

# **The Road Home: Interdicting Suicide Risk by Strengthening Our Communities**

**06/26/2019**

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**Medal of Honor**

**173<sup>rd</sup> ABCT, Afghanistan**



# Foreword: Content of this Presentation



# Briefing Objectives

**Briefing: 10:00AM-10:30AM**

Talking Points

- The Road Home: From Antiquity to Present Day
  - Meaning of Community: Military and Veteran Definition
  - Loss of Community: Fueling Isolation & Suicidal Ideation
  - Importance of Community Connections: Areas of Focus
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**Guided & Open Discussion: 10:30AM-11:00AM**

Talking Points

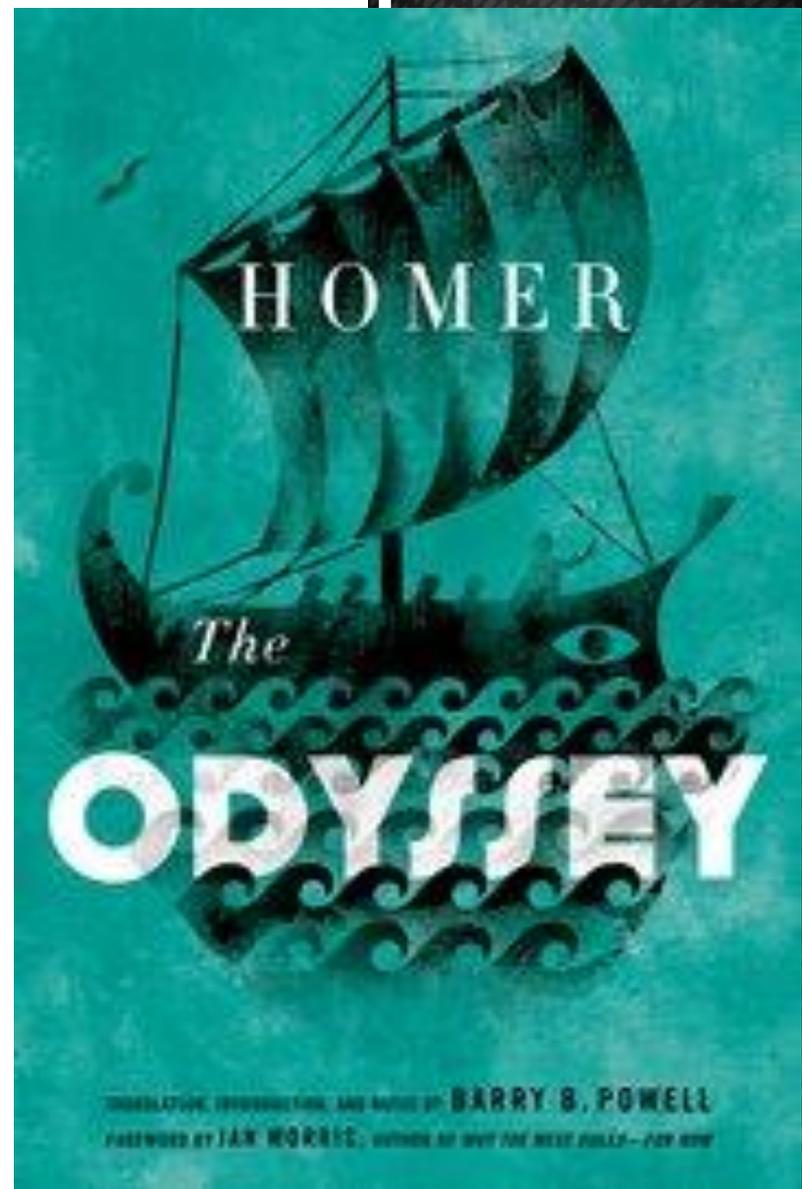
- When & How to Get Involved?
- Ideas for Community Connection
- Benefits of Community Connection: Progress & Sustainment



# The Road Home



# The Road Home



## “The Odyssey”: Homer

“Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns driven time and again off course, once he had plundered the hallowed heights of Troy.

Many cities of men he saw and learned their minds, many pains he suffered, heartsick on the open sea, fighting to save his life and bring his comrades home.

But he could not save them from disaster, hard as he strove- the recklessness of their own ways destroyed them all.”

