

WORKING WITH VETS

My Experience While Filming the Veterans PTSD Documentary

"Operation Emotional Freedom: The Answer"

by Lindsay Kenny, EFT Master

Part 2 of 2



In my first installment of this series, I began by expressing how honored I felt to be included in the making of this documentary on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It has been almost three years since the project, yet it seems like three days ago. My gratitude goes out to Gary Craig and everyone involved in the creation and production of this amazing film, especially to Eric Huurre, the producer and director and the brave Veterans. They agreed to put their fate in our hands with this “weird tapping thing.” My hope is that we will be able to offer the healing tool of tapping to hundreds and thousands of other returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans and their families.

If you haven't read Part 1 of this series, I suggest you do for continuity, before reading this article. You can find it at www.LKcoaching.com/media.html The background established in Part 1 is relevant to the conclusion of this article.

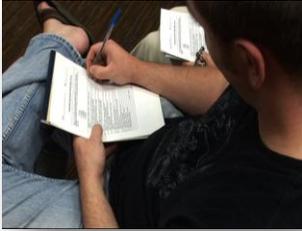


PILING ON

As I mentioned in Part 1 there were several things the Vets held in common; similar negative emotions, particularly anger, and a sense of betrayal. By the end of the first day another intriguing similarity began to surface among the Veterans:

Just like other PTSD Vets with whom I've worked, most of these Vets had entered into the military with a great deal of existing emotional baggage. They were likely already suffering from their own form of PTSD.

The Vets' history was apparent on their intake forms, but became even more obvious as we worked with them. By my estimate over 90% of those with PTSD had experienced



significant physical, sexual or emotional abuse (or other traumatic experiences) *before* their active military duty. I'm certainly not a psychiatrist, but it appears to me that having existing, unresolved emotional wounds leaves a soldier more vulnerable to PTSD than those who entered the service without previous unresolved trauma.

When an emotional wound is left unresolved, it continues to block energy pathways in the body, leaving an "emotional scar". For instance, when a civilian experiences the sudden death of a loved one, the grief can be profound and traumatic. If another death occurs before the healing process is complete on the first one, the additional loss compounds the existing emotional wound, making the grief exponentially more intense. Other such loss within a few years can push someone over the edge into a depression or other disorders. That additional insult-to-injury is what I call "piling on."

The piling on syndrome is highly applicable with war, except the traumas are often larger in scope, often losing several comrades at a time, more frequent and usually ongoing over a period of months or years.

This phenomenon may answer the question that many PTSD Vets have, "*Why have I been so dramatically impacted by PTSD while most of my buddies didn't seem that affected?*"

Many soldiers involved in combat duty experience trauma and tragedy, horror, grief, sadness and more. Yet only a relatively small percentage continues to suffer from PTSD long after their discharge from the service. The commonality of those with long-lasting PTSD, as I see it, is that they entered the service already wounded. By enlisting, especially during times of war, troops are likely to experience trauma again, especially if sent into combat.

WHAT TO DO

One of the techniques I consistently used with these Vets was to begin the session by bundling together many or all of their war traumas.

Rather than dealing with them one at a time, I would attempt to diffuse the overall negative charge by putting everything together.



In other words I would have them put *all* of the horror or trauma they witnessed while in the service into a giant, imaginary, pile several yards in front of them. Then, while it's indistinguishable and at a safe distance, we would tap away the trauma, sadness and grief...or at least make a huge dent in the pile. This greatly helped to reduce the overall intensity of their experiences.

Doing it this way reduces the likelihood of re-traumatizing them. That can happen if they are being specific about an event or reliving their traumas one at a time. While this "Bundling Baggage" technique is contrary to traditional tapping procedures of being specific, it is appropriate and highly effective when used correctly.

When dealing with a *series* of traumatic events, as these Vets had experienced, it is efficient and less painful to bundle the events together initially, to reduce the overall negative charge.

For instance, I would ask a Vet to imagine all of their war traumas together in a huge pile, many feet in front of them, as indistinguishable debris. I then asked them to tell me how big the pile was, equating it to a tangible object like a boulder, Volkswagen, bus, house or mountain. For most of them the pile was gigantic, warehouse-sized, or mountainous. I also asked them to describe other elements or dimensions such as smell, density, color, vibration, etc. We would then give the pile an innocuous name, such as "war traumas" or "my time from hell" and assign an intensity rating of 10-1. For most Vets the intensity of the pile was even larger than a 10.

We would then tap that pile down to a more manageable size by doing round after round, checking back in for a reduction in the size, transparency and smell, until the pile was either gone or significantly reduced. Often when a pile reaches a manageable size, like the size of a garbage can, one particular trauma may stand out from the heap.

The Vet would generally say something like "You know, what really bothers me was that time when" We would then take *that* event out of the pile and deal with it separately until it was neutralized. At that point, the charge on the singular event would be at a lower number than if we had dealt with it singularly from the beginning.



This process worked very effectively for most of the Vets, allowing them to discharge the collective traumas before dealing with specific ones. By the time we got to those individual traumas they were often much lower in intensity and therefore less painful to deal with.

THE EFFECT ON US



The final observation of this experience was how traumatic it was for the practitioners, film crew and others witnessing the procedures. At the end of each day, many of us were saddened and traumatized by what we had heard. And it's not as if we hadn't heard some pretty horrific stories in our own practices!

It's just that nothing had affected us in the past quite as profoundly as what we heard during those few days.

Many of the Vets' stories were so horrendous that I couldn't share them, even with my friends or husband. In fact, many of us were so shaken by what we had heard that we had to tap on ourselves, or each other, at the end of each day to stay clear. That said, it was nothing compared to what the Vets had actually lived through first-hand, and were still experiencing long after their military service.

It's fulfilling to know that the work we did was highly beneficial to both the Vets and us. I have a totally different perspective now about what it means to serve our country and what 'sacrifice' really means. I remain truly humbled and grateful to have played a role in this process and am so proud of the brave Vets who participated.

As mentioned in Part 1, my vision is that the healing tool of tapping can be offered to everyone, worldwide, not only with our Vets but with all others who are suffering. Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences with you and thank you again, Eric Huurre for the making of this wonderful film.



Good Luck and Good Tapping,

Lindsay Kenny

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If you would like to watch a trailer of Eric Huurre Vets' documentary or purchase the DVD, please follow this link: <http://tinyurl.com/vetsfilm>