

WAR and the SOUL

Healing Our Nation's Veterans
from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

WAR and the SOUL

READ

Read Introduction

■ Part 1

- Establishes the traditional context of war in history, mythology, and religious and spiritual traditions

■ Part 2

- Concerns the effects of war in terms of the symptoms that make up what we know as PTSD

■ Part 3

- Presents some of the ways that can enable a disturbed vet to heal
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 1

■ Key Concept: Soul

- The drive to create and preserve life
 - The awareness of oneself as a discrete entity moving through time and space
 - The “me” at the center of our experience
 - our intellectual power, that which thinks, reasons, and understands
 - What gives us our ethical sensibilities
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 1

■ Key Concept (cont.d): Soul

- Our will, our individual volition
 - Our aesthetic sensibility, the aspect of ourselves that hungers for beauty and both perceives and appreciates it
 - The part of us that loves and seeks intimacy
 - The seat of the imagination, our image-making and image-interpreting functions
 - The great cry of I AM in the individual
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 1

■ Concept: Shadow

- The contents of the *shadow* are those aspects of us judged unacceptable by society, religion, our ourselves.
-

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REFLECT

□ Questions for Reflection

- Which of the previous descriptions of soul most closely matches your own understanding and experience of the concept. How would you adapt that description to include other ideas that are important to you?
 - Write your own definition of soul including some reference to your understanding of the *shadow*.
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 2

■ Key Concept: Myth

- The universal stories that convey the deepest truths of human experience and repeat themselves in every generation and every individual
-

WAR and the SOUL READ

□ Read Chapter 2

■ Key Concept: Archetype

- Universal role templates

- Fundamental forms in the human psyche, innate to all of us

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READ

□ Read Chapter 2

■ Synopsis

- War is an eternally recurring theme in myth and history, and nearly every culture has had its version of the warrior (archetype).
 - Greek Gods: Zeus along with Ares and Athena
 - Great Warrior - Odysseus
 - Hebrew God: Jehovah
 - Great Warriors – Joshua, Saul and David
 - Norse God: Odin
 - Great Warriors – the Berserkers
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 2

■ Synopsis (cont.d)

□ Over time, the belief that war derived from God's will developed into the Just War argument.

■ *The natural order conducive to peace among mortals demands that the power to declare and counsel war should be in the hands of those who hold supreme authority.*

Augustine

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REFLECT

□ Questions for Reflection

- According to our text, what are the essential elements of a just war?
 - According to our text, what types of wars should be “rightly condemned”?
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 3

■ Key Concept: Rite of Passage

□ Rites of passage are *necessary* for healthy human development. We need them to prepare for, demarcate, and celebrate our changes through the life cycle and in relation to our society.

□ Components of a rite of passage

- Creation of sacred space
 - Training by elders
 - Ordeals that test and prepare the initiate
 - Rituals that symbolize the transformation sought
 - Concluding celebration
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 3

■ Synopsis: War as a rite of passage

- Since time out of mind, human societies have used warrior training and warfare in [an] initiatory way.
 - Modern cultures, like traditional ones, seek the initiation of their boys, the renewal and reaffirmation of society, and reconnection to divinity through war.
 - Yet here the similarities end, for even when initiation appears to be successful, modern war as a rite of passage is woefully incomplete.
-

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REFLECT

□ Question for Reflection

- According to the author, why is modern warfare, as a rite of passage, “woefully incomplete?”
-

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READ

- Read Chapter 4
 - Synopsis
 - As we know from mythologies the world over, traditional warfare provided for expression of the warrior archetype and served as a container for the initiatory process.
 - War's archetypal elements continue to try to play themselves out.
 - The archetypal aspects of war as expressed in myth are not optional. They will work in, on, and through us whether or not we are aware of them.
 - We have choices in **how** we engage these archetypes, how consciously we repeat them, how we direct their energies, and what types of outcomes we seek.
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 4

