



**GENERAL DIVISION
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT**

41 N. Perry Street, Dayton Ohio 45422



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Veteran's Treatment Court Graduation Keynote Address

Posted: 2015-12-16

Veterans' Treatment Court Graduation Address

16 December 2015

Kathy Platoni, Psy.D.

COL (RET), US Army

COL, Ohio Military Reserves/SDF

Today's Veterans' Treatment Court graduates represent the very best of what America has to offer. This is due to the unequalled commitment of the likes of Judge Dennis Adkins and your mentors, who have walked the walk of the unsung hero along with each of you and provided you the fork in the road that allowed you to triumph once again. What you have overcome to arrive here today seals that deal. Success should never be measured by status or position, but by what hurdles, obstacles, roadblocks, and struggles of enormous proportions one has overcome to get where they got. According to Disraeli, there simply is no greater education than hardship.....and you have mastered that lesson better than just about everyone. Under duress and times of toil and trouble, true and genuine character is often revealed. There are those genuinely destined to strive in the face of adversity, who are adept at spinning gold out of rags; and you have persisted and persevered in these endeavors. True survivorship is borne of the struggle, the toil and labor of adapting to and overcoming the most tortuous of circumstances that life has to offer. From utter despondency, comes the resilience to overcome the insurmountable, to gain strength in the face of tremendous sorrow and unceasing despair. For those of us who have defied pain of immeasurable proportions to endure unspeakable torment and where there is no chance of locating the off switch to misery, we are obliged to unearth the message that enormous good may be cultivated from the unbearable. Out of this struggle from the

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darkness and desolation that threaten to consume us with stagnation, there are riches and enlightenment to be found, where a transformed spirit is permitted to flourish. The most adverse of life circumstances can be the most exceptional teachers (Brookfield, 2005). When exposed to searing flame, "clay re-emerges as the finest of porcelain china" (Krauss, 1989). You looked misfortune square in the eye and stepped past.

The unseen wounds of war are a plague upon the soul. They are sometimes so much more heartbreaking than injuries that are unmistakable and readily noticed, because no one knows the pain and agony carried inside like a rucksack full of rocks that sear our souls and shatter our hearts and minds into thousands of pieces that will never come back together the same. These are the injuries that are stigmatizing and that leave us isolated and alienated from the society we left behind. There is simply no good yardstick to measure the psychological wounds of war. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, 640,537 (or roughly 23.7 of post-9/11 deployers) have been diagnosed with some form of mental health issue. More than 322,000 suffer from a TBI (Woodruff, 2015). The truth is that these are probably very low estimates and even more likely that a tremendous number of war veterans have never been diagnosed with any disorders at all, let alone treated for them. The great truth is that if you stuff your stuff inside, it will come back to haunt you, eat away at you from the inside out. The trick is to eat it before it eats you. That is precisely what makes you tough enough to push through, press on, adapt and overcome, and come out of this no longer a victim, but a victor.

It was Rabbi Krauss (1989) who recounted the parable of the two woodchoppers, who had chopped down a tree that was more than 100 years old. As they studied the growth rings as a matter of curiosity to determine the age of the tree, the younger of the two men noticed that there were five narrow rings among many wider ones. He concluded that a five year drought had produced very little growth in this tree. The older and far wiser man, however, came to a considerably different conclusion. It was his contention that five years of drought were actually, the most significant in the history of this tree. Forced to send its roots deeper into the ground to draw water and minerals from the earth, necessary for survival, its root system was fortified, permitting more rapid growth and the reaching of majestic heights with the passing of the seasons of drought. It is under times of duress and anguish that growth potential to overcome the seemingly inconceivable is fueled and that infinite resources can be tapped

11/02/11	PROPOSED AMENDMENT(S) TO LOCAL RULES 1.27 AND 2.39
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04/27/09	LAW DAY
04/20/09	E-FILING ADMINISTRATIVE RULE, EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2009
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(Krauss, 1989). It is within all of us that the need, the desire for life to have meaning and direction and purpose, the "WHYS" of suffering of immense proportions, that gives rise to the "HOWS" of one's existence and where the will for survival is born and aimlessness, overcome. This cannot help but draw upon a degree of hardiness and resilience that may eclipse all other life experiences. Commit to untold challenges passionately. Draw and cherish unparalleled joys from immersion in the struggle to extract life from barren lands that have may have caused planetary existence as we know it, to run dry. And in the big scheme of things, be sure to follow your heart, but don't forget to take your brain with you. Be daring enough to do the seemingly impossible. Overcoming seemingly unattainable odds equals far more than thriving. Now is the time to soar. Be motivated by hurdles and obstacles, but never allow your struggles to identify who you are and who you can become. Do not allow your scars to bring any degree of shame to you. They only represent the pain and anguish you have endured, only to have the sheer guts and determination to have discovered the pathway to healing and recovery. This is resilience, pure and simple. If you give up, the ache and agony will never subside. Until you have been cracked or broken, you will never come to appreciate just how tough you are and the genuine stuff of which you are made. It is the most difficult of times that teach us the most priceless of all lessons.

05/10/07	PROPOSED LOCAL RULE CHANGE
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04/30/03	LAW DAY 2003

We return from war with immeasurable burdens, having trudged in boots that most will never have the courage to wear. You have witnessed the catastrophic; horrors and losses and tragedies of indescribable proportions so that 99 percent of the American populace will never have to. You are among that elite group of exceptional individuals who willingly placed their signatures on that dotted line that states, "America, I will die for you". And though we learned that unequalled lesson that no Soldier, Sailor, Marine or Airman or will ever be left behind, too many of us have been thrown off a cliff and forgotten when the uniform came off, forced to face yet another battlefield on the home front. Faltering is not failing. And regardless, there is still an enormous debt of gratitude owed to each of you. And know that you are no longer alone in your endeavor to fly right, march forward.

Warrior Ethos

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I represent the best of what America has to offer.

I would gladly stand up with any one of you, anytime, anywhere, in defense of these great United States, of our way of life and the cause of freedom. You bring tremendous pride and honor to yourselves and to the Dayton community by your unequalled accomplishments. It matters so much less that you derailed, than what you have overcome to stand here today. Never forget that all gave some, some gave all, and some gave up, but there is none of that going on here today.