

Love²

A Journey of Healing



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FOREWARD

To the countless people around the world suffering from PTSD, depression, or mental illness; endeavor to fight the good fight. May radiance fall upon your lives, and you feel love and see beauty again. Please share this paper with those who could benefit from it. Ultimately, I have only one motive; make people smile in non-smiling lives. Helping people with PTSD defines who I am. This endeavor is an immense passion and will continue to be until I am no more.

To the millions of Military Veterans, I have a soft spot in my heart for your sacrifices and noble ability to change history for the betterment of the world. We share an undeniable bond amongst ourselves because we train hard, fight hard, and build intimacy as we talk about our families and dreams. We understand the hold at all costs orders. It means it is our show time to rock and roll to protect our fellow warriors. To those who are interred across this country, foreign continents, deserts, jungles, and in the deep blue oceans in perpetuity; I salute you my quiet warriors. I hope your spirits are at peace.

To my beautiful wife LaDonna: You are my staunchest supporter and a constant friend. Your love and presence is a constant in a sea of variables.

To my parents who gave me unconditional love and showed me how to live a good life. I regret not saying thank you enough.

To the multitude of mental health professionals I have met who used their passion, skills, and knowledge to help patients. Thank you.

To my lovely godmother whose spirit still shines brightly as she explores the universe with her boundless energy, wisdom, and goodness.

To my friends who made me smile; you carried and pulled me to the finish-line. Your love stopped me from throwing in the towel. Know I did not quit!

INTRODUCTION

I firmly believe I possess the knowledge that will facilitate the healing process for people with PTSD. I too fought the same battle. I have passion in this endeavor because I understand how intensely difficult the battle is. It is fundamentally the most crucial time in your life. I would be remiss if I did not try to help you because PTSD elicits extreme pain, confusion, and fear. It is so very hard. I am fortunate something on my shoulder whispered softly, “Ken write down how you healed with PTSD.” I want to help you. I want to share with you how I approached my healing and my story.

I do not carry fancy credentials and my qualifications are simple. I experienced severe PTSD as my personal and professional lives crashed and burned in my 19th year serving in the Army. The onset of PTSD ushered in mental pain, depression, fear, and confusion quickly. I did not know what I was experiencing, and I definitely did not know how to deal with it.

Sometimes my eyes mist when I think of the past. It was that difficult and painful. My first 730 days with PTSD I wanted to throw in the towel each and every day. I wanted to stay down. I did not want to get up because I would sentence myself to more suffering. None of my therapists connected with me. How could they? They did not have PTSD. They had little empathy. Therefore, I started a slow process to heal myself. I used logic, intuition, experiences, and gut feelings in the healing process. Sometimes luck was a factor as well. A few years later I successfully turned my life around 160 degrees. I am still working on the other 20 degrees. I will not lie. Healing can be a long and tough process. I really do hope this paper illuminates ways to become stronger and for you to heal with PTSD. I did and countless other people with PTSD have healed. Now it is your turn.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The goal is for you to heal and regain your life. I have the confidence I possess the ability to help people with PTSD. One day I walked through the Wounded Transition Unit at Ft Riley, KS and spied a couple senior NCOs with PTSD sitting on a couch together. They were just sitting there, saying nothing, and looking at space. Perhaps my rank as a MAJ helped me build a rapport with them. I asked if I could help them and thankfully, they agreed. Every day I told them a healing focus for the day in regard to PTSD. I turned their lives around 160 degrees in a few months. **It was quite gratifying to ask them if life was good to which they responded with a huge smile and said yes sir! That relationship we shared was so damn rewarding.**

How is this paper organized? When I commenced writing the paper, my goals were to make it simple, comprehensive, and easy to understand. I will enumerate principles to live by and emphasize how to use them to achieve healing. It was an imperative to transform concepts into visual pictures of different facets of PTSD to improve your clarity and understanding.

