

Pastor as a Safe Haven

- Offer a calm, safe and non-judgmental, non-anxious presence
- Provide clear, reliable boundaries of communion and respect
- Be present with veterans and families during the storms of reintegration
- Provide a compassionate space wide enough to encompass the awfulness of war trauma

Pastor as Listener

- Avoid advising or offering platitudes
- Listen without interruption or comment
- Hearing content and emotion with respect
- Convey warmth and acceptance of the person, their journey and their struggles
- Avoid asking questions
- Notice *what is* in a caring and genuine way

Pastor's Role in Grounding

- Provide roadmap for reintegration into church and community at large
- Provide roadmap of opportunities for appropriate outlets regarding frustration, pain, fear, guilt, and trauma
- Provide avenues of dialogue for spiritual and religious growth and engagement
- Provide honest, realistic reflection of recovery process
- Provide spiritual, religious and community resources for veterans and their families

Pastor's Role in Accepting

- Understand the “both/and” nature of good and evil, then and now
- Not trying to fix the unfixable
- To offer deep reflection on “what is goodness” and how to help others find “goodness” within themselves
- Understanding and accepting the dark side of human nature

Pastor's Role in Referring

- A Pastor's referral can validate, even de-stigmatize the use of mental health services
- Pastor can bring people in need to those who know how to assist best
- Rules for referral:
 - Refer early and often
 - Provide initial pastoral care at first . . . then
 - Assist with referral calls with and for them

What NOT to do as a Pastor

- Ask if they killed anyone
- Push for details regarding the deployment
- Try to fix problems
- Assume the service member is “unsaved” or does not have a faith journey of their own
- Push to get service member involved in church ministries
- Prematurely assuage feelings of guilt
- Diagnose PTSD, assume PTSD or label PTSD

The Pastor's Gift

Theological Reflection: Discovering the presence of God in one's experience

Engaging spiritual resources to re-frame one's understanding of what is happening

Methods of Theological Reflection

Various methods of thinking theologically about what your service member is going through can help you reframe that person's experience and connection with God

Theological Reflection Resources Include:

● Sacraments / Rituals	● Festival Days
● Sacred Narratives	● Stages of Faith
● Hymns / Songs of Faith	● Images of Ministry
● Theological Constructs	

The Pastor's Challenge

- Actualizing Hope and Resilience
- Providing an honest, caring relationship
- Truthful imagination of the future
- Resource review – what was lost - what was gained?
- Acceptance of humanity
- Moving toward pardon (self and other)
- Inspiring collaboration & community

Facets of Resilience

- Resilience helps us *cope with hardship* (endures, minimizes or overcomes hardships)
- It helps us *resist the destructive pressures* on our physiological, psychological and spiritual self (maintains capacity)
- Resilience moves us to *achieve a new proficiency* out of the unfavorable experience (we learn something from the experience)

True Hope

- Hope is not initiated and sustained by erasing emotions like fear and anxiety, it integrates the genuine threats and dangers that exist into the proposed strategies to subsume them
- Hope takes into account the real threats that exist and seeks to navigate the best path around them
- Hope brings reality into sharp focus. Hope incorporates fear into the process of rational deliberation and tempers it so we can think and choose without panic.