



# SELF-HELP EXERCISE: RECLAIMING YOUR FAITH

## INTRODUCTION

A core belief is a deeply held and long-lasting understanding about the fundamentals of life. A good example of a core belief is the belief that people are generally good at heart. If your core understanding and beliefs about yourself and how the world works are damaged because of things that happened to you and others while deployed, it can negatively impact all aspects of your life. This is because our core beliefs help us work through and make sense out of all sorts of life challenges, such as serious stress, loss, disappointments, failures, and betrayals.

One of the most deeply held core beliefs for many people is about one's faith. Serious and repeated combat and operational stress and loss can be damaging to one's beliefs. The most common altered belief is that "God has abandoned me." Although this may feel true, almost all theologies claim it is impossible. So the real question you have to sort out is why you feel as though God abandoned you. That is a question worth exploring.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### GO TO THE SOURCE:



A shaken belief system signals the need to gather more information. One approach is to go to the original sources of your faith. Go to inspirational writings or scriptures. Learn what your faith says about forgiveness, grace, mercy, goodness, evil, human weaknesses and salvation, redemption, responsibility, and any other ideas that are important to you. Seek guidance from members of the clergy, who have spent a lot of time reflecting on religious issues and may have helpful insights.

### REINVEST IN FAITH PRACTICES:



A second approach is to reinvest in the practices of your faith. This may be done through the study of sacred writings, engaging in meditative reflection on the teachings of your faith, or actual conversation with God in prayer. Many people find that spending time in quiet and persistent meditation or prayer really helps to sort things out. Most religions encourage people to form connections by joining supportive communities.

## PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE



Core beliefs can change and grow over time. Many people experience a significant strengthening of their belief system following a period of doubt. As frustrating as it can be to feel anchorless or ill-served by your prior beliefs, consider the possibility that this frustration is an opportunity to search for a new approach that will serve you better in the long run.