

6 Tough Facts and Battlemind Concepts:

1. Combat is difficult. Someone in your unit may be injured or killed. You may need to talk to someone about it.
2. The combat environment is harsh and demanding. Keep yourself in good physical condition and use MWR facilities when you can.
3. Fear in combat is not a sign of weakness. Even heroes feel fear.
4. Soldiers are often afraid to admit they have a mental health problem. Admitting a mental health problem is not a character flaw.
5. Deployments place a tremendous strain upon families. Family problems do not improve over time.
6. Unit cohesion and team stability are often disrupted by combat. However, Soldiers function best in combat with those they know.

“The capacity of Soldiers for absorbing punishment and enduring privations is almost inexhaustible so long as they believe they are getting a square deal, that their commanders are looking out for them, and that their own accomplishments are understood and appreciated.”

GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1944



Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR)
U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command

WRAIR Land Combat Team

POC:
LTC Carl A. Castro
carl.castro@us.army.mil
(301) 319-9174

This presentation contains a combination of research findings and recommendations, many of which are based on personal observations and experiences. Therefore, the opinions and views expressed here are those of the Land Combat Team, and should not be considered representing the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense. OIF/OEF casualty figures are as of 7 MAR 05. Updated 7 MAR 05.

6 TOUGH FACTS ABOUT COMBAT



**AND WHAT
SOLDIERS CAN DO
TO HELP
THEMSELVES AND
THEIR BUDDIES**



Facts of Combat:

- Combat is sudden, intense, and life threatening.
- It is the Soldiers' job to kill the enemy.
- Innocent women and children are often killed in combat.
- No Soldier knows how he/she will perform in combat until the moment arrives.
- All Soldiers are affected.

Development of Battlemind:

What is Battlemind?

It is a Soldier's inner strength to face adversity, fear, and hardship during combat with confidence and resolution. It is the will to persevere and win.

Objectives of Battlemind:

To develop those factors (focusing on Leader behaviors) that contribute to the Soldier's will and spirit to fight and win in combat, thereby **reducing combat stress reactions.**

6 Facts and Battlemind Concepts:

Fact #1: COMBAT IS DIFFICULT.

FINDINGS:

- Over 1,600 service members have been killed and over 11,000 have been wounded since OIF/OEF began.
- Almost 90% of Soldiers know someone who has been seriously injured or killed.

WHAT SOLDIERS CAN DO:

- Don't take unnecessary risks.
- Participate in leader-led AAR's and/or mental health debriefings led by mental health professionals or chaplains.
- Conduct memorial services with the utmost respect and dignity.
- Talk to your buddies about critical incidences.

SOMEONE IN YOUR UNIT MAY BE INJURED OR KILLED. YOU MAY NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT.

Fact #2: THE COMBAT ENVIRONMENT IS HARSH AND DEMANDING.

FINDINGS:

- Soldiers' performance progressively deteriorates with less than 8 hours of sleep per day.
- The combat environment (e.g., physical strain, heat, noise, lack of privacy) takes a toll on Soldiers.
- Combat tests the character of leaders and Soldiers.
- Soldiers are sensitive to differences in the distribution of MWR resources.

WHAT SOLDIERS CAN DO:

- Ensure you get adequate rest (≥8 hours of sleep), hydration, and other force protection measures.
- Use MWR resources: they are there for you.
- Monitor and maintain your physical condition.

KEEP YOURSELF IN GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION AND USE MWR FACILITIES WHEN YOU CAN.

Fact #3: FEAR IN COMBAT IS NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS.

FINDINGS:

- Over 2/3 of silver star recipients reported increased fear as battle progressed.
- Combat stress reactions such as nightmares, flashbacks, anger and avoidance of expressing painful feelings are common and normal.
- Over 90% of Soldiers who receive combat stress support are returned to duty.

WHAT SOLDIERS CAN DO:

- Pay attention to your training on what to do in combat conditions—Tough training is the best preparation.
- Admitting and joking about fear will release tension.
- Remember that fear is NOT a mental disorder.

EVEN HEROES FEEL FEAR.

Fact #4: SOLDIERS ARE AFRAID TO ADMIT HAVING A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM.

FINDINGS:

- PTSD symptoms are common after combat (10-20% of Soldiers).
- Combat stress often leads to excessive alcohol use and aggression.
- Earlier treatment leads to faster recovery.

WHAT SOLDIERS CAN DO:

- Look out for your buddies. Talk to them about what you think and how you feel. Encourage other Soldiers to get professional help if they need it.
- Make sure you know where mental health is located and how to access it.

ADMITTING A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM IS NOT A CHARACTER FLAW.

Fact #5: DEPLOYMENTS PLACE A TREMENDOUS STRAIN UPON FAMILIES.

FINDINGS:

- Nearly 1/5 of all Soldiers deployed to OIF reported marital concerns or problems.
- Soldiers generally report dissatisfaction with the FRG and rear detachment.

WHAT SOLDIERS CAN DO:

- Make sure your family is prepared not only with power of attorney and a will but with social support from family and friends.
- Talk to someone if you are having family problems.
- Look out for other Soldiers who may be having family problems. Get them to professional help if they need it.

FAMILY PROBLEMS DO NOT IMPROVE OVER TIME.

Fact #6: UNIT COHESION AND TEAM STABILITY ARE DISRUPTED BY COMBAT.

FINDINGS:

- Soldier bonds will be disrupted due to combat deaths, medical evacuations, emergency leave, etc.
- Changes in task organization and FOB locations may also impact unit cohesion.

WHAT SOLDIERS CAN DO:

- Know that you will lose some members of your unit and may or may not get new ones to replace them.
- Welcome and integrate new members of the unit and make them feel like part of the team.
- Participate in team building and hail & farewell activities.

SOLDIERS FUNCTION BEST IN COMBAT WITH THOSE THEY KNOW.