I will reiterate; our goal is to win! I want to be your guide. I want to help you escape your mental and emotional shackles of PTSD. You might not be able to visualize victory now, but it is achievable. Winning will require hard work, open mindedness, and trust from you. Give me a chance. Together we can reach the finish-line. I want you to feel happiness and love again. I want to fix your wings, although you will never quite fly exactly like in the past. **Thank you for letting me be your guide. Now let's get started!**

THE 7 PRINCIPLES:

Listed Below are Seven Principles of recovery we will focus on. These collectively are a skeleton, and we will put meat on the bones soon. I strongly suggest you read carefully to understand the principles in order to apply them properly. This is where the battles are won.

1. SURVIVAL
2. LOVE
3. PAINT THE PICTURE
4. USE COPING SKILLS
5. MAINTAIN MOMENTUM
6. RELATIONSHIPS
7. ACTIONS ON RELAPSE

PRINCIPLE 1: SURVIVAL

First and foremost, you need to survive. Instead of thinking of reasons to die, find reasons to live. Find that switch and turn it to reasons to live. Know exactly who you can turn to if you need immediate help. Making the decision to live will drive you in the right direction. Focus on what I call “Infantry Skills” like sleeping, eating, hygiene, and working out. I recall many times I forced myself to eat despite a lack of appetite. If you are in the “Survival Mode” focus on

the simple and little things. **You need to survive, keep fighting, never quit, never throw in the towel!**

Write down a list of all the people or organizations who you can contact quickly at your weakest times. **Make sure you have an absolute go to person or place if you need help right away.** I went to the post hospital emergency room, and they helped me. When I was completely broken one morning and afraid to drive, I went to mental health on post. There is no shame asking for help. People want to help you.

In the darkest and loneliest moments do something! Listen to music or indulge in other activities like walking; something that will occupy your mind. As an example, I chopped down many trees one winter in Kansas to clear the forest of smaller trees. I was on autopilot chopping with my ax. I was not exclusively occupied by dark thoughts because of the activity. It was almost a spiritual experience as I walked into the snow-covered forest. It was just me, the ax, the trees, and how many swings it entailed to cut down each tree. It cleansed my mind of racing thoughts and depression and contributed to mindfulness.

PRINCIPLE 2: LOVE

Love Squared is a culmination of living several years with PTSD, depression, anxiety, pain, and therapy. Ernest Hemingway said this about depression, “If you are in the dark, look for the light.” Love is the light. Love is the peg from which everything hangs from. The tentacles of love goes deep and wide. Fill your heart and mind with love. You will experience an incredible transformation towards stabilization that will shape the conditions to create a stronger foundation for further self-healing.

It is my goal to convince you how important love is for healing. Love supports hope, courage, energy, and passion – all of which are

necessary to heal emotionally and mentally. It displaces the pain and depression and becomes the basic connective tissue to recovering. Love can become a constant in a sea of variables. It gives you courage and hope to keep striving during times you feel lost and alone. **Principle of Love is the most important one of the seven principles except for Principle of Survival.** Love is the rocket fuel that pulls and pushes you to victory. The next paragraph will explain how to harness love to your benefit.

I am adamant you go to the mirror and smile at yourself to indulge in positive self-talk. I know this sounds eccentric and weird, but that fake smile will actually trick you into believing you are happier. It is better to have a fake smile than none at all. In due time your fake smiles will become genuine smiles. Think positively about yourself. Think about who and what you love. Think about who and what loves you. Say good things about yourself each and every day, a few times a day. For example, I have said, "I love my wife, kids, parents, football team, pets, and the country. My wife and my children love me. Ken you are a good person, husband, father, soldier, and citizen. Everything will be OK." There were many times when I was really depressed and stressed, so I went to the mirror for more positive self-talk; and it made me feel better. On numerous occasions I had too much anxiety to sleep, so I also went to the mirror for positive self-talk which helped me tremendously by making me feel better. Love is the kryptonite for depression. This practice of filling your heart and mind with love facilitates at least eleven things for you:

