

## The War Healing Circle at FUUSA

Many, many of our Veterans have real difficulty in returning to ‘normal’ life. They find that coming home is just an introduction to a new kind of battlefield: nightmares, depression, divorce, alcohol, drugs, PTSD... and even suicide.

So we begin with the understanding that a Veteran’s problems are not just *his* problems. When we send someone off to military service or war, it’s in our service, for *our* war. It’s not just *his* fight, it’s *our* fight. And when a Vet returns, we accept that it is our responsibility to help him to rebuild his life, his connection to family, community and himself.

But when a Vet returns, everything is different. Because *she is different*. What she’s seen, what she’s done, what she’s seen others do. So how will she fit in again? How to make sense of it, find meaning again in day-to-day details that often seem pointless or trivial? So the question arises: how can we help? How can the community of civilians, Veterans, family and friends, come together to lend a hand?

Veterans often say that society doesn’t have a clue as to what military service is like. And in particular, what war is like. And few civilians are interested in finding out. Most would much rather tune back into American Idol, go to the latest Blockbuster movie, play Fantasy Baseball, fiddle with with the new Smartphone. So, the returning Veteran often faces a situation in which people just don’t get it and don’t know how to be of help.

This is where our War Healing Circle comes in. We are a community based group that seeks to fill the gap. We believe that much healing and fitting back in can happen if Veterans are able to talk about what happened. If the Vet is given a chance tell his story, express his feelings fully in an environment of respect and support. (We closely follow the Circle of Trust approach recommended by [Parker Palmer](#).) And in doing so, our Vet can also give the rest of us at least a small sense of what it was like, what really happened.

So our healing circle aims to provide a space where folks can tell their stories and express their feelings ... Veterans, their families, friends, interested civilians. **We are not a therapy group.** We don’t confront people, give advice, or try to ‘correct’ someone’s opinions about war or politics. We simply provide a place where people can come together to support their Vets and families by listening and feeling.

At one of our Circles you may hear a Marine Afghanistan Veteran describe some experience on the battlefield. A Veteran’s spouse may tell about the stress and strain that her family experienced while dad was away. An Army Vietnam Vet may speak about how difficult it was to find his place after returning home. A father may speak about how it was to lose his son.

The Circle meets on **second and fourth Sundays** of each month, promptly at 6 p.m. (for exact dates, see below). It is open to anyone who would like to support the process of healing and true homecoming. Each gathering is co-facilitated by a congregation member from FUUSA and a

volunteer from [Soldier's Heart](#) (a Veterans return and healing group based on the work of Dr. Edward Tick). New participants are always welcome.

Meeting dates for the remainder of 2010 are listed below. *Please show your respect for the integrity of the circle by arriving no later than 6 pm.*

- September 12 & 26
- October 10 & 24
- November 14 & 28
- December 12 & 26