



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
EXECUTIVE OFFICE *of*
VETERANS SERVICES



Massachusetts Department of Veteran's Services in collaboration with Department of Public Health



STATEWIDE
ADVOCACY
— FOR —
VETERANS'
EMPOWERMENT

WHEN YOUR SERVICE ENDS, OUR MISSION BEGINS.



Special Mental Health Considerations for Returning Veterans




Battlemind

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research

Continuing the Transition Home




Massachusetts Department of Veteran's Services in collaboration with Department of Public Health



Battlemind is the Soldier's inner strength to face fear and adversity in combat with courage. Key components **INCLUDE:**

- Self-confidence
 - Taking calculated risks
 - Handling challenges
- Mental toughness
 - Overcome obstacles or setbacks
 - Maintain positive thoughts during times of adversity and challenge





Battlemind skills helped soldiers survive in combat, but may cause problems if not adapted when they get home.

Battlemind Checks allow Soldiers and clinical staff to identify if and when help is needed.



Buddies (cohesion) vs. Withdrawal
Accountability vs. Controlling
Targeted Aggression vs. Inappropriate Aggression
Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance
Lethally Armed vs. “Locked and Loaded” at Home
Emotional Control vs. Anger/Detachment
Mission Operational Security (OPSEC) vs. Secretiveness
Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt
Non-Defensive (combat) Driving vs. Aggressive Driving
Discipline and Ordering vs. Conflict



Buddies (Cohesion) vs. Withdrawal

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In Combat: The soldier may believe that no one understands their experience except their buddies who were there.

At Home: The soldier may prefer to be with battle buddies rather than with spouse, family, or other friends. May avoid speaking about themselves to friends and family.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

Cohesion: Combat results in bonds with fellow Soldiers that will last a lifetime; back home, their friends and family have changed, re-establishing these bonds takes time and work.



Accountability vs. Controlling

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In Combat: Maintaining control of every single minor detail is essential for survival.

At Home: Soldier may not let others share in making minor decisions, try to control things that don't really matter or overreact to minor events.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

Accountability:

Back home, the small details are no longer important; family decisions and personal space are best shared.



Targeted vs. Inappropriate Aggression

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In Combat: Targeted aggression involves making split second decisions that are lethal in a highly ambiguous environment, which keeps the soldier and their buddies alive.

At Home: Soldier may be easily irritated. Get into fights or heated arguments, assault, spouse abuse, snapping at the kids or buddies or your NCO.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

Targeted Aggressiveness:

In combat, the enemy is the target; back home, there are no enemies.



Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance

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In Combat: Survival depends on the soldier being aware at all times of their surroundings and reacting immediately to sudden changes.

At Home: The soldier may feel easily startled, anxious, have nightmares, consume alcohol to calm down.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

Tactical Awareness: *Combat requires alertness and sustained attention; back home it takes time to learn to relax.*



Lethally Armed vs. “Locked and Loaded” at Home

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In Combat: Soldiers carrying their weapons at all times was mandatory and necessary.

At Home: Soldiers may feel a need to have weapons on them, in their home and/or car at all times. They may believe that they and their loved ones are not safe without them.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

Armed: In combat, it's dangerous to be unarmed; at home, it's dangerous to be armed.



Emotional Control vs. Anger/Detachment

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In Combat: Controlling emotions during combat is critical for mission success.

At Home: Failing to display emotions or only showing anger around family and friends will damages the soldier's relationships. Soldier may be seen as detached or uncaring.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

Emotional Control: In combat, controlling emotions is necessary; at home, limiting emotions leads to relationship failures.



Mission OPSEC vs. Secretiveness

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In Combat: Talk about mission only with those who need to know. Can only talk about combat experiences with unit members.

At Home: Soldiers may avoid sharing their deployment experiences with spouse or significant other. Soldiers may feel angry when asked about their experiences.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

OPSEC: *The “need to know” now includes friends and family.*



Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat: Your responsibility in combat is to survive and do your best to keep your buddies alive.

At Home: You may feel you have failed your buddies if they were killed or seriously injured. You may be bothered by memories of those wounded or killed.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

Responsibility: In the “*heat of battle*” Soldiers must act—they must make life and death decisions. Later, it’s learning from these decisions...without second guessing.



Non-Defensive (Combat) vs. Aggressive Driving

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In Combat: Unpredictable, fast, rapid lane changes, straddling the middle line, keeping other vehicles at a distance, designed to avoid IEDs and VBIEDs.

At Home: Aggressive driving leads to speeding tickets, accidents, fatalities. Soldier may be chasing an “adrenaline high” or often get angry while driving.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

Combat Driving: In combat, driving fast is necessary to avoid danger; back home, driving fast ‘feels right,’ but is dangerous.



Discipline & Ordering vs. Conflict

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In Combat: Survival depends on discipline and obeying orders.

At Home: Inflexible interactions (ordering and demanding behaviors) with your spouse, children, and friends often lead to conflict.

Transitioning the Combat Skill

Discipline & Ordering: Giving and following orders involves a clear chain of command, which does not exist within families.



Questions?





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