890



DEATH AND DYING LESSONS FROM TRADITIONAL WARRIOR CULTURES

- Ancestor reverence and initiation
- Altars, graves and monuments
- Atonement
- Legacy – memories; memorials; meaning
- Affirmation of warrior destiny and place in history
- Reconciliation – with oneself, the living, the nation, the former foe
- Making peace with the dead
- Completing the grieving process
- Remembrance – nothing bad after I am gone; how will I be remembered?
- Death songs and final messages
- Becoming an ancestor



HONOR FOREVER

DR. EDWARD TICK AND SOLDIER'S HEART, INC.

Resources and Contact Information

Dr. Tick's books:

The Practice of Dream Healing (Quest Books, 2001)

War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (Quest Books, 2005), esp. Chapter 8, "Relations with the Missing and Dead"

Warrior's Return: Restoring the Soul After War (Sounds True, 2014)

Audio: Restoring the Warrior's Soul (Sounds True, 2015)

Contact information:

Visit our website for:

- information on upcoming events with Dr. Tick and Soldier's Heart leaders across the country
- Interviews, articles, videos and news about our military and veteran healing work

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Especially for veterans, their families and Hospice care providers:

Memorial Day Weekend Intensive Healing Retreat, May 25-28, 2018, Rowe MA:

<http://rowecenter.org/wp/events/memorial-day-retreat>