1. **It breaks the cycle of negative thinking.**
2. **It gives you hope.**
3. **It reminds you to see beauty in life.**
4. **It makes you think about gratitude for what you have.**
5. **It helps counter racing thoughts.**
6. **It displaces depression.**
7. **It will stabilize you and create a foundation to help you heal.**
8. **It reduces regrets.**
9. **It makes you happier.**
10. **It makes you emotionally and mentally stronger.**
11. **It reduces anxiety.**

PRINCIPLE 3: PAINT THE PICTURE

Severe PTSD is caused by various events, conditions, and experiences. It often hits suddenly like a tidal wave with overwhelming force and speed. PTSD is quite humbling as people feel incapable of controlling their mind to include the body to an extent. Common symptoms are anxiety, pit in the stomach, lack of appetite, insomnia, regret, guilt, racing thoughts, confusion, memory loss, loss of hope, and a sense of defeat.

I need to interject some thoughts. Some of you will fight your fate and will make mistakes because you don't want to believe the truth about having PTSD. PTSD hit me suddenly and my rationality was replaced by much pain, fear, and confusion. I feared for my military career because that is all I knew. Naturally, I feared about my ability to

take care of my family and the long-term future. The fear of losing my career stymied me. I did not want to accept my fate and thought I could fight through PTSD. Subsequently I made mistakes that an Army MAJ should not have made. Some of you are destined to find out you really need help the hard way as I did.

I thought I could fight through PTSD, but one morning at Ft Campbell, KY I drove on post for physical training and realized I was too afraid drive. I felt like I was 5% of me. My eyes watered, I was sad, I put my head on the steering wheel. I realized I needed help and drove myself to mental health that morning. You should and must get help for your PTSD.

I will “Paint the Picture” for you. In a nutshell you will make more progress once you can understand and visualize PTSD. Just remember that every journey starts with one step forward, and it will most likely be slow at the start. However, what matters most is you keep moving forward albeit slowly. It is my intent to start slowly to give you more time and thought to visualize PTSD and understand it. Then we can accelerate your healing once appropriate understanding is achieved.

Most of the causes of severe PTSD fall into the categories of behavior, experiences, and environment. The causes vary dramatically based on different circumstances of your life. **PTSD is not always war related. Physical and mental trauma causes PTSD. Listed below are some causes of PTSD, although this is not an all-inclusive list.**

Causes and Contributors to PTSD

Extreme Anxiety	Postpartum	Guilt
Extreme Stress	Illness	Alcohol Abuse
Death of Someone Close	Drug Abuse	Shame
Moral Injury	Spiritual Injury	Lack of Sleep
Divorce	Grieving Over “Old Self”	Accidents
Traumatic Events	Excessive Adrenaline	Illness

FOUR PHASES OF PTSD

Below are 4 depictions of “PTSD Paradigms or Phases” to describe the multiple stages of PTSD in simple terms. These visual aids will help you understand the current, future mind sets, and focuses. The phases turn the conceptual to the tangible. It must be emphasized it is quite normal to go up and down the depression phases. PTSD is not static. You will have good days and bad days. That is how PTSD works. **The 4 phases of PTSD are: Dark Deep Hole, Numb, Stable, New Normal.**

“The Deep Dark Hole Phase” is often the starting point for PTSD. The impact on your life can be quite devastating. I will be candid and say for the first 730 days I wanted to die. My main priority in this phase was surviving, safety, and practicing “Infantry Skills”.

Dark Deep Hole

Description

Feels Life Is Out of Control
Has Racing Thoughts
Feels Lots of Anxiety
Feels No Happiness
Severe Depression
Feels Guilt
Has Regrets
Feels No Hope
Feels Detached From The World

Focus

Do Not Hurt Yourself
One Step At A Time
Infantry Skills: Sleep, Food,
Grooming, Exercise, Hygiene
Seek Help
Stay Busy
Positive Self Talk
Think About Love

“The Numb Phase” Some people will make themselves numb to protect themselves, but it filters out happiness as well. It is a double-edged sword. You are essentially floating in a sea that we call life. You exist and much of your feelings are suppressed.

