



Fallen Comrades Ceremony for Veterans and Communities:

What is a Fallen Comrades Ceremony?

The ceremony is designed for veterans, their families, and civilians to help veterans lay their burdens down. While Memorial Day honors those who died in military service, the *Fallen Comrades Ceremony* honors those who *survived* and carry the burden of their dead comrades' memory. Based on Native American warrior welcoming-home rituals, the ceremony restores hope for healing *Soul Injuries*. Safe sanctuary is provided for them to mourn the losses they sustained.

Why is a Fallen Comrades Ceremony important?

There is a gaping hole in our society from the aftermath of war caused by *unmourned losses* sustained by Veterans, as well as *unforgiven guilt*. This sometimes leaves a hole in their souls until the losses are acknowledged, honored, mourned, and redeemed.

Who should attend a Fallen Comrades Ceremony?

Veterans, their families, and civilians are encouraged to attend. They will experience some level of healing even if they only witness the ceremony without participating in it. Family members are also encouraged to attend because they are secondarily impacted by their loved one's trauma. They are the "unsung heroes" whose sacrifice often goes unacknowledged. Civilians and citizens are encouraged to attend to accept their responsibility for healing our nation after war and violence.

How Did Fallen Comrades Ceremonies Originate?

Opus Peace non-profit organization was providing consultation services at a state veterans' home so staff would better understand how to care for the unique needs of veterans as they age. One veteran was asked, "Is there anything from the war that might still be troubling you now?" The veteran started crying, saying: "My brother and I both went to Vietnam, but I was the only one who came back." Then, he added: "I didn't even get to go to his funeral." A memorial service was subsequently provided for him and for all the veterans at the facility who held similar losses.

Why emphasize "unmourned loss"? Why dredge up the past?

Grief is the normal, natural emotion that accompanies loss and change. Grieving helps us "let go of what was" and "open up to what is" so we can be present to the "now." Grief that is not mourned gets stored in the body, mind, and spirit, keeping us stuck in the past. By numbing the pain, we disconnect from the part of self carrying it, banishing into unconsciousness. Rescuing the part of self carrying the pain and integrating it into the light of consciousness releases the trapped energy; fear of pain lessens its grasp on us.

If grief is normal and natural, why are we so afraid of it?

American heritage is built on "rugged individualism" and "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps." Military and Police cultures take stoicism to an extreme - grief is not seen as a normal human emotion, but rather a weakness. Addiction behaviors are commonly used to numb our fear of pain. Grief is often covered up with anger.

To host a Fallen Comrades Ceremony, contact: LtCol (Ret) Kathy Lowrey Gal-lowitz at Vanguard Veteran: kathy@vanguardveteran.com or (270) 945-7286