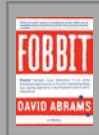


“Telling our stories is a way to make sense of the nonsensical. It’s a way to process, to digest, to try and understand what we’ve been through. It’s also a way to share that understanding with others, to make the private public.”

~David Abrams, Iraq War veteran & author of *Fobbit*.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
TO PARTICIPATE,
OR TO OFFER SUPPORT:**

Visit the VRP website:

<https://bit.ly/3YgNEZf>

Or contact the VRP facilitator & lead:

Joshua Shinn,

Extension & Engagement/

Community Development Specialist

5115 Oak Street | UMKC Administrative Center

Kansas City, MO 64112

Phone: (816) 505-5966

Email: jshinn@missouri.edu

Or scan the QR code:



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OUR MISSION:

To use storytelling and story analysis as strategic tools to help uniformed service members and their families strengthen **communication, camaraderie, and catharsis.**

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS:

Free for any veterans, active-duty service members, first-responders, & their families.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

Transitioning from military service to civilian life can present significant challenges for veterans, including mental health issues, social integration difficulties, and general well-being concerns.

The Veteran R.E.A.D.S. Program leverages the power of narrative and storytelling to address these challenges, fostering resilience, education, advocacy, dialogue, and service—the “READS” in the Veteran R.E.A.D.S. Program.

By engaging veterans in storytelling and bibliotherapy, the VRP provides a supportive community and opportunities for veterans, including student veterans, to share their experiences, access resources, and combat issues such as PTSD, depression, suicidal ideation, and social isolation



RESILIENCE. EDUCATION. ADVOCACY. DIALOGUE. SERVICE.



EMPOWERING VETERANS THROUGH STORY



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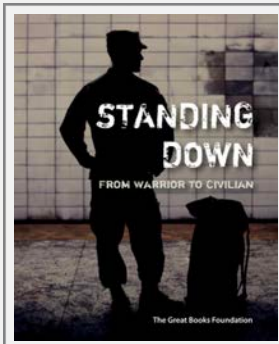
THE POWER OF STORY:

Stories guide humanity through difficult times, acting as innovative tools for addressing fundamental issues. They function as social glue, allowing people to practice essential social skills and better understand themselves and the world. Storytelling aids in meaning-making, personal growth, and learning, with personal life narratives significantly influencing behavior, relationships, and mental health.

For veterans, storytelling is transformative, offering a means to process and articulate their experiences, fostering emotional release and community connection. It helps them reconstruct their identities, integrating military experiences into civilian life, promoting healing, resilience, and improved mental health. By reflecting on their narratives, veterans can gain insights, recognize strengths, and envision a future beyond their service, aiding in their post-military adjustment and well-being.

All participants receive a free copy of **Standing Down: From Warrior to Civilian** provided

by:  Great Books Foundation



PROGRAM GOALS:

1. **Develop skills of inquiry and critical analysis** for unpacking fiction and nonfiction narratives.
2. **Investigate story's significance** in relation to individual experience and differing perspectives.
3. **Cultivate a space of authentic dialogue**, where participants may speak freely and truthfully.
4. **Foster a sanctuary-culture that begets trust**, belongingness, camaraderie, and community.
5. **Strengthen participants' networks**, resource familiarity, and support systems.
6. **Create opportunities for community service**, projects, and/or development.



RESEARCH & EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES:

- **"Veterans identified telling their stories to others** as an effective way to cope with war memories (Esaki, et. Al, 2020).
- **"Making meaning of scenes in a book may present a less threatening way to practice engaging with difficult topics** and finding ways to construct meaning from it" (Hamm & Leonhardt, 2023).
- **"Just as bootcamp integrates service members into the military, a similarly immersive experience is needed to integrate them back into civilian life, and this applies to all veterans** (MITRE Co., 2019).
- **"In coming to terms with the mind of another, you can come to better discover your own mind, both its strengths and its weaknesses.** To read your own mind, you must learn how to do second-order thinking: how to think about your thinking while you are thinking from outside your thinking. But how do you get outside your thinking? Read... **The better you understand someone else's logic, the better you understand your own**" (Elder and Paul, 2004).
- **"High levels of distress exist among veterans who are caught between military and civilian cultures, feeling alienated from family and friends, and experiencing a crisis of identity. Narrative is identified as a means of resolution"** (Demers, 2011).

BASE-PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:

- Small groups in a secure, inclusive setting with circle seating.
- Unpacking and discussing select stories with guided thematic discussions.
- Focus on stories, with optional personal sharing.
- Sharing resources and promoting events.
- Fostering connections and activities outside the group.

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