

Heroes Outreach Program
Starting a new chapter
(This document is currently under development)

First, let me start by saying, thank you. Thank you for showing interest in starting a new chapter of the Heroes Outreach Program in your city or local area. It's inspiring to see so many people recognizing the need for HOPE in addressing the seemingly growing devastation caused by PTSD in our Veterans. Believe it or not, it is actually pretty easy to start a new chapter anywhere in the world. Below is a short, and simple checklist to get you up and running in no time. As always, keep in mind, we are always here to help in any way we can.

1 Locate a suitable location for the meetings.

 A The place needs to be a place of peace and safety. A church auditorium, a school classroom, a community center, an Elks club, or perhaps the same location as the AA meetings. The key is that the location has to be peaceful and disarming.

 B The location has to be large enough to accommodate the attendees, but not too large as to lose it's 'coziness'.

 C The location is something that has to be taken into consideration. It needs to be in an easily accessible location, not only with handicap access, but easy driving and not in the middle of a large population area, such as a busy shopping mall area or theater area. Individuals suffering with PTSD often avoid crowds. If you hold a meeting in a busy area of town, your attendance may suffer.

2 Find a Veteran to lead host and lead the meeting. This is very important. Veterans feel comfortable around their fellow Veterans. Many Vets don't attend or seek counseling because they are not comfortable discussing their issues with a counselor who they feel can't understand what they have been through. Having a Vet host and start the meeting will put everyone at ease from the start.

3 Always have refreshments available at the meeting. 'Breaking bread' has historically been a way of showing friendship and kinship. Chatting around the snack table has always made people feel comfortable.

4 Always keep in mind, keep everything as relaxing and comfortable as possible. There will be no alcohol or intoxicating substances consumed at any meeting. No one will be called out for being late or not being dressed appropriately. Everyone will be greeted and welcomed to attend the meeting. There will be no smoking at the meetings, but inform everyone they are welcome to step out at any time for a smoke. Also, if the group is large enough, schedule a break here and there to allow the attendees time to mingle and build a repartee with each other. It will be through these interactions that will allow the members to select a 'Buddy'.

5 Selection of a Buddy. Selection of a Buddy is a very personal issue. The Buddy will be someone you will accept into your life. Someone you can confide in. Someone you are comfortable spending time with. Someone who makes you feel comfortable and at ease. Some Vets may not select a Buddy for several weeks of meetings. It may even be that some may

never select a Buddy. While having a Buddy is an important aspect of the HOPE program, no attendee should feel pressured into accepting someone in their life with whom they are not comfortable.