Review Draft

Resilience 101

Understanding and Optimizing Your Stress System

Workbook for Service Members And Veterans

(Review Draft, Version 3)

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Resilience 101

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Cover Photo: National Guard SSG Joel Dalton cradles his seven-week old daughter Camden before boarding a plane to deploy to Iraq from Pope Air Force Base, N.C., on Oct. 6, 2004. Dalton serves with the 105th Military Police Battalion, North Carolina National Guard. DoD photo by TSgt. Brian Christiansen, U.S. Air Force. (Released)

Quick Survey Before You Start

It might be helpful to start by looking at where you are right now. Here are a few questions:

1. On a scale of 0 to 10, how much do you believe the following? "In general, people who have **more** mental or moral strength are more likely to come back from the war zone with **less** troubling or inconvenient reactions to stress." (0=not at all true; 10=very true).

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. On a scale of 0 to 10, how effective do you think professional help for operational/post-deployment stress effects might be for you? (0 = not at all effective, 10 = very effective)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. On a scale of 0 to 10, how comfortable are you with the idea of getting professional help for deployment stress effects? (0 = not at all comfortable, 10 = very comfortable)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. On a scale of 0 to 10, how easy is it for you to control your body's reactions to stress? (0 = very hard, 10 = very easy)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. On a scale of 0 to 10, how easy is it for you to control your mind's reactions to stress? (0 = very hard, 10 = very easy)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Why did you pick up this workbook?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. What would you most like to get out of using this workbook?

   _____

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A Tool to Start Off With: Grounding

Adapted from a workshop by Dr. Laurie Leitch and Elaine Miller-Karas, LCSW
Trauma Resource Institute

Grounding is one way of making sure you're in the "here and now," so you can keep troubling thoughts, feelings, memories, anxiety, etc. from taking over your head. It's a good skill to learn, practice, and get used to doing, because it can give you more overall control over your stress system. You can practice grounding when you're alone and doing nothing else, and then use the same skills and techniques later when you're in tense situations. No one will notice, except you might get more calm. Here are some possible steps:

1. Get comfortable in your chair, with both feet on the floor. (If you're standing, you can stand with your back to a wall, a strong tree, etc.) You can keep your eyes open and rest them someplace neutral, if you like.
2. Notice the support that the back of the chair (or the wall, or whatever) is giving your back. Keep feeling that support, and notice any physical sensations it gives you.
3. Notice your feet, connecting with the ground. Notice any sensations about that.
4. Push a little bit with your feet against the ground, and notice what happens in your body when you feel that extra contact. Now relax your legs.
5. Check in with your breath, without changing the way you're breathing or making an effort to breathe a certain way. Just notice your breath, and follow it as it goes in and out. When you pay attention to it, does it get deeper or more shallow? Notice any physical sensations as you breathe.
6. If you notice any places in your body that may be feeling tense, just shift your attention to someplace else in your body that's feeling less tense, or even someplace that's feeling calm and relaxed.
7. Just connect with that calm place for a while, feeling it in your body. Remember it, so you can go back there at times when your stress system starts to overreact. If that place in your body still feels calm when your stress reactions start to rise, that might be a good place to remember and focus your attention on.
8. Let your attention drift like a very slow wave, down from the top of your head, all the way down, past your back, sensing into the support of the chair (or the wall, tree, etc.), all the way down to your feet connected to the ground.
9. When you're ready, turn your attention to the room or the scene around you. Notice the people (if there are any), the furniture, the walls, the trees, the ground, etc. You might ask yourself to name ten objects that you can see around you. What do you notice in your body when you notice what's around you?

The more you practice this, the more you can use it when things get too intense.

Resilience 101

1. This Workbook

The *Resilience 101* (R-101) workbook does a lot of things, but its first purpose is to answer a few simple questions that sometimes trouble service members and veterans who have operational or post-deployment stress effects. These include questions like:

- "Am I crazy?"
- "Is this a sign of weakness or cowardice?"
- "Is this permanent?"

The answer to each of these questions is an absolute "**no**," but most people won't find a simple "no" very convincing. Unless you know **why** these effects don't mean you're weak, cowardly, or "crazy," it might sound like someone's trying to reassure you so you'll feel better. But you might be more interested in learning the truth and figuring out how to deal with what's happening. So R-101 focuses on two things:

1. Explaining the physical roots of deployment stress effects, so you'll understand why these really are normal reactions to the experience of war
2. Building the resilience skills that can help you have milder effects, overcome the effects you have, and work around the effects that haven't gone away yet

Deployment Stress Effects	Resilience
Stress reactions that come up in the war zone or after—sometimes long after—people return to safety. At the low end, these include things like moodiness or jumpiness, trouble sleeping, or feeling "shut down." Higher up on the scale, they include things like posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, problems with drugs, and trouble staying out of trouble.	Your ability to bounce back during or after difficult experiences. You have resilience, no matter what you've been through, and no matter how your body and mind have reacted to war. By learning and practicing "resilience skills," you can tap into that resilience and work on getting your stress system back in balance.

Resilience 101 has 12 sections. Each deals with a topic that helps you understand how your body's stress system reacts and how you can bring it back into balance.

R-101 Section		Purpose—Check here if you might want to try this section:	
1	This Workbook	Learn what R-101 is and some reasons/options for using it	❑
2	Resilience	Understand and identify your own resilience	❑
3	The body under stress	See how resilience and stress play out in the human stress system—a combination of organs, chemicals, and processes that keep us functioning under stress and threat[1]	❑
4	Overwatch and the survival brain	Understand your experience a little better by learning about how the survival brain and the higher brain get involved in our natural reactions to stress and threat	❑
5	The human chemistry set	Identify the natural chemicals that are adding intensity to your reactions to stress and threat, and to your ongoing reactions to everyday life events after you've left the war zone	❑
6	What happens to memories?	Understand why people sometimes don't remember important details of memories linked with intense stress and threat—and why some memories or feelings seem to jump out at them out of nowhere	❑
7	Deployment stress effects	Understand the range of effects that different people might have, and relate these effects to the human stress system's natural reactions to extreme stress and threat	❑
8	The underlying power	Look at the role of the human survival instinct in giving us intense reactions to stress and threat—and reactions after the stress and threat are over	❑
9	Thoughts and feelings	Find ways of regulating and getting perspective on some of the thoughts and feelings that might be getting in your way	❑
10	Relationships	Understand how stress reactions can affect relationships, and a few ways of getting your relationships back in balance	❑
11	Mission and purpose	Appreciate the strength of your sense of mission and purpose—even back home—and think about ways in which it can help you get your stress system back in balance	❑
12	Training, help, and support	Find out what might be involved in getting more information, skill training, support, counseling, or medical help	❑

[1] This can be a threat to safety, to your unit, to others' well being, to your sense of honor or morality, etc.

How to use R-101

Resilience 101 (R-101) is a workbook, with pages of text and questions mixed in with "tools." The tools include some question-and-answer worksheets and some descriptions of resilience skills you can practice. In the Appendices at the end, there's also a list of web sites, a little more information about the brain, some tips for getting better sleep, and a section acknowledging some of the people who have given their support and encouragement to these efforts.

You can use R-101 alone, with a buddy, with a coach or mentor, in a class, in a discussion group, or in group or individual counseling. It's set up in short sections—four pages each—one for each of the 12 topics mentioned on the previous page. You can follow the sections in order if you want to, but you don't have to.

One way to use R-101 might be to follow your own interest: Try looking at the list of sections—or flipping through the workbook—and picking the section your "gut" says you'd like to look at right now. Then that section might raise your interest in one or more of the other sections, so you can try one of those next. If you're working with a buddy, in a group, or with a mentor, trainer, or counselor, you can negotiate the order in which you tackle the 12 topic sections—or just figure it out as you go along.

The information in each of these sections is closely related to the information in all the others. So from time to time you'll see a note that says there's more information on that subject in another section. This makes it possible to keep each section short, and avoid a lot of repetition, but still give you as much flexibility as possible.

What Resilience 101 is Not

Before we close this section, a quick look at the boundaries of this workbook:

What R-101 is not	**Why?**
A complete explanation of deployment stress effects—or even the most important aspect of deployment stress effects.	These effects take place on many levels of the human being—including the body, the brain, thought and belief systems, emotions, relationships, and spirituality. This workbook puts its main focus on the physical stress system, rooted in the central nervous system and the brain, but affecting many areas of the body, mind, emotions, etc. You might think of the stress system as the "engine" that drives the intensity of many reactions to (or after) intense stress or threat. But it's definitely not the whole picture. It's just a good place to start.

What R-101 is <u>not</u>	Why?
Just about PTSD	There's a wide range of deployment stress effects. PTSD is one of them—one of the most troubling—but it's not the only thing this workbook is about. So even if you just have some mild effects, or very different effects, your stress system is probably involved. R-101 can help you understand and regulate your stress system, which can help you deal with those effects.
Therapy or medical help	R-101 combines some basic education about resilience and the stress system with some training in a selection of resilience skills. Although it's a very useful tool for a therapeutic process—and is being used in some support and treatment programs for service members and veterans—it's not therapy or medicine. It doesn't have to be led by a therapist. You can use the workbook by yourself or with someone else you know and trust.
A substitute for therapy or medical help	Since these stress effects reach into so much of the human experience, a workbook like this can't address all the challenges that all service members and veterans face. If you're not sure if you need professional help, R-101 can be a good step in finding out and preparing for help. You can also find out about the different kinds of help that are available, and which ones fit your goals and where you are right now. **If you're in crisis or in danger of hurting yourself or someone else, please get medical or mental health care.**
A "cure" for flashbacks, nightmares, night terrors, and memories or feelings that crash in on you out of nowhere	For many people, these challenges are rooted in the way the brain naturally records and "plays back" memories of heavy stress and threat. Learning to regulate your stress system won't change that, but it can put you in a better place to deal with these challenges when they come up. And if you decide to get professional help for the memory effects of PTSD, knowing how to regulate your stress system can make that process easier and more effective.
Another bunch of checklists you'll have to fill out	Service members and veterans have way too many checklists to fill out as it is. If you're on "checklist overload," you can just read the text, use any of the tools you want to, and ignore the rest or save them for later.

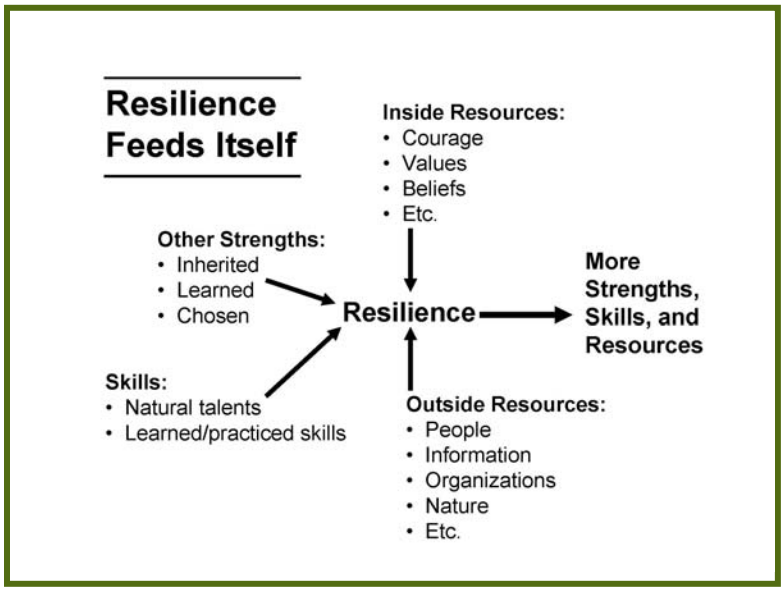
The 12 workbook sections start on the next page.

Resilience 101

2. Resilience

One common definition of "resilience" is the ability to meet challenges and bounce back during or after difficult experiences. If you're not sure how resilience is different from strengths, skills, or resources, don't worry. It's more important to have it than to know exactly what to call it. The diagram below shows one way of looking at the way strengths, skills, and resources might relate to resilience.

Everybody has resilience. We all have strengths, skills, and resources in many areas of life—body, brain, thoughts, feelings, family, friends, values, beliefs, education, training, work, combat, finances, sports, creativity, spirituality, even goofing off. These all add to our resilience, and the fact that we have resilience—that we're able to live through difficult things and learn from them—helps build our strengths, skills, and resources even more. Resilience feeds itself.



Some people have an easy time finding and believing in their resilience, and others have it harder. This can sometimes be traced back to people's experience, but often it can't. Two people can lead very similar lives, but one ends up feeling strong and confident and the other has a lot of self-doubt. Is it genetics? Is it free choice? Something somebody said or did to them when they were young? Divine intervention? Who knows? It's different from person to person.

On a scale of 0 to 10, how easy is it for you to think of ways in which you might be resilient? (0 = very hard, 10 = very easy)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

On a scale of 0 to 10, how easy is it for you to **believe** in your own resilience? (0 = very hard, 10 = very easy)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What are some ways in which you already think of yourself as resilient?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

People who don't know their own resilience often have just as much of it as people who are aware of their resilience. They tend to discount the courage they show every day. In tough times, just getting out of bed, stepping through the door, and showing up for a difficult task can be a sign of great strength and courage.