The Odyssey, Homer



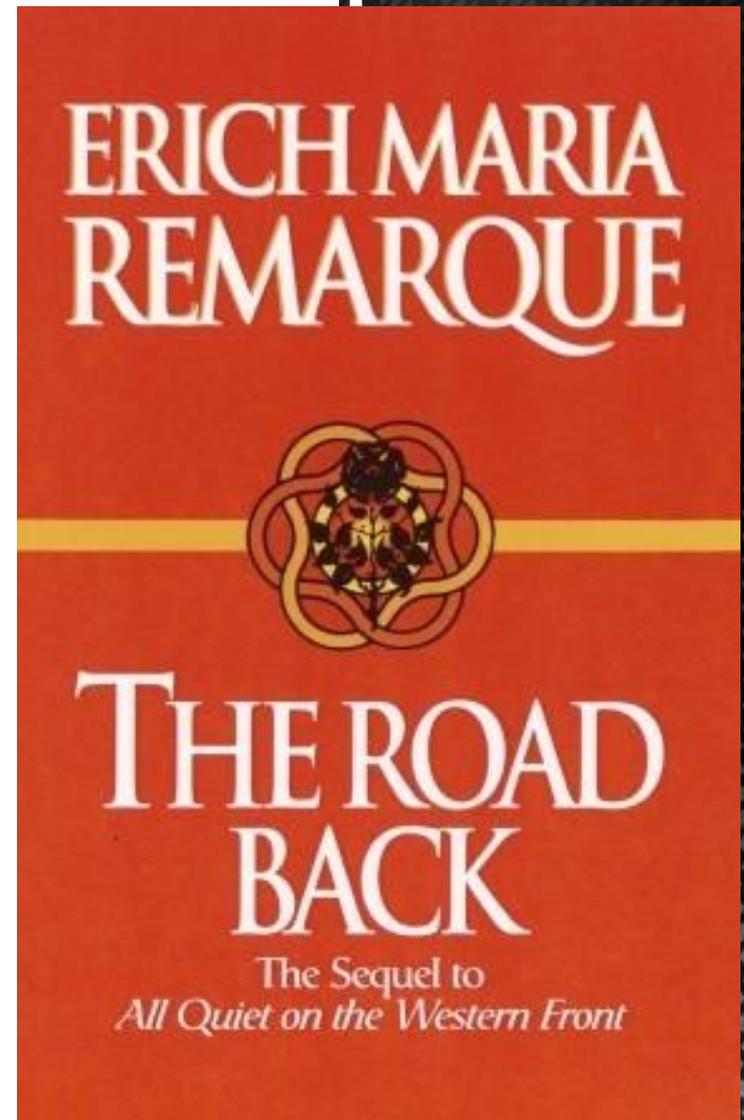
# The Road Home

## “The Road Back” Remarque

“It will be a road like other roads, with stones and good stretches, with places torn up, with villages and fields—a road of toil. And I shall be alone. Perhaps sometimes I shall find some one to go with me a stage of the journey—but for all of it, probably no one. And I may often have to hump my pack still, when my shoulders are already weary; often hesitate at the crossways and boundaries; often have to leave something behind me, often stumble and fall. But I will get up again and not just lie there; I will go on and not look back.

—Perhaps I shall never be really happy again; perhaps the war has destroyed that, and no doubt I shall always be a little inattentive and nowhere quite at home—but I shall probably never be wholly unhappy either—for something will always be there to sustain me, be it merely my own hands, or a tree, or the breathing earth.”

