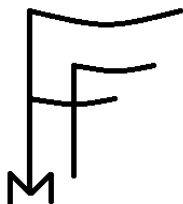


“They Made Us Warriors”

The Fitzgerald Freedom Theory

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Cover illustration by Faith Benedict

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Veterans...

Do you have a hard time doing nothing? Does your brain have to be occupied by something?

Do you find that you have no tolerance for people's lack of basic competencies?

Do you find when you go out you have difficulty relaxing because you are always looking for a threat that can harm you or someone you are responsible for?

Do you feel that most people in your life lack self-discipline or intestinal fortitude?

Do you feel like even if you were willing to share your military stories no one would understand anyway, so you just don't?

Do you find yourself wondering what the rules are in the civilian world, or where you might find an operating manual to help you figure out how to fit in?

Do you hit a place of f\*\*k it and shutdown when you have reached your end point of dealing with people?

Do you find that the only time you are able to relax or find enjoyment is on a motorcycle, in nature, or engaging in an activity that gives you an adrenaline rush?

Do you have your significant other tell you that they cannot access you emotionally or get you to

emotionally connect? Do you feel frustrated that you don't understand what they want when they say that?

Does the operational tempo of civilian life feel like everyone is going 20 mph in a 70 mph zone?

Do you find that civilians treat you like you are not competent and have no idea how much you know that they have no clue about?

Civilian with a loved one that is a veteran...

Do you ever wonder why your veteran sometimes expects you to know how to do things you have never been taught how to do or is critical of how you carry out a task?

Does it seem like your veteran has difficulty enjoying events that are in crowded places?

Do you ever wonder why your veteran doesn't share more military stories with you?

Do you ever wonder why your veteran can seem extremely angry in one moment and perfectly fine in the next?

Do you ever wonder why your veteran gets agitated when an item isn't in its proper place?

Does your veteran seem to do everything with a high level of intensity?

Do you find it difficult to connect with your veteran on an emotional level?

If you can relate to any of these questions or ones like them, and are looking for answers, this booklet is for you. We encourage you to read the entire booklet, take from it the aspects that are applicable to you, and share it with anyone you feel would benefit. Our focus is to help veterans and their loved ones. For further copies, to leave feedback or for more information, please contact us at:

[www.fitzgeraldfreedomranch.com](http://www.fitzgeraldfreedomranch.com)

Veterans want to be happy and enjoy life just like civilians. They have dreams and hopes, and they desire to thrive after their time serving in the military. They did their job, and now they want to live a successful and healthy life in the civilian world. They want to love and be loved, to provide for themselves and for those they care about, to have fun, grow and experience joy. They long to be known, seen, and heard, and they desire connection with their family, friends, and the community around them. They also want to be respected and treated with dignity, acknowledgement, and without pity.

Veterans start out as civilians who join the military for differing reasons. Individually they encompass a variety of personalities, backgrounds, beliefs, expectations, and abilities. While serving in the military, the veteran may have been deployed or not, may have experienced combat, or not. Some may come out of the military with no apparent trauma, or an experience that caused them suffering, and for others, experiences that caused profound suffering. One thing all veterans have in common, regardless of where they came from, or what they did in the military, is that *the military had to transform all of them from having a civilian mindset to a warrior mentality in the process of forming a military identity.*

**Creating the Military Identity** - The military identity is a set of characteristics, values, and beliefs that the United States Military expects their service members to possess and operate out of. The military takes civilians and transforms them into service members who share the same beliefs, expectations, capabilities, values, and character. This transformation occurs through conditioning and training a military identity into the new service members. The branches of the military use various methods to accomplish this transformation. The end result is to create a machine with a heartbeat, one that will follow orders that may have consequences up to and including their own demise for the completion of the mission.

The conditioning begins from the moment the service member engages with their military recruiter. Each recruit will at some point take on the Oath of Enlistment and sign a DD Form 4, which is their Enlistment Contract with the Department of Defense. Once the DD Form 4 is signed, the recruit gives away ownership of their civilian freedoms and is legally government issued property. The recruit has traded their civilian rights of free will by submitting themselves to obedience to anyone in the military that is appointed over them. They are told what to do, when to do it, how it will be done, what to wear, how to walk, what they need, what is



acceptable to want, who they are, and what to expect. They no longer have the individual freedom to make decisions for themselves in their daily life. If they do not obey orders, they will be punished and ultimately could go to jail. They are held to this until their contract is fulfilled or they are less than honorably discharged.