When your stress system is out of balance, you have more challenges to manage and overcome—on many levels of life—and you might have less confidence in your resilience. The changes in your stress system have probably ramped up the chemicals that mess with your confidence and tamped down the chemicals that would otherwise add to your confidence. (More about the chemicals in Section 5)

Resilience Traits and Skills

You might think of resilience as including a number of traits (things about you and who you are) and skills that keep you in balance and make it possible for you to meet challenges and bounce back after difficult times. The Armed Forces have been focusing a lot on resilience, with efforts like the Real Warriors Campaign (www.realwarriors.net/) and the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program.[2]

Throughout R-101 you'll find descriptions of what we call "resilience skills." These aren't the only skills that build resilience. They're just a few of the many skills that can help you balance your stress system and work on developing even more resilience.

[2] Comprehensive Soldier Fitness focuses on soldier, family, and DA civilian resilience and readiness in five dimensions: Physical, Emotional, Social, Family, and Spiritual. This workbook is a good supplement to Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, providing an extra focus on the stress system.

Tool: Examples of Resilience Traits and Skills

This page and the next give you a few examples of resilience traits and skills, and a chance to look at these and other traits and skills in your life. They're organized in the five dimensions of strength (physical, emotional, social, family, and spiritual) laid out in the Global Assessment Tool (GAT). That tool is part of the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program for soldiers, family members, and DA civilians. If you've taken the GAT and discovered strengths in these dimensions, you can include them below.

Beyond this tool, you might want to start and keep a Resilience Journal. That could be as simple as a pocket-sized notebook that you carry with you. Then, whenever you think of it, you can write down resilience traits or skills you've noticed in yourself, or things you've said or done that have shown strength and/or resilience.

What are some resilience traits and skills that you have?	**Are these things you've always had? How have you worked on them?**	**How do you know you have these resilience traits and skills?**
Physical:		
❑ Physical strength	_____	_____
❑ Physical flexibility	_____	_____
❑ Stamina	_____	_____
❑ Speed	_____	_____
❑ Ability to rest and relax	_____	_____
❑ _____	_____	_____
❑ _____	_____	_____
❑ _____	_____	_____
Emotional:		
❑ Creativity	_____	_____
❑ Courage to face your fears	_____	_____
❑ Insight into yourself	_____	_____
❑ Intuition about people, events	_____	_____
❑ Empathy for others' pain	_____	_____
❑ _____	_____	_____
❑ _____	_____	_____
❑ _____	_____	_____

What are some resilience traits and skills that you have?	Are these things you've always had? How have you worked on them?	How do you know you have these resilience traits and skills?
Social: ❑ Having friends you trust ❑ People who are there for you ❑ Being there for others ❑ Being at ease with people ❑ Putting others at ease ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____		
Family: ❑ Accepting family members ❑ Being considerate of family ❑ Being comfortable with family ❑ Working through problems ❑ Having fun together ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____		
Spiritual: ❑ Sense of mission/purpose ❑ Selfless service ❑ Honesty, integrity, honor ❑ Forgiveness (self and others) ❑ Spiritual faith and discipline ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____		

Resilience 101

3. The Body Under Stress

Sometimes the best way to understand that an experience really **is** normal and natural is to know a little about how it works—the science underneath it. In the case of the human stress system, that can also be a good way to start learning how to make it do what you want it to do.

The **stress system's** official name is the "autonomic nervous system," and it has two arms:

- The **fast system** (whose official name is the sympathetic[3] nervous system) rules our "fight or flight" responses
- The **slow system** (whose official name is the parasympathetic nervous system) is in charge of slowing us down and returning to balance—"rest and reset"

The stress system uses several brain areas and organs in the body to trigger or pump out the chemicals it needs to respond to stress and threat, and to keep the body and brain in balance. (More about the brain in Section 4 and Appendix C; More about the chemicals in Section 5) When you think about the brain's role in our stress responses, it's helpful to divide the important parts of the brain into two main "brains":

- The **survival brain** that triggers responses for dealing with threat—often using the fast-system, fight-or-flight chemicals (like adrenaline)
- The **higher brain** that calms us down—often using the slow-system rest-and reset chemicals—and helps us think about options and choose our reactions

[3] You won't have to remember the technical names "sympathetic" and "parasympathetic," but if you want to, you can keep them straight by remembering that the sympathetic system is **sympathetic** to your need to fight back or escape danger—or by thinking of the parasympathetic system as a **para**chute, because it brings you down gradually.

Keeping in Balance

If the stress system's first job is to keep us alive, its second job is to keep itself—and us—in balance. Many of its functions are organized around balance, including:

- The fact that the stress system has two opposite arms (the fast system and the slow system) that can balance one another out, the way your arms would balance your body if you were walking along a narrow board
- The "feedback loops" that run between the fight-or-flight chemicals and the rest-and-reset chemicals (with high levels of one chemical designed to trigger the opposite chemical, which then tells the first chemical to slow down)
- The fact that several parts of the higher brain know how to "talk to" the survival brain and provide more information, so the survival brain can calm down

Think of the way you grow strong muscles—by stressing them, then resting them, over and over again. In the same way, our stress systems are designed to go back and forth between stress and calm, between the fast system and the slow system. It's often this back-and-forth motion that helps us grow resilient stress systems, so we can handle stress and return to balance quickly. Many people who have strong resilience skills have learned them all through their lives, often by going back and forth between times of higher and lower stress, and between times of mild or moderate threat and safety.

Think of a situation where you've gone back and forth between times of mild or moderate **physical** stress and times of rest. What were the effects on you?

_____

_____

_____

Think of a situation where you've gone back and forth between times of mild or moderate **mental** stress and times of rest. How did that affect you?

_____

_____

_____

What could you change in your life or your actions today to build in more balance, more of a "swing" back and forth between mild or moderate stress and rest?

_____

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_____

When Things Go Out of Balance

When there's only mild or moderate stress or threat—and it doesn't last too long—the fast system and the slow system play well together. That's what our bodies were designed to do. But if the threat is extreme or long lasting, the survival brain often takes over and refuses to listen to anyone else. It blows through all the feedback loops that are supposed to keep things in balance. It just wants to keep pumping adrenaline and other fight-or-flight chemicals, and store intense memories of threat and pain, so it can pull them out later and warn you if the danger seems to be returning. Your survival brain just wants to protect you, and this is the only way it knows how to do that.

Meanwhile, the slow-down system just wants to send out chemicals that will shut you down, numb you out, and keep you from thinking about or remembering what's happening. If they build up over time, some of these chemicals can be cause as many problems as the speed-up chemicals sent out by the fast system.

As it's used here, the word "threat" doesn't have to mean a threat to your physical safety. It might mean a threat to the mission, your unit, your sense of honor or morality, the safety or well being of others, etc. The strain on your stress system may be connected to an intense loss, guilt, shame, anger, etc.

And what if the threat is extreme, but the situation doesn't give you a chance to react in the fight-or-flight way your survival brain wants you to react? Sometimes, when the situation adds that element of helplessness, the speed-up and slow-down systems can both go into overdrive at once. You can also experience a "freeze response," an ancient survival reaction that all but shuts down several body systems. The freeze might just last a second, because military training has prepared you to snap out of it and keep fighting. But some experts believe that the freeze leaves a lot of tension behind in your body that can cause problems later if you don't let it "shake itself out" naturally.[4]

Even one threatening event—like a car crash—can put anybody's stress system in overdrive and affect the way it works for a long time. If the threat happens over and over for months or years, as it often does in the war zone, it's no wonder many people's stress systems go out of balance.

What does your body need?

No matter which areas of life they affect, deployment stress effects get their intensity from your physical stress system. The next page lists a few of the many physical things you can do to help get your stress system back in balance.

[4] Peter Levine (*Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*) has written some good books about the freeze response and ways of dealing with it, and many of the "gurus" in the trauma field admire his work.

- **Breathing:** Most of the oxygen your brain needs for clear thinking and problem solving comes from the bottom of the lungs, but most people—especially if we've been through high stress—breathe very shallowly. It's important to take slow, deep breaths, feel the air going in and out, and notice what's going on in your body. And smoking definitely robs you of oxygen, because it clogs up the "pipes" in your lungs.

  What could you do differently here?_____

  _____

- **Sleep:** Sleep problems can come from depression, anxiety, or nightmares—things you might need extra help (like a doctor or a counselor) to deal with. But they can also come from some of the things you put in your body. How much caffeine do you take in (coffee, cola, chocolate, energy drinks)? How much sugar (candy, cookies, soda/pop)? Alcohol? Street drugs? Over-the-counter drugs or prescription meds? Not taking meds you're supposed to take? For many service members and veterans, caffeine may be the biggest source of insomnia. It's a powerful drug. Sleep problems can also come from habits like having lively discussions right before bedtime; watching TV in bed; or using TV, X-Box, computer, or other electronic devices late at night. (Appendix B has some tips for getting better sleep.)

  What could you do differently here?_____

  _____

- **Healthy food, not overdoing alcohol or caffiene:** What you eat, how often you eat, and how much you eat can have powerful effects on the amount of fuel and oxygen that get to your body and brain. Too much sugar, too much alcohol or caffeine, too little protein, too much or too little food, going too long between meals, or eating too close to bedtime can all set your stress system on edge, raise your levels of stress chemicals, and make it harder to think clearly and solve problems.

  What could you do differently here?_____

  _____

- **Exercise:** Almost any exercise—fast or slow—is great for the stress system. Fast exercises (like running, sports, fast dancing) give you strength and energy, burn the adrenaline and other chemicals that make you anxious, turn on the calming chemicals, and increase your stamina. Slow exercises (like Tai Chi, yoga, stretches) can calm you down and give you a physical sense of balance. Side-to-side exercises (like walking, dancing, horseback riding) might even help the different parts of your brain communicate better. Repetitive exercises soothe the deep, primitive parts of your brain. Things like team sports that make you think and work with others can help you balance your body, brain, and relationships.

  What could you do differently here?_____

  _____

Resilience 101

4. Overwatch and the Survival Brain

Why think about the brain? Like learning about the body's stress system, it can help you understand that your experiences really do make sense. It can also make you a little better at questioning your own thoughts and getting perspective on things like anger, anxiety, guilt, shame, and a sense of hopelessness. When you get to know which part of the brain is talking to you—and what its "agenda" is—you have a little better idea of whether or not to believe everything it's telling you.

It would be great if there were one or two "bad" parts of the brain that cause all the problems. We could just figure out which wire we need to snip to disconnect them, and everything would be fine. But the truth is that:

1. Many different areas of the brain are involved in the way we handle stress, our experience of threat and safety, the thoughts and feelings we have, and the way we interpret the people and events around us.
2. Many brain areas are involved in more than one important task, and many important tasks need the efforts of multiple brain areas.
3. Most of the brain areas do some things that make life easier or more pleasant, and some things that make life harder or more unpleasant.

If we divide it up in general terms, the brain makes more sense. When it comes to the way we process stress and threat (to ourselves, others, important ideals, etc.), it's helpful to group some of the more important parts of the brain into two groups:

- The **survival brain**, made up of parts that are most often linked to the fast system, fight-or-flight chemicals and reactions
- The **higher brain**, made up of parts that are more often linked to the slow system, rest-and-reset chemicals and reactions

Of course, these are not their official names.[5] But to learn and make use of this information, it's often more helpful to use metaphors or images from everyday life—like describing the survival brain as a watchdog or an alarm system.

In a military example, you might think of these two "brains" as two units, one on patrol in a valley, and the other positioned on high ground, providing overwatch. We'll use this idea to make sense of the information about the survival brain and the higher brain.

The Survival Brain

The survival brain's main job is to keep us safe and alive. It's like the unit on patrol, moving across dangerous ground in the valley. Its position doesn't give it a very good perspective on the area, so the enemy might be around any corner. It also receives information about the immediate situation very quickly, but its information is primitive and incomplete. Sometimes it looks like there's a threat when there's not.

What are three situations in your life **today** that sometimes seem threatening—to your safety, your well being, or your dignity—even when there's really no threat?

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In an ambush, this unit's job is to respond automatically, without thinking, returning fire as quickly as possible, and with as much force as possible. In the case of the survival brain, this means triggering fight-or-flight chemicals at high levels that put the body and brain on "overdrive."

Describe one time in the past week when it seemed like your survival brain was making split-second decisions and overreacting based on incomplete information:

_____

_____

_____

What were some of the consequences of this reaction?

_____

_____

_____

[5] Appendix C, "More About the Brain," combines a lot of the information in this section with the technical names and functions of the main brain areas involved in stress and threat.

The Higher Brain

The higher brain is like the unit providing overwatch for the survival brain. It's positioned on higher ground, with a better view of what's going on all around, and what's far ahead. Of course, the one disadvantage in this position is that, from this distance, the overwatch may not know about the attack until it's already underway. The unit in the valley knows right away, and responds right away.

Like the overwatch unit, the higher brain has a much better perspective and receives much more sophisticated information about the situation at hand than the survival brain. If it's a false alarm, the higher brain can see that the survival brain is overreacting. It can send out signals, triggering chemicals that will calm the survival brain down, slow down the body's reactions, and help you think more clearly. Then it gets to work looking at the most important facts about the situation, your options, possible consequences, moral concerns, and steps you might take to meet the challenges at hand.

Describe one time in the past week when—in spite of some stress—you were able to calm down enough to see the situation clearly, see more than one option, predict the consequences of those options, weigh them carefully, and make a plan. What was that experience like? What were the results?

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One problem is that the higher brain also receives its more sophisticated information much more slowly. In case of an ambush, if the unit in the valley waited to return fire until the overwatch had spotted the enemy and radioed instructions, they'd lose a lot more lives. It's the same way with the survival brain: In case of real physical danger, it can't afford to wait for the higher brain to figure out the situation.