— Erich Maria Remarque, The Road Back



# The Road Home

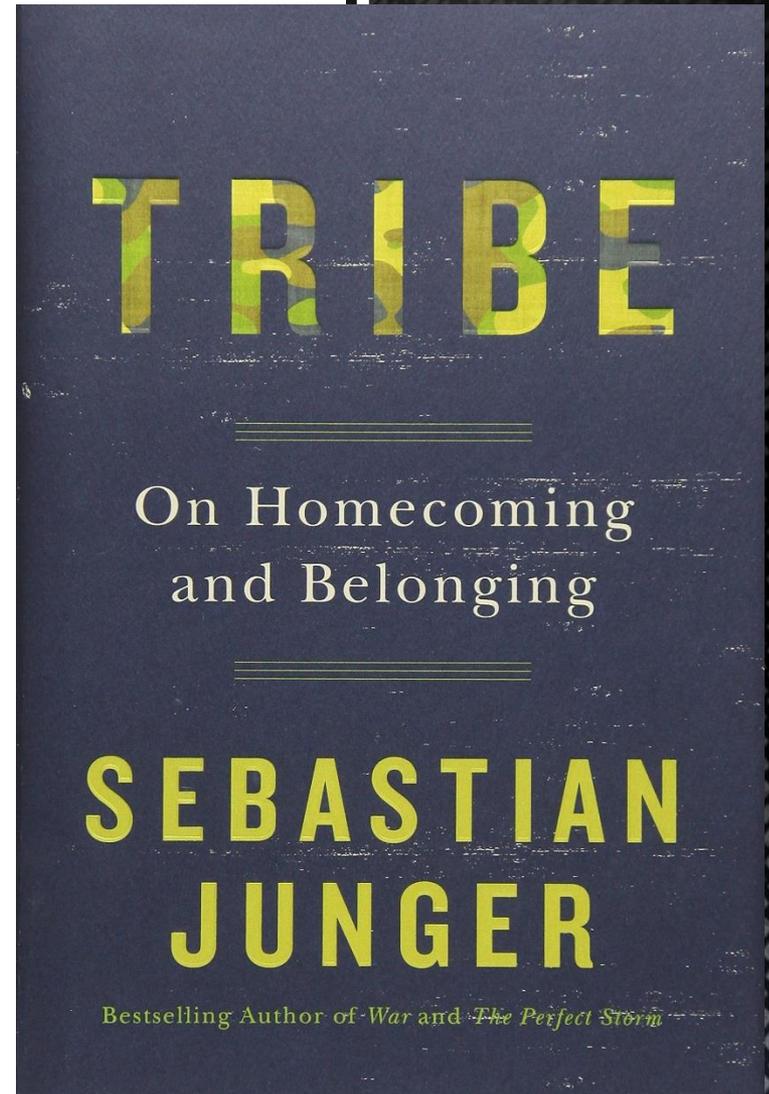
## “Tribe” Junger

“Modern society has perfected the art of making people not feel necessary”

“Any discussion of Veterans and their common experience of alienation must address the fact that so many soldiers find themselves missing the war after its over...as awkward as it is to say, part of the trauma of war seems to be giving it up”

“Ex-combatants shouldn’t be seen- or be encouraged to see themselves - as victims. One can be deeply traumatized, as firemen are by the deaths of both colleagues and civilians, without being viewed through the lens of victimhood”