■ Synopsis (cont.d)

□ Archetypal dimensions of war

- Legends of heroic deeds
 - Divine mentoring of the warrior inspired by elders
 - Battle conditions where these patterns could be lived out sufficiently to shape the soul
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 4

■ Conclusion

- We are trapped in a terrible tension between the soul's craving for realization of the warrior archetype and the realities of a warfare that devastates the soul who seeks it.
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REFLECT

□ Questions for Reflection

- In this chapter, what are some of the reasons given for the need for mature warriors in society?
 - What are some of the realities of modern warfare that work against the healthy realization of the warrior archetype among soldiers?
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 5

■ Synopsis

- We do violence to ourselves in emptying death of personal meaning, in relying on statistics as a substitute for truth.
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 5

■ Synopsis

□ Essential components for making war

- Dehumanize the people involved, both our antagonists and our population
- Place “them” and ourselves in a kill-or-be-killed situation

□ Motives to kill

- The will to survive
 - Loyalty to friends, families and foxhole mates
-

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READ

□ Read Chapter 5

■ Conclusion

- On a veritable pinhead of time, in war our soul must make the choice, “kill or be killed.” What are the ramifications? If our primitive urge to exact revenge overcomes our civilized feelings of restraint, we descend into the savage. If compassion overmasters our savage instincts, we are likely to be maimed or lose our life. Either way, there is no return to innocence.
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WAR and the SOUL REFLECT

□ Question for Reflection

- What is the *berserk* state and how does it reflect a “soul in slaughter”?
-

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READ

- Read Chapters 6 - 7
 - Key Concept: PTSD
 - Soldier's Heart, Nostalgia
 - *Heimweh, Maladie du Pays, Estar Roto*
 - War Neurosis
 - A constellation of fixed experience, delayed growth, devastated character, interrupted initiation, and unsupported recovery
 - A moral, spiritual, and aesthetic disorder – in effect, not a **psychological** but a **soul** disorder.
-

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READ

Eros

- Twin aspect of the one life force, along with *thanatos*
- The drive toward union
- The force that attracts, connects and binds all beings
- Love and sex
- Negative dimensions of passion when transformed by war
 - Revenge
 - Development of an abnormal sex drive

Thanatos

- Twin aspect of the one life force along with *eros*
 - The drive toward death
 - The force that tries to separate and destroy what *eros* connects
 - Negative outcome
 - Suicide
-

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- Key Concept: Beauty
 - Food of the soul
 - The manifestation of the Spirit... The force that keeps the soul alive.
 - It's importance to the soul's well-being cannot be overestimated; nor can the damaging effect of beauty's distortions engendered by the hideousness of war.
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WAR and the SOUL REFLECT

□ Question for Reflection

- Why and how might more emphasis on the aesthetic dimensions of religious education (such as incorporating the arts into teaching and learning) help soldiers and families who have been impacted by PTSD?
-

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READ

- Read Chapters 8-10
 - Synopsis: Relations with the Missing and the Dead
 - Every culture the world over has struggled with proper relations with the war dead and missing in action.
 - Throughout history, cultures around the world have created elaborate ceremonies to ritualize war death in an attempt to give meaning to the loss of lives.
 - It seems that survivors cannot find peace unless they make peace with the legions of dead with whom they may have had any relationship – as relative, friend, comrade in arms, former enemy, or even as their killer. Relations with the missing and the dead, and with death itself, are at the core of the soul wound we call post-traumatic stress disorder.
-

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READ

- Read Chapters 8-10
 - Synopsis: Soul of the Nation
 - The qualities in each of us will be evident in our state.
 - War in its traditional role as a rite of passage may have taught participants that existence is short and fragile, that its challenges must be met with courage, and that lives truly depend upon one another. As a mythic arena, war can teach that every life is a story that matters and must be redeemed through witness, restitution, and service. We can learn that we are servants of both creation and destruction and so must act with wisdom, restraint, and compassion. These lessons, however, are difficult to embrace even under the most generous conditions. They are rendered virtually invisible by the denial in American culture and the common interpretation of PTSD.
 - Aspects of our nation's soul *shadow* in times of war
 - Wasting
 - Friendly fire
 - Atrocities
-