Another problem is that the survival brain's automatic, extreme response works well in a high-threat environment, but not so well in a low-threat environment. When the survival brain has gotten used to real danger, it's very hard for it to remember how to slow down and wait for information from the higher brain. The chemical reactions can go out automatically—and cause problems—even when there's no real physical threat.

That's where you come in. If you've been living in a high-threat environment, you've had no good choice but to operate out of your survival brain, and actually identify with the survival brain. Now it's time to learn to operate out of the higher brain—unless there's a physical threat—and identify with the higher brain. The tool on the next page breaks down some skills of overwatch and uses them on a situation in your present life.

Tool: Practicing Overwatch

Please try this process out on a situation <u>in your present life</u> that's bothering you:

Gathering Information: In overwatch, you collect a lot of information—what's around you right now, the history of the situation, your knowledge of the people involved, what your "gut" says. In this situation, what kinds of information do you still need to look at?

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Observing Yourself: In overwatch, you still experience your life, but you also stand back and notice your experience without judging it. You're still having your thoughts, feelings, and actions, but you're also standing back as a compassionate but objective observer. How would you describe yourself, and your experience, in this situation?

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Calming the Survival Brain: in overwatch, one of your jobs is to keep yourself calm and in control of your reactions. What can you tell yourself to help you calm down?

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Looking at Options: In overwatch, you can look at many options and their possible consequences. What are three options in this situation, and possible consequences?

Options	Possible Consequences

Making a Plan: In overwatch, you get systematic about problem solving, making plans that reflect all the thought processes described on this page. On a separate piece of paper, you might try writing out some steps that you can take to meet the challenges involved in this situation. For each step, look at options and possible consequences.

Resilience 101

5. The Human Chemistry Set

If they did a scan of your brain, they wouldn't find any thoughts in there, or feelings, or memories. What they would find is evidence of electrical activity, energy moving between the **neurons**, or nerve cells. That electricity would be riding on the backs of several chemicals, chemicals that the neurons would be shooting to one another, passing from each one to the next like a football or a hot potato.

Because of these chemicals, you'd have thoughts and feelings and memories. Your heart would keep beating, your lungs would keep pumping, and you'd be able to tell when something itched and reach up to scratch it.

There are many chemicals running around in our heads. But when it comes to the way the human brain and body handle resilience, stress, threat (to ourselves, others, important values and principles, etc.), moods, emotions, pleasure, pain, and motivation, there are a few chemicals that are particularly important. That's what this section is about. It helps to think of the stress system chemicals in three categories:

- Fast-system, "fight-or-flight" chemicals that speed you up
- Slow-system, "rest and reset" chemicals that slow you down
- Slow-system chemicals that ease your pain

Different people's bodies pump out different amounts of these chemicals under stress and threat. There are many reasons for these differences, for example:

- Genetic factors might lead your body to make more or less of a chemical
- A particular chemical might have helped you survive or succeed earlier in your life, so your body learned to pump out a lot of it
- The food you eat, the things you drink, or the drugs or medications you take might make your body pump more or less of certain chemicals

Fast-System Chemicals That Speed You Up

If you've been to war, you already know what these chemicals are like—the racing heartbeat, the pounding of blood in your head, the ramped-up physical strength, the overwhelming urge to take physical action. These fight-or-flight chemicals give you a "rush" in battle. The most important of these chemicals is **adrenaline.** Just enough of this chemical makes you alert, confident, and decisive. Too much, and you get something they call **adrenaline overload** (see Page 5-4). You lose touch with your higher, more rational brain, and you tend to make decisions that can backfire on you.

Got Adrenaline?

You can figure out if you get a lot of adrenaline under stress or threat by checking the boxes below. Most of the time when I'm under stress or threat:

- ❑ I feel decisive
- ❑ I have a burst of energy
- ❑ I might feel angry or scared
- ❑ I make some unwise decisions
- ❑ I feel a tightness in my chest or my throat
- ❑ The heat starts to rise in my body
- ❑ My heart starts to beat faster
- ❑ My body gets stiff
- ❑ My hands close up in fists
- ❑ My shoulders and arms get tense
- ❑ I lose my appetite
- ❑ I feel impatient
- ❑ It's hard to put things into words
- ❑ My head gets hot or my face turns red
- ❑ A vein sticks out on my forehead
- ❑ My jaw muscles get tense and tight
- ❑ My head starts hurting
- ❑ I hear a pounding in my ears
- ❑ I get a prickly feeling on my skin
- ❑ I have a metallic taste in my mouth

Your body can get so used to pumping out a lot of adrenaline that it starts overloading over little things or nothing. When you return from deployment in the combat theater, the adrenaline overload might keep you from sleeping, spark rage or panic, tell you to do risky things, or give you the jitters or the shakes. Or your body may have pumped so much adrenaline that your "pump" is worn out and you can't find any energy, excitement, or motivation to do anything. The adrenaline rush is addictive, and we all need enough adrenaline to keep going. So whether you have too much or too little adrenaline, you may be drinking too much caffeine—which makes many things worse—and you may get cravings for danger and drugs that will speed you up.

Another speed-up chemical is **dopamine.** Dopamine makes you think quickly, feel confident, and feel good. In the war zone, you may have gotten used to high levels of dopamine, and you might miss them back home. Dopamine is the main pleasure chemical, something many drugs give you (and at lower levels, so do things like gambling, sex, smoking, eating, spending money, etc.). So after you leave the war zone, you may feel a lack of pleasure and get powerful cravings for alcohol or drugs, and/or urges to overdo the other activities that give you pleasure.

Slow-System Chemicals That Slow You Down

A couple of these chemicals are the most important. **Cortisol** can slow down your stress system, but it can also make you anxious. Cortisol helps protect you during the first half hour of a crisis, but after that, having a lot of cortisol isn't good for your body—and it stays there a long time. Long-term stress can give you too much cortisol.

If your body has reacted to stress and threat by pumping too much cortisol, you may feel both tired and anxious, shut down and distant from others, and more vulnerable to depression (feeling helpless and hopeless; aches and pains that don't make sense; not wanting to do anything except lie in bed or on the couch, stare into space, drink too much alcohol or caffeine, or use drugs that will pep you up). Cortisol can also weaken your immune system, so you're more likely to catch colds and other infections.

Too Much Cortisol?

You can see if you get a lot of cortisol under stress or threat—and it continues to hang on afterwards—by checking the boxes below. Most of the time when I've been under stress or threat:

- ❑ I feel cold
- ❑ I feel numb or kind of "dead" inside
- ❑ I feel tired and don't want to move
- ❑ I feel tense and out of sorts
- ❑ I feel depressed
- ❑ I don't remember things as well
- ❑ I get sick more easily
- ❑ I feel really, really hungry
- ❑ I gain more weight, especially belly fat
- ❑ I'm restless, and I have trouble sleeping

Serotonin is another important slow-system chemical, helping you feel calm, think of solutions, cooperate with others, and resist cravings and urges that would get you in trouble. Serotonin helps protect you from deployment stress effects. But for some people, high stress and threat can hurt the body's ability to make and use serotonin. People often come back from deployment with much lower levels of serotonin. This raises the risk of anxiety and depression; makes it harder to deal with people; and makes it harder to resist cravings for cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, etc.

Slow-System Chemicals That Ease the Pain

The most common of these chemicals are the **endorphins,** some of the body's natural pain relievers. When you're in pain, your body sends endorphins to your brain. It makes you less aware of the pain and helps you feel detached or separate from the situation. If your body reacted to the stress of war by pumping out a lot of pain-killing endorphins, you might miss those endorphins when you get home. You might have trouble feeling pleasure and tolerating pain, have cravings for alcohol or drugs, or have a higher risk of getting dependent on prescription pain killers.

Tool: Dealing With Adrenaline Overload

Taken from the work of Andra Medea (*Conflict Unraveled* and The Virtual Tranquilizer®)[6]

First, notice if you have adrenaline overload:

- **Watch for physical symptoms first:** Pounding head, racing heart, short breath, sweaty palms, dry mouth, heat rising in the body, tense muscles and jaw, etc. Make a list of your personal signs. Check the list when you're under stress. Checking the list is more important than yelling at someone.
- **Watch for mental symptoms:** Losing touch with the higher brain. Jumbled thoughts; circular thinking; or an inability to see options, remember time sequence, or handle math. Also watch for sudden loss of ability to speak clearly, and for a tendency to believe things without questioning them.

Next, burn up the adrenaline by using your large muscles: Many non-destructive activities can do this. Which of these things might you do if the situation allowed?

- ❑ Go for a run or a fast walk—outside if you can, or inside if you can't go out.
- ❑ Run up or down the stairs (unless stairs might trigger rough memories for you).
- ❑ Open a window and push sideways on the frames.
- ❑ Close the door and do calisthenics (push-ups, jumping jacks, etc. are good).
- ❑ Breathe slowly and deeply (the lungs are large muscles, too).
- ❑ Do active home repair or yard work (cleaning the garage, putting on a new roof, hauling things, digging a garden, clearing brush, etc.).
- ❑ If you're stuck in a meeting, use isometrics. If you're sitting at a heavy table that you're sure you can't lift, put your hands underneath it and push up (without anyone noticing), as if you're trying to lift it. Or "try" to pick up your chair—while you're sitting in it. Nobody will know what you're doing.

Reverse whatever your body is doing: If your breathing goes short, make yourself breathe deeply and slowly. If your fists are clenched, open your hands and stretch your fingers. If you're hunched over, sit back. If your shoulders are scrunched up, lower them.

Focus on specifics: List the facts one by one, then read them back, to keep your mind focused. Slow the pace. List events in the order in which they happened.

If you can't break free of adrenaline overload at the time: Recognize that you can't think very well and stop arguing. State clearly that you'd like to talk later, then leave and re-group. Try again after you've repeated the steps shown above.

Prepare in advance: If you're going into a tough situation, practice taking yourself out of adrenaline overload. Practice first when you're just a little overloaded, and keep practicing until you can bring down high levels of adrenaline. (At Walter Reed's Deployment Health Clinical Center they call this a "mental rehearsal" or a "fire drill.") You can develop a resistance to adrenaline overload, or train yourself to snap out of it.

[6] From *Conflict Unraveled: Fixing Problems at Work and in Families*, by Andra Medea. Also, hear a sample of her Virtual Tranquilizer ® for Returning Vets at http://www.conflictunraveled.com/vets.html

Resilience 101

6. What Happens to Memories?

For some it seems like a source of relief, and for others a source of worry or frustration, or even shame. But sometimes people who have been through intense experiences of pain or threat can't remember important details of those experiences later. This can be troubling, especially if people also remember some of the details—usually the most uncomfortable ones—intensely.

Have you ever had any of these memory-related challenges?

- ❑ Trouble remembering important details of an experience of heavy stress or threat
- ❑ Sudden and powerful memories of things you didn't remember happening
- ❑ Flashbacks (sights, sounds, smells, physical sensations, or emotions from the past, feeling like they're happening **right now**)
- ❑ Frequent or intense nightmares
- ❑ Night terrors (waking up suddenly, shaking, sweating, rapid heartbeat, etc.)

It's not just people who have been to war. Many people who have been in disasters or attacked in their homes or communities have the same confusing effects. Even many women who have been through the intense pain of childbirth say they can't remember the pain later. This all makes perfect sense, but only if you know how the brain works.

The most important thing to know is that each of us has two separate memory systems, one ruled by the higher brain, and one ruled by the survival brain.

It's your higher brain's job to make sure you remember everything you need to lead a productive and successful life. And it's your survival brain's job to make sure you can remember, recognize, and respond immediately to every experience associated with your survival.

So each of those "brains" has organized its own memory system:

1. Organized by parts of the higher brain, our **conscious memory system** makes and stores the kinds of memories that help us live our everyday lives and carry out tasks: facts, figures, maps, people we know, things that have happened in our lives or other people's lives, etc. You might think of this as a place where the memories are laid out on an open bookshelf, so you can find them easily.
2. Our **unconscious memory system** stores memories related to survival: emotions (pleasant and unpleasant), pain, pleasure, threats, things to be avoided, things to be desired, etc. You might think of these memories as being kept hidden in locked drawers. Your survival brain holds the key, and takes these memory fragments out when it thinks that's necessary for your survival. And when it takes these memories out, it puts them **right in your face.**

When Memories Do Strange Things

When you're under threat, the stress system pumps out combinations of chemicals that sometimes shut off the parts of the brain that record conscious memory, so it can leave "holes" in your memory. It's not that you've "blocked out" the memories because they're too painful. It's that you never recorded them in the first place. (This can sometimes happen when people have high levels of the fight-or-flight chemical adrenaline mixed with high levels of the slow-system chemicals cortisol and/or endorphins.)

But even if your conscious memory system stops recording memories for a while, your unconscious memory system is still working overtime, making intense, realistic memory fragments of pain and threat. Then it can pull out those memories later, often when something reminds it of those events: Fireworks might sound like gunfire. Trash by the side of a road might look like an IED. Feeling anger, pain, or anxiety might remind the survival brain of what it felt like to be under attack. Flashbacks and nightmares are two of the many ways the survival brain chooses to bring up its intense memories.

When these powerful memories are triggered, the body responds with a rush of adrenaline designed to give you the strength to fight off an attack or escape the danger. If the adrenaline doesn't get burned off in physical action, it builds up in your body and brain. You can experience "adrenaline overload." (More on adrenaline in Section 5)

If you find yourself "shutting down" or "numbing off" a lot, it might be partly your body responding with chemicals that numb you. But it might also be the only way your body knows (so far) to avoid emotions or memories that might trigger adrenaline overload.