Basic training/Boot Camp is something every service member must successfully complete to become a full-fledged member of the United States military. It is during this training that the conditioning of the military identity occurs in full force. It is here that service members encounter their first foundational experience of placing the mission first, putting the needs of the team second, and putting themselves last. It is drilled into them and reinforced every single day.

The mission comes first. It is their duty, and it is their job to accomplish the mission at all costs. That is success. The needs of the team come second. The need of the individual comes last. Failure and mistakes are not allowed, or someone can die. Any excuse to not carry out the mission is unacceptable. If they cannot carry out their orders and perform their duties, they are weak and therefore weaken the United States Military. The mission, the battle, the fight does not care if they are tired or bleeding, if they

are sad because they miss home or lost their best friend yesterday, or if they are holding onto their last strand of sanity. Human emotions such as joy, sadness, compassion, and empathy are of no use in a service members toolkit. Being disciplined, having conviction, and being self-controlled is required. Emotions of anger, hate and even fear are acceptable as long as they do not detract from their ability to carry out the mission.

They are taught to put their lives in the hands of their fellow service members and to hold the lives of their fellow service members in their hands, with the goal of removing dependence from their family of origin and turning it to having dependence on those they serve with. Military values require that service members push themselves to destruction for the mission and for their team if necessary. When the mission is completed successfully, no matter the cost to the team or themselves individually, the service member is rewarded with yet another mission. If they do not achieve success, they are letting down their team, their comrades, the United States Military, the American people and even God.

As the recruit goes through basic training with their unit, a sense of belonging is created amongst them. Drill Sergeants and instructors are appointed over the unit to tear down each individual

in extreme circumstances of mental and emotional distress, while enduring shame, humiliation, and punishment to the point where they feel like they cannot succeed. They then build them back up with the values and characteristics of the military as a unit, so they feel like they can do anything and that they cannot fail individually and will succeed together.

During basic training, at first when an individual recruit makes a mistake that recruit is individually punished. If the recruit continues to make the mistake, the recruit and squad leader are punished for it. If that continues, the entire squad is punished. The recruits learn that if they do not do what they are supposed to do, the entire team is weakened by it and punished for it. The team will continue to pay for the failure of the individual. The only two options for the other team members to do is to help that team member that is struggling or punish them until they can get it right. In this dynamic there is a sense of responsibility for the success of the team. If there is a weakness in the team, it is the responsibility of each team member to make sure that weakness goes away so that the team does not fail with carrying out the mission. At the same time no one wants to get punished for something someone else cannot do right, and no one wants someone else to be punished for their failure. This is where the military identity belief of “I will not fail. I will do my

job. I will not need anything from anyone” is instilled and reinforced. It is also the rooting place of “I cannot be wrong. I must perform without failure. I will not make a mistake.”

Through repetition and practice the recruits master their orders and pass their tests individually and as a unit. By reciting oaths, creeds, songs, chants, and repeating verbal acknowledgements of obedience to the superior service member, the beliefs of the conditioning are embedded, reinforced and the military identity is instilled.

**Is there anything about the Military Identity that can cause an issue for a Veteran?** - The United States military creates warriors (soldiers, marines, airmen, sailors, and coast guardsmen) because it has to. It is the job of the military to take ordinary young men and women and mold them into human beings that are willing to see and do inhumane things in the worst possible circumstances, anywhere in the world; to defend our own shores and way of life as well as to protect the lands and lives of others as determined by our government. The problem is that these warriors eventually leave the military and become veterans, turned out to try to navigate a civilian society with the root of the warrior mentality still in place. This warrior mentality is part of the military identity.

There is a part of the military identity that is not compatible with the civilian culture that they came from and once lived in. We call this root the ICE (Involuntary Emotionally Cutoff). *We believe this part of the military identity left unreversed is a root cause of many veteran difficulties, including suicide. It is experienced by the veteran and seen by those that love them, those that try to interact and connect with them and those that want to help them. Veterans and the persons that make up their support system gaining an understanding of this part of the military identity and being able to finally deal with the root cause of their situation is the key to a successful transition into society.*

**The ICE - Involuntarily Cutoff Emotionally** - “The ICE” is a term we use to describe the effect of the military identity on the service member’s ability to separate their individual needs, wants, feelings and thoughts from the duty imposed by the military. It is put in place by the military so they learn to ignore innate forces of their own humanity that could deter them from performing their duty and accomplishing the mission. The idea is represented in the picture on the front cover, showing the service member walking across the ice to complete the mission of getting to the other side of the frozen water, while his humanity screams at him to let himself out as he is drowning under the ice, ignored by the service member for the sake of the mission. To ignore this part of themselves,

the soldier, marine, airman, sailor and coast guardsman denies their individual self, in basic training/boot camp and forms a new part. This is the part of the service member. It is trained and conditioned to be in agreement with the military identity: that who they are, what they need and what they want comes after the mission is accomplished and that their team has what they need and what they want before they do. Since there is always a new mission once one has ended, there will never be a time where the part that carries the needs and wants of the individual gets to take precedent. The part of the service member must exist to do their duty while enlisted in the military. It is an absolute necessity. A block gets put in place that separates the two parts of the individual which co-exist.