— Sebastian Junger, Tribe



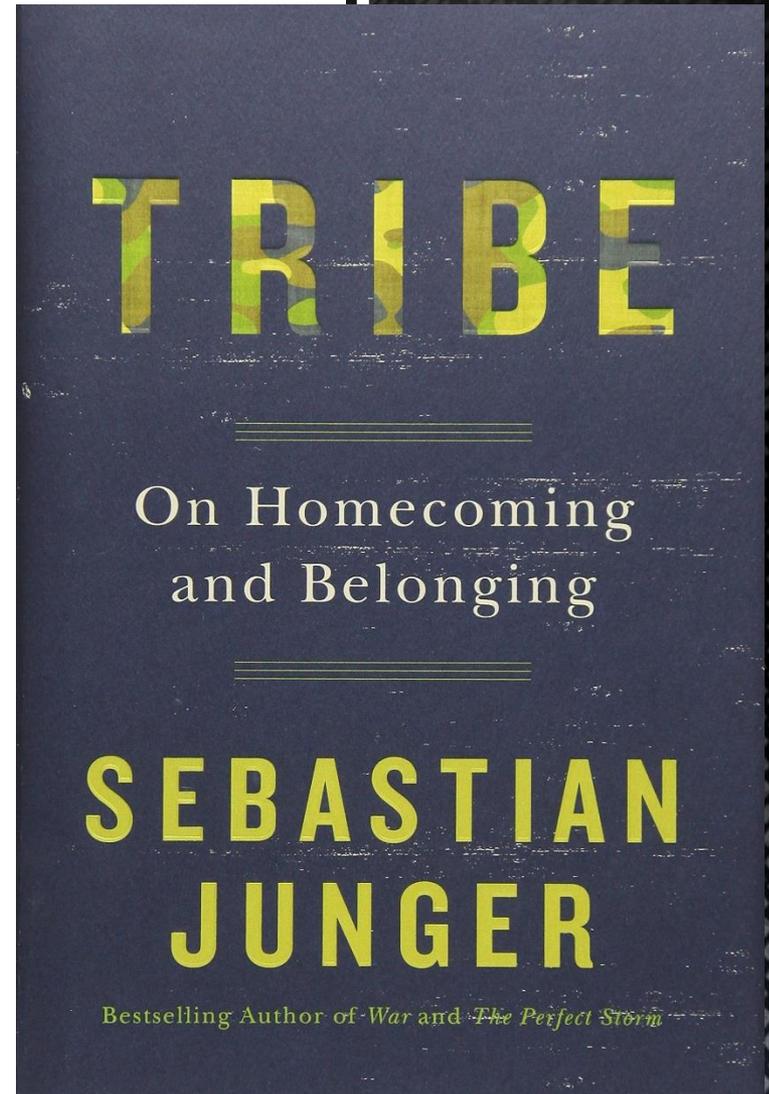
# The Road Home

## “Tribe” Junger

“Perhaps most important, Veterans need to feel that they’re just as necessary and productive back in society as they were on the battlefield. Iroquois warriors who dominated just about every tribe within 500 miles of their home territory would return to a community that still needed them to hunt and fish and participate in the fabric of everyday life. There was no transition when they came home because - much like in Israel - the battlefield was an extension of society, and vice versa. Recent studies of something called “social resilience” have identified resource sharing and egalitarian wealth distribution as major components of a society’s ability to recover from hardship”.

“American soldiers have returned to a country that displays many indicators of low social resilience, resources are not shared equally, a quarter of children live in poverty, jobs are hard to get, and minimum wage is almost impossible to live on”.

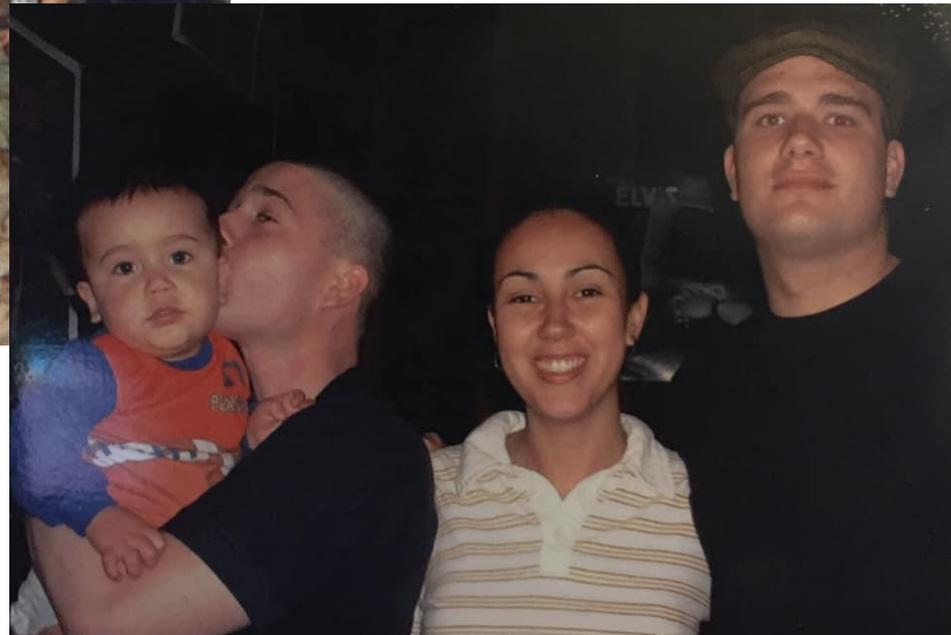
— Sebastian Junger, *Tribe*





# The Road Home:

Present Day:  
From the Battlefield  
to the Homefront



# Community: Military & Veteran Definition

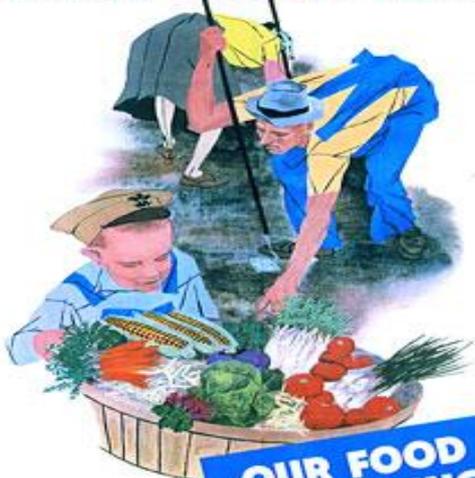
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# Community During and After Service in the U.S. Armed Forces: Community is *everything*.



