

# PTSD Recovery Fellowship Handbook

*For Veterans and First Responders*

## Welcome

Welcome to the PTSD Recovery Fellowship, a peer-led 12-step program for veterans and first responders. This fellowship provides a safe, supportive environment to:

- Share experiences of PTSD
- Learn coping strategies
- Foster hope, healing, and resilience
- Support others in their recovery

**Important:** This fellowship is **peer-led and not a substitute for professional therapy or crisis intervention**. Members are encouraged to seek professional care when needed.

## Our Mission

To provide a safe, confidential, and trauma-informed community where veterans and first responders can work through PTSD, rebuild their lives, and support each other in recovery.

## PTSD 12 Steps

1. **Admit powerlessness** over PTSD and acknowledge that we cannot recover alone.
2. **Believe in hope**—that healing and support are possible.
3. **Commit to a recovery path**, seeking guidance and fellowship.
4. **Courageously examine** the ways PTSD has affected our thoughts, emotions, and relationships.
5. **Share our experience** with ourselves, a trusted peer, or the group.
6. **Prepare for change**, facing triggers and unhealthy coping patterns.
7. **Seek guidance** from peers, professionals, or spiritual resources.
8. **Identify harm** caused to ourselves or others due to PTSD.
9. **Make amends where possible**, within safe boundaries.
10. **Maintain awareness** of triggers, stress, and progress.

11. **Develop inner resilience** through coping strategies, mindfulness, and peer support.
12. **Support others** by sharing hope, tools, and fellowship.

## 12 Traditions

1. **Unity:** We support each other through shared PTSD recovery.
2. **Primary Purpose:** Help those still suffering, through fellowship and shared experience.
3. **Group Autonomy:** Each group makes decisions collaboratively, respecting members' needs.
4. **Non-Affiliation:** We do not endorse political, religious, or outside causes.
5. **Self-Funding:** Meetings are supported by member contributions only.
6. **Non-Professional Membership:** We are peers, not therapists.
7. **Self-Support:** We maintain independence through contributions.
8. **Anonymity:** Confidentiality is essential; principles come before personalities.
9. **Rotation of Responsibility:** Leadership rotates among members.
10. **No Public Endorsement:** Avoid public controversies, focus on recovery.
11. **Attraction Through Example:** Demonstrate recovery and hope, rather than promotion.
12. **Spiritual Foundation:** Put recovery first, carry the message with humility and service.

## Sample Meeting Structure (60–90 min)

1. **Opening & Welcome (5–10 min)**
  - Greeting, grounding exercise, reminder of safe space
2. **Check-in / Safety Circle (10–15 min)**
  - Brief sharing of current emotional state
  - Identify urgent support needs
3. **Step Reading & Reflection (10 min)**
  - Rotate focus on weekly step
  - Silent reflection or journaling
4. **Sharing / Peer Discussion (20–30 min)**
  - Guided, trauma-informed sharing
  - Optional prompts: triggers, coping strategies, lessons learned
5. **Coping / Skill-Building Exercise (10–15 min)**
  - Examples: grounding, mindfulness, breathing, journaling
6. **Announcements / Resources (5 min)**
  - Local VA programs, therapists, hotlines, upcoming meetings
7. **Closing & Ritual (5–10 min)**

- Group reflection, moment of silence, action step for the week

**Optional:** Pair members with a sponsor, hybrid meetings, guest speakers

## Practical Resources

- **VA Mental Health Services:** 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1 for Veterans)
- **Veteran Crisis Line:** 988 (U.S.)
- **First Responder Helpline:** Local peer support networks, employee assistance programs
- **Recommended Apps / Tools:** Mindfulness apps, PTSD Coach, journaling templates

## Guidelines for Members

1. **Confidentiality:** What is shared stays in the group.
2. **Safety First:** If experiencing suicidal thoughts, seek immediate professional help.
3. **No Forced Sharing:** Members may “pass” at any time.
4. **Respect:** Listen without judgment or advice unless requested.
5. **Trauma-Informed Language:** Avoid triggers and respect boundaries.

## Next Steps for Piloting Your Fellowship

1. **Recruit initial members:** Veterans, first responders, or both.
2. **Identify trained facilitators:** Ensure trauma-informed peer leaders.
3. **Schedule regular meetings:** Weekly, 60–90 minutes, flexible format.
4. **Provide materials:** Handbook, step sheets, coping exercises.
5. **Track feedback:** Adjust step focus, exercises, and meeting structure as needed.

This handbook is a **complete foundation** for starting a PTSD Recovery Fellowship.