Numb

Description

Little Happiness
Some Mental Pain
Feels Little Hope
Has Some Depression
Feels Detached From The World
Less Suffering

Focus

Continue Positive Routines
Monitor Self
Seek Help
Stay Busy
Positive Self Talk
Think About Love

“Stable Phase” is where your foundation for healing is highly developed. It is significant because I firmly believe reaching this phase portends your stability will shape conditions to reach the finish line with some more work. In the first two phases you were defending yourself from PTSD. In the “Stable Phase” you are relatively free of intense emotional swings. Now you are starting to get significant control of your life in this phase.

Description	<u>Stable</u> Focus
Stable Mood	Seek Happy Activities
Has Some Hope	Monitor Self
Feels Some Happiness	Continue Therapy
Minor Level of Depression	Positive Self Talk
Less suffering	Stay Busy
Much Less Emotional Swings	Think About Love

“New Normal” Congratulations! Reaching this phase is indicative you have turned your life 160 degrees. You only need to work on the other 20 degrees. You crossed the finish-line and won. Your wings are fixed, but you will never quite fly the same way again. Here is something to ponder. When I reached my “New Normal” I confidently thought this is the best I could progress. For several years I thought not being happy was normal for me. Continuing my fight against PTSD would be counterproductive and it would be frustrating. However, question yourself: is there room for improvement? After a few years I pondered why I was not happy. Why was I not able to feel happiness when good events should have made me happy? Thus, I realized I had room to improve my healing. Later I will discuss a strategy to feel happier.

New Normal

Description

Very Stable
Has Hope
Feels Happiness
Feels A Lot Less Depression
Little PTSD Symptoms
Feels Passion
Sees Beauty In The World

Focus

Monitors Self
Work On Spirituality
Indulge In Your Passions
Stay Busy
Positive Self Talk
Think About Love
Ask Is This The Best I Can Be?

PRINCIPLE 4: USE COPING SKILLS

Coping skills are critical to address symptoms of PTSD. Listed below are several coping skills. PTSD is often comprised of numerous and continuous emotional and mental challenges that are called symptoms. Often you will deal with a package of symptoms daily. It is crucial you understand the appropriate coping skill for each symptom in order to deal with the symptoms quickly to lessen your suffering.

Coping Skills

Stay Busy	Time Out	Avoidance
5,4,3,2,1	Intense Flavors	Music
Redirection	Electronic Media	Movies-Videos
Play With Pets	Relationships	Family
Exercise	Meditation	Religion
Spirituality	Breathing	Confidant
Reading-Writing	Working Out	Hobbies
Walking	Friends	Helping Others
Yoga	Intense Smells	

Listed below are major symptoms and appropriate coping skills. Use the coping skills. The more coping skills you use with repetition the more you will remember the appropriate coping skills in a timely manner.

I must note if you have a drug or alcohol addiction it is important you quit taking drugs or drinking alcohol because you must have a clear mind to heal from PTSD. I cannot emphasize that enough.

MAJOR SYMPTOMS

Suicidal Ideations: Use Principle 1-Survival. Find that switch in your heart and mind to turn off the reasons to die to replace with reasons to live. Don't throw in the towel. Don't quit. Fight through it!

Depression: Use Principle 2-Love. If you fill your heart and mind with love, it will displace depression and contribute to building your foundation and stability in order to heal further.

Racing Thoughts: I had lots of racing thoughts and told myself **they did not matter**. When a racing thought hit my mind, I immediately said it did not matter. **Principle 2-Love** also helps to alleviate racing thoughts.

Insomnia: My psychiatrist helps me by prescribing sleep medication. Talk to your mental health specialists if sleeping is a problem. Sleep is a key component to a healthy life. **I also used Principle 2-Love to reduce my anxiety if I felt too much anxiety at bedtime.**

Losing People: One time a friend asked me how to reduce his burden in regard to losing troops. I told him that I did not know. When I am confronted with a problem that I don't have an answer to I would "Sleep On It". The following day I told him to hold a small, private, solemn ceremony for his soldiers. Ask their maker to accept them into

a better place. He went to the cemetery with their dog tags and spoke to each of the soldiers and asked their maker to accept them into his domain. This helped him reduce his burden. Another person wrote letters to his soldiers in a small, private, solemn ceremony and also asked their maker to accept them. This helped him rid of the burden he felt inside as well. I don't know if this will help you, but I feel compelled to say what has helped others.