The sights, sounds, smells, and experiences in the present that remind the survival brain of danger are often called "triggers." The tools on the next two pages can help you understand and identify your major triggers and make a plan for dealing with them.

Tool: Managing Triggers

If you thought of your stress system as a grill full of charcoal soaked in lighter fluid, your triggers would be the matches that can set it on fire. Triggers might include:

- **Sights, sounds, smells, activities, feelings, or body sensations** that remind your brain of unconscious, survival-based memories, triggering intense memories, feelings, or flashbacks. What are some common triggers for service members and veterans?

  _____

- **Anything that would ordinarily bother you or stress you out:** This could be anything from an argument with your spouse to some stranger saying something that sounds insulting. What are some things that usually bother you or stress you out?

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- **Closeness or intimacy with other people:** No matter how strong or independent you are, being close to other people raises feelings—positive ones and negative ones. For anyone who has been through extreme stress and threat, **any** kind of feeling can trigger stress reactions. The experience of war can make that even more complicated, because it can affect you in so many areas of life. The people you love most can be your greatest triggers for pain and anger, and it can sometimes feel like it's their fault—and even feel like they're doing it on purpose. Who in your life today seems to be a trigger for you?

  _____

You might avoid many of the challenges that some service members and veterans experience—trouble at home, at work, with friends, with alcohol or drugs, with finances, with the law—if you:

1. **Become aware of your triggers:** You can start this by carrying a pocket notebook around and writing down everything that triggers a stress reaction. You can choose whether and when you want to learn more about a trigger—where it came from, why it's so intense, etc. That might be part of a counseling process, when you're ready to resolve things. But you don't have always to understand a trigger in order to manage it. How might you use overwatch (See Section 4) to help you manage your triggers?

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2. **Make a list of your triggers:** Read the list often enough that the triggers are no longer surprising. Carry the list with you, so when your stress system "goes off" you can look at your list and see what might have triggered it.
3. **Don't blame the trigger:** The trigger is not the problem. The fact that your stress system is out of balance is the problem, but there are many solutions to that.
4. **Make a plan:** You can use the form on the next page to list some of the resilience skills you'll use to deal with your stress reactions.

Tool: Triggers vs. Resilience Skills

Adapted from the work of Marsha Linehan, PhD
University of Washington

Here's a tool that might help you think about and make a plan for dealing with some of your triggers.

Trigger	How you feel around this trigger	Your usual reaction	Some consequences of reacting this way	Resilience skills that might help	A more helpful reaction

Resilience 101

7. Deployment Stress Effects

The effects of war on the stress system can be mild, moderate, or intense. They can start right away or wait months or years before causing problems. They can range from something as mild as a bad temper, or a tendency to jump at loud noises, to PTSD, depression, or an overwhelming urge to numb out on alcohol or drugs.

None of these effects are signs of being weak, cowardly, or "crazy." They're actually signs that your stress and survival system has been doing its job—maybe a little too well. But all these deployment stress effects are normal reactions to intense stress and threat (to self, others, or honor). The experience of war may be different from all other experiences, but the human stress system is the same no matter where the body goes.

And—this is important—all these effects can and do get better. People learn to get back in balance, to re-regulate systems that have gone out of whack. Stress injuries heal. Lives get back on track. Resilience works, whether you've had the skills of resilience all your life or you're just learning these skills during or after deployment.

There are many different kinds of deployment stress effects. Here are just a few of the most common examples. You can check the effects below that you've experienced, and add any others that aren't mentioned. You might:

- ❑ Feel too many things all at once—or not be able to feel anything at all
- ❑ Feel really bored and out of touch with civilian life, and long for that chemical "rush" of battle
- ❑ Have strong urges to do risky things—like driving too fast, running up your credit cards, getting in fights—just to be able to feel something besides numb
- ❑ Not be able to remember important things that happened—or not be able to shut off the bad memories
- ❑ Suddenly feel exactly like you're **right there** under fire, even if you're far away

- ❑ Feel that rush of memory and panic just because you heard a loud noise, or you saw, heard, smelled, or felt something that reminded you of life in the war zone
- ❑ Have unexplained stomachaches, headaches, or pains in other parts of your body, even if you weren't injured in those areas
- ❑ Have the shakes, or find your fists clenching as if they had a mind of their own
- ❑ Have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep—or trouble getting out of bed at all
- ❑ Feel like you have to be busy and doing things all the time—or feel paralyzed
- ❑ Lose all patience with the people around you
- ❑ Feel panic, anger, or rage at little mistakes you've made or small things that other people do
- ❑ See people or situations as threatening or insulting when they're really not, and feel your body and brain reacting as they would if you were under attack
- ❑ Have a hard time thinking of different choices you might have and weighing the possible consequences of each choice
- ❑ Feel intensely guilty about people you killed, people you didn't kill, people you couldn't save, or the fact that you survived and can still feel happiness
- ❑ Feel a deep sense of shame about who you are now, or about your role in the war
- ❑ Feel overwhelmed by the losses you've experienced and witnessed in the war zone
- ❑ Feel cut off and separate from anyone who hasn't seen combat, including the people you love back at home
- ❑ Find yourself judging people harshly who seem overly concerned with trivial things
- ❑ Find yourself trying to escape or numb these feelings by drinking too much, driving too fast, getting into risky situations, using drugs, gambling, blowing all your money, having sex with the wrong people, getting into fights, etc.
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

Different people have different effects, in part because they're living in different bodies, with different genetic makeup and basic brain chemistry. They have different training and experiences—before, during, and after military service—and develop different dreams, values, beliefs, relationships, spiritual resources, and coping skills.

Deployment stress effects can also trigger reactions on many "layers" of being a human being—thoughts, feelings, relationships, family, social, religious/spiritual, etc. it's easy to think that deployment stress effects are—at their roots—emotional problems, relationship problems, family problems, substance abuse problems, spiritual problems, etc. But often the difference between a difficult life challenge (like we all have) and a big problem is the extra intensity brought on by a stress system that's out of balance.

When you learn and practice resilience skills, you have the power to bring your stress system back into balance. And if you also need medical help and/or counseling, you'll be in a much better position to make the most of it. (More about help in Section 12)

Tool: Myths vs. Truths About Deployment Stress Effects

Myths	Truths
People who have deployment stress effects are "crazy," weak, cowardly, or "defective." **(False!)**	Deployment stress effects are rooted in the body's normal and powerful responses to high stress, intense experiences, and the threat of injury or death. These are physical effects—driven by the stress system—that naturally spill over into many aspects of life. They're not signs of weakness, cowardice, or being "crazy" or "defective"—even if they sometimes feel that way. They're signs of the body's power to respond to extreme threat and keep you functioning, fighting, and saving lives.
Deployment stress effects are mental illnesses. **(False!)**	Deployment stress effects are driven by changes in stress system functioning caused by exposure to intense stress and threat—reactions that help people survive and function in the war zone but don't work well at home. These effects range from mild embodied stress to injuries like posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They're not illnesses, though people sometimes become more vulnerable to other conditions because of the effects of war-zone stress. These conditions can include diseases of the stomach or intestines, immune system conditions like fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome, mental health issues like depression or anxiety disorders, and other conditions. PTSD is rooted in injuries to the stress system, results of the normal and natural ways in which the body, mind, and spirit adapt to extreme stress and threat.
Deployment stress effects are always permanently disabling. **(False!)**	Most people have milder or more temporary effects that aren't at all disabling. They work through them. If they don't already have strong resilience skills, they learn these skills or get help or training from others. Other veterans or service members who have been there and overcome these effects are often very powerful resources. A much smaller percentage of service members and veterans have stronger stress effects that can get in the way of their ability to do one or more of the things it takes to adapt to life at home or in the garrison. But that doesn't mean these disabilities are permanent. There are ways of overcoming even very powerful effects, though it might not seem that way at first. And if you experience any longer-lasting challenges to your stress system, your resilience skills are among the many ways of working around these challenges and not letting them stop you.
All deployment stress effects are PTSD. If you have problems, it must be PTSD. And if you don't have PTSD, you don't have any problems. **(False!)**	There's a whole range of deployment stress effects, from mild challenges to very difficult problems. There are also many different directions these effects can take. For example, they can speed you up, slow you down, do both at the same time, or mess with your memories—or any combination of these.

Myths	Truths
Only people in direct combat roles have deployment stress effects. **(False!)**	Everyone who spends time in a war zone is under threat, and their stress systems can react in powerful ways that can have powerful effects. If you're in a threat environment, the fact that your role doesn't include fighting won't keep your stress system from doing what stress systems are built to do.
The only thing they can really do for deployment stress effects is dope you up on a bunch of medications. **(False!)**	Some of these effects—like extreme anxiety—need medicine to stabilize them, but once you're stable, your doctor can move you on to the next phase of balancing your stress system. In many cases things like anxiety, depression, or rage can last longer, so doctors might prescribe medicine to manage them. The most important thing is to be a well informed consumer of medical services, and to have people in your life who can give you feedback on any side effects you may be having. You'll want to keep track of the effects of medications, learn about possible side effects, report any side effects you have, and negotiate with your doctor for a medication change if the side effects are unacceptable to you. You can also get a second opinion. (More on getting training, help, and support in Section 12)
If you get counseling for your deployment stress effects, people are going to "probe your psyche," make you talk about your feelings, keep you in therapy forever, and generally make you weaker and less able to fulfill your role as a service member and/or productive citizen. **(False!)**	There are many kinds of counseling to choose from, and many are focused on skill training, managing stress effects, and using sensations in your body to help you learn to balance your stress system. Some counseling approaches are supported by the research, some still need to be tested more but are already helping people, and some haven't shown much promise. So you'll want to be an informed consumer here, too. (More on getting training, help, and support in Section 12)

Remember: Deployment stress effects are normal, resilience works, and hope is real.

- If your thoughts are scrambled, you can't sleep, you have nightmares, your feelings or actions seem "out of whack," or you're losing it over little things, you might sometimes wonder if you're "going crazy." **You're not.**
- If your body is experiencing reactions that feel like fear, you might be tempted to think you're being cowardly or weak. **You're not.**
- If you can't remember information about important experiences—or intense memories come crashing in on you out of nowhere—you might sometimes feel like you've lost all hope of controlling your mind and memories. **You haven't.**
- If you have intense urges to drink or use drugs, you might be afraid drinking or drugging is the only way you can ever feel normal or okay. **It's not.**
- If you're experiencing some of these things with no relief, you might feel as if nothing can bring you back in balance. **You're wrong. There are definitely good ways of getting back in balance.**

Resilience 101

8. The Underlying Power

The major force behind war-zone stress reactions is the same as the major force behind many of our most powerful experiences—the human instinct to survive and preserve our species.

The chemical forces that fuel these reactions are very primitive. We're animals. Our bodies haven't changed much since we lived in caves and the only threats we had were physical and temporary—like other animals coming into our caves to kill us or steal our food. Seeing the threat, we'd be filled with adrenaline. Fighting the threat, we'd burn off the adrenaline. Our threats are different now, but our bodies are pretty much the same.

These changes are automatic. We don't choose them. They're built to be far more powerful than our will, because the survival of our species depends on how well they work in all of us. We may be able to control our behavior in crisis situations, but our bodies are still going to do what bodies do under extreme stress.

The survival instinct is not just the thing that makes you shoot back when somebody's shooting at you. It's also the unconscious force behind things like:

- Sexual desire for an attractive potential mate (keeping the species going)
- The urge to protect children (protecting the next generation)
- Acts of heroism and endurance (protecting our fellow human beings)
- The drive to get ahead in the world (having enough resources to survive)
- Generosity toward people who are less fortunate (making sure others have enough resources to survive)
- The desire to serve our community, our state, or our country (defending the pack)
- The first responder's dedication to the well being of the community (protecting those with less strength)
- The service member's dedication to his or her country and comrades in arms (defending one another, the pack, and the forces that defend the pack)

It's all about keeping us—all of us—going. Our species is wired to survive, and the stress system is an important part of that "wiring." So the body's survival-level reactions don't just happen when we ourselves are threatened or harmed. This may be why things that happen to other people—even people we don't know or think we identify with—can have such powerful effects on us. Even a threat to the values and principles that support the survival of the species—things like honor, morality, dignity, sense of mission, sense of meaning, or belief in a higher power—can trigger these reactions.

If the survival instinct applies to the survival of more than just the individual, what are some the people, values, principles, etc. that are most important to you?

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You can look at it as if the survival instinct were laid out on a long line. Depending on whether you're at war or at home, this might include survival of:

The Individual	Your Buddy (or Loved One)	Your Unit (or Family)	The Community	The Nation	The Species

We all move back and forth on that line all the time, depending on what happens, what's needed, and what's important to us. Sometimes we're called on to support or protect ourselves, and sometimes to support or protect others.

Effects on the Stress System

If the survival instinct were only there to protect your own survival, it would be a lot simpler. You might never have volunteered for military service, because it would have been a lot safer to stay home. But if we're built to support the survival of the species as a whole, that often means putting our own well being aside to support and protect others. That's why the military mission is so powerful, because it taps into your instinct to protect your country and preserve your society.

How would you describe your own instinct to protect others, in your family, your unit, your community, your country, your culture, and/or people in general?

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Three examples of situations in which the larger survival instinct might trigger high stress:

- When service members are unable to protect their buddies or their unit, this may activate the instinct for survival of loved ones and the community.
- When service members are exposed to the aftermath of fatal attacks—especially those with large numbers of casualties or with children as casualties—this may activate the instinct for survival of the species, even if the service members didn't know the people who were killed.
- The act of wounding or killing another human being can have powerful effects on the stress system, even if that act is absolutely necessary. The warfighter's instinct to save lives within his or her unit may prevail, but the urge to protect the species may also create conflicts in the body, mind, and spirit.

