

Continuing the Transition Home

Battlemind

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

- **Self-confidence**
 - Take calculated risks
 - Handle challenges
- **Mental toughness**
 - Overcome obstacles or setbacks
 - Maintain positive thoughts during times of adversity and challenge.



Combat Skills to Possess

- **Battlemind Checks** allow Soldiers and their Buddies to identify if and when help is needed
- **Battlemind skills** helped you survive in **combat**, but may cause you problems if not adapted when you get home.

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

In Combat: No one understands your experience except your buddies who were there.

At Home: May prefer to be with battle buddies rather than with spouse, family, or other friends. May avoid speaking about your self to friends and family.

Question: *When you first returned from **combat**, did you notice that your relationships with your family and friends had changed?*

Transitioning the **Combat** Skill: Buddies (Cohesion) vs. Withdrawal

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

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Felt close to buddies over there but now feel alone?
- Not connecting with loved ones?

Accountability vs. Controlling

In Combat: Maintaining control of weapon and gear is necessary for survival.

At Home: Become angry when someone moves or messes with your stuff, even if insignificant. Nobody cares about doing things right except for you.

Question: *Since coming home have you been able to let go, relax, and let someone else be in control?*

Transitioning the Combat Skill: Accountability vs. Controlling

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

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Overreacting to minor events?
- Still having trouble letting family and friends share in making decisions?
- Trying to control things that don't really matter?

Targeted vs. Inappropriate Aggression

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

At Home: Overreact to minor insults. Inappropriate aggression, assault, spouse abuse, snapping at the kids or buddies or your NCO.

Question: *After returning home, were you easily irritated: yelling, throwing things or threatening someone?*

Transitioning the Combat Skill: Targeted vs. Inappropriate Aggression

Targeted Aggressiveness: *In **combat**, the enemy is the target; back home, there are no enemies.*

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Still snapping at your spouse, kids or buddies?
- Getting into fights or heated arguments?
- Avoiding people?

Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance

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

At Home: You may feel keyed up or anxious.

Questions:

- *When you returned home were you easily startled by loud noises?*
- *Did you have trouble sleeping or have nightmares?*

*Transitioning the **Combat** Skill: Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance*

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

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Still jumping at loud noises...staying revved up?
- Still have trouble with sleep or nightmares?
- Drinking to calm down or to help you sleep?

Lethally Armed vs. “Locked and Loaded” at Home

In Combat: Carrying your weapon at all times was mandatory and necessary.

At Home: Need to have weapons on you, in your home and/or car at all times, believing that you and your loved ones are not safe without them.

Question: *When you first came back, did you feel the need to remain armed?*

*Transitioning the **Combat** Skill:* Lethally armed vs. “locked and loaded” at home

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

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Threatened someone with a weapon?
- Carry a loaded weapon in your car?
- Keep an unsecured loaded weapon at home?

Emotional Control vs. Anger/Detachment

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

At Home: Failing to display emotions, or only showing anger, around family and friends will hurt your relationships. You may be seen as detached or uncaring.

Question: *When you returned did you notice you were less patient, less tolerant, more likely to get ticked off?*

*Transitioning the **Combat** Skill:* Emotional Control vs. Anger/Detachment

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

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Can only show anger or detachment?
- Feeling numb?
- Friends & loved ones tell you that you have changed?
- Having relationship problems?

Mission OPSEC vs. Secretiveness

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

At Home: Soldiers may avoid sharing their deployment experiences with spouse or significant other.

Question: *When you returned home did you feel like others who hadn't been there couldn't understand what you'd been through?*

*Transitioning the **Combat** Skill: Mission OPSEC vs. Secretiveness*

- OPSEC: *The "need to know" now includes friends and family.*

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Haven't shared your deployment experiences with those closest to you?
- Get angry when someone asks you about your deployment experiences?

Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt

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.

Question: *Did you second guess decisions you made while deployed?*

*Transitioning the **Combat** Skill: Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt*

- 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.*

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Certain memories of the deployment keep bothering you?
- Still feeling guilt about things that happened in **combat**?

Non-Defensive (Combat) vs. Aggressive Driving

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.

Question: *When you returned, did you find yourself having the urge to drive fast?*

*Transitioning the **Combat** Skill:* Non-defensive (combat driving) vs. aggressive driving

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

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Chasing adrenaline highs by driving fast?
- Involved in driving accidents?
- Easily angered while driving?

Discipline & Ordering vs. Conflict

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.

Question: *When you returned, did you tell family members and friends what to do instead of discussing options with them?*

*Transitioning the **Combat** Skill:* Discipline & Ordering vs. Conflict

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

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Relationships aren't going well?
- Ongoing conflicts over decisions?

The Alcohol Transition

Restricted Alcohol vs. Available Alcohol

In Combat: In the **combat** theatre, alcohol use was limited.

At Home: Alcohol is now plentiful.

Question: Did you prevent a fellow Soldier from drinking too much and/or driving after drinking?

The Transition: Alcohol

Many Soldiers use alcohol as a way to cope with deployment experiences, but this is not healthy. Learn to relax without using alcohol.

Battlemind Check (self & buddy)

- Using alcohol to calm down?
- Using alcohol to help you sleep?
- Others telling you that you're drinking too much?

The 5 Myths of Mental Health

Myth 1: Only weak Soldiers/Veterans have mental health problems.

Fact: Everyone is affected by combat.

Myth 2: If a Soldier/Veteran has a problem, he/she will get help.

Fact: Most don't get help because of stigma.

Myth 3: A fellow Soldier's /Veteran's mental health problems are none of my business.

Fact: Soldiers most often turn to other Soldiers when they need help.

Myth 4: VA/ DOD don't support Soldiers/ Veterans who have mental health problems.

Fact: There are multiple ways to get help.

Myth 5: No one can help me if I have a mental health problem.

Fact: Professional treatment helps, the earlier the better.

Summary

- Adapt your **Battlemind** skills to facilitate your transition home. Build on your strengths.
- If you need or want help, get it. Overcome the myths of **mental health**.
- It takes courage to ask for help and it takes leadership to help a fellow Soldier get help.

VA Montana has established numerous ways for Soldiers and Veterans to get help for **mental health** issues:

- **Mental/Behavioral Health Services**
- Off-post **Mental Health** professional / Army One Source / Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647