



I AM NOT INDESTRUCTIBLE

Abalinx - Peter Adamis
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I have written a few articles on suicide and effects on those left behind as well as chastising those who believed that committing suicide was a selfish act on the part of the individual.

Many of us who have served this great nation at one time or another have had suicidal thoughts but most will never go ahead with the thoughts racing in their heads. Neither would many consider or attempt to go ahead and execute the many plans revolving in their heads at one stage or another. When they do enter the mind, it is in my opinion a response to something in their immediate environment. Mind you I am talking from personal experience and not to be mistaken for a psychiatrist or a psychologist. I would prefer to have it out in the open so that it can help others.

This article is dedicated to all of my friends who have taken their lives, those in despair, those who have given up, those who feel that they are no longer useful, feel neglected, worthless, have lost their self-esteem, bottling it up and lashing out at those closest to them knowing that in that moment of anger, others would deem them to be mentally ill. Some find solace in drink, others in isolation and solitude, quarrelling, fighting, disagreements, and in a few cases shutting themselves off from the world.

The lucky ones may find the peace they looking for in keeping fit, reading, keeping active, finding God, being spiritually alive, always surrounded by good friends, relatives and companions, or maintain an active lifestyle and finding enjoyment in being employed for paid work or in a volunteer organisation that is need of their skills. However even those who I would call the lucky ones still have their own personal inner demons as I call them and somehow find the way to push back the dark thoughts that accompany them day and night. However, whenever they are faced with a crisis and depending how well they handle that crisis, these dark thoughts turn malignant like a cancer can turn malignant.

I am not a doctor, not a man of science and neither am I an academic or employed in any discipline that can cover suicides or the dark thoughts of our mind. My qualifications are based on numerous life experiences followed by late in life university studies in Adult Learning and development, followed by Environmental Health and Safety and a few diploma by-products. I write this because it's important to note that despite these qualifications, I have been prone to suicidal thoughts for reasons which will become clear throughout the article. Therefore it makes no difference whether you are an educated individual or down and out, suicide is real and is expressing its self on a daily basis amongst us.

I am but one bloke amongst thousands of veterans who have served this country and like those many others been through many trials of Stress, Strength and Stretched (SSS) to the limit on a physical and psychological level. Again this all comes to a halt for many when we leave the confines and the bosom of the Defence Force family and are out in the world alone, armed with skills that no one truly wants, cares or even considers worthwhile in the current employment world of work. Those who managed to obtain an education were better off, or those whose skills can be transferred to meet with civilian equivalent may have a small advantage over their colleagues but not in all cases.

Anecdotal evidence points to education meaning very little when it comes to depression, self-doubt, low self-esteem, and poor physical shape due to either neglect, injury through Defence Force employment on a physical or psychological level. There have been suicides recorded amongst academics, medical disciplines, psychiatry, entertainers, the common man, ethnic communities, refugees and now it seems that the Australian government is finally coming to grips with this catastrophic epidemic that is hitting our veterans, both serving and non-serving. Why have our veterans lost the will to live and who is responsible for their deaths.

Whoa, don't blame us says the Defence Force, we are not to blame say the relatives, we in the government cannot be criticised, the individual had mental health issues to start with, it is part of society and that veterans are mirroring the community at large. WHAT A LOAD OF HOGWASH AND BULLSHIT, to put it bluntly. I am of the opinion that all of society is responsible for the suicides within our midst and it should be treated like any other illness known to mankind today. Don't sweep it under the carpet as it is still there. Don't pretend that you don't know and certainly don't avoid the matter entirely. We as a society need to look deep within ourselves and start to learn how to care for one another again before the epidemic becomes systemic and we as a society become immune to its side effects and by-products.