These are all ancient, powerful, instinctive drives, hooked into powerful, automatic stress systems. Military training can teach you what to do and make you strong enough to keep moving or stand and fight, but it can't wipe out instincts and automatic physical processes that have been around as long as human beings have walked the earth.

Look at the resilience skills and traits you checked/listed on Page 2-3. How do you (or might you) use some of those skills to handle your concern for the well being of others?

_____

_____

_____

Beyond Physical Safety and Survival

The human being lives on many levels, from the most basic chemicals in the body to the indescribable and unquantifiable thing that is the human spirit—and all points in between. Everything that happens to us happens on all those levels at once. Who you are, and what you choose, may affect the direction of some of your reactions during or after deployment—like whether you feel angry or afraid, whether you grieve or shut down, whether you blame others or yourself. But the force that drives the intensity of your reactions is physical, rooted in a body that's hard-wired to keep you—and your species—alive. That force is a sign of your amazing strength, as a member of an amazing species.

The chart on the next page looks at some of the effects of war-zone stress on the whole human being. On a number of levels (the body, the brain, thoughts, feelings, etc.), this chart lists some common responses in the war zone, the power of these responses, the possible impact after deployment, and suggestions for getting back in balance.

The Power of Common Responses—and Suggestions for Getting Back in Balance

	1. Common Responses in the War Zone	2. Power of These Responses	3. Possible Impact Afterwards	4. Suggestions for Restoring Balance
The Body	Powerful chemicals go into "overdrive"—heart racing, "super-human" strength; if helpless, go into "freeze" responses, tensing protective front core muscles.	In combat, speed and strength help you feel confident, react quickly and decisively, fight, save lives, escape harm. "Freezing" can save lives.	After these chemicals go into overdrive, the body has some unfinished business. It may be shaky, "jumpy," or very tired or weak (feeling "paralyzed") for a while.	Use Grounding and techniques for adrenaline overload. Exercises to relax and release energy. Good diet (whether or not you feel hungry), rest, exercise, vitamins and minerals, and medical care to help the body handle stress and learn to make stress chemicals again. Patience with the time it takes the body to "normalize."
	In constant threat, these systems can stay on overdrive for a long time.	You can stay ready for battle at all times, for long periods of time.	Constant stress makes the body jumpy, weak, vulnerable to chronic illness.	
The Brain	Some chemicals speed up thoughts, raise feelings of alarm and fear.	Speedy thoughts help you take action. Alarm and fear help you judge threat.	"Speedy" chemicals cause jittery nerves, anger, feeling threatened, sleep trouble.	Understand that these are normal chemical reactions to sometimes unimaginable events. Use Grounding, overwatch, Mindfulness skills to be an observer of your own reactions. Watch your reactions to things that seem like threats or insults, and question whether they really are, or if it's just your brain chemicals talking. Avoid alcohol, drugs, and caffeine, and get medical advice if you think you might need help. Get help for depression and any other reactions that last more than a month.
	Some chemicals calm you down, help you control your actions/reactions; keep your moods stable, even in unstable situations like combat.	These calming chemicals help you think more clearly, make better decisions, react in more effective ways, cooperate better, be a better leader.	Calming chemicals can "wear out" after they've been needed too much, causing anxiety, depression, urges to drink or use drugs, higher risk of getting addicted.	
	Some chemicals relieve pain and sometimes help you forget what you experienced under intense stress.	Pain relief during the crisis—and forgetting the pain afterwards—helps you keep going in spite of the pain.	You might lose important memories later, or memories might "come at you out of nowhere," even long after combat is over.	
Thoughts	"This isn't happening. It isn't so bad."	Makes it easier to cope and function.	You might neglect signs you need help.	Find people you can trust, and confide in them. Question the thoughts that sound self-critical or self-destructive. Balance helping others with getting the support or professional help you need. Let trust grow back slowly. Question blame, and put it in context. Talk about responsibility.
	"I'm strong; other people need me."	Brings more hope, courage, action.	You might see needs as weaknesses.	
	"I can't trust anyone outside the Unit."	Helps you spot danger and react to it.	You might not trust anyone outside Unit.	
	"This is all happening for a reason."	Helps you accept pain and move on.	You might blame yourself or others.	
Feelings	Not feeling emotions (numbing them).	Less pain/fear, more decisive action.	You might not grieve important losses.	Practice noticing what you feel, putting a name to it, and feeling whatever it is. Use skills like overwatch and Mindfulness to help you notice and manage your feelings. Let the grieving happen in whatever form or timetable it seems to want to take. Remember: It takes great courage to feel.
	Feeling only "safe" emotions (anger).	Helps you focus on fighting and winning.	You might take feelings for weakness.	
	"Projecting" your feelings onto others.	Helps you not notice/feel your feelings.	You might resent, damage relationships.	
	Giving in to just feeling overwhelmed.	Lets people know you need help.	You might ignore real strength/courage.	
The Spirit	Connecting with your spiritual beliefs.	Strength in safety, connection, meaning.	You might reject others' help or beliefs.	Know that there's plenty of room for your beliefs, others' beliefs, and human help. Use questioning to strengthen your beliefs and get closer to what you really believe. Balance acceptance of yourself and others with the need for action. Find mission and purpose, even after you've returned home.
	Questioning or rejecting your beliefs.	Helps explain painful and unfair things.	You might lose connection, meaning.	
	Finding new spiritual feelings/beliefs.	Brings in new spiritual strength/hope.	You might lose beliefs when crisis is over.	
	Accepting and transcending events.	More clarity, calm, sense of purpose.	You might accept things you should change.	
The Unit	Military discipline, high expectations.	Standards promote strength, discipline	You might be ashamed of reactions to stress.	Know that it's **not** weak or disloyal to get help for your body's and brain's reactions to war-zone stress. Make and keep deep friendships with others who have served.
	Staying alert for danger at all times.	You're ready to react to any emergency.	Toll on body and brain (see above).	
	Sense of unity within the Unit.	Cooperation saves lives, wins battles.	You might feel lost/alone after deployment.	
Home	Keeping in contact from the war zone.	Sense of connection brings strength.	Stronger feelings of stress, loss, missing them.	Accept that you've changed, and those at home have changed, too. Learn who you all are now. Use resources for re-learning trust, fun, romance, communication, and relationships.
	Not talking about bad experiences.	Protects loved ones from pain and fear.	You might feel disconnected from home.	
	Remembering your home as ideal.	Reminds you what you're fighting for.	Nobody can live up to an ideal in real life.	

This page reprinted from *Finding Balance After the War Zone: Considerations in the Treatment of Post-Deployment Stress Effects* (Woll, 2008).

Resilience 101

9. Thoughts and Feelings

Many humans have trouble with thoughts and feelings, because we're too close to them. They're happening in our own heads, in our own bodies, and it's hard to get perspective on them.

If you're trying to untie a knot, you're not going to put your face right there over the knot. You'd have to cross your eyes just to see it, and pull it apart with your teeth. You're more likely to get a little distance, so you can see what's really going on and use your hands to untie it.

But with thoughts and feelings that trouble us, we often try to deal with them by analyzing them, obsessing about them, thinking about them non-stop, taking them very seriously. Or we might run the other way—ignoring, avoiding, and denying them until they blow up in our faces. But very few of us have been trained to keep our thoughts and feelings at just the right distance.

If your stress system has been affected by war or any other intense experience, there are often a few extra layers of complication. Thoughts can be jumbled, scattered, and confused for a while, and even positive feelings can trigger strong stress reactions. It can actually seem like your feelings are threats to your survival and your thoughts are the only weapons you have to defend yourself. Here are some questions you can ask yourself when you run into this kind of turbulence:

1. What's going on in my head right now?
2. Is the way I'm thinking or feeling right now really going to help me survive, succeed, be happy, or fulfill my mission in life?
3. What's the next right thing I can do right now, and what can I do to focus on that instead of all this stuff that's going on in my head?
4. Who can I talk to who would understand and help me get back on track?

Several resilience skills involve using your mind to manage your thoughts and feelings and bring your stress system back in balance. You can:

- **Practice being in the "here-and-now":** This skill can be challenging at first, especially if intense experiences have played tricks on your memory. One way is to notice things in the present—your breathing, sensations in your body, people and things around you, etc. (More on this in "Grounding," Page iii)

  How could this skill be useful to you?_____

  _____

  _____

- **Practice physical and mental overwatch:** Most people are so lost in our own experience—our thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and opinions—that we almost think we **are** those thoughts, feelings, sensations, and opinions. It's important to practice providing overwatch of your own minute-to-minute experience. Don't try to avoid having the experience, but while you're having it, also watch it and notice things about it. (More on overwatch in Section 4)

  How could this skill be useful to you?_____

  _____

  _____

- **Identify and manage triggers:** When your stress system is out of balance, even ordinary things—and well meaning people—can trigger intense stress reactions, from flashbacks to intense pain, anger, fear, or guilt. It's important to learn what kinds of things trigger your stress reactions, so you can make a plan for coping with them. (More on triggers, including two tools, in Section 6)

  How could this skill be useful to you?_____

  _____

  _____

- **Question things:** The more often we think a thought, the more it gets "burned" into the brain. Many people get used to thinking negative thoughts over and over, and it gets harder and harder to keep these thoughts from triggering stress chemicals. Some of our most upsetting thoughts aren't true, or haven't happened. One way to keep thoughts from running you over is to question them: "How do I know this is true?" "Is this something I **really** believe in the present? Was it just true in the past? Is it something that might not even happen?"

  How could this skill be useful to you?_____

  _____

  _____

Tool: Being Mindful—Noticing Without Judging

As you learn and practice overwatch on your experiences, thoughts, and feelings, it's helpful to take advantage of an old and well practiced technique for doing this. The idea of being mindful has been around more than 2,500 years, originally as a Buddhist meditation practice called Mindfulness. But lately many Western teachers, doctors, counselors, and people of all occupations have also been using it, to calm down and learn to think more effectively.[7] It's a good skill to combine with the other skills described in this workbook.

You don't have to be a Buddhist or "into meditation" to practice being mindful. You don't have to sit still, cross your legs, or breathe a certain way. It helps if you breathe slowly and deeply, but you don't have to. And you can be mindful anywhere—at work, driving, walking, waiting for appointments, watching TV, with friends or family, etc. You can practice being mindful no matter what else you're doing. Nobody will even know you're doing it.

Being mindful is about getting a little relief from that constant "mind chatter"—that jumble of thoughts, feelings, and memories that most people have bouncing around in our heads. It's not about controlling the mind chatter or shutting it down. It's about getting a little distance from it. People who practice being mindful understand that you can't make the mind chatter go away. But what you can do is focus your attention on what's happening right now—where you are, what's happening around you, how your body feels, etc. (the kinds of things you noticed in the Grounding exercise). That way, instead of focusing on the mind chatter, you can just be aware of it—watch it as it goes by. **And practice watching it without judging yourself or others.**

That's why mindfulness can be a good technique for practicing overwatch. You're watching your experience from a little higher ground, a little more distance, a little better perspective. Thoughts may be happening inside your head, but your thoughts are not who you are. And because you're not so caught up in your thoughts, your feelings don't get so intense either.

You might think of your thoughts, feelings, urges, and memories as clouds floating over your head, or cars rolling past you on the highway below. You notice them, but they don't have to move you around or make you lose your balance. You're still in the same place, watching them. Your thoughts, feelings, urges, and memories are like those clouds or cars. They're moving past you, but you're still grounded in the here-and-now.

You can also train yourself to remember to be more mindful in everyday life. You can decide that certain things are going to remind you to be more mindful—like red lights in traffic, sidewalks, fences, etc. After a while, your mind really can get quieter. You can get calmer and start thinking more clearly. Mindfulness actually helps "grow" the higher parts of your brain that help balance and strengthen your stress system.

[7] There are many books, etc. on Mindfulness. One good place to start is with a well known American author and expert on the subject, Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Tool: Remembering Success

Inspired by a suggestion from Desert Storm Veteran Steve Robinson

This skill isn't just about the way the world defines "success"—achievements that others might think are important. This is also about remembering things like:

- **Peak experiences:** These may be times when you've felt happy, free, triumphant, successful, inspired, creative, alive, connected, "in the zone"—any or all of these things. These experiences are important, because they help you explore and believe in the best in you.
- **Times when you've overcome adversity:** These experiences show how strong you are, show you how to handle stress, and remind you that you can handle stress successfully. They can increase your sense of hope and confidence.
- **Times when your mind has been opened:** Sometimes your greatest triumphs might include conquering the way you've always thought about someone or something. When you end up liking, admiring, or respecting a person, an idea, or an experience that you judged negatively in the past, your world gets a little bigger and a little more comfortable, with more possibilities.

Make a list of 7 experiences of success below, then picture each one and hold it in your mind:

1. _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____
3. _____
   _____
4. _____
   _____
5. _____
   _____
6. _____
   _____
7. _____
   _____

Resilience 101

10. Relationships

In the realm of the human stress system, human contact makes a lot of difference. It starts when babies are just building their stress systems. Researchers have found that:

- Loving face-to-face contact between a baby and a caregiver can actually strengthen and "grow" the parts of the higher brain that help us regulate our stress systems.
- Babies learn how to handle stress and threat by watching the way their caregivers handle these experiences.

The need for positive relationships is built into our stress systems.

