



Basic Question guide for
Using the documentary *Go in Peace!* to educate caregivers about soul wounds of veterans at end of life.

This is a question guide for hospice staff who want to use the documentary, *Go in Peace!* to facilitate staff training about veterans' care. It includes a brief resource list. It is for use with the full version of the film (56 mins.). **Total session time 2hrs.**
Note: This is the initial version of the longer question guide, which is subject to revision.

A question guide for use with the short version of the film (35 mins.) is planned (for a total session time of 60-90 minutes).

TO BEGIN WITH...

Introduce the goals of the entire session, to understand the soul wounds of veterans and the impact of the caregiver on their healing.

Then ask participants to take some time to consider their own relationship to veterans.

This allows for a Caregiver Spiritual Self-assessment, a journaling exercise for participants to do on their own.

Ask participants to take **5 minutes** to reflect on the following questions:

1. Do you have a family member who is a veteran? If so, how was your relationship to that veteran? Did the veteran talk about being in the military? If the veteran did, how did that affect you? If you are a veteran, what is your own relationship to the military and your experience?

2. What is your view of veterans out in the world who are troubled by what they have experienced? How do you feel about the problems these veterans face in dealing with difficulties from their past? Do you feel knowledgeable, daunted, helpless, other emotions towards them? Are you able to feel compassion?

3. How do you feel about working with veterans who have spiritual wounds?
What are some of your fears/ hesitations?

Ask the group if anyone wants to share what came up for them. This is entirely voluntary and no-one should feel compelled to speak. 5 minutes.

Introduce *Go in Peace!*

This question guide is based on 7 Steps that caregivers can take to serve veterans with soul wounds, and to potentially open up a path for healing.

The 7 Steps within the *Go in Peace!* documentary.

Participants are in small groups to discuss the questions related to each step. Spend approximately 6 minutes on each step.

STEP 1: Recognize the veteran (the soldier in the person, forever changed by military experience).

Question a: What does this mean to you? Overtly recognizing them or tacitly recognizing them as veterans who are shaped by their military experiences?

Question b: How do we do this without judging them?

STEP 2: Understand the symptoms of PTSD/PTS (renamed Post Terror Soul Distress by Dr. Ed Tick in *Go in Peace!*).

Question a: Name some of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress mentioned by Deborah Grassman in *Go in Peace!*

Question b: What is your understanding of Dr. Ed Tick's term "Post Terror Soul Distress"?

STEP 3: Create safe physical and emotional space (removing triggers, creating an environment in which the veteran feels able to open to the listener).

Question: Can you name some of the potential triggers for trauma linked to a veteran's military experience?

STEP 4: Prepare yourself and find the courage to ask the difficult questions to open the can of worms inside the veteran.

Question a: How do you know if you should open the can of worms in a veteran? Think of your own intellectual/emotional preparation to receive stories of horror told by a veteran and your resources.

Question b: What can you do to prepare yourself to hear stories of horror and to bear witness to a veteran's pain?

Question c: What can you do with those stories, so they do not overwhelm you?

STEP 5: Listen and validate, without judgment, avoiding belittling or dismissing what the veteran shares.

Question: What might it mean to a veteran if you said, “But you were just doing your job,” in response to a veteran sharing about their regret, guilt, or shame.

STEP 6: Create opportunities for ritual for acknowledgement of grief and loss, purification, and forgiveness.

Question: Do you have any ideas for rituals for spiritual cleansing/purification, that address grief, loss, forgiveness?

STEP 7: Create opportunities for atonement (action after forgiveness to make the world “whole” again).

Question: What are some of the small but meaningful ways a veteran may find to atone and heal for guilt and shame rooted in past actions?

NOW COME BACK TOGETHER as a whole group and ask for voluntary sharing (approximately 12 minutes).

Question a: What is the biggest challenge for you in caring for veterans?

Question b: What is the most useful thing you have learned from this time of reflecting on veterans’ care?

CLOSE WITH A VERSE of your own choosing to inspire hope for healing, or you might use this by Emily Dickinson:

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

Some statistics about veterans at end of life.

1 in 4 people who die is a veteran, according to a 2013 Veterans' Administration report.

World War II veterans are dying at a rate of approximately 492 a day. This means there are approximately only 855,070 veterans remaining of the 16 million who served the US in World War II, according to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, LA, (based on VA data). Today, that number stands at just over a million. It is estimated that by 2036, no veteran of World War II will be alive.