Anxiety: Severe PTSD can be devastating as it weakens a person emotionally, mentally, and intellectually. This renders the person in some cases incapable of prioritizing and categorizing stressors properly; the situation can become overwhelming. Often, we think of all the stressors at the same time. These circumstances create an immense amount of anxiety. Life feels out of control due to the intense anxiety.

I developed the “Pistol Range Analogy” to help you with anxiety. Mentally visit a pistol range. In theory the closest targets are the most important or dangerous and easiest to hit. Therefore, hit the closest targets first. Assume the effective range of the pistol is 50 meters. Each target is a stressor. The targets range from 25, 50, 100 meters. The 25-meter target represents stressors that must be addressed relatively quickly. The 50-meter target represents stressors that must be addressed perhaps a week to two weeks in the future. The 100-meter target represents stressors several months away. Put the 100-meter targets on the back burner. You can't hit them now anyway.

All the targets or stressors will pop up at the same time. Shoot the closest target first. Then start moving further out. Hit the 25-meter targets then hit the 50-meter targets. You should give the 100-meter targets a very low priority due to the impossible distance. This approach

will prioritize stressors. Deal with one stressor at a time if you can. This will make the task of dealing with anxiety much easier and manageable.

Anxiety In Public Places: I felt anxiety going into public places. I will use Walmart as an example. I felt uncomfortable going to Walmart to shop. Fortunately, it was not intense anxiety. Something in my head told me to go to Walmart to not shop, but to just walk around inside in large circles. I walked around in Walmart in leisure. It worked for me. My anxiety of public places was greatly reduced. It really did help me.

PRINCIPLE 5: MAINTAIN MOMENTUM

Continue to apply all the Principles on a day-to-day basis, this will be a necessary preventive measure. It will make you stronger in the long run. Do not take your hard work regarding mental and emotional healing for granted. Life can still be unpredictable. Don't stop moving forward because there is a great likelihood you have room to improve. Sustain your accomplishments and continue to grow stronger. Remember the goal is to cross the finish-line.

How to become happier: One day I had an epiphany. I noticed I was not happy by events that should have elicited happiness, so I rectified the situation. I would like to share a technique that helped me become much happier. Think of who and what you love. By definition who and what you love should bring you happiness. For two weeks think about who and what you love and say they make me happy. For example. I love my wife; she makes me happy. I love my pet macaw; she makes me happy.

It creates an automatic linkage of the object of love to happiness. After two weeks I felt happiness when I see or think about my wife or macaw. It became an automatic process. For those who do not know what a

macaw is, it is one of the largest parrots in the world and their habitat is in Central and South America. My macaw is named Ariel and she is predominantly red.

TRIGGERS

I want to discuss triggers because they are pitfalls: Triggers are persons, places, events, smells, and things that illicit negative emotional and mental responses like anxiety, anger, and fear. The responses can be subtle to debilitating. Triggers are to be avoided if possible, which means you should inventory what triggers you have, and attempt to shape your day to minimize your exposure to triggers.

Triggers

Illness	Taste	Memories	Drugs
Friends	Smells	Dreams	Blood
Hallucinations	Noises	Voices	Violence
Sights	Location	Alcohol	Date/Time
TV	Movies	Public Places	Crowds
Back To Public	News	Certain People	Family
Finances	Overworking	Sexual Harassment	Divorce

PRINCIPLE 6: RELATIONSHIPS

For expediency and ease let's assume the husband is the soldier member. PTSD has a tremendous potential to disrupt marriages and cause divorces. People with severe PTSD often ask, "What is wrong with me? How do I fix myself?" The spouse or significant other often asks "What is wrong with him, how can I help him, why does he treat me like this?" Spouses often feel incapable of helping their partners due to the lack of communication, miscommunication, general lack of understanding of PTSD, and marital friction. Often the marriages or relationships are super charged like a powder keg ready to blow up. It is imperative to get rid of the powder keg. I have seen several marriages go up in flames quickly because the divide was too much to contend with.