Leaving the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is merely a physical experience, while on a psychological level the Defence Baggage (DB) comes along for the ride. There is no turning back, especially when one is injured physically or psychologically and the effects only become apparent in many cases years later in someone's life. That of course will depend upon the severity of the Defence Baggage and what support systems if any were in place to capture those fall by the wayside through personal and/or external unforeseen circumstances triggers whatever they maybe. For me, the trigger is hearing of a high ranking serving member advising an ill-informed public that mental health issues in the Australian Defence Force are not defence force related.

Those men and women who have been injured physically and psychologically need our (society) support and we can do this by first appreciating and acknowledging their service to this nation. Secondly the Australian Defence Force has a responsibility and Duty of care to ex serving members long after they have separated from Defence employment. Mind you, don't think that I am talking about military personnel here, as I am also including defence civilians who are also subjected to the many stresses of a Defence Force life.

If there is no legislation to compel the Australian defence Force to feel obligated towards its serving members and ex serving veterans then the Government should make that legislation happen and bring the Australian Defence Force in line with the expectations of a grateful nation. This is something we should all consider and remember next time we go to a Federal Election.

I have lived with stress all my life, both as a young teenager, throughout my 30 years in the military and certainly in post defence force years as a civilian. Life was tough as a youngster I must admit, especially when you have a migrant background and yet we learn to rise above it all. In the military, there was always someone looking after your back, whether it was someone close to you or the powers to be who managed your daily life. Back in to civilian life, there is a sense of relief, grief, anguish, loss, anger, and acceptance and to use that well known psychologist, Abraham Maslow, reach self-actualisation a number of times. I have lost count how many times I came across this phrase and the many levels associated with self-actualisation.

Once having reached the dizzy heights of self-actualisation there is only way to go and that is down. I have often question this reality and why is that we reach the top only to find that it is difficult to remain at that level without making some sacrifices and/or adjustments in life. Each adjustment made became more painful as one grew older until it came a time when one could honestly say and/or confess that enough was enough. I played by the rules of society, embraced all of its values and abided by its laws and respected its institutions and when all was said and done, I wondered why these demonic thoughts that had only one conclusion had.

For example, I had already been through, chronic, stress for many years, followed by severe depression, then with the three heart attacks, came a tiny piece of respite lasting one month before being diagnosed with an aggressive and deadly cancer. All that I could do was to lean on my faith in God, gather my strength from my military "Duty First: attitude, put on a brave face and in true Aussie fashion laugh at my predicament. For once in my life, matters were out of my control and my life was in the hands of others. Not a welcome thought, which only became worse later and the demonic thoughts became a plague of sorts.

During this difficult period of agonising between ones mortality, why me, how long have I got, how do I fight the bastard, lurked suicidal thoughts in the shadows. Whenever I had a break from the chemotherapy the thoughts of ending one's life become almost a reality, as at the time, may unsolved issues were in abundance and it was up to me to come to terms with them, find a solution or try and avoid them wherever possible. People are of the belief that if you can overcome the treatment then the recovery period will be just fine. That's one for the record books I must assay and those that have been through it will know what I mean.

At one stage, I told my wife, my psychiatrist, my local doctor and a few close friends that what I was going through only embellished my desire to end it all. To make matters worse, I was attacked on two different occasions about my cancer and that one, not to hide behind my illness and the other that I should die as a result of it.

I had never in my whole life ever been subjected to such personal attacks by individuals would have known better. I am of the belief that in both cases it was said out of anger, foolishness, and means of beating me, kicking me when I am down and that they were all cowards for even mentioning that I had cancer. My military friends on social media identified my problem and reached out. Still despite their intervention, one could not but feel isolated and wanting to end it all. I just could not believe that people like that existed.

Suffice to say, deep down within the depths of my being, I somehow knew that I was not giving up against these attacks and in my own way fought back. Mind you, the matters are not finished yet and in will have my day. As we used to say in the military when faced with stupidity and poor leadership, we would often mutter under our breath, "Come the revolution". Which never came but it made us feel better. I have been fighting, quarrelling all my life and for what? To make the many wrongs right, to slay the dragon and save the damsel from utter ruin, fighting the good fight, standing up against injustice, being there for a cobber digger mate, what else may I ask? All that I know is that over the past 10 years I have been sorely tested in so many ways, that I am surprised that I am still here to write this article.