WWII THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM LIVING WWII VETERANS BY STATE 2015			
Alabama.....	12,721	Pennsylvania.....	45,892
Alaska.....	1,559	Rhode Island.....	3,213
Arizona.....	30,151	South Carolina.....	13,749
Arkansas.....	11,173	South Dakota.....	2,506
California.....	93,157	Tennessee.....	16,293
Colorado.....	15,618	Texas.....	52,776
Connecticut.....	10,610	Utah.....	6,767
Delaware.....	3,259	Vermont.....	2,065
D.C.....	1,288	Virginia.....	20,915
Florida.....	79,925	Washington.....	21,473
Georgia.....	20,191	West Virginia.....	6,474
Hawaii.....	4,003	Wisconsin.....	16,080
Idaho.....	5,556	Wyoming.....	1,757
Illinois.....	29,889	Puerto Rico.....	2,786
Indiana.....	17,314	Is. Areas & Foreign....	3,321
Iowa.....	9,629		
Kansas.....	8,027		
Kentucky.....	10,882		
Louisiana.....	10,472		
Maine.....	4,935		
Maryland.....	14,359		
Massachusetts.....	19,858		
Michigan.....	28,111		
Minnesota.....	15,060		
Mississippi.....	6,794		
Missouri.....	18,354		
Montana.....	4,032		
Nebraska.....	5,340		
Nevada.....	8,351		
New Hampshire.....	5,174		
New Jersey.....	22,344		
New Mexico.....	6,108		
New York.....	44,254		
North Carolina.....	24,340		
North Dakota.....	1,933		
Ohio.....	34,863		
Oklahoma.....	11,515		
Oregon.....	14,323		
		▶ Grand Total.....	855,070
		▶ Deaths Per Day.....	492

Note: The VA has reported that at least 22 veterans a day commit suicide. But the number of others who engage in risky behaviors resulting in death, is much higher.

Websites for *Go in Peace!*, the documentary, and for Deborah Grassman's *Opus Peace* organization, and Ed Tick's *Soldier's Heart*.

www.goinpeacefilm.org

www.opuspeace.org

www.soldiersheart.net

A Very Selected Bibliography of Books for those interested in deepening their understanding of the nature of the spiritual pain associated with military experiences.

Tick, Ed

2005 *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.

Tick, Ed

2014 *Warrior's Return: Restoring the Soul After War*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.

Grassman, Deborah L

2005 *Peace at Last: Stories of Hope and Healing for Veterans and their Families*. St. Petersburg, FL: Vandamere Press.

Shay, Jonathan

1995 *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster. An examination of the psychological devastation of war, in which he compares the soldiers of Homer's classic, the *Illiad*, with PTSD in Vietnam War veterans.

Shay, Jonathan

2002 *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. New York, NY: Scribner. In this follow-up to *Achilles in Vietnam*, Shay compares the *Odyssey*, a story of the trials of a Greek warrior's homecoming, to the challenges faced by veterans returning to life as civilians.

Hedges, Chris

2002 *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*. New York, NY: Anchor Books division of Random House. As a war correspondent, Chris Hedges illuminates the power of the force that is war.

O'Brien, Tim

1990 *The Things They Carried*. New York, NY: Penguin Books. A fictional work about the Vietnam War that provides profound insights into the experience of it and its legacy.

Nakashima, Rita and Gabriella Lettini

2012 *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. Four veterans of wars from Vietnam on reveal how moral injury as a result of their military experiences has impacted their lives.

TWO POEMS by Larry Winters Vietnam veteran, mental health therapist who has studied post-traumatic stress in the Vietnamese.

**If a man kills another man
He must dig two graves
One in the earth for the dead man
One in his heart for his own spirit
Or he will not return.**

Written for a Vietnamese general who hated Americans because they killed his wife with Agent Orange:

**I am one Man
I have lived with Sadness
Holding your spirit prisoner in my Heart
Forgive me.**

Larry Winters, Vietnam Veteran, Author of The Making and Un-Making of a Marine: One Man's Struggle for Forgiveness, Millrock Writers' Collective, 2007.

Contact Karen van Vuuren, director of Go in Peace! at karenvanvu@gmail.com.