



Welcome, Warrior!

Aqua Ch'i™

Veterans are in crisis. It is estimated that up to one-third will come back with PTSD and traumatic brain injury. Those who have the courage to seek counseling often must wait six months or longer for an appointment. Suicide, homicide, drug and alcohol addiction, and other destructive acts are common among our vets.

In so many ways, the world as we have known it has been turned on its head. What used to work now has little efficacy. Yet from the tumult, a new paradigm is emerging. A rich and varied body of literature is showing that “mind/body” methods and practices are achieving remarkable results in stress relief, physiological healing, and aggression reduction.

Interesting, but does it work with Vets??!!

“These techniques help me get into a deep and restful sleep.”

“When I feel like I’m about to lose it, I remember what we did in class, and I can pull myself back from hurting my loved one’s feelings.”

“All these years after the war, finally I feel whole. I definitely want to continue on with this group, and mentor young vets coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Director of a Veteran’s Center: *“These ‘out-of-the box’ treatments are the only ones that ever work.”*

Welcome, Warrior! is an 8-week program rooted in the belief that rather than “fixing” veterans we need to honor them and give them tools to better manage their own lives, and help others. Bett interweaves new therapies, meditation practices, celebratory movements from traditional and contemporary cultures, expressive drawing and writing, healing music and bringing the vets into warm water. Alon offers scuba and ceremonial elements from the environment.

In our name, vets have seen and done unspeakable things. *Welcome, Warrior!* is a powerful way to restore and reintegrate them. *Welcome, Warrior!* works with and trains veterans of past wars so they may mentor newly returning vets.

The Warrior’s Path

In *War and the Soul*, psychologist Ed Tick describes the Warrior’s Path. Most traditional cultures have had warriors, which is not the same as soldiers. The role of the warrior is protector, not destroyer. Our troops do not enlist because they want to destroy or kill. They seek to protect the country and people they love. Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) is, in part, the tortured conscience of good people who did their best under conditions which would dehumanize anyone.

Understanding that war could be a poison for the spirit, traditional cultures—Native American, Zulu, Buddhist, ancient Israeli—put returning warriors through significant rituals of purification before allowing them to re-enter their communities and return to their families. Knowing that returning warriors could be dangerous, Sitting Bull considered his role as Medicine Chief to be his highest office.

The Heart of Healing

“Awareness itself is not enough: it must be joined by mastery.”

~ Piero Ferrucci (*What We May Be*)

The goal of *Welcome, Warrior!* is both for veterans’ lives to be better (however they describe that for themselves), and for them to define a new mission involving meaningful service to their communities.

A torrent of new studies show those who serve are happier mentally and healthier physically. And physicists have discovered what contemplative practitioners of the world's great religions have always known: We are not separate; we are all connected. If we are to heal our society, wounded warriors have a large role to play in spearheading this shift.

What is *the right stuff* in this process? Breath. Going into water for cleansing and purification. Water – a place where there is peace and healing. Healing movements from many wisdom traditions. Drawing and writing their stories. Forgiveness—of self and others. Laughter. Silence. A sacred bond. Compassion. Service. Meaning.

Who knows where this program/experience may go? Hopefully, some day proud vets will wear an emblem around their neck: *"I am of service to you. How can I help?"*

*The Possible Society invites your inquiries. **Welcome, Warrior!** Associates are ready to work with you to bring this program to your area.*

Contact Executive Director Bett L. Martinez at 510-526-0312 or well-being@pacbell.net.

The Welcome, Warrior Team

Possible Society

Bett Lujan Martinez began with a career in theatre and dance; a Masters in Education then led to a career in health care planning and policy. But it was the traumatic brain injury and breaking multiple bones that led her on a healing journey which has touched thousands of lives. While Western medicine initially kept her alive, her exploration of tai chi, dance, yoga, and qigong brought full healing. As she recovered, she taught these modalities to others. Bett witnessed the most extensive healings beginning in 2003 when she created Spiritwalking |Aqua Ch'i™: energy-building movements in warm water, including walking a water labyrinth. Riveted by the idea that the culture which sends young people to war must celebrate *and* help them to heal upon return, Bett now brings her innovative program to older vets so they may settle into their own wholeness, then assist new vets to heal and find a mission of new service. She is the Executive Director of *The Possible Society of California*.

Alon Altman is a former Israeli Sergeant Major and combat soldier who experienced the peace and power of water to heal his own severe PTSD. He went on to become a swim teacher, scuba instructor, and hydrotherapist. He has coached children in the Special Olympics, works with individuals with severe disabilities, and assists veterans in reintegrating and empowering their lives. Alon served as Aquatic Medicine Warrior.

Collaborators

Salvador Ueda, LSW. Salvador is an Army Veteran who served 6 years as a Medical Specialist at Tripler Army Medical Hospital in Honolulu, HI. He received his Master of Social Work Degree from the University of Hawaii. Salvador brought the first group of veterans to the program.

Dena Phillips is an MSW candidate from California State University, East Bay. As program intern, Dena handled logistics and record-keeping, and provided a warm welcome to the vets.

Contributed by Ellen Augustine