

Combat Veteran's Guidebook | 6 | Making New Choices

You belong to yourself now.

Everyone has an opinion on how you should live, but no one has the authority to order you to do it. Not having an authority to tell you what to do can be daunting when you first get out.

There are parts of your development of independence that you missed. Making choices about your life may feel confusing even though you're an adult and you've lived more than most people ever will. But you can learn these things quickly, if you have a framework to guide your decisions.

You got flung into civilian life and civilians assume that you know all the shit that they know about living as a civilian. You probably believe you do.

But here's the thing. It doesn't matter what everyone else assumes. It only matters what you learn and how you use what you learn to change and guide your life.

If you feel stuck, you're not alone.

The first thing you need to do is accept responsibility for your Self. There's no one else to blame now. You are absolutely responsible for your life. Cheating spouse left you? How you respond to that – your responsibility. Got fired from every job you've had in the last two years? You're responsible for your employability. PTSD counselor sucks? You're responsible to find your own healing path.

The point is: this is YOUR life and no one is going to fix you, heal you, change you, rescue you or do the work of creating your life for you.

Are there guides? Yes, I am one of them. But only you can make choices about your life.

So how do you make the right choices?

There are two questions to ask yourself to make wise decisions in life:

1. Is it life-giving, does it add to my life in a positive way?
2. Will it harm anyone, including myself?

Let's explore this a bit.

For a decision to be right for you, it needs to be life-giving. It needs to add more life to your sense of being, support your highest good and wellness.

For a decision to be right for you, it needs to not harm other people or you.

Now, be very clear: there is a difference between hurting someone and harming them.

Many life-giving decisions (to break up, to quit a job, to tell your parents you're gay, to divorce, to move) will hurt people. But it will not harm them. When you move toward Life, it may be painful, but in the end, no one is truly harmed. They may not like it and it may disrupt or change their life entirely, but it leads them to new life, too.

Life-giving decisions align with your inner truth, and when you follow that, it gives others the chance to examine their inner truth (which they may or may not do, that's their responsibility, not yours).

Change is disruptive. It exposes lies, illusions, and all the things we avoid/ignore/sweep under the rug. It exposes our hiding places. And it drives the Inner Critic crazy!

When you step up with the courage to make a life-giving decision, it's going to disrupt your world. But it's also going to make your life better.

Work through these and be deeply honest with yourself:

1. What are some choices I could make that would be life-giving to me? (getting help for addiction, seeing a counselor, breaking up, getting married, taking that vacation, staying home when I don't feel like going out, being honest about how I really feel)
2. What choices do I know I need to make, but I'm avoiding? What am I afraid will happen? If the worst thing happens, will I still ultimately, be okay?
3. Do I have beliefs about selfishness/loyalty that might be keeping me from living a better life?
4. What would my life look like if I followed what I feel is truly right for me? (your gut response to this one speaks volumes)
5. What is one thing I can do today to add more life into my life?
6. What is one thing I can stop doing today that will add more life to my life?