

## *By Way of Introduction*

Welcome to *Roadmap to Resilience: A Guide for Military, Trauma Victims and their Families*. For the last 40 years, as a clinical psychologist, I have worked with many groups of individuals who have experienced traumatic and victimizing experiences. Some have endured natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, earthquakes and floods. Others have been victimized by violence due to human intentional design. I have been involved in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack, Oklahoma city bombing and Columbine school shooting. I have trained clinicians who treat individuals who have been sexually and physically abused and tortured. Most recently, I have been consulting with the National Guard and Veteran's hospitals that treat returning service members and their families. [Note: For the author's complete biographical sketch, please see the end of this book.] This work is summarized on a website of an Institute for Violence Prevention that I oversee as Research Director (Please visit [www.melissainstitute.org](http://www.melissainstitute.org)).

This *Guidebook* reflects all of the clinical experience and wisdom, as well as research findings that I have collected over 40 years. I have a "remarkable story" to relate, one of resilience, courage and growth that individuals, families and communities evidence following traumatic events.

Research indicates that all individuals have the ability to improve their level of resilience following the experience of stressful events, whether they are service members or civilians. In fact, some individuals, families and communities evidence post-traumatic growth and become stronger and develop closer meaningful relationships in the aftermath of stressful life events, whether these events are combat-related, victimization due to intentional human design like crimes or terrorist attacks, or due to natural disasters, accidents or illness.

This book will provide a *roadmap* on ways to improve your level of resilience. We will begin with a brief discussion of the concept and definition of resilience and some facts about resilience. Then we will consider the research evidence of examples of the adjustment capacity of returning service members, family members, and civilians to successfully adapt to adversity. The major portion of this book will be to provide specific practical "How To" ways to improve your level of *resilience* and *fitness* in six important areas:

1. Physical Fitness
2. Interpersonal Fitness
3. Emotional Fitness
4. Thinking (or Cognitive) Fitness
5. Behavioral Fitness
6. Spiritual Fitness

In each area of Fitness you will learn “tricks of the trade” of what *resilient* individuals *Do* and *Do Not Do*. Specific practical steps to enhance your well-being are enumerated based on research findings. These are supplemented by *Quotable Quotes* offered by returning service members and civilians. Distributed throughout are specific self-assessment tools, self-examining *Hinge Questions* that allow you to swing open the gate of possibilities toward personal growth and well-being. These questions are accompanied by *practical* steps you can take and things you can implement *right now*. In addition, there are sections on *Useful Information* that discuss briefly why engaging in such bolstering behaviors can enhance your resilience and also contain additional resources such as websites, agencies and hotline telephone numbers.

You will be given an opportunity to create your own “tool kit” of *resilient-bolstering behaviors* that can help in the transition from military to civilian life. The military has taught service members how to prepare for combat and military activities. This guidebook is designed as a *roadmap* to help individuals to meet the challenges of post-deployment. Although many of the examples offered were created with the returning Service members in mind, these same resilience-bolstering activities apply equally well to the general civilian population.

These same fitness activities can be used by family members and also by civilians in the aftermath of traumatic and stressful experiences. *Appendix A* provides a list of 101 ways to bolster your resilience. How many of these resilience skills and activities do you presently engage in? Which Fitness activities do you wish to refine or develop further?

For example, are you having difficulty in sleeping, relating to family members, experiencing positive emotions and regulating intense negative feelings, finding meaning, maintaining hope, forgiving yourself and others, and going for help? This guidebook provides ways to address each of these challenges and others. There are many different pathways to resilience and what works best for one individual may not work for someone else. You will have an opportunity to develop an individual plan for coping and look for opportunities to practice your new found resilience-bolstering behaviors.