# PLANT A VICTORY GARDEN



OUR FOOD IS FIGHTING

A GARDEN WILL MAKE YOUR RATIONS GO FURTHER

WW2 in the U.S.: (War Bonds, rationing, etc.)

Knowledge of battles and losses (Normandy, Iwo Jima, etc).

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Vietnam: Destruction of a generation of Veterans.

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Present Day (0.45% of U.S.

Population serving during longest war in U.S. history)

Public has little to no knowledge of the War on Terror.

**“What do Warriors Return Home To: Impact on Readjustment”**



RP

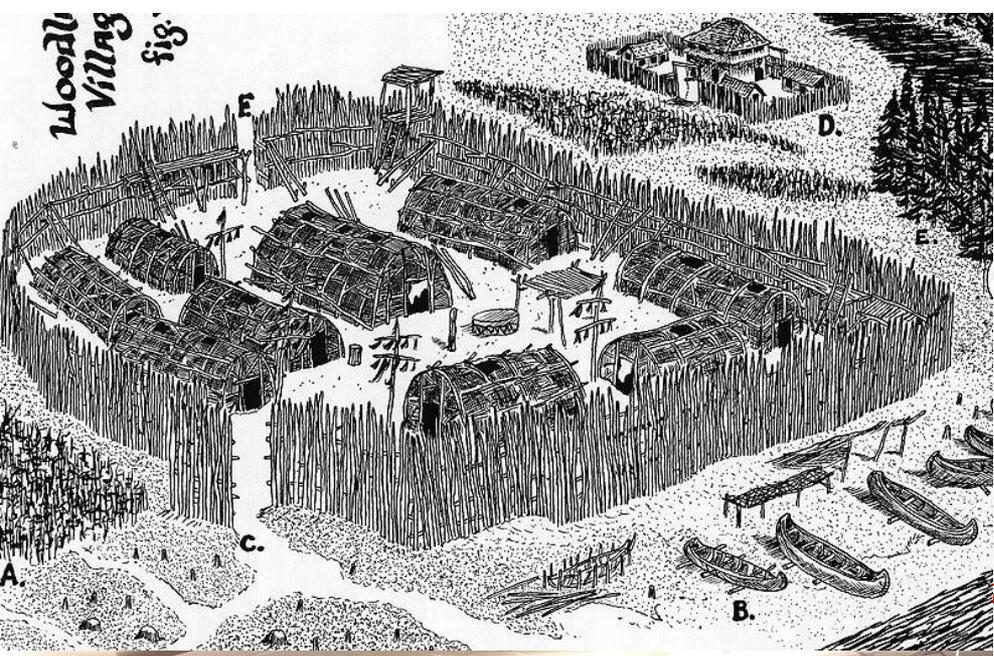
## IN SERVICE OF AMERICA

WW2	VIETNAM	WAR ON TERROR
1941-45	1963-75	2001-PRESENT
11.5% SERVED	4.30% SERVED	0.45% SERVED



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Woodall  
Village  
fig.



# The Haudenosaunne

## 6 Nation Iroquois Confederacy:

- \*The Longhouse
- \*The Council Fire
- \*Wampum: Condolence Ceremony

**“How Are Warriors Welcomed Home?”**



# The Road Home



**1970, Norfolk Virginia, Prior to  
Last Ship-Out to Vietnam**

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**Vet  
Center**  
"Keeping the Promise"



**2019, Norfolk  
Virginia**



**RB**

# Loss of Community: Impact



# Loss of Community, and the inability to find a new “Tribe”

The tragedy of  
SFC Steve,  
the consequence of  
isolation & loss of  
community:

- \*Medical Discharge
- \*Loss of Community
- \*Loss of Purpose
- \*Justice Involvement
- \*Shame
- \*Suicide Completion



# Readjustment: Post-Military Transition, Some Veterans May Experience:

<b>Marriage, relationship problems</b>	<b>Medical issues</b>	<b>Financial hardships</b>
<b>Endless questions from family and friends</b>	<b>Guilt, shame, anger</b>	<b>Lack of structure</b>
<b>Feelings of isolation</b>	<b>Nightmares, sleeplessness</b>	<b>Lack of motivation, forgetfulness</b>



# Readjustment: Post-Military Transition, Steve Experienced:

Marriage, relationship  
problems

Medical  
issues

Financial hardships

Endless questions from  
family and friends

Guilt, shame, anger

Lack of structure

Feelings of isolation

Nightmares,  
sleeplessness

Lack of motivation,  
forgetfulness

# Steve : Last Social Media Posts

Steven [redacted]  
February 26, 2013 · Hopkinsville, KY · 🧑

I just don't know anymore...