In the war zone, one of the most effective sources of resilience is the powerful bond that so often grows up among the men and women who live and work and fight side by side. Only the experience of shared danger and grief, and the knowledge that your lives are in one another's hands, could forge such powerful relationships.

When the relationships within a unit are strong and positive, the warriors in that unit have a better chance of coming through with less wear and tear on the stress system. When one or more relationships within the unit are negative or harmful, it can be devastating to the individual—or to the whole unit. This is partly because there's nowhere to go to get away from it, and partly because it's a betrayal of a sacred bond among brothers and sisters.

How would you describe your strongest positive relationship(s) within your unit?

_____

_____

_____

When people return from deployment, their relationships with other service members or veterans are often strong sources of resilience. For Guardsmen and Reservists, and for veterans retired from the service, finding and keeping these relationships can be a challenge, but it's an important one to meet.

Many people who have sustained serious stress injuries have been able to "keep it together" until they separate from military service. At that point the loss of that intense bond combines with the loss of military structure, creating a much higher risk of post-deployment stress effects. Reconnecting with others who have fought in the same wars can be a powerful resilience factor. There are Vet Centers, veterans' service organizations, chat rooms focused on connecting veterans and service members, etc.[8]

If (or when) you're living apart from the military community, what might be some ways you'd be willing to contact other service members or veterans?

_____

_____

Communication With Spouses and Partners

For service members who are married or in other romantic relationships with people back home, the availability of instant communication through cell phones, texting, blackberries, webcams, etc. has done some interesting things to war-zone stress. It's made it easier to communicate about your safety, but it's also made it easier to communicate about everything else—including all the big and little problems at home that you can't do anything about. This increases your level of stress and distraction, and it doesn't do much for the quality of the relationship, either.

Keeping the Romance

1. Have both partners do a sort of "triage" on communication. Before you write or text your partner about a problem, ask yourself:
   - Is this something he or she needs to know?
   - Is this something he or she can do anything about?
   - Is this something that will raise his or her stress level?
   - Is there someone else I can talk to about this instead?
2. Write love letters. Pretend you're back in World War II and these letters are precious, reserved for messages of love, desire, and commitment. Even if you have to send them via email or text, try making the words count. And once a month the spouse at home might dress up and go out for a "date" with the deployed service member. Sit at a table in a nice restaurant and write a letter from the heart.

Most married service members are well aware of the stress their spouses experience at home, where so much of the family focus is on the service member, but so much of the stress is on the spouse. As important as this knowledge is, it adds to the service member's stress—so everybody's worried about everyone else.

Apart from making sure each one has a good support system and sound techniques for preparing for deployment and homecoming, there may be no way to fix this hard reality of wartime service. But it's important to keep remembering that this much concern must reflect a lot of love, and that love may be our most important resilience skill.

Expectations

Much has been written about the stress that expectations can put on service members and families during deployment—and on marriages after deployment. No one can live up to the idealized people we create in our heads when we miss them and worry about them from a great distance. There's an old saying, "Expectations are premeditated resentments." It's easy to let expectations turn into disappointments, and to let disappointments turn into hurt and anger.

Once the "honeymoon" stage of homecoming is over, people are often not at their best for a while. Everyone has been under intense stress, and the many adjustments associated with homecoming are also stressful. It's normal and common for people to feel "shut down" for a while after returning from deployment at war, to have a hard time communicating with those they love, to be completely exhausted, and to have a hard time controlling their stress reactions. These realities can fall far below the expectations the family might have

One good thing to do with our expectations of a loved one is to get a little distance from the expectations. Each partner might make out a chart with the columns shown below, being careful not to tell the others about any expectations that would hurt their feelings or bruise their egos (like "I expected you to be much smarter and better looking!").

What disappointment am I having?	**What expectation did I have that wasn't met?**	**How am I making this about me?**	**What would I learn if I made it <u>not about me</u>?**
I haven't seen my kids in almost a year, and now they don't seem to have any time for me.	I thought we'd do all kinds of things together, like we used to do before my deployment.	I'm wondering whether they still look up to me, or if I've lost my place in their lives.	They've just spent a year protecting themselves from worrying too much about me. Give them time.

Civilians

Civilians who have never been in a war zone haven't seen, done, or experienced anything close to what you experienced in country. Many returning veterans and transitioning service members find it hard to communicate with civilians—even those they're close to—for many reasons.

Compared to the intense bonds that form in the war zone, relationships back home may seem superficial and trivial. It may seem like you can't trust civilians at all, even people you love. It might help if you tried thinking of trust as something you do in a lot of different ways, for different reasons, rather than all-or-nothing thing. For example, as an exercise, name three civilians you can trust in one or more important ways:

_____

_____

_____

Some civilians, even strangers—out of concern, curiosity, or feelings of awkwardness—may ask you well meant but annoying or intrusive questions about your war experience or your reactions to it. You can control these questions by finding direct, courteous ways of protecting your privacy. For example, you might say something like, "I appreciate your interest, but that's a more complicated question than I can go into right now." You can practice different ways of stopping the questions or changing the subject without shutting people out. What's one good way you might respond?

_____

_____

Victoria Bruner, LCSW, RN, BCETS (Deployment Healthcare Clinical Center, Walter Reed Army Medical Center) suggests writing a letter to your loved ones, letting them know you understand their questions are coming from a place of concern, but asking them to wait until you're ready to talk about it, and asking them to let you know what they need from you. Here are some things about your stress reactions you might explain to people when you're ready:

- What's happening in you is a normal response to the experience of war.
- Civilians will never understand the experience of war, but if they can respect that fact, it's enough.
- Stress reactions are universal human experiences. We all have the same stress system.

For those friends, family members, neighbors, and co-workers who are important to you, it's worth taking the time to help them learn how to be respectful to you. You can learn from each other and negotiate the types of topics and questions that are okay.

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11. Mission and Purpose

For many transitioning service members and returning veterans, the greatest challenge in returning home is the loss of the clear and powerful sense of mission and purpose they experienced during deployment.

No matter how much stress and threat may have been connected with the mission in the war zone, that same sense of mission probably played a powerful protective role. And back home, reviving your sense of mission and purpose—in whatever form it might take now—can be a very important resource in helping you balance your stress system.

Higher Connections

Whoever you are, whatever your age or experience, there are probably higher or deeper kinds of connection that are important to you.

- You may have been raised in a religious faith that follows you still
- You may have a strong sense of connection to nature or to humanity as a whole
- You may practice a spiritual discipline that adds depth and dimension to your life
- You may have values or principles or people you live for—and have proved yourself willing to die for
- Your love of country, sense of honor, and loyalty to the mission may be a powerful force in your life

If any of these are true, you may already be calling on these resources to help you get your stress system back in balance. It's important to recognize these connections, see their value, and—if you can—connect with others who share your commitment. These connections use your higher brain, and the more we use a part of the brain, the stronger it gets.

What are some of the higher kinds of connection that are important to you?

- ❑ Religious faith _____
- ❑ Connection to nature _____
- ❑ Connection to humankind _____
- ❑ Spiritual discipline _____
- ❑ Values _____
- ❑ Principles _____
- ❑ People _____
- ❑ Love of country _____
- ❑ Loyalty to the mission _____
- ❑ Warrior Ethos _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

Your Ongoing Mission

It's also important to know that, with all the ways war might have changed you, there are many changes that have made you a better person—stronger, wiser, deeper, with more potential to be of service. Of course, if you can't sleep,[9] you can't get out of bed, or you're ambushed by flashbacks or rages or unexplained pain, this may seem beside the point. We have to learn to walk before we can learn to fly.

But please put a bookmark here: There's something important in you. It's worth all the work, all the skill building, all the re-balancing. You still have a mission to carry out. It may not be the same one you found in country, but it's yours. You might not know what it is for a while, but it will wait until you're ready.

So many warriors have fallen to save all of our lives, we owe it to them to live with as much purpose as possible. It can be an upward spiral: Focusing on mission and purpose can help you balance your stress system, and getting your stress system in balance can make you more effective at finding and carrying out your mission. How would you describe your mission right now, at this point in your life?

_____

_____

_____

[9] Appendix B offers a collection of tips for getting better sleep.

Tool: Dealing With the Things You Can't Control

When you're learning about and carrying out your mission and purpose, one of your biggest challenges may be the fact that human power is limited. Unfair things happen. Horrible things happen. It may be your fault, it may be somebody else's fault, or it may be nobody's fault. There are—and always will be—important things you can't control.

If you're having a hard time dealing with that, it can throw off the balance between yourself and the world, and your stress system will carry much of the burden. If you have a lot of anger, resentment, guilt, shame, anxiety, hopelessness, etc., it can get in the way of your ability to see, believe in, and carry out your mission.

So how do you deal with that? Sometimes it starts with just knowing which things you can change or control and which ones you can't. So a question for you: Which realities in your present life (in yourself, other people, events, etc.) can you change or fix, and which ones are beyond your power to change or fix? (Hint: If it's other people, they usually fall into the "beyond your power" category.)

Can change or fix: _____

_____

_____

Can't change or fix: _____

_____

_____

Sometimes it seems like accepting the reality of the things we can't change might be a betrayal of ourselves, our values or principles, our mission, or people we care about. Of course, if you keep fighting that reality, it won't make things any better, and it will get in the way of your higher brain—and you need your higher brain to fulfill your mission.

What parts of your present reality might you be fighting these days?

_____

_____

_____

If you were to stop fighting the realities you don't have the power to change—and work on accepting and dealing with life on life's terms—what could you do instead to honor yourself, your values, your principles, your mission, and the people you care about?

_____

_____

_____

Tool: Appreciation

Appreciation is a powerful tool for balancing your stress system. You might think of it as appreciation, or as gratitude (gratitude is basically appreciation combined with the feeling or belief that the person or thing you appreciate is also a gift to you). When some things are wrong in your life, it's important not to forget all the important people and things that are **right** in your life. Appreciation and gratitude:

- Strengthen the higher brain areas that help regulate the stress system
- Give the survival brain something positive to chew on, to distract it from its preoccupation with pain and danger
- Give you hope—not false hope, but a general feeling of hope (appreciation and gratitude are to the past and present what hope is to the future, so they make it easier to hope)
- Give you a clearer sense of mission and purpose, by highlighting your values

Here's a useful skill to practice regularly, whether or not you feel like looking for things you appreciate. The times when you really don't feel appreciative will often be the times when you get the most out of this exercise. **Below, write down as many people or things as you can think of that you appreciate.**

Comfort (physical, emotional): _____

Strength: _____

Security: _____

Belonging: _____

Pleasure: _____

Interest: _____

Fun: _____

Humor: _____

Calm: _____

Excitement: _____

Fulfillment: _____

Joy: _____

Beauty: _____

Love: _____

People: _____

Mission: _____

What else? _____

Resilience 101

12. Training, Help, and Support

If your stress reactions are causing challenges for you or others around you, you might need something beyond resilience skills. But many people who are having trouble with deployment stress effects aren't sure what's involved in getting professional help. Others say they don't want any kind of help that's going to take a long time or ask them to dig deep into their memories, talk about feelings, or talk about personal things.

You might think of the help that's available in four basic types: 1) help in managing triggers and stress reactions, 2) managing stress reactions with help from medications, 3) help in changing the way your brain and body process and react to war memories, and 4) help in dealing with risky or harmful use of alcohol or drugs.

Help and Training in Managing Stress Reactions

The first type of help—in managing your triggers and reactions—is really more training than therapy. You don't have to relive the past or talk about your feelings, and you can start in small, manageable ways. For example:

- Other service members or veterans who have dealt successfully with deployment stress effects can tell you what has helped them and give you pointers.
- The research supports many kinds of skill-based therapies that train you in the resilience skills you'll need to balance and regulate your stress system and operate in more effective ways. Many skills can be taught in a few sessions.
- There are also body-based approaches. There are "somatosensory" approaches that build your awareness of body sensations and use that awareness to teach you to balance your stress system. Some approaches use tapping techniques to bring calm. Though many of these approaches haven't yet been researched fully, some research is underway, and some of them have helped many people.

- Many service members and veterans are finding help from practitioners of alternative therapies such as acupuncture, acupressure, and massage therapy. For example Fort Bliss and Walter Reed have model programs in which service members and veterans receive some alternative services. Any technique that helps you learn to balance and manage your stress system can be helpful.

Managing Stress Reactions With Help From Medications

Many people with post-deployment stress effects receive short- or long-term prescriptions. The right medication can help you stabilize your stress chemicals—though **it's not a substitute for practicing resilience skills and learning to manage your stress system**. Here are notes on just a few of the many medications prescribed:

- The most common and best-researched medicines for war-zone stress reactions are the antidepressants that make the chemical serotonin (See Section 5) more available. You don't have to be depressed for these medications to help you.
- There are alpha blockers and beta blockers (heart medications) that can help block the effects of adrenaline on the body without many side effects.
- If other medications aren't working, some doctors may add drugs like anticonvulsants or the newer ("atypical") antipsychotics to increase their effects. You don't have to have a seizure disorder or a psychosis for these to help, but some of them have difficult side effects.
- To bring down extreme stress reactions quickly, a doctor might prescribe the temporary use of a benzodiazepine sedative. Benzos are addictive, so if you have problems with alcohol or drugs, they're not a good idea. Used on a regular basis, these drugs can also make your stress reactions worse. So if your doctor insists on prescribing ongoing use of benzos, please get a second opinion.

Help in Changing The Way Your Body Processes Memories

You can learn to manage and cope with your triggers, stress reactions, and troubling memories, but that won't "neutralize" them. The fact that the body has two separate memory systems can cause complications after experiences of extreme stress and threat. (More about memory systems in Section 6)

If you're having intrusive memories, flashbacks, nightmares, or night terrors, you'll need to deal with the way your brain and body process these memories. The good news is that there are effective ways of changing the brain's and body's relationship to these memories, and these approaches are well supported by the research. The unwelcome news is that these kinds of therapies often involve bringing up memories and feelings people usually don't want to deal with. Here are a couple of approaches:

- The research supports a process called Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), which uses both thoughts and easy physical techniques to lower the intensity of your reactions to memories and present-day experiences. Sometimes EMDR involves bringing up and "neutralizing" difficult memories, but sometimes it can be effective just working with images or body sensations in the present. Sometimes people see results in a short time.
- Research also supports the use of exposure therapies, in which a therapist walks you through difficult memories while helping you regulate your stress system. Examples of these approaches include some cognitive-behavioral therapies, gradual exposure, and prolonged exposure therapy (don't try this unless you have strong skills for regulating your stress reactions). Some approaches include homework, in which you'll be exposed to memories between sessions.

These approaches fit in with what we know about the stress system: It grows stronger by going back and forth between high and low stress—by experiencing threat in an atmosphere of safety. Done safely by therapists who are well trained, experienced, and careful—when you're willing and able to work to regulate your stress responses—these approaches can help you cut the ties between your memories and your stress reactions.

But when you're thinking about trying an approach that works with stressful memories, remember: These approaches can be like a roller coaster ride—at best, a controlled roller coaster ride. Before you start, you'll want to ask yourself these questions:

1. Am I ready to deal with these memories? What might happen if I don't?
2. How are my skills at bringing my stress system down? Am I willing to use them?
3. What do I know about the therapist's training and skills in this approach?

Help With Risky or Harmful Use of Alcohol or Drugs

There are many approaches that can help you deal with these challenges. A few are:

- Motivational Interviewing, to help you find and strengthen your own motivation and preparation to cut down or quit drinking or using
- Cognitive/behavioral skill training to help you get better at reducing or coping with urges to use, choosing not to pick up a drink/drug, or staying away from temptation
- Spiritual approaches (some based on 12-Step groups like Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous) that use social support, moral repair, and a higher power
- Faith-based approaches rooted in the beliefs of a particular religion (make sure these faith leaders are also knowledgeable about alcohol, drugs, and addiction)
- Medications that can help you reduce cravings and/or withdrawal symptoms

If you choose the approaches that seem to make the most sense to you, they're more likely to work for you. And if you're also getting other kinds of help for your deployment stress effects, it's best if all the people delivering these services work together with you.

Tool: Questions for Therapists, Doctors, or Referral Sources

Here are a few important questions about some of the medical or counseling services available for deployment stress effects (with or without alcohol-or-drug-related problems):

General questions:

- What kinds of help or services are available for me here?
  - ❑ Skill training using: _____
  - ❑ Medication
  - ❑ EMDR (Eye Movement, Desensitization, and Reprocessing)
  - ❑ Exposure therapy: ❑ Gradual ❑ Prolonged
  - ❑ Motivational Interviewing
  - ❑ Substance-related treatment using: _____
  - ❑ Other: _____
- What kinds of services would you recommend for me? _____
- Why do you recommend this for me? _____

If a doctor prescribes medication:

- What's the name of the medication? _____
- What condition(s) is it for? _____
- What type of medication is it? _____
- How can it help me? _____
- What are the most likely side effects? _____
- Are there any danger signs I should look out for? _____
- Why is this the best medication for me? _____

If the provider recommends exposure therapy:

- What kinds of training and coaching will I receive—before the exposure starts—in ways of bringing down my stress reactions? _____
- Will the exposure to stressful memories be gradual enough to give me a chance to regulate my stress system? ❑ Yes ❑ No
- Will the therapist:
  - ❑ Take me into and out of stressful thoughts and memories, or
  - ❑ Ask me to stay with a memory until it becomes very uncomfortable?
- What kinds of signals can we set up so that I can let the therapist know if I start to shut down, move toward adrenaline overload, or get cravings for alcohol or drugs?

  _____
- If I give those signals, how will the therapist work with me to lower my stress level so I won't start shutting down, going into adrenaline overload, or getting cravings?

  _____

One More Survey

To help us make these materials better, please answer these questions after you've finished using Resilience 101. Some of the questions were on the first survey. You can answer them differently if your answers have changed:

1. On a scale of 0 to 10, how much do you believe the following? "In general, people who have **more** mental or moral strength are more likely to come back from the war zone with **less** troubling or inconvenient reactions to stress." (0=not at all true; 10=very true).

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. On a scale of 0 to 10, how effective do you think professional help for operational/post-deployment stress effects might be for you? (0 = not at all effective, 10 = very effective)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. On a scale of 0 to 10, how comfortable are you with the idea of getting professional help for deployment stress effects? (0 = not at all comfortable, 10 = very comfortable)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. On a scale of 0 to 10, how easy is it for you to control your body's reactions to stress? (0 = very hard, 10 = very easy)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. On a scale of 0 to 10, how easy is it for you to control your mind's reactions to stress? (0 = very hard, 10 = very easy)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. On a scale of 0 to 10, how easy is it to use Resilience 101? (0 = very hard, 10 = very easy)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. On a scale of 0 to 10, how helpful is Resilience 101? (0 = not helpful, 10 = very helpful)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. What did you like best about Resilience 101?

   _____

   _____

   _____

9. What did you like least about Resilience 101?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Appendix A:

Acknowledgments

Note to reviewers: This is the Acknowledgments section that was published in Version 2, in October, 2009. Since then many more people have provided information, encouragement, and inspiration to this process, and a few facilities have begun to use Resilience 101. This Appendix will be updated after the current review process is complete.

Service Members and Veterans

Since this will be a very long Acknowledgments section, let us start with the most important: To the men and women who have served our country, and those who continue to serve, please accept my gratitude for your courage, your sacrifice, and your dedication.

Reviewers

My thanks go to all the people who read early review drafts of *Resilience 101* and responded with generous encouragement, including Terry Boyd, Celia Brim, Jacque Elder, Erika Elvander, Sallyann Holzgrefe, CAPT Ken Ireland, Dr. Lenny Jason, Sally Lipscomb, Linda Manthey, Stephanie Moles, Pat Poertner, Cynthia Reinbach, Nancy Rosenshine, Mary Ellen Salzano, Albert Schafer, Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen, Bill White, Basil Whiting, and Dr. Jessica Wolfe.

I also extend special gratitude to the following particularly dedicated reviewers:

- Victoria Bruner, who not only encouraged me in this work and provided detailed feedback, but also inspired me throughout the process of submitting an application to the Army's 2009 Force Health Protection conference and launching this product there

- Elizabeth Hudson, Andra Medea, Dr. John Mundt, Dr. Randi Tolliver, and Pam Waters, each of whom submitted detailed and very helpful reviews
- Drew Palmiter, whose extensive and insightful feedback inspired some wholesale changes that have made the second version far better than the first
- Joan Ferdinand, David Folkes, and Mark Sanders, who have for years been some of my most consistent sources of personal and professional wisdom

Advisers and Encouragers

Within this category, my special thanks go to:

- Lonnetta Albright, for whom mentorship and encouragement come as naturally as breathing
- Rosemary Bell, whose inspiration began my journey down this path, and whose guidance and encouragement always give me hope
- MG (RET) Patrick Sculley, who was not only my highest-ranking encourager, but also one of the most visionary and enthusiastic
- LTC Denise Gordon, whose acceptance and encouragement helped make the Force Health Protection conference feel like a welcoming community
- MAJ Angela Bowman Halvorson, my colleague and co-presenter, whose partnership has given me encouragement, information, inspiration, and insight into the military culture
- Laurie Krom and Erin Fridley, who have worked hard to make Addiction Technology Transfer Center resources available to veterans, and have included me in that process

Several more people have also been sources of information, advice, encouragement, and/or inspiration on this subject in the past few months, years, or weeks. These have included Brian Bardsley, Dr. Mark Bates, SSG Levi Bellovics, Dr. Karen Berte, Linda Bilunka, Terry Boyd, Dr. John Briere, John Bryant, Shannon Burns, Angela Cornelius Dawson, Dr. Ron Diamond, Trina Diedrich, Dennis Dix, Kim Eithun, Teri Figiel, Dr. Mike Flaherty, Lia Gaty, CDR Brenda Gearhart, Steven Guerra, MAJ Jeffrey Hall, Sheri Hall, Oren Hammes, Elizabeth Hawkins, Jessica Hayes, CH(bg) Wayne Hoffman, Dr. Paula Horvatich, Sara Howe, Cherie Hunter, Bill Johnson, Randi Johnson, Dr. Richard Kearney, Keith Lang, Dorian LeBeau, Dr. Laurie Leitch, Alison Lighthall, Dr. Taunya Lowe, Christi Luby, Ilona Meagher, Peter McCall, Dr. Philip Metres, Elaine Miller-Karas, Laura Naylor, Jewel Neely, Cathy Nugent, Dr. Gene Oulvey, Peter Palanca, Nancy Phillips, COL Kathy Platoni, Armando Reyes, Steve Robinson, Lisa Rosenthal, Kimtoiya Sam, Dr. Ray Scurfield, Donna Silker, James Sizemore, Jill Storms, Adreana Tartt, Dan Taslitz, Dr. Johnnie Tillman, Dr. Joe Troiani, Monica Velasquez, Diana Williams, Vonshurii Wrighten, Nikki Wooten, and—last, but definitely not least—my mother, Marion O'Malley Woll.

Expert Sources

Although I chose not to pepper this workbook with footnotes, please know that most of its content is distilled from conversations with individual veterans, and with information I've gathered from the books, articles, and lectures of many people. The following are by no means my only favorite experts on this subject, but each has contributed much to this work, including:

- John Briere, PhD, whose ideas on the body's natural attempts to heal itself after extreme stress have added considerably to the strength orientation of this workbook
- Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, whose instruction in Mindfulness has given us a great gift
- Peter Levine, whose insights into the freeze response and somatic approaches have broken important ground
- Alison Lighthall**,** RN, BSN, MSN, whose insights into the military culture and the needs of veterans have helped educate the civilian culture, and whose encouragement has meant much to me
- Andra Medea, MA, whose wisdom and encouragement have helped sustain my work, and whose ground-breaking work on adrenaline overload, the Virtual Tranquilizer®, etc. are helping many people and will help many more
- Elaine Miller-Karas, MSW, LCSW, and Laurie Leitch, PhD, LISW, whose encouragement and gentle, practical somatic approaches have added much to this work
- Bruce Perry, MD, PhD, whose encouragement and explanations of stress system development have been invaluable
- Robert Scaer, MD, whose wonderful teaching skills and excellent work on somatic aspects of trauma and dissociation have done much to prepare me for this work
- Dan Siegel, MD, whose ability to blend neuroscience and mindfulness has been a source of interest and inspiration
- Raymond Monsour Scurfield, DSW, LCSW, ACSW, whose encouragement, dedicated service, insightful writings, and magnificent resource list have been of great help
- Bessel van der Kolk, MD, whose work has greatly increased my understanding of the development of the stress system
- William L. White, MA, whose consistent encouragement and relentless emphasis on strength and resilience have (I hope) changed my approach forever

Appendix B:

Tips for Getting Better Sleep

From *Courage After Fire: Coping Strategies for Troops Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and Their Families*

Armstrong, Best, and Domenici, 2006.

To make this useful, you can check the entries below that you already do, and circle the ones you might be willing to try.

- ❑ Maintain a regular sleep schedule
- ❑ Have a comfortable sleep environment
- ❑ Use the bed only for sleep or sex
- ❑ Have a wind-down routine before you go to bed
- ❑ Don't have food or drinks with caffeine (e.g., coffee, sodas, chocolate) within six hours of bedtime
- ❑ Don't use alcohol or drugs to help you fall asleep
- ❑ Don't have regular or extended use of over-the-counter or prescribed sleep aids
- ❑ Get regular exercise
- ❑ Stay active
- ❑ Avoid heavy food before bed
- ❑ Quit smoking or chewing tobacco
- ❑ Avoid or limit naps during the day
- ❑ Don't watch the clock as you try to fall asleep
- ❑ Get up if you can't sleep
- ❑ Try not to worry at bedtime (make a worry list for tomorrow)
- ❑ Make sleep a top priority
- ❑ Include your partner in this process
- ❑ Talk to a doctor
- ❑ Talk to a therapist

Appendix C:

More About the Brain

Note: This Appendix presents the basic information from Section 4, "Overwatch and the Survival Brain, with a little more information about the areas of the brain we're talking about in that Section. Although most people would rather avoid information about the brain—and tend to stop reading if they run into it—a few people can't get enough. So if you're one of the few, this might be enough to get you started.

Why think about the brain? Like learning about the body's stress system, it can help you understand that your experiences really do make sense. It can also make you a little better at questioning your own thoughts and getting perspective on things like anger, anxiety, guilt, shame, and a sense of hopelessness. When you get to know which part of the brain is talking to you—and what its "agenda" is—you have a little better idea of whether or not to believe everything it's telling you.

It would be great if there were one or two "bad" parts of the brain that cause all the problems. We could just figure out which wire we need to snip to disconnect them, and everything would be fine. But the truth is that:

- Many different areas of the brain are involved in the way we handle stress, our experience of threat and safety, the thoughts and feelings we have, and the way we interpret the people and events around us.
- Many brain areas are involved in more than one important task, and many important tasks need the efforts of multiple brain areas.
- Most of the brain areas do some things that make life easier or more pleasant, and some things that make life harder or more unpleasant.
- Our knowledge of the brain is still very incomplete. Much of what we know comes from animal studies, chronicling the results of injuries in various parts of the brain, and scans that measure electrical activity and growth in the brain.

If we divide it up in general terms, the brain makes more sense. When it comes to the way we process stress and threat (to ourselves, others, important ideals, etc.), it's helpful to group some of the more important parts of the brain into two groups:

- The **survival brain**, made up of parts that are most often linked to the fast system, fight-or-flight chemicals and reactions
- The **higher brain**, made up of parts that are more often linked to the slow system, rest-and-reset chemicals and reactions

Of course, these are not their official names. But to learn and make use of this information, it's often more helpful to use metaphors or images from everyday life—like describing the survival brain as a watchdog or an alarm system.

In a military example, you might think of these two "brains" as two units, one on patrol in a valley, and the other positioned on high ground, providing overwatch. We'll use this idea to make sense of the information about the survival brain and the higher brain.

The Main Players

You may be familiar with the model that divides the brain into the **brain stem** (the oldest in terms of our evolution, concerned mostly with the body), the **limbic system** in the center of the brain (a little younger, concerned mostly with emotions and motivation), and the **cerebral cortex** (the most recent to develop, the "thinking brain" that wraps around the other "brains" and does much more sophisticated processing than they do. And, of course, the brain is divided into two halves or **hemispheres**. Most of the processing of stress reactions takes place in the right hemisphere.

- The most important part of the higher brain to in processing stress and threat is the front part of the cerebral cortex (the **prefrontal cortex**), and particularly the **medial** (middle) part of the prefrontal cortex, including a portion right behind the eye called the **orbitofrontal cortex**.
- Some other parts—including the **insular cortex** and limbic structures like the **hippocampus** and the **anterior** (front) **cingulate**—also get involved in the higher brain functions.
- And most of the survival brain's tasks are carried out by the **amygdala** in the limbic system, but the insular cortex gets involved here, too.
- The functions that the survival brain and the higher brain set in motion are supplied by the **hypothalamus** (the brain's pharmacist), the **pituitary gland** (a messenger for the hypothalamus), and the **adrenal glands** (near the kidneys, where they make two of the main stress chemicals, **adrenaline** and **cortisol**). These three structures make up something called the **HPA Axis** (hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis).

The Survival Brain

The survival brain's main job is to keep us safe and alive. It's like the unit on patrol, moving across dangerous ground in the valley. Its position doesn't give it a very good perspective on the area, so the enemy might be around any corner. It also receives information about the immediate situation very quickly, but its information is primitive and incomplete. Sometimes it looks like there's a threat when there's not.

The main player in this unit would be the **amygdala**, the structure most in charge of responding to threat and processing, recording, and remembering positive and negative emotions. It makes sense to couple survival with positive and negative emotions because, in general, things that promote survival often make us feel good in the long run, and things that threaten our survival often cause us pain. Sensing threat, the amygdala orders adrenaline from the HPA axis, and the amygdala is prepared to keep pushing for more adrenaline, even if the others tell it to stop.

Another important character here—the one most involved in determining level of threat—would be the **insular cortex**, a structure that collects and interprets information from many senses. The insular cortex is a big player in our decisions about what is threatening and what is not, what we crave, and what we're disgusted with. This part helps us figure out what we consider friendly and a part of us, and what we consider foreign and dangerous. It also works with the higher brain, and is a major player in our ability to have empathy for others.

In an ambush, this unit's job is to respond automatically, without thinking, returning fire as quickly as possible, and with as much force as possible. In the case of the survival brain, this means triggering fight-or-flight chemicals at high levels that put the body and brain on "overdrive."

The Higher Brain

The higher brain is like the unit providing overwatch for the survival brain. It's positioned on higher ground, with a better view of what's going on all around, and what's far ahead. Of course, the one disadvantage in this position is that, from this distance, the overwatch may not know about the attack until it's already underway. The unit in the valley knows right away, and responds right away.

The leader of the higher brain's unit would be the **prefrontal cortex**, particularly the middle part of the prefrontal cortex on the right-hand side. This part does a very sophisticated assessment of threat, and sends calming chemical messages to the survival brain (the amygdala) if the threat isn't as great as we think and the amygdala is overreacting. The prefrontal cortex looks at all the options we have, predicts their consequences, looks at the moral factors involved, makes decisions, and works out a plan for proceeding.

Like the overwatch unit, the higher brain has a much better perspective and receives much more sophisticated information about the situation at hand than the survival brain. If it's a false alarm, the higher brain can see that the survival brain is overreacting. It can send out signals, triggering chemicals that will calm the survival brain down, slow down the body's reactions, and help you think more clearly. Then it gets to work looking at the most important facts about the situation, your options, possible consequences, moral concerns, and steps you might take to meet the challenges at hand.

A lot of the information about the real level of threat comes from the **hippocampus**, the limbic structure in charge of providing more accurate information about what's really going on (based on historical details remembered from our past) and "ordering" from the HPA axis some of the slow-system chemicals (like cortisol) that will calm us down.

The higher brain also includes the **anterior cingulate**, the limbic structure in charge of monitoring the human situation, looking for errors, telling the amygdala when it thinks the amygdala is overreacting, and asking the prefrontal cortex for help when the amygdala refuses to listen.

One problem is that the higher brain also receives its more sophisticated information much more slowly. In case of an ambush, if the unit in the valley waited to return fire until the overwatch had spotted the enemy and radioed instructions, they'd lose a lot more lives. It's the same way with the survival brain: In case of real physical danger, it can't afford to wait for the higher brain to figure out the situation.

Another problem is that the survival brain's automatic, extreme response works well in a high-threat environment, but not so well in a low-threat environment. When the survival brain has gotten used to real danger, it's very hard for it to remember how to slow down and wait for information from the higher brain. The chemical reactions can go out automatically—and cause problems—even when there's no real physical threat.

That's where you come in. If you've been living in a high-threat environment, you've had no good choice but to operate out of your survival brain, and actually identify with the survival brain. Now it's time to learn to operate out of the higher brain—unless there's a physical threat—and identify with the higher brain.

There's a process called **neuroplasticity**, which means the brain can change the way it processes information, and in some cases re-wire itself (if someone loses function in one part of the brain, another part might step in to do it). When we learn a lot, they say our brains become more **plastic**—they grow stronger and work better. And when we use a function more—spend more time in the higher brain, for example—that function grows stronger. So practicing overwatch can make your brain better at regulating your stress reactions.

Appendix D

Web Sites With Information, Help, and Support

Note: Many of the resources in this very brief and incomplete listing are reprinted from Ray Scurfield's "War Trauma Resources," a large and considerate guide to web sites and other sources of help, support, and information. Ray Scurfield, DSW, LCSW is a Professor of Social Work at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast and author of the *Vietnam Trilogy*. You can get the current version of "War Trauma Resources" by going to Ray's web site, http://www.usm.edu/socialwork/scurfield/index.php, and clicking on its link at the bottom of the page.

Veterans for America has developed *The American Veterans' and ServiceMembers' Survival Guide,* a comprehensive resource for veterans and Service Members seeking to understand and navigate the services available to them. You can find it at: http://www.nvlsp.org/images/Survival%20Guide-102309.pdf

4MilitaryFamilies.com
http://www.4militaryfamilies.com/about.htm

4 Simple Strategies for Coping With Less Sleep at Work
Tips for employees with sleep problems, available at
http://www.businessinsurance.com/video/2008/?t=7060511001

After Deployment (lots of interactive web self-help tools)
http://www.afterdeployment.org

America Supports You 9Lists non-profit groups devoted to helping service men and women)
(http://www.americasupportsyou.mil/AmericaSupportsYou/index.aspx

American Veterans With Brain Injuries
http://www.avbi.org/

The American Veterans and Servicemembers Survival Guide
Now accessible from the Veterans legal Services program web site,
http://www.nvlsp.org/
exact URL: http://www.nvlsp.org/images/Survival%20Guide-102309.pdf

ArtReach Foundation (art therapy for children affected by war and disaster)
(info@artreachfoundation.org)
Also has a new project for veterans at http://www.artreachprojectamerica.com/

AW2 Resources
Links to many resources for warriors and families, available at
http://www.aw2.army.mil/resources/index.html

Battlemind Training web site
www.battlemind.org

Books for Military Children
(http://www.military.com/opinion/0,15202,121091,00.html

Brain Injury Association of USA
(*www.biausa.org*

Books for Soldiers
www.booksforsoldiers.com

Cell Phones for Soldiers
www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com)

Community of Veterans (online Community for OIF/OEF Veterans)
http://communityofveterans.org/

The Coming Home Project
http://www.cominghomeproject.net/cominghome/

Deployed Military Family Support
(http://www.dtra.mil/be/deployed/index.cfm

DHCC Guide for Servicemembers and Families to www.PDHealth.mil
Tells what's in the various sections of this site, at
http://www.pdhealth.mil/downloads/Non-Provider_Guide_to_PDHealth_5Jan06.pdf

Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve
www.esgr.org

Fallen Patriot Fund
www.fallenpatriotfund.org

Family Caregivers
www.familycaregiving101.org/index.cfm

Families
Resources and information for families, at http://www.realwarriors.net/family

Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors
Information on policies covering a wide variety of benefits, available at
http://www1.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/federal_benefits.pdf

Fisher House
www.fisherhouse.org

For families
Resources for families at http://www.dcoe.health.mil/ForFamilies.aspx

Give an Hour (network offering free mental health services to veterans)
http://www.giveanhour.org

GI Bill information
www.mygibill.org

Guidelines for Veterans' Partners and Relatives
Tips for families, friends, co-workers, etc., available at
http://www.usm.edu/socialwork/scurfield/index.php (link is near the bottom of the page)

Hand 2 Hand Contact (a number of great resources for veterans, families, etc.)
hand2hand contact.org

Healing Combat Trauma
http://www.healingcombattrauma.com/

Hooah4Health
www.hooah4health.com

How to Apply for GI Bill Benefits
Has links to apply for benefits online or apply for benefits using a hard-copy form, at http://www.gibill.va.gov/gi_bill_info/how_to_apply.htm

Lawyers Serving Warriors
Free legal representation in disability, discharge, and veterans benefits for OIF/OEF Service Members and veterans, at http://www.lawyersservingwarriors.com/

Marine Corps Key Volunteer Networks
www.usmc.mccs.org

Military Home Front (Department of Defense)
http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/

Military Mental Health
www.militarymentalhealth.org

Military OneSource (lots of materials, services, referrals)
http://www.militaryonesource.com

Military Wives Network
www.MilitaryWives.com

Military Writers Society of America
www.militarywriters.com

MyVetWork
www.myvetwork.com

Military Family Resource Institute
Resources for service members, veterans, and families at http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/

National Center for PTSD (Veterans Administration)
http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/veterans/

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV)
http://www.nchv.org/about.cfm

National Military Family Association

www.nmfa.org

National Resource Directory
List of organizations, links, and other resources, at http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/employment/employer_resources/laws_and_regulations

Notalone.com
Has some reintegration insights, at www.notalone.com

One Freedom (training and resources for veterans)
www.onefreeedom.org

Operation Home Front
At www.operationhomefront.net

Operation Vets
http://www.operationvets.com/

Our Military Kids
http://www.ourmilitarykids.org/

Patriot Outreach
www.patriotoutreach.org

Project America (new project of ArtReach Foundation in Atlanta, GA)
http://www.artreachprojectamerica.com/

PTSD Anonymous (12-step approach)
www.ptsdanonymous.org

Real Warriors (lots of resilience information/resources for Service Members and veterans)
http://www.realwarriors.net/

Red Cross
www.redcross.org

Resources for Military Children Affected by Deployment
http://www.armymwr.com/cys-images/Deployment%20A%20Compendium%20of%20Resources.pdf

Resources for U.S. Troops and veterans, their families, and those who provide services to them
http://kspope.com/torvic/war.php

Resources for Veterans and the General Public
Links, information, and resources available at http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp

Semper Fi Fund
www.semperfifund.org

STOMP Specialized Training of Military Parents
http://www.stompproject.org/

Student Veterans of America
http://www.studentveterans.org/

TRICARE Behavioral Health Care Services
Basic information on TRICARE coverage, etc. with contact information for regional and national resources, http://www.tricare.mil/MentalHealth/PDFs/BHC_Flyer_L.pdf

VA Benefits for Servicemembers
In question-and-answer format, at http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:rntdN4JLYFoJ:www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/factsheets/general/servicemembers.doc+%22VA+Benefits+for+servicemembers%22&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us

VA Suicide Prevention Hotline.
Toll-free number, 1-800-273-8255

VA Veteran Recovery
www.veteranrecovery.med.va.gov

Vet Centers (community based, informal, run by the VA)
http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/

Veterans Benefits Timetable
Information for veterans recently separated from active service, available at http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0501-ARE.pdf

Veterans for America
www.veteransforamerica.org

Veterans Legal Assistance
www.nvlsp.org

Vets4Vets (support and training for vets, by vets)
http://www.vets4vets.us/

War Trauma Resources (comprehensive collection) on Ray Scurfield's site
http://www.usm.edu/socialwork/scurfield/index.php (scroll to the last link on the page)

Wounded Warrior News
Links to articles and resources on www.military.com/wounded-warriors

Wounded Warrior Project
https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/

Your TRICARE Benefits Explained
Basic information, at http://www.military.com/benefits/tricare/understanding-your-tricare-benefits