**Why is having the ICE a problem for a Veteran?** - The ICE is the root of the military identity that needs to be recalibrated after a service member becomes a veteran or the veteran may have difficulty thriving in the civilian culture. It is what can block veterans from having the access to *develop self-awareness, experience vulnerability, connect with others and have the hope of living a fully thriving successful life*. We feel that having the ICE in place is a key contributing factor as to the reason there is a higher rate of veteran suicide than civilian suicide, and why veterans often have difficulty connecting with themselves and others

on an emotional and vulnerable level as well as have difficulty relaxing, experiencing a great range of emotion, asking for help, and feeling satisfied in the civilian culture.

**The Cost of the ICE** - The service member part is trained to be okay with their own death. They fully accept the thought of their own life ending as part of their duty. It is important to note they do not generally long for it, but they do not fear it either. It is an acceptable outcome in the job that they are performing. The ICE being in place by the formal training and conditioning of the military is what makes something like the acceptance of your own death perfectly normal in the military, when in most professions in the civilian world it is ludicrous to think someone might go to their job every day, and be okay that they might die before they get done with their shift. This desensitization to death is carried over from the service member into the life of the veteran in the civilian world.

Hope while enlisted or being deployed is going home for many service members. It is the ultimate. They put “home” on a pedestal. They dream about what they will do, the food they will eat, the people they will see, the freedom they will have, and it gets them through the rough times, the “suck”. Home is not the same for everyone. Some people

joined to get away from home. Regardless, everyone has a hope of something better when they get out. Better than the past and better than the suck.

When the service member completes their time and returns home as a veteran, the reality of home is often not what their hope of home looked like. They go home to the same problems or worse. They re-engage in a different suck but now there is no utopia to escape to. They could deal with the suck when they had the hope of home, but when they get home and it sucks too, they start thinking about the reality of the suck they are in alone versus the suck they were in with their team. It is demoralizing and isolating. Everything they had such high hopes for failed. There is confusion and a feeling that they lied to themselves that there was something better waiting for them. It spirals from there.

In the military the completion of a mission comes with a sense of pride and accomplishment, and the service member is potentially rewarded with praise, possibly a medal, but always another mission. When the service member becomes a veteran and they are in the civilian culture, they search to define and grasp a mission for themselves. If they complete that mission there is no reward for it. There is no one to give them a medal or tell them that they did a good job or give them another mission. While the veteran



may search for these missions and complete these missions because that is what they are trained to do, after a while the missions feel purposeless, causing the veteran to feel a lack of accomplishment and pride. The veteran feels empty because there is no acknowledgement to what they do like there was in the military. If there is a response from a civilian, they cannot receive it because the ICE is in place. This double bind contributes to that isolation and sense of purposelessness many veterans experience. This, over time, can translate to “Nothing I do matters”. Their only option is to accept it and continue to seek a mission and work hard or stop.

Many veterans believe they can rest and celebrate when they are done, but when the ICE is in place, the service member inside reminds them they are only done when permission is granted. There is always another mission. The veteran feels the difficulty to rest and relax, but they cannot make sense of it. They continue to just do and do and do and no matter what they accomplish there is always more to do. If they complete a task, they can feel good that the battle, or this task, is complete, but they cannot celebrate until the war is over. The war of life is never over; it only ends when you die. They feel that they have only two choices: continue in the manner they are existing and deal with the diminished returns on their efforts or take control of

when the war ends themselves. It does not have to be this way. Removing the ICE gives them the option to thrive and experience joy in a way they have forgotten is possible.

**Getting Out** - When the service member is in the military, they always have someone over them telling them what to do. During those years they are serving, they have no experience being wrong because the military is always right. They might not agree with what they are told to do but they do not get a choice, they do not have a voice, and they do not get a say. They are told what the military needs and that this is what they are going to do. Their superior does not care what they think or feel about it. If the service member is a superior to someone else and makes a choice of their own freewill, and their choices creates the wrong outcome, they will be punished severely for it. *When the service member comes out of the military into the civilian world, they have no practice making decisions for themselves that are focused on themselves and they have no practice being wrong.* The military trained it out of them in Basic Training/Boot Camp through push-ups and running and discipline and humiliation. Everything is chosen for them. *They train away their ability to be vulnerable.* If all they ever do is what the military tells them to do, then they do not have to make choices for themselves on their own. *They learn that they do what the military says, and they do not*

*have any practice being wrong and therefore vulnerable.* They give away their ownership to choose for themselves to the military and they never get it back after leaving.

When they get out and do not have anybody telling them what to do, it can be intimidating and confusing. They were told what they needed did not matter so they do not know how to access that. They were never allowed to be wrong, and they were never allowed to make choices for themselves, so they never did. Now they find themselves in unfamiliar territory where no one is telling them what to do, how to spend their day, where they are going to live, how to make a living, and they have never developed the muscle to handle being wrong because they were never allowed. It is very easy to understand, as they try to make a choice to formulate their mission in the civilian world, that there is a feeling of vulnerability to it because they might be wrong. If they are wrong, they feel like they are going to be punished but they do not know from what.

Once out of the military culture, and living in the civilian culture, the ICE that is in place causes the service member part to approach life from a military identity instead of a civilian identity. The ICE blocks the service member part from having the ability to acknowledge and accept the part of their being that

makes them vulnerable to others, which is who they were as a civilian before they joined the military. The civilian part of themselves wants to say to someone “I need something from you” but it cannot, because the service member part will not allow that part of themselves to need something from someone else for themselves. The military conditioning tells them they come last and if they cannot carry their own weight, they are a failure. The military cannot have warriors that are self-serving. The military must have warriors that put the mission and their unit first. Suffering is normal. Self-deprivation is normal. Duty is normal. The ability to be vulnerable is blocked by the ICE. It was blocked because being vulnerable and asking for something is self-serving, weak, and leads to failure which is unacceptable for a service member.

This creates a double bind. To need something from someone means they cannot do what they are supposed to do on their own and they have been ordered to ignore what they need and want to put the mission first. To resolve this double bind, the service member part does not communicate what they need or want and instead denies this part of themselves. The part of themselves that has a need or want does not disappear. Instead, it is under the ICE, screaming at the one who denied it was there (Reference the cover picture). This creates a tension between the part of the service member that walks on

top of the ICE to put the mission first and the part of their humanity that is drowning under the ICE that has a need or want despite the mission. To keep moving, the service member reinforces the military conditioning by being in agreement that their duty is to not need anything from anyone and focus on accomplishing the mission. To get their job done the service member has to take the way they feel out of their experience. They do not develop experiencing a range of emotion during the time they are serving.

When the veteran is living in the civilian culture where those they interact with operate with a wide range of emotion, the service member part has trouble communicating on relational matters. They often carry black and white concrete thinking when attempting to deal with relational issues because that is what makes sense to them. This can create a scenario where those they are interacting with do not feel heard and understood by the veteran, and the veteran feels frustrated in the dynamic. This can cause marital problems including divorce, difficulty at work and interacting with colleagues, and difficulty connecting with family and friends. They are accused of not caring and of being emotionally distant. In reality, it is the service member part of the veteran that is dealing with the relational dynamics from a duty posture because they have been trained that their job is to put the mission first, and there is

always a mission. Once leaving the military the new mission is whatever they are responsible for. This can include work, family, friends, exercising, hobbies, volunteering, or anything else that the veteran feels an obligation to. *Because there is no emotion involved with completing a mission and taking care of their team, the veteran functions in those relational interactions without vulnerability and a level of emotional connection.* The consequence over time is the veteran becomes more and more isolated from those around them, and they feel like they can only talk to or connect with other veterans. While enlisted, denying the vulnerable part of themselves does not impede the service members ability to experience belonging with those they serve with. There is comfort in the suffering because that is the only acceptable place to meet each other.

*The needs, wants and desires of an individual express what matters to them. Being able to pursue this is what makes life worth living. By being denied that liberty, a person surrenders themselves to the needs, wants, and desires of others. Without being able to acknowledge one's own needs wants and desires, a person cannot connect with the totality of their being. The consequence of this is the individual loses the ability to have fully integrated relationships as well as the ability to have self-awareness. Without self-awareness they cannot have access to the fullness of knowing what they need. A service member gives away acknowledgement of their own being and needs. They are taught that they are expendable. So,*

the fact that they matter as an individual and that their needs are important can be a foreign concept to a veteran. A civilian needs these things to thrive in the civilian culture. Without that access veterans are functioning in a void. *They suffer silently*. No one can access them in the void that they feel and all that it is made up of. The veteran has difficulty understanding why what worked in the military does not occur the same way in the civilian culture. The more they do not communicate what they need, the greater the separation occurs between themselves and those around them. The uncommunicated need becomes unfulfilled, and more is depleted out of the veteran. The more they are depleted the more they feel invisible to those around them. They become a slave to their tasks and responsibilities.

Having the ICE in place can inhibit other therapeutic modalities to be fully successful in helping veterans because a practitioner can only have access to anything within the veteran that exists outside of the ICE. Specifically, a practitioner can only access what the service member part allows them to.

**The ICE removed** - The goal of the journey of getting back to themselves is to feel, live, and thrive and not be driven by duty and mission. *When the ICE is removed from a veteran, they can connect to*

*themselves, choose to put themselves first, and place finding their own joy as a priority over duty. Being able to allow themselves to quit existing as a shell that does not experience joy because they flat out will not give themselves permission to live since no one ever told them it was okay. If they do not know how to give themselves permission to live, they will be continued to be drawn back to the duty and seek out the missions that do not exist. They cannot be present. Until they give themselves permission to live, they cannot get back to some semblance of vulnerability. Without vulnerability they cannot fully experience themselves or others since they are unable to show up with their whole self.*

When the veteran has the ICE removed, *they can choose in their own will to do something for themselves because they want to, not because they have to.* This allows them to take pride in what they are doing and feel a sense of accomplishment. They can receive for themselves and from others and celebrate what they have done. Life develops a sense of meaning and purpose that they can have control in obtaining because they feel like they are allowed to have needs, wants and desires and that it is important to communicate and pursue them. When they choose to do something for themselves, they are allowing themselves to be vulnerable.



**What is the Solution?** - What we have discovered through helping veterans is that removing the ICE and recalibrating the military identity, allows the veteran to gain access back to what they had to disconnect from in themselves to be made into a warrior. This allows the veteran to engage in civilian society without the confines of the military identity.

**How is this accomplished?** - This is done by freeing the veteran from all Oaths and Creeds they agreed to while serving and replacing them with a new Oath and Creed that gives them permission to taking ownership back of having all individual, emotional, psychological, and physical rights released to them that they gave up while serving. This, in and of itself effectively removes the ICE granting the veteran multiple benefits: 1) Gaining back access to the heart they had to bury to carry out the mission. 2) Having the freedom to encounter their own humanity. 3) Releasing the veteran to be able to actually seek and internally receive any additional support or therapies that they may need. 4) Being able to relax without having an adrenaline goal if they want. What it does not do is to take away the training, discipline, intestinal fortitude, pride, or in any way diminish what a veteran may have accomplished while serving. It is not disrespecting a veteran's branch, other veterans or those who are still

serving. It is simply recalibrating the conditioning that is keeping the veteran from thriving in the civilian world.

The second piece of the solution involves educating veterans, and whoever makes up their support system in the civilian world, about the differences between the warrior mentality and the civilian mindset. Helping veterans realize that the way they think, process information, react to situations and accomplish tasks, are significantly different than how a civilian would accomplish these same things. This needs to be done in such a way that does not make the veteran feel attacked or judged but instead empowers them to experience the civilian world with a better awareness of how it operates. The knowledge that the warrior mentality and the civilian mindset are different allows the veteran an explanation and understanding of why they may feel isolation in the civilian world. This understanding gives them a landing ground for growth and healing to have compassion for themselves and the civilians they engage with that they experience as frustrating.

The Fitzgerald Freedom Theory is applicable to all veterans. The efficacy of the solution as it pertains to a particular veteran is dependent upon how ingrained the military identity is in a veteran and how completely it affects the way they encounter the

civilian world. The veteran's willingness to remove the ICE is also a factor. Regardless, even the knowledge of the difference in the military and civilian mindsets is a significant positive shift in a veteran's ability to successfully navigate the civilian world. Veterans need to choose for themselves what they want to do. Without having the awareness of what is occurring, they do not have the information they need to be able to choose.

In this booklet we have explained the Fitzgerald Freedom Theory. We have yet to find evidence of this approach in current academic literature or therapeutic practice. Our hope is to share this with the veteran community and educate the civilian population, so this freedom is available to all who have served and all who care about those who have served. The vision of the Fitzgerald Freedom Ranch is to create a safe, unified community for veterans to find the wholeness they need to live their best life. It is the place where veterans are Free to Play. For more information go to:

[www.fitzgeraldfreedomranch.com](http://www.fitzgeraldfreedomranch.com)