

TURNING WAR GRIEF INTO POSITIVE PEACE



Death and loss are inescapable repercussions of violence and war. People living in, or have lived through, conflict, trauma and war teach us how to turn the devastations of war into a path toward global peace. For it is the bereaved, the widows, the orphans, the veterans, and the refugees who have witnessed the very best and the very worst of humanity and have been forced to rebuild not only their countries, but their very identities.

While war is waged by nations, it is fought by individuals. War and conflict pulls apart families, and takes place in communities. While the politics of war have convinced us that war is inherently political, the loss of war teaches us that war is in fact, about people.

The death that comes with war may be inevitable but it is not natural. It is the result of violence and trauma and it is often the young, with bright futures ahead, who are caught in the cross hairs. As a global community, we have recognized this. It is clear in the monuments we build, and the rituals and ceremonies we create.

As survivors, we are now part of a global community of military grievers, speaking the universal language of love and loss, hope and healing. We transcend religious and cultural differences. We rise above politics. We join together in honor, remembrance, hope and love.

Today, in the midst of ongoing global conflict, we recognize the consequences of war extend beyond casualties on the battlefield. They are the pivotal moments of our lives which lead us to choose love and peace.

WHAT IS POSITIVE PEACE?

- The end of violence
- Government stability
- Economic prosperity
- A focus on human and civil rights
- The creation of community bonds and social innovation

A MODEL FOR TRANSFORMING WAR GRIEF INTO POSITIVE PEACE

- Acknowledge the grief of survivors and communities through ceremonies, monuments, and rituals.
- Validate the magnitude of war grief by creating opportunities to collectively mourn and memorialize.
- Foster communities for those processing war grief to connect with one another and develop empathic social support.
- Compel survivors of war grief to take an active role in the establishment of peace and stability for generations to come.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF GRIEF, WAR GRIEF AND CONFLICT

- Grief is the universal emotional response to loss.
- War grief is an emotional response to the death of a loved one, the loss of a homeland, the loss of relationships, or the loss of identity through armed conflict, civil unrest, genocide, or terrorism.
- War grief can accompany or mirror trauma symptoms, but is independent. War grief can persist even when trauma symptoms have subsided.
- Research on resilience and conflict recovery suggests peer based emotional support is a critical component of healing for those recovering from war grief.