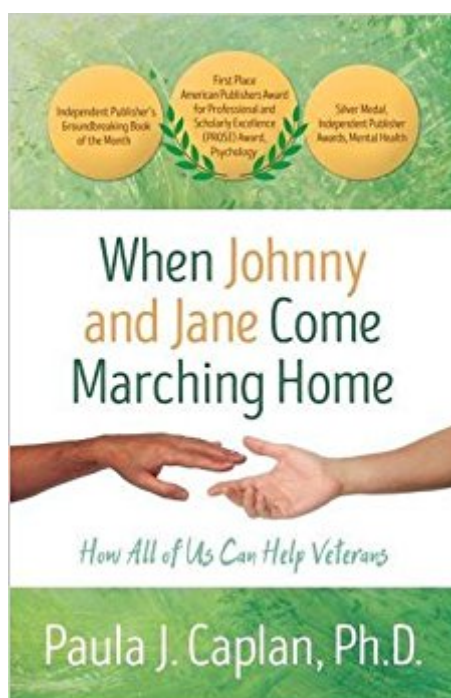


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When Johnny And Jane Come Marching Home: How All Of Us Can Help Veterans



Synopsis

Why are those devastated by war or other military experiences called mentally ill? The standard treatment of therapy and drugs can actually be harmful, and huge numbers of suffering veterans from earlier eras demonstrate its inadequacy. "Most of us are both war-illiterate and military-illiterate. Caplan proposes that we welcome veterans back into our communities and listen to their experiences, one-on-one. Beginning a long overdue national discussion about the realities of war and the military will help us bridge the dangerous chasms between veterans and nonveterans."

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Customer Reviews

It's a grim irony: too many American soldiers return from duty and fall into homelessness, addiction, and thoughts of suicide, yet their crazy behavior might just be the sanest response possible to the horrors of war. What's really crazy, says Harvard psychologist Caplan, is the belief that only a psychologist or psychiatrist can help these suffering souls. Caplan (*The Myth of Women's Masochism*) delivers a compelling argument that society has "psychiatrized" these vets' normal response to the horrors of war, with the result that many are not receiving effective care. Caplan depicts a military bureaucracy that sweeps vets into the overarching category of the mentally ill; she cites the case of one war-weary vet who became "more depressed about dealing with the than anything that happened in Iraq." Helping, Caplan says, is as simple as "and as difficult as not turning away when vets speak of their experiences, but rather listening

attentively and nonjudgmentally. Some readers may be impatient with Caplan's attacks on a "psychiatrized" society or her belief that listening to veterans will somehow bring an end to war, but she makes an important and welcome call for average citizens to take responsibility for our veterans. (Apr.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“A work of profound and astonishing humanity. A harbinger of hope for all of society.”
•Jamin Raskin, Professor of Law, American University, and Maryland State Senator
“I am truly amazed by Caplan's grasp of not only the psyche of the combat veteran but of the human heart and soul as a whole. Extraordinary insight. Brilliant!”
•Michelle Dallochio, Iraq War veteran, former Team Lioness member, author of Quixote in Ramadi
“All-encompassing, meticulously-researched, brilliantly thought-out and marvelously-written. Cuts through the smoke of the institutional lies to the true nature of the emotional injuries sustained by these poor souls and offers a detailed and sensible path to healing. Brave and astonishing book”
•Samuel Shem, author of The Spirit of the Place and The House of God

Dr. Paula Caplan's impassioned plea on behalf of active duty soldiers, veterans, and their families moves beyond its exceptional critical analysis of the abysmal VA and other military mental health 'systems' to deliver paradigm-shifting insights. As citizens, many of us may vaguely recognize a duty to care for returning soldiers but fail to realize the extent to which we've abrogated that responsibility. Well, we are heading for trouble and we've earned it. The current overburdened, dysfunctional mental health system is now our stand-in, pathologizing the soldier and veteran, implicating and sequestering him or her from the rest of us, and further dehumanizing and poisoning with a cornucopia of powerful and unproven medications. All this so that the rest of us can remain entranced and ignorant as to what our consuming and political choices imply. Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have been prosecuted at enormous human cost. We've built complex bureaucracies out of the brick and mortar of psychiatric shibboleth so as to avoid listening to those who've been put front and center in the carnage. Throughout her analysis, Dr. Caplan's allegiance is to restoring respect for the truth of the returning soldier's experiences and needs, and to challenge the brittleness of our complicity and denial so that the rest of us might do the same.

Outstanding book and guide for helping veterans

Paula Caplan is a smart and sensitive clinician and writer who takes a strong, controversial position about helping returning veterans. She argues that lay people are as good or better than mental health professionals in dealing with the ravages of war upon the psyche. As one of those professionals, I mostly agree with her. While the Dept. of Defense and the Veterans Administration busily hire more therapists, the soldier suicide rate goes up. It may be difficult for the DoD and the VA to consider that training for war is itself damaging. Humans, like other social animals, are instinctively inhibited from killing face-to-face. Once the killer genie is released it's hard to put it back (only 2%, uninhibited to begin with, are not affected). For clarification see "On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society" by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman.

This book will probably bring a bit of reality and remembrance to any soldier and even their families. The military's history of suck it up and get over it, has been the order of the day. Boot camps rid the soldier of individuality and train them to be a unified unit following orders immediately and without question. What has never been addressed well are the ramifications of what is left in a soldier's head after battle. Paula Caplan has addressed this problem in this book, although much of the writing and ideas are repeated throughout...what a soldier needs is understanding and the chance to talk and vent without the label of being mentally unstable and without the automatic use of drugs. It is also true that when soldiers even went to counseling with a chaplain they had a stigma surrounding them. Granted this is not always as simple as it sounds, no one unless they have been in battle can even imagine the whole reality. This seems to be especially true in the present conflicts where soldiers face multiple deployments, fighting in conflicts without rules and against many times unidentifiable foes. Although many of the 'arguments' presented here are simplistic and repetitive, "we participate in concealing the true consequences of war...is to risk being considered unpatriotic

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