It is important couples act in rational, non-accusatory, non-caustic manner to include working as a team or there is a high possibility relationships will spiral out of control. I can't stress enough both the husband and the spouse must work as a team. We want to avoid the wife divorcing her husband who has PTSD. He ultimately loses his wife and his family as well. What more can he lose? I have seen this occur numerous times and it always broke my heart. The trend I noticed was this was much more applicable to younger families.

Conduct a "Meeting Of The minds". "Meeting Of The Minds" should be conducted in a quiet environment. All the cards are put on the table in a civil manner. It is a great venue for the husband and the wife to discuss how one feels about oneself and what they think of the partner, the relationship, and the perceived treatment by the partner. Be honest and civil. Establish mutual goals and do not fail to emphasize love still exists. Formulate a way ahead for the marriage. Focus on short-term and long-term goals. Discuss the treatment plan. Set rules and boundaries for debates.

Do things together. Find a babysitter if you have kids. Go out on dates and enjoy each other's company. Remember this is a date, not a forum for debating, arguing, or fighting. Much to my dismay I have witnessed couples fighting on dates. **Sometimes it is prudent for the couple to attend marriage counseling to facilitate communication and strategies to rebuild their relationship.**

Listed below are tips to maintain a healthy relationship. It is important to open up lines of communication and to work together as a team. It is that important.

Tips for Relationships

Open Lines of Communication

Practice Empathy

Civil Debates

Go To PTSD Therapy Together

Reduce Stress

Spend Quality Time Together

Say Sweet Things

Rebuild Trust

Say This Is How I Feel

Compliment Strengths & Weaknesses

Treat With Dignity & Respect

Say How You Feel

How Can I Help You?

Go To Marriage Counseling

Go On Dates

Practice Compassion

Make Major Plans Together

Monitor Tempers

Show More Affection

Do Something Fun

Work As A Team

Be Honest But Also Civil

Support Each Other

Go On A Vacation

This Is What I Am Hearing

Are We Making Progress?

PRINCIPLE 7: ACTIONS ON RELAPSE

If you have a relapse and take a step backward think of your last known point of departure to frame the problem to get back on track. It is not the end of the world. Hold your position and utilize the coping skills. This is only a temporary setback. You will move forward again. Do not lose hope. Don't freak out.

There will be times when you will step backward in a pronounced manner because you and the environment are not always linear. When this occurs do not blow it out of proportion. This is a natural process of PTSD. For example, you might wake up with depression or anxiety. You might be confronted with an unsettling trigger. Something negative might randomly impact you. It is impossible to rid the environment of its unpredictable nature to insulate you completely. Your mind can work randomly as well. **The most prominent facet of dealing with relapses is how you react. Take a deep breath and survey the situation. It is what it is.**

This process is like being in a battle. When you relapse, you are defending your position and shaping the conditions for you to go back on the offense. Identify the trigger or catalyst of your relapse. To fix a problem you must understand the problem. If you can't find the root cause of your problem, then address the symptom with the appropriate coping skill(s). Use your experiences of utilizing coping skills to rationally approach this negative emotional and mental mood swing. Develop an action plan to move forward. Seek mental health help if you think it is appropriate.

CONCLUSION

First and foremost, you must survive. Find the switch to replace reasons to die with reasons to live. That is the right path to embark on. Never throw in the towel and never quit. You must use “Infantry Skills”. Stay safe and healthy. Know exactly who you can turn to if you need immediate help. Keep getting up! Don’t quit!

