

WRAIR Minds, Ep. 102
Transcript

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CAPTAIN THOMAS NASSIF: [MUSIC] HELLO AND WELCOME TO WRAIR MINDS, A PODCAST BY WALTER REED ARMY INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH, WHICH WE CALL WRAIR. I'M YOUR HOST, AMY CAPTAIN THOMAS NASSIF. [MUSIC]

IN THIS EPISODE OF THE PODCAST, WE WILL HAVE A MINDFULNESS EXERCISE THAT WILL HELP YOU CONNECT WITH OTHERS. BUT FIRST, IN HIS 37-YEAR CAREER, LIEUTENANT GENERAL WALTER PIATT HAS SERVED IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ, EARNED A RANGER TAB, AND COMMANDED THE 10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION AMONG MANY OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS. HE CURRENTLY SERVES AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE ARMY STAFF, A ROLE FROM WHICH HE ENSURES OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY AND THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF ARE BEING MET. GENERAL PIATT HAS ALSO BECOME KNOWN AS ONE OF THE ARMY'S MOST PROMINENT ADVOCATES FOR THE VALUE OF MINDFULNESS IN THE MILITARY. WE SPOKE WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL PIATT ABOUT HOW HE CAME TO THE PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS, THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCERNMENT IN THE MIDST OF COMBAT AND THE NEED FOR LEADERS TO MAKE TIME FOR SOLDIERS TO FOCUS ON THEMSELVES. GENERAL PIATT WAS INTERVIEWED BY FORMER WRAIR COMMANDER, DEYDRE TEYHEN, IN PART ONE OF A TWO-PART DISCUSSION. [MUSIC]

COLONEL DEYDRE TEYHEN: SIR, THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO SPEAK WITH US TODAY ABOUT MINDFULNESS. WE KNOW THAT YOU'RE A HUGE ADVOCATE FOR MINDFULNESS. HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN IT?

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WALTER PIATT: WELL, IT'S A LONG STORY, BUT IT HAPPENED IN 2010. AND I WAS A BRIGADE COMMANDER IN 25TH I.D. IN HAWAII. SO JUST GOT BACK FROM MANY BACK TO BACK DEPLOYMENTS. AND I MET TWO VERY INTELLIGENT PEOPLE, DR. AMISHI JHA AND DR. ELIZABETH STANLEY. THEY WERE OFFERING SOMETHING DIFFERENT. BECAUSE EVERY TIME WE WOULD COME BACK, WE WOULD DO REINTEGRATION TRAINING. WE'D PRESENT SOLDIERS A BUNCH OF INFORMATION OF WHAT NOT TO DO, HOW TO REINTEGRATE FROM COMBAT BACK TO YOUR NORMAL LIFE. DON'T GO SPEND ALL YOUR MONEY YOU JUST SAVED OVER THE DEPLOYMENT. DON'T GO DRINKING 15 OR 12 MONTHS WORTH OF NOT DRINKING AND DO IT IN 2 NIGHTS. HOW TO REINTEGRATE WITH YOUR SPOUSE SO YOU'D AVOID DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THINGS OF THIS NATURE. ALL THESE VERY DIFFICULT SUBJECTS WE KNEW COULD POSSIBLY MANIFEST POST-DEPLOYMENT, BUT WE WEREN'T REALLY HELPING PEOPLE WITH THE TOOLS THAT WERE CAUSING THIS. AND THAT WAS REALLY CAUSED BY STRESS. WE WERE GIVING THEM INFORMATION AND THEN WONDERING WHY IT WAS HAPPENING. AND SO OUR MANY DEPLOYMENTS, WE'D WATCH THIS HAPPEN TIME AND TIME AGAIN. ONLY THE MORE DEPLOYMENTS WERE ON, THE FASTER IT WOULD HAPPEN POST-DEPLOYMENT.