I remember well back in 1984 when I attended my first leadership course for Warrant Rank and I was in Canungra upon realising that my marriage was over. All that I could think of was my four sons and who would look after them if I was not there. I was devoted to my sons and I knew in my heart that my mind was not on the course. I saw a padre who gave demonstrated to me through a simple story that sometimes life is like a pond. While everything is going well and life is good, the pond and the water is still and calm.

If however someone came along and stirred up the water and the bed beneath it, then there will be a whirlwind of material, fish, plant matter and water going all over the place. However after a period of time, everything would settle down and return to a calm known before. But there was a catch the padre said. Nothing will be the same as it was before it was rudely interrupted and as such when I was to return home to a broken marriage the padre was right.

After the strife and bitter divorces, peace finally came, but life was never like it was before. I learnt a very valuable lesson on that day. It would take me four years to get my boys back even though I lost all three custody cases. Another lesson learn of never giving up. I ended up raising the boys on my own without my wife's support. I must say they were difficult years but one of my most enjoyable and fulfilling times. I am not sure that my sons would agree however.

I am not convinced that I have adequately covered the areas of concern surrounding suicides in the military and post military amongst veterans and serving men and women, but I do hope that what I have written sparks an interest in someone involved in making the right decisions that would benefit to all those contemplating on taking the lonely road that leads to nowhere.

Having said all of the above, I would t leave the reader with a true story. In June 2015, my wife and I visited that wonderful city called Istanbul or to those of the Hellenistic persuasion, Constantinople. We had a wonderful time and we received by phone from a good friend back in Australia that my final stoush with a former employer was finally over and that I was vindicated after an eight year battle. What could go wrong I asked myself, finally we were going to have some good fortune come our way?

To be on the safe side, I sauntered over to the Blue Mosque and walked inside its spacious courtyard. I looked up and said quietly to myself: Now listen God, I am here in the Blue Mosque and asking only one thing of you. That is I want you help me be a good person until I die. Not a problem I said to myself as I walked over to Agia Sophia, the ancient Greek Orthodox Christian Church, paid my fee to get in and walked into the main hall. Facing where once an alter stood, I said to God. Now listen God, I was over at your other home in the Blue Mosque and asked one thing of you. That is I want you help me be a good person until I die. Great, I have covered both I said to myself.

When we returned back to the Greek mainland, my wife and also visited the beautiful Greek island of Chios. It just so happened that on that island was a very famous and beautiful Greek Orthodox Church. I wanted to go to a Jewish synagogue to cover all my bases but I thought this will just have to do. Well I walked into the church and admired all of the icons that appeared to be hovering over me and repeated my statement that I had made in Asia Minor (Turkey). Having done that I felt pretty good about myself and went off with enjoying the rest of my European holiday with my wife.

Suffice to say, within a few weeks I was back in Aussie amidst the dreaded winter. No sooner had I been in Melbourne, I began to having severe coughing, night sweats, pain in my shoulders and underarms, difficulty in sleeping, pain in my lower back area and difficulty in sleeping. I went to the local doctor and requested blood samples be taken. The very next day after the blood samples came back, the doctor gave me the bad news that I had cancer and I had the hard task of advising my wife on the phone and hearing her pain. On the way home from the doctor I looked up at the heavens I said: God when I asked for you to help me be a good person until I die, I did not mean that you had to take me so early. True story, no bull.

As always, my apologies for the poor grammar, punctuation and savagery of the Aussie English language. All that I can say is that it is great to be alive and one does not give up in the face of adversity. Remember that life is still worth living despite the many challenges of life we face each day.



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