

# Duquesne University Military Psychological Services



We all know that the psychological wounds of extended deployments and war typically involve not only unforgettable images, depression, numbing, and self-medication. We also know that this trauma ripples through the veteran's family and social network, and it can run down through future generations.

- These wounds were described by Homer over 2500 years ago. The story of Achilles is the story of a man with PTSD (Shay: Achilles in Vietnam).

- The psychological wounds of war have been known in all warrior societies and cultures around the world. (Tick: War and the Soul).

- Our own society lacks healing rituals for returning warriors, and leaves the veteran frequently isolated, misunderstood, and seen as a mental health “case.”



Achilles  
Justin Sweet



The wounds are often subtle and not “symptoms” of anything--just a feeling of not fitting in--and that can make life painfully lonely and blunt one’s relationships.

The wounds can also be devastating--a loss of soul and all sense of meaning: the destruction of identity and character.

Combat veterans have seen the world blown to pieces. Its fragility will never be far from one’s mind.

## Our assumptions at the DU Military Services Psychology Clinic:

- The veteran can never go back to a time of civilian “innocence.”
- The veteran has experienced things that cannot be medicated away or somehow mentally tricked into irrelevance.
- Putting up a wall around oneself cannot prevent the trauma being passed on to the family, the society, and the next generation (one’s children). In fact, the trauma tends to deepen.
- Therefore, one challenge for veterans, which can help them find their bearings in civilian life, is to transform the experience into something that can be told--a narrative that has meaning.
- Another challenge is to find a way to live a life with dignity, worthy of the dead. (Some veterans need to make peace with the enemy dead as well--and can’t sleep until they have done so).

## Our assumptions at the DU Military Services Psychology Clinic:

- Lessons learned in service or combat need to be integrated into a livable life.
- Talking to someone who genuinely wants to understand and who will take time to do so is helpful in putting one's life back together again, or in transitioning back to the civilian world.
- Too much focus on symptoms often feels disrespectful, to us as well as to veterans.
- Veterans and their loved ones do not want gimmicks or psychological cliches from us.
- Advice is occasionally helpful, but it is often better to help people find solutions to their situations that they can live with.

## What we offer

- We are good listeners. We try to relate to people and to hear them in a way that is helpful. We understand trauma, but we have no agenda other than to be of service.
- We can often help veterans find a way to make sense of their experience and to find their way through to a fuller humanity.
- We are also able to help reintegrate families post-deployment (and we have a short, eight session program for that purpose).
- We see couples, families, other family members, including the children, with or without the service member.
- Services are confidential and free. We report to no-one.
- We also offer seminars and presentations for veterans and their families.

## Seminars and presentations offered

- Combat trauma as an identity crisis and a spiritual challenge
- Finding meaning in combat post traumatic stress disorder (yes, there really is meaning to be found there)
- Challenges and opportunities for families during and after deployment
- The warrior's path: a life span developmental perspective for the returning warrior
- The role of community in a time of war: how we all can help
- The confrontation with evil and moral horror (for helpers, chaplains, etc.--not appropriate for families)

Typically presented by Dr. Roger Brooke  
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Director, Military Psychological Services  
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## Some readings that orient us

- Jonathan Shay: Achilles in Vietnam
- -- : Odysseus in America
- Edward Tick: War and the soul
- Charles Hoge: Once a warrior, always a warrior
- David Grossman: On Killing
- -- : On combat
- Stanley Krippner & Daryl Paulson: Haunted by combat
- Karl Marlantes: What it is like to go to war
- Daryl Paulson: Walking the point
- Peter Marin: Living in moral pain
- Florence Kaslow (Ed.): The military family in peace and war