AND SO WE WANTED TO TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT. AND I REMEMBER MYSELF AND SERGEANT MAJORTONY MARRERO, WE SAT AND WE LISTENED TO DR. STANLEY AND DR. JOHN DESCRIBED WHAT THEY WANTED TO TRY AND THE STUDYTHEY WANTED TO DO ON OUR BRIGADE POST-DEPLOYMENT AND PREPARE FOR THE NEXT DEPLOYMENT THAT WOULD BE COMING UP.AND THEY DESCRIBED US PERFECTLY. WITHIN THE FIRST FEW MINUTES, I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING HERE BECAUSE THEYDESCRIBED HOW WE WERE ACTING, HOW WE WERE REACTING, HOW WE WERE DOING THINGS WITHOUT THINKING, HOW WE WEREMULTITASKING, HOW OUR MIND WAS ALWAYS SOMEWHERE ELSE AND NEVER AT THE TASK AT HAND. THEY DIDN'T EVEN MENTION THEWORD MINDFULNESS YET OR PRACTICE, SO I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS. BUT I WAS ALREADY HOOKED BECAUSE THEY PRESENTEDREALLY SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE THAT THERE'S SOMETHING HERE THAT IT COULD WORK. SO INSTEAD OF INFORMATION, WE WERE WILLING TOTRY SOMETHING, AND THEN THEY INTRODUCED THIS PROGRAM WITH THIS MINDFULNESS ON THIS BASE. AND WE WERE REALLY ALLEAGER TO GO, BUT ONLY ABOUT 200 OR SO MADE TO STUDY GROUP. I DID NOT MAKE THE GROUP, SO I WAS OFFENDED. I THOUGHT ASA COMMANDER, I WOULD MAKE IT, BUT I DIDN'T. SO I HAD TO TEACH MYSELF. AND I NOTICED ALMOST IMMEDIATE IMPACTS THATDOING SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS DOING NOTHING. IT JUST OPENED MY MY MIND SO MUCH, AND I WAS NOW NOT CHECKING MYBLACKBERRY FIRST THING IN THE MORNING. AND WE HAD BLACKBERRYS BACK THEN IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY ARE.

BUT IMMEDIATELY, EVERY TIME I WOKE UP, I CHECKED THE BLACKBERRY,
AND I FELT LIKE YOU KNOW I HAD TO MAKE UP FOR THE FEW
TRANSCRIBEME2

HOURS I WAS ASLEEP ON WHATEVER EMAILS CAME IN. AND THEN I
REMEMBER PLAYING CATCH WITH MY SON, AND HE EVEN SAID, "DAD,
YOU'RE NOT ON YOUR PHONE. YOU'RE HERE." AND IT JUST REALLY HIT
ME, "WOW, I'M LEARNING SOMETHING HERE." AND I HAD THOUGHT I WAS
GOOD AT THIS DEPLOYMENT AND REINTEGRATION. I ACTUALLY THOUGHT I
WAS EXPERIENCING POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH, AND I DIDN'T REALIZE ON
HOW IT WAS AFFECTING ME. AND I THINK THE MOST IMPORTANT THING
IS-- I JUST REMEMBER LISTENING TO MY WIFE, ACTUALLY LISTENING TO
HER, NOT FORMING AN ANSWER. SHE WAS TALKING. NOT TRYING TO
ANSWER HER QUICKLY, NOT TRYING TO DISMISS WHAT SHE WAS SAYING BUT
JUST LISTENING. AND I JUST REMEMBERED LISTENING AND HOW WONDERFUL
HER VOICE SOUNDED. AND I REALLY FELT THAT I WAS HOME FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS BECAUSE EVERY TIME I'D COME BACK, I WAS
ALREADY FOCUSED MENTALLY ON THE NEXT MISSION OR THE
REINTEGRATION OF THE SOLDIERS. I WAS NEVER REALLY THERE. SO THIS
VERY SIMPLE PRACTICE, I NOTICED IMMEDIATE IMPACTS. AND I WAS
VERY EXCITED ABOUT OUR UNIT PARTICIPATING IN A STUDY AND WHAT I
THOUGHT THE ARMY WOULD DEFINITELY LEARN FROM IT.