WAR and the SOUL READ

□ **Men and Archetypal Development**

- Warrior
- Magician
- Lover
- King

□ **Women and Archetypal Development**

- Lover
 - Magician
 - Warrior
 - Queen
-

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READ

- **Proper Training for a Warrior**

- *Note: Warrior and soldier are different roles, different archetypes. The role of soldier may be the modern remnant of the warrior archetype, in that it is mass produced, wired with technology, and given no honest sense of transcendent purpose or lifelong usefulness.*

- Content

- Physical dimensions of military performance
- Intellectual dimensions of military performance
- Values and traditions of warriorhood

- Context

- An environment that fosters dignity and honor

- Process

- Highly personal (with elders/mature warriors)
-

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REFLECT

□ Question for Reflection

- Chapter 10 ends with the following challenge:

One way to create mature elders is to restore the warrior archetype in its fullness and wisdom. We can do this by changing the ways we rear, teach and train young men, and now women, in their conception of the warrior. We can do it by completing the warrior's education and initiation before and during service. And we can do it by restoring a complete initiation of the soul and healing efforts for our homecoming veterans.

- Identify one way that religious education and religious educators might participate in healing efforts for homecoming veterans.
-

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READ

- Read Chapters 11-15
 - Key Concept: the warrior's path
 - Walking the path of a spiritual warrior at all times
 - The four essential steps to mature warriorhood
 - Purification and cleansing
 - Giving meaning to wartime experiences
 - Storytelling
 - Transforming war stories into art and personal stories into tribal myth
 - Restitution in the family and nation
 - Lifting responsibility off the warrior and transferring it to the people as a whole
 - Initiation as a warrior
 - Learning to carry war skills and visions in mature, life-affirming ways
-

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REFLECT

□ Question for Reflection

- Of the four essential steps to mature warriorhood, **storytelling** seems most related to religious education. How might religious educators encourage soldiers and their families to tell their stories in ways that would lay a foundation for ongoing healing through storytelling.
-

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READ

- Read Chapter 16 and Conclusion
 - Insight: Deuteronomy 20
 - Puts forth laws to regulate the practice of warfare
 - Rely on faith rather than advanced weaponry for strength
 - Exempt from service new home builders and farmers, the newly married, and those unduly afraid
 - Offer humane treatment for cities that yield or surrender
 - Prohibit deforestation or the destruction of food sources
-

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READ & REFLECT

- Concluding Challenge:
 - Our goal is not just to awaken the soul; that is what childhood religious and secular education is meant to do. Rather our goal is to grow the soul large enough, to help it become wise and strong enough, so that it can surround the dominating wound we call trauma.

 - Concluding Question for Reflection:
 - What are you doing in your educational ministry that is helping people grow their souls large enough and strong enough to meet the challenges of a world in persistent conflict.
-

WAR and the SOUL RENEW

- Based on your reading, and using your own words, respond in writing to the “Questions for Reflection” in this reading guide.

 - Based on your personal interest and/or professional calling, choose and complete one of the activities on the following page.
 - Rites of Passage
 - Army Spiritual Values
-

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RENEW

□ RENEW Option #1

- Identify several life cycle changes experienced during adolescence and/or young adulthood. Choose one of them. Then, using the components of a rite of passage outlined in slide #12, create and describe a rite of passage for that experience.

□ RENEW Option #2

- As a means of helping people grow their souls large enough and strong enough to meet the challenges of a world in persistent conflict, do the following. Choose an Army spiritual value. Design a 1.5 hour study of sacred texts that encourages personal development of this spiritual value.
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