Fill you heart and mind with who and what you love. Love is the kryptonite against depression. It will make you stronger and prepare your foundation for further healing. There are other benefits. It will give you hope and the ability to see the beauty the world illuminates for you. It is the most powerful drug for your recovery. Love’s tentacles will positively encompass and fight many facets of PTSD. I can’t stress enough the importance of filling your heart and mind with love.

I hope you understand the natural evolution of PTSD as you heal. There exists four paradigms or phases to help you understand what emotional and mental state you occupy currently to include the recommended focuses. The phases will help you visualize the next state of mind and the requisite focuses. My expressed intent is to provide you with a road map with the phases to use from start to finish in your healing process.

The paper lists pronounced symptoms of PTSD and the relevant coping skills for the symptoms. If PTSD is a battlefield, I have identified for you the threats which are symptoms and how to eliminate the symptoms with coping skills. This might come across as a “Duh” statement, but the less symptoms the better.

Now you know how to react and actions to take if you take a step backward. Don’t become overly alarmed because it is just a temporary state. When you take a step back remember your last known location. That will give you a point of reference to move forward too. Take a deep breath and don’t freak out.

Healing from PTSD is an immensely arduous process that will test any relationship. It is an imperative to conduct a “Meeting of the Minds” to put all the cards on the table. Be candid and forthright. Discuss friction, mutual goals, the treatment plan to include the inherent love that exists in the relationship. The goal is to build stronger marriages and relationships. If it is broken, let’s fix it. Don’t allow PTSD to control the marriage.

Ultimately, I intended to give you a road map to use, effective strategies to deal with PTSD, and hope. Hope is so very important in the healing process. I want you to gain momentum in order for you to run to the finish-line. Keep plugging away and do not quit. There is yet much love and beauty in the world for you to feel and see. I want you to regain a semblance of who you were. You will never be quite the same again. However, I would like to mention something strange will happen after you cross the finish-line. All the pain you experience will create scars. Those scars will become your new armor. You have won the hardest battle in your life. The new armor will protect you. You will be the Phoenix that rises from the ashes of your old self. I want you to stand tall, be confident, experience love, and smile again. Have a winning spirit!

I trust you know what to do if the sea is stormy. Batten down the hatches and tighten the ropes. I wish nothing but success and smooth sailing for you and your family when you find placid waters. I want your heart filled with love and your mind awed by the beauty the world illuminates for you. Thank you for gracing this paper with your eyes, it has been my distinct pleasure and honor to write this paper for you. You are important to me. Ultimately, I ask nothing from you but a smile.

Should you have questions, see mistakes, have suggestions, or want to say hello; contact me at KenOnCloud@Hotmail.com

To find this paper:

- Go to www.WellnessWishes.org
- Select “Areas of Impact” and select [“Veterans”](#) in the drop-down menu
- Click on “Fighting PTSD” or simply scroll to the bottom of the page to find the downloadable link for “Love Squared: A Journey of Healing”. Click “Download” to download your own copy.
- Go to the [“Blog”](#) section of the website and select “Love Squared: A Journey of Healing (2021)”. On this blog page, you may comment or message me.

Please give us feedback by commenting or leaving a message on the blog page. We are interested in the facets of the paper that made the greatest impact to you. Thus far the feedback is like a shotgun blast; the blogs cover the full spectrum of the paper. We are also interested in the overall efficacy of the paper.

ENCLOSED IS A POEM I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU

I often walked into the forest. It helped me realize mindfulness and helped me see the beauty in the world. It became a spiritual journey I undertook which helped me immensely. Perhaps it will help you as well.

I AM GOLD

I sit and lean against a tree.

My jeans get dirty.

I lose myself.

My mind is clear.

The forest tolerates my existence.

I become part of the land.

Time is meaningless.

Sunshine glitters through the trees.

The sun warms my heart.

Clouds float slowly above.

Leaves whisper their existence.

The wind cools my cheeks.

Sweet smell of wildflowers wafts.

I absorb the beauty of the world.

There is brilliance around me.

Today will be a good day.

Perhaps I will find myself again.

I am gold.