FOR THOSE THAT ARE NEW TO MINDFULNESS, WHAT DOES MINDFULNESS
MEAN TO YOU? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE IT TO SOMEBODY THAT HASN'T
BEEN PRACTICING? IT'S BEING IN THE MOMENT, BEING IN THE NOW

WITHOUT JUDGMENT. AND FOR MILITARY FOLKS, I THINK WE BEST GET IT WHEN WE SAY, "THE ARMY HAS TAUGHT US HOW TO STAND AT ATTENTION BUT THEY NEVER REALLY TOLD US HOW TO PAY ATTENTION." WE'RE NOT TAUGHT THAT. WE'RE REALLY TAUGHT THAT MULTITASKING IS PROBABLY A SIGN OF STRENGTH. YOU CAN DO MORE. YOU CAN SLEEP LESS, ALL THESE THINGS. BUT THEY NEVER REALLY UNDERSTAND THE STRENGTH OF THE POWER OF DOING NOTHING AND TO FOCUS ON IT, TO JUST BE IN THE NOW. TO BE WHERE YOU NEED TO BE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU'RE DOING RIGHT NOW AND TO ACTUALLY PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY BE THERE AND NOT BE MENTALLY SOMEWHERE ELSE. SO I THINK THAT'S HOW IT MAKES SENSE FOR MOST MILITARY MEMBERS. BUT MINDFULNESS, IT ALLOWS YOU TO OBSERVE WITHOUT THINKING.

TEYHEN: SO, OBVIOUSLY AS A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER, I'VE BEEN A BIG ADVOCATE FOR MINDFULNESS. BUT WHAT REALLY STRUCK ME WHEN I WAS STATIONED AT SCHOFIELD BARRACKS IS MY NEIGHBOR WAS A BATTALION COMMANDER FOR 25TH ID. AND HE REALLY ATTRIBUTED HIS SUCCESS OF HIS UNIT AND HIS ACTIONS TO PRACTICING MINDFULNESS EVERY DAY AND WHILE THEY WERE DEPLOYED. SPECIFICALLY, HE'D GO UP TO THE ROOFTOP. AND HE, AT THE END OF EACH MISSION, JUST PRACTICES MINDFULNESS BEFORE HE WENT ON WITH THE REST OF THE DAY AS SOON AS THEY CAME BACK IN THE WIRE. HE REALLY FELT THAT WAS THE KEY TO HIS SUCCESS. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE BENEFITS YOU HAVE FOUND FROM

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS EITHER DURING YOUR DEPLOYMENT, OR AS A STRATEGIC LEADER, OREVEN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

PIATT: THANK YOU FOR DOING THAT WITH THE 25TH ID. AND I THINK THE BATTALION COMMANDERS COMMENTS, I JUST FULLY AGREE WITH.AND I THINK ANYONE WHO WOULD DO WHAT HE HAS DONE WILL NOTICE THOSE EFFECTS IMMEDIATELY. BUT TO BE CALM WHEN THINGS ARE SO CHAOTIC IS SOMETHING WE TRY TO TRAIN FOR, AND WE TRY TO TRAIN FOR IT BY CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT THINGS ARE CHAOTIC AND HECTIC, AND YOU'RE FORCING PEOPLE TO REACT. AND YOU MAY BE OVERLOADING THEIR MIND. BUT WE NEED TO STEP BACK AND THINK THAT MINDFULNESS HAS A PLACE IN THAT TRAINING OF SOLDIERS THAT WE'RE GOING TO PUT IN THAT POSITION. AND I REMEMBER SO MANY TIMES FROM DEPLOYMENTS OF FOLKS WHO ARE ABLE TO SOMEHOW SEE CLEARLY AND SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY WHEN EVERYBODY ELSE WAS SEEING WHAT THEY WERE TRAINED TO SEE OR WERE JUST SO OVERWHELMED WITH STRESS OF THEMOMENT THAT THEY COULDN'T SEE. AND I REMEMBER ONE DEPLOYMENT WHERE MY VEHICLE WAS HIT WITH AN IED, AND IT SADLY WASN'T THE FIRST TIME, AND IT WASN'T THE LAST TIME. BUT IN THIS PARTICULAR TIME, I REMEMBER COMING OUT OF THE VEHICLE QUICKLY OBSERVING THE AREA, AND I COULD TELL IMMEDIATELY WHICH WAY THE THREAT HAD COME FROM. BUT I COULD ALSO SEE IMMEDIATELY WE HAD A NEW PLATOON OF SECURITY WITH US, AND THEY OVERREACTED AND WERE ABSOLUTELY MOVING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION. AND THEY WERE MOVING IN A HOSTILE

