

May Patriotic Instruction

Brothers,

I find myself today sitting at my computer trying to find the words to adequately describe the importance of the month of May to us as Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. Quite frankly, if you are in this organization, and do not understand the importance of the month of May, then we as an order have failed. In hopes that we have not failed as an order, I am going to take things in a different direction. Most of us are taking this time to make sure our Memorial Day Ceremonies are perfect, to ensure that we remember those brave souls that gave the last full measure of devotion. However, how do we keep ourselves mission ready? How do we stay in a state in which we can perform our duties as Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War? Over the next few months, I am going to address a few of the ways in which we can do this.

One of the ways we must keep ourselves ready is mentally. Many of us are facing hidden demons for the first time, or for the first time in a while, because of mandated quarantines and the inability for us to have social interaction as Brothers. As men, we sometimes face an unseen conflict, an invisible battle if you will, and that is the internal struggle we all face. Whether it be about actions we made twenty years ago, actions we made yesterday or a hereditary fight with depression. It is too easy for us to cover up the invisible wounds we face and carry on. Whether they are wounds that we received from combat actions, medical roles we have served or incidents we have witnessed as bystanders. These nightmares stay with us longer than we care to admit.

The first way we can address these items is to admit that they are there. We all carry invisible scars in some way shape or form. Whether it is from seeing the remanence of a terrorist of attack that we came to assist on, or to be the first in on scene of a motor vehicle accident, or to be in an abusive household growing up. Many of us carry hidden horrors that we care not to share with anyone else, and to bury deep down, but the question is, how can we harness these horrors to better ourselves and the community. The first thing we can do is recognize that we are not alone, that we are not the only people to have seen horrors like this and that the ability to confide in those who have seen similar horrors is there. Seeking help from a friend or professional on these matters does not make us weak, on the contrary, it makes you stronger for being able to identify that something is off and taking the steps to rectify it.

By taking care of our own, we are making sure that they are in a good headspace to take on the mission of the order and preserving the Boys in Blue. Selfcare is the most important thing for any Brother to undergo, it is also the hardest for any Brother to admit they need to undertake. Many of us have seen our fellow Brothers calling out for help in a non-verbal way, and they are praying that any one of us asks them if something is wrong. My challenge to all of you is ask that Brother "Hey man, are you okay?" as sometimes it is on us, to recognize the signs, and to reach out and remind each other that we are not alone in this fight. I have seen the negative effects of PTSD, whether it was in loved ones, Brothers of the Order or Friends outside the order, of untreated PTSD. I have also first-hand witnessed and fought those demons with my own depression and know that this past year has been a struggle for a lot of us mentally, but it is not something to be ashamed of and to seek out help.

I am hoping that at this point it is obvious why these actions are needed at all levels of patriotic instruction, we cannot be good patriots and do all the great work we do for our order, for our

communities and our country, if we do not take care of ourselves. If we are in a mental space where we are not motivated to do anything, do not want to get out of bed, are having dark thoughts about harming ourselves, we cannot be effective patriots. Do not be too ashamed to reach out and get help, or to talk to someone about what is going on. I would much rather any Brother of the order call me in the middle of the night to talk than to find out a Brother has lost the fight with their demons. If any of you are in a dark place and want to talk with someone who gets what you are going through, please do not hesitate to call me or email me and we will get through this together.

In Fraternity Charity and Loyalty,
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