



Back from the Front: Combat Trauma, Love, and the Family

Aphrodite Matsakis

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To write about the combat veteran is to write about fortitude, dedication and selflessness, and about experiences unfathomable to those who have never known the indescribable horrors of war. To write about you the veteran s spouse or partner is to write about another kind of loyalty and perseverance and yet another kind of pain and sadness. The trauma of war can affect not only the warriors, but their partners and children as well. Often it is you, the veteran s partner, who helps sustain the veteran during his or her depressions, anxiety attacks, and post-traumatic reactions. It may also be you, and perhaps you alone, who has sustained your veteran s will to live during his or her most anguished moments. Unfortunately, some veterans vent their anger (at themselves or at others whom they felt betrayed them) on the people they love and who love them the most their partners and children. The purpose of this book is to help you (and your veteran) better understand combat trauma and its possible effects on intimate relationships and family life and to guide you to resources that can help strengthen every member of your family. The beginning chapters provide basic information about combat trauma and how it can lead to depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other forms of emotional pain. The remaining chapters focus on some of the most common problems confronting families of combat veterans: emotional numbing, sexual difficulties, anger, and guilt. There are also chapters on family violence, children, women veterans, and military couples and sections on how to cope with anger and depression, how to find helpful organizations and books, and how to communicate effectively on difficult issues. In addition to describing the tensions that can result from combat trauma, this book emphasizes the many ways a veteran s war experiences can help enrich individual family members and the family as a whole. Just as one part of your family cannot suffer without that suf

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