STANCE WITH WEAPONS POINTED, MOVING TOWARDS A CROWD OF CIVILIANS THAT WERE COMING TO SEE WHAT THE EXPLOSION WAS--A NATURAL REACTION TO ANYBODY THAT WERE TO HEAR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. AND I REMEMBER GETTING IN FRONT OF THEM, AND THEY WERE VERY NERVOUS BECAUSE NOW I WAS IN FRONT OF THEM, AND THEY WERE WORRIED ABOUT ME. AND THEY SAID, "SIR, GET BACK. WE GOT THIS." AND I TOLD THEM, "I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT YOU. I'M WORRIED ABOUT THE PEOPLE COMING HERE." AND I COULDN'T GET THEM TO CALM DOWN. AND I REMEMBER WHAT MY WIFE WOULD ALWAYS TELL ME WHEN OUR DAUGHTER WAS FIRST BORN. SHE WOULD CRY, AND I WOULD HOLD HER, AND I WAS NOT DOING VERY WELL AS A FATHER. AND SHE WOULD SAY, "IF YOU WANT CALM, YOU'VE GOT TO BE CALM." AND THAT'S WHAT I TOLD THE SOLDIERS THAT DAY. IT'S LIKE, "YOU'VE GOT TO BE CALM HERE, AND YOU GOT TO SEE THAT YOU'RE COMPLETELY GOING THE WRONG DIRECTION. YOUR MANNERISMS ARE COMPLETELY CREATING THE WRONG REACTION. YOU'RE NOT THINKING THIS THROUGH. YOU'RE DOING EXACTLY WHAT THE ENEMY WANTS YOU TO DO." AND I'VE SEEN THAT OVER AND OVER AGAIN. BUT WHAT WE DIDN'T KNOW THEN IS HOW DO YOU TRAIN FOR THAT. WHY DO SOME SOLDIERS DO IT NATURALLY, AND SOME DON'T. SOME WILL DO IT ONE TIME BUT NOT THE OTHER. IT'S VERY DIFFICULT. BUT WE LEARNED THAT IF YOU CONNECTED IF YOU SOLVE THINGS WITHOUT JUDGMENT FIRST. A LESSON I LEARNED IN AFGHANISTAN FROM A FRIEND OF MINE WHO WAS A GOVERNOR. HE TOLD ME AT THE END OF THE YEAR WHEN I ASKED HIM WHY WE DID SO WELL IN OUR TIME TOGETHER, AND HE SAID,

"WELL, IT WAS--" HE SAID, "IT WAS YOU." HE SAID, "YOU BECAME MY FRIEND FIRST BEFORE YOU TOLD ME WHAT TO DO." AND SIMPLY TRANSLATED THAT MEANT TO SEEK TO UNDERSTAND BEFORE YOU DEMAND TO BE UNDERSTOOD. AND TOO OFTEN IN MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS, WE PUSH TO DEMAND TO BE UNDERSTOOD, AND WE DON'T SEEK TO STOP AND UNDERSTAND THE ENVIRONMENT WE'RE IN, THE PEOPLE WE'RE IN, HOW THEIR LIVES ARE AFFECTED. AND YOU HAVE TO DO THIS. SO HOW DO YOU DO IT IN MINDFULNESS IS A FUNDAMENTAL APPROACH TO DOING THIS WELL BECAUSE YOU OBSERVE WITHOUT JUDGMENT. YOU'RE TRAINING YOUR MIND TO BE ABLE TO SEE AND BE IN THAT MOMENT, WHICH IS SO HELPFUL IN THESE VERY DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX SITUATIONS WHERE YOU CAN-- IT'S ONE THING TO BE ABLE TO FEEL WITHOUT JUDGMENT. BUT IT'S ANOTHER THING TO BE ABLE TO SEE WITHOUT JUDGMENT. AND I THINK BOTH ARE ABSOLUTELY VITAL FOR THE COMPLEX SITUATIONS WE PUT FOLKS IN, WHETHER IT'S COMBAT DEPLOYMENT IN AFGHANISTAN OR IT'S RESPONDING TO COVID CRISIS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES OR SIMPLY JUST BEING HOME AND WITH YOUR FAMILY.

TEYHEN: AS THE ARMY GETS READY TO PREPARE FOR MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS, AND WE AT LEAST UNDERSTAND NOW FROM THE DOCTRINE BEING WRITTEN, THAT PHYSICAL PRIMACY WILL ALWAYS BE IMPORTANT FOR THE ARMY TO BE ABLE TO DO IT. BUT REALLY COGNITIVE DOMINANCE AND EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE IS GOING TO REALLY PLAY A BIