



# SELF-HELP EXERCISE:

## LEARNING TO FIND THE POSITIVE FROM LOSS

### INTRODUCTION

#### Can something good come out of a terrible experience?

It is easy to imagine how a tragic, violent, and unfair loss can negatively impact your core values, beliefs, and attitudes.

#### For example, some people blame themselves for the loss and think:



- ★ I don't deserve to be happy
- ★ I should always expect the worst
- ★ It's best not to trust anyone

Do these descriptions seem to fit you? Over time, there are ways you might grow or gain something positive from your loss.

#### Some people who have lived through terrible experiences and losses find or develop:

- ★ A renewed or deeper sense of meaning and purpose in their lives
- ★ A fuller appreciation for how precious life is
- ★ A deeper appreciation for others and their kindness during times of need
- ★ A deeper appreciation for how much they are cared for and valued by others
- ★ A sense of what is most important to them
- ★ Greater self-knowledge — knowing how they respond to adversity and how they can face great adversity and not be defeated by it
- ★ Increased self-esteem (e.g., "I am stronger now")
- ★ Greater compassion for others who are facing hardships or losses
- ★ A desire to advocate for the needs and rights of those who have suffered
- ★ A deeper sense of spirituality
- ★ Ways of expressing their experience creatively (e.g., through art, writing, photography, etc.)



Finding meaning and positive growth after a loss doesn't mean it doesn't hurt to think of a fallen warrior. It is just one aspect of moving forward from the loss.



WOUNDED WARRIOR  
PROJECT

## WHAT YOU CAN DO



### Record Changes:

Take a minute right now and think about how your life has changed since the loss.

### Since your loss, have there been any positive changes that have come from it?

*Use the space below to write your observations about how you have grown or other positive changes since your loss. Think of ways that you might eventually grow from your loss.*

Positive growth after a loss, including a greater sense of meaning and life purpose, is a process that takes time. Although it may seem crazy or naïve for you to even consider that something positive could come from loss, consider ways you have changed — maybe you have grown more than you think.

For example, if you have been deeply affected by your loss, you are probably more in tune with and accepting of these experiences in others. These are good qualities that make you a better leader, parent, friend, son or daughter, and so forth. This is a sign of personal growth. Keep yourself open to opportunities for growth — it will help you heal and recover from loss over the long haul.



### From today forward, are there any positive changes you would like to come from your loss?

*Use the space below to write positive changes you would like to see happen or ways you would like to grow from your loss.*

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE



As you move forward after your loss, be careful you aren't thinking about it over and over again, including all the what-ifs surrounding it. When trying to make sense of the loss and find meaning in the experience, you may find yourself slipping into thinking, "What if?" or "If only." This thought process results in thinking about what could have been, rather than trying to come to terms with what actually happened. This type of thinking is not helpful because it will not change what occurred; it will only keep you locked in the past instead of moving forward.

Thinking about positive changes that have happened or can happen in yourself as a result of the loss is one way to honor the loss, focus on the future, and avoid getting stuck in negative thoughts.

### RECOMMENDED EXERCISES

- ★ Have your deployment experiences left you feeling pessimistic or cynical — expecting the worst in every situation? Are you only seeing the negative and filtering out the positive?
- ★ Have you adopted the belief that life is not worth serious investment because tragic things can happen at random to good people?

**TRY THESE EXERCISES:** Complete the self-help exercise worksheets titled **Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts** and **Core Beliefs About Ourselves And The World**.