👍 1 6 Comments

👍 Like Comment

←

**Hopelessness: Completion of  
Suicide 25 Days Later**

→

**Repeated Posts of Self-Medication**

Steven [redacted]  
January 30, 2013 · Hopkinsville, KY · 🧑

Getting drunk tonight.

👍 Ed Martinez Jr., Shawn Alvarado and 12 others 9 Comments

👍 Like Comment

Steven [redacted]  
January 11, 2013 · Hopkinsville, KY · 🧑

I'm still awake.... Can't sleep.

👍 1 2 Comments

👍 Like Comment

←

**Repeated Posts of  
Insomnia**

→

**Repeated Posts of  
Self-Medication**

Steven [redacted]  
January 10, 2013 · Hopkinsville, KY · 🧑

I'm getting drunk....

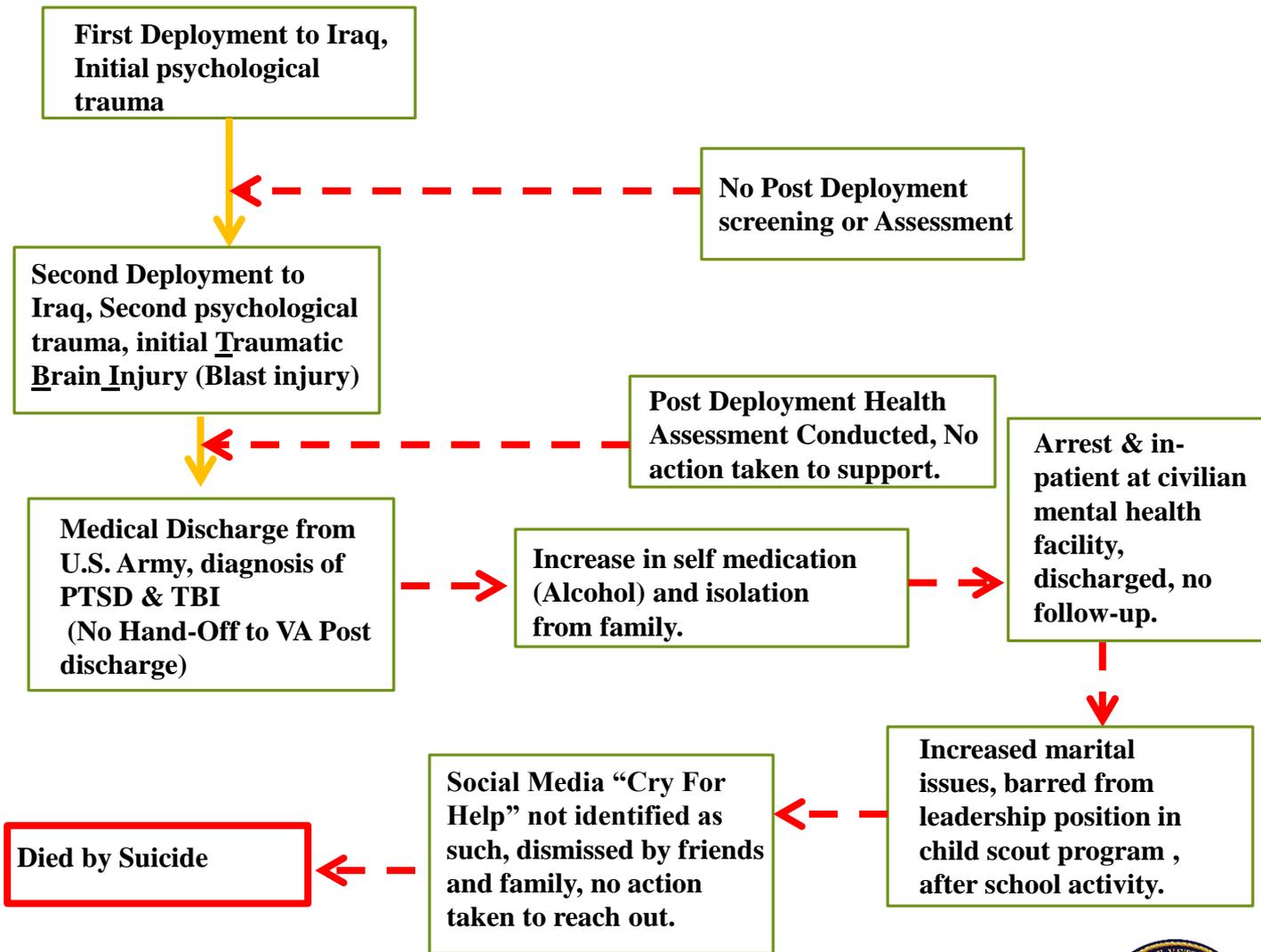
👍 Ed Martinez Jr., Jason Irvin and 14 others 7 Comments

