Tribe of the Restored Warriors

Meeting Guide

Facilitator Reads:

“This is a closed Veterans and First Responders Posttraumatic Growth group. Attendance is limited to Military Veterans and First Responders, both current and former, as well as select supporters approved by the group.

The purpose of this group is to transform our struggles into strength and find purpose in our battles, sharing each other’s joys, perspectives, and triumphs in the aftermath of our struggles. Please keep shares focused on growth, not on being stuck in the past.

Please do not share who attends or what is discussed outside of this meeting. If you are struggling, please let us know so we can help.

Keep up the good fight!”

Group Rules

- Avoid cross-talk or giving advice unless asked
- Share your own experiences; your story has value
- Avoid political discussions
- Rank and roles are left at the door
- Harsh language is acceptable but never directed at one another.
- Do not encourage self-destructive behaviors
- Arrive on time when possible

Introductions

- If no new members are present; skip
- If new members are present:
  - Veterans/First Responders: State your name and how you served.
  - Supporters: State your name and reason for attending. (If not appropriate, kindly ask them to leave.)

Opening Discussion

- Ask: “Does anyone have a growth related challenge they’d like to talk about today?”

  - Allow space for brief check ins.

  - Members share by first giving their first name, then their thoughts.

Main Meeting Format

- Choose one type of meeting (rotate weekly, group vote, or facilitator's choice)

- Option A: Weekly Reflection Meeting

1. Pick a reflection (by week of the year or random number 1-52)
2. Read it aloud.
3. Members share their reflections
   - Each begins by stating their first name, then their thoughts
4. Facilitator: Redirect if the discussion becomes stuck in negativity, drifts into ware stories, or loses focus

Main Meeting Format (continued)

- Option B: Reading Meeting

1. Read a short excerpt from a PTG-focused book (e.g., Struggle Well, Restoring the Warrior, Transformed by trauma).
2. Members share their reflections
   - Each begins by stating their first name, then their thoughts
3. Facilitator: Use gentle redirection if the discussion strays

Main Meeting Format (continued)

- Option C: Topic Meeting

1. Pick a topic that relates to PTG such as, increased personal strength, new possibilities, deeper relationships, appreciation for life, existential change.
2. Members share their thoughts and experiences around this topic
3. Facilitator: Redirect if discussion becomes stuck in negativity, drifts into war stories, or loses focus.

- Note: These are examples of meeting types; others may be used if it adheres to the guiding principles

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It also became clear to us that there's no such thing as "simple" trauma, the idea that trauma can be traced back to a single incident. It feels easy to pin all of our struggles on one hard experience—"It's the divorce, that's what caused everything." But that ignores our complexity as humans. Consider the rucksack that Soldiers carry—it's a full pack, a heavy pack. Throughout life, you fill your rucksack up with experiences, both good and bad. Then a traumatic event hits that's massive: a huge rock is added, and the pack can no longer be carried. But the truth is, you were already carrying plenty in that pack before the addition of the giant rock. Those pre-existing experiences help contribute to the weight of the current situation. Depending on how heavy they are by themselves, they might prevent you from ever putting the pack back on. And then, you're stuck. How do you get unstuck? You need to examine what's in the rucksack. Until and unless you understand the experiences you carry—the rocks in your bag—you will only ever manage to be the sum of your past training and experiences. By pursuing an understanding of your past, you can repack the bag. You can keep your gifts and utilize them, and eliminate some of the heavier baggage.

Falke, Ken; Goldberg, Josh. Struggle Well: Thriving in the Aftermath of Trauma (pp. 105-106). Lioncrest Publishing. Kindle Edition.

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Closing the Meeting

- Begin the closing 10 to 15 minutes before the meeting ends

1. Gratitude and Self Care Round

   Each Member shares:

   - One thing they are grateful for today
   - One thing they will do for self care

Closing the Meeting (continued)

- “As we close today’s meeting, let us remember why we come together. This group is not meant to replace any other program or clinical approach. It is here to give us space to grow, to support one another, and to remain open to many different paths of healing and recovery. It is here to help us transform struggle into strength, together.
  - We carry forward the lessons of the Five Domains of Posttraumatic Growth:
    - New Possibilities — The sense that new opportunities have emerged from the struggle, opening possibilities that were not present before.
    - Deeper Relationships — Experiencing closer relationships with specific people and an increased sense of connection with others who suffer.

Closing the Meeting (continued)

- Personal Strength — An increased sense of one's own strength.
- Appreciation for Life — A sense of gratitude for the large and small things in life, especially the small things that make life unique and interesting.
- Spiritual and Existential Change — A deepening of one's spiritual life and an exploration of beliefs and notions previously unconsidered.

- Before anyone leaves, please make sure no one is in distress. If you notice a brother or sister struggling, check in and remind them that they are not alone. Together we can guide and encourage one another as we grow side by side.
- Finally, let the work of this group extend beyond these walls. Stay connected, encourage one another, and live out growth with resilience, courage, and hope."

Tribe of the Restored Warriors Pledge

- Facilitator says, “Repeat after me,” then recite together:

We are warriors; we are not meant to struggle alone.

I will face the past and the present with my Tribe.

Our mission is to transform struggle into strength with intent and purpose.

Not just to survive but to thrive.