👍 Like Comment

View 3 more comments

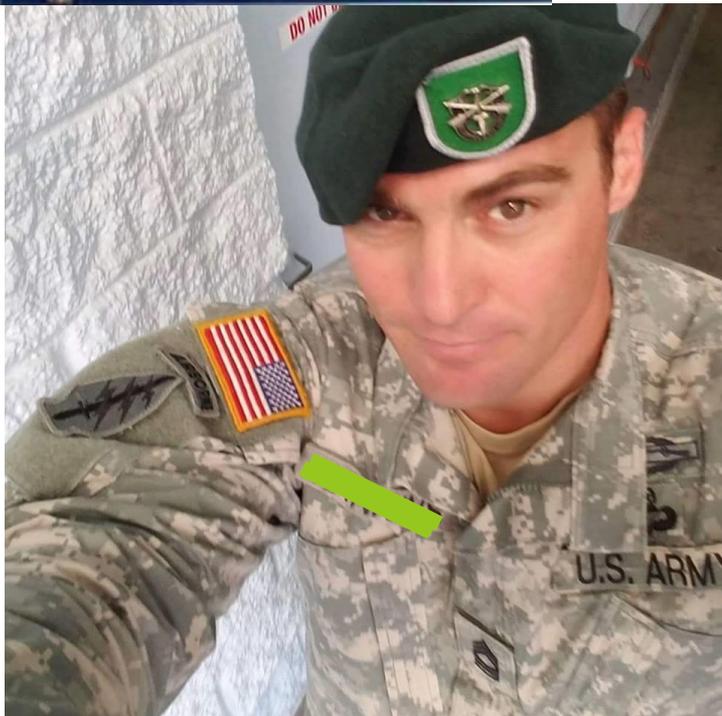


# Downward Spiral of Steve





CPT Brian  
and  
MSG Tim  
(11 Combat Deployments):

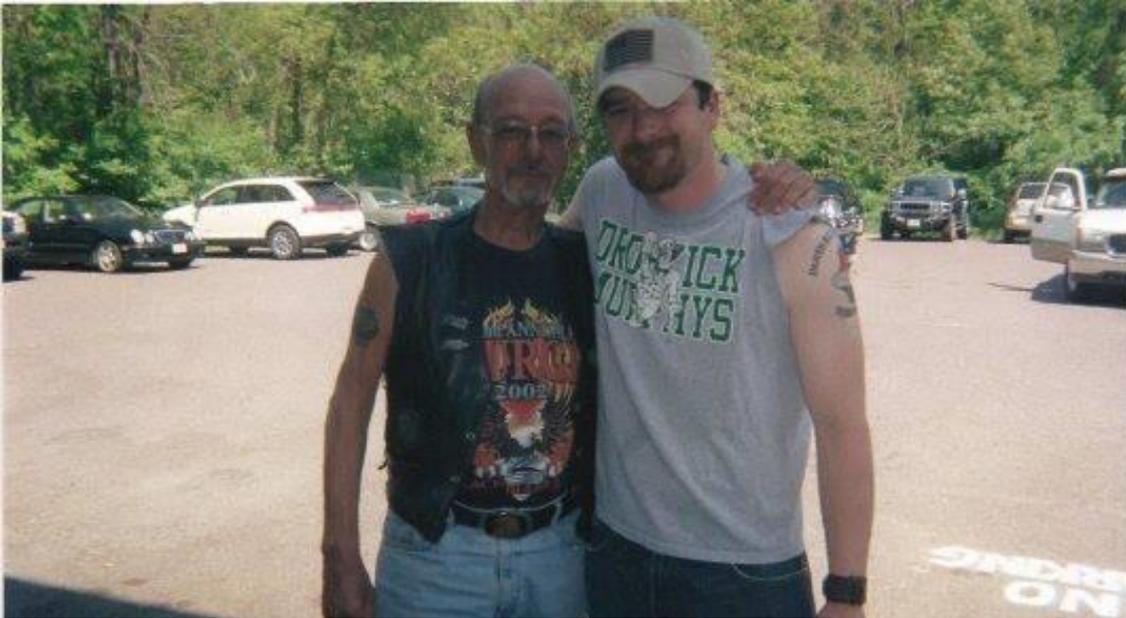


- \*Poor Transition Home**
- \*Loss of Purpose**
- \*Shame**
- \*Suicide Completion**



# Importance of Community Connections





**Bill Grondin, 173<sup>rd</sup> ABN BCT,  
Vietnam:**  
**“Right Fit” for Peer to Peer  
Engagement”** Encouragement  
of Recovery & Sobriety,  
augmenting clinical support.

**Jim Dort, USMC, Khe Sahn  
1968**  
**Encouragement of Counseling  
& Sobriety,** continuing  
education.



**COL (Ret) John Castles:**  
**MENTORSHIP**  
“Find Your New Mission”,  
Coaching toward a “Purpose  
Driven Life”





Massachusetts Military Heroes Memorial Flag Garden, Boston, MA



Massachusetts Military Heroes Memorial Flag Garden, Boston, MA

Hierarchy of Needs

+

Community Supports

+

Wellness

+

Solid Mentorship

=

Path of Transition & Readjustment



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Tough Ruck, Battle Road, Concord, Massachusetts



Wreaths Across America, Arlington National Cemetery



Wreaths Across America, Arlington National Cemetery

# Hierarchy of Needs

+

## Community Supports

+

## Wellness

+

## Solid Mentorship

=

## Path of Transition & Readjustment

**“How Are Warriors Welcomed Home?”**





Gloucester, MA Vietnam Veteran Welcome Home Dinner



Marblehead Veteran Town Hall, Sebastian Junger

# Hierarchy of Needs

+

Community Supports

+

Wellness

+

Solid Mentorship

=

**Path of Transition  
& Readjustment**

**“How Are Warriors  
Welcomed Home?”**





Ed [Redacted]

May 5 at 8:12 PM · 🌐



Net Call!!! Net Call!!! Net Call!!! Any stations this NET, Sunday Evening  
BuddyCheck! Requesting COMMS Check, OVER!!



## The Ed M. Weekly Social Media Buddy Check



# When to Get Involved?



“The Veteran in a New Field”:  
Winslow Homer, 1865



## When to Get Involved?

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# When to Get Involved?:

## What is the need in the community?



# Ideas For Community Connection



# Ideas For Community Connection



North Shore Veteran Collaborative



Pathways of Patriots Veteran Experience Event

Veteran sits with a clinician for 1 HR a week in Psychotherapy....*What are they doing the rest of the time?*

## Community Supports:

“The Mission Continues”

“Mass Military Heroes”

“Wreaths Across America”

“Team RWB”

“Outward Bound”

“Team Rubicon”

“Veteran Coffee Socials”

“Veteran Collaborative”

“Tough Ruck”

“SVA”

“Project Healing Waters”

“Veteran Town Hall:

Public Education”

“Military Friends Foundation”

“Operation Troop Support”

“Troy To Baghdad: Reading Groups”

Junger “Town Hall” Model

Combined with:

## Solid Mentorship



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# Ideas For Community Connection:

**\*\*How can I be most impactful?**

**\*\*Who can I collaborate with?**



# Benefits Of Community Connection



Search for the seed of good in every adversity. Master that principle and you will own a precious shield that will guard you well through all the darkest valleys you must traverse. Stars may be seen from the bottom of a deep well, when they cannot be discerned from the mountaintop. So will you learn things in adversity that you would never have discovered without trouble. There is always a seed of good. Find it and prosper. -Og Mandino

## Benefits of Community Connection: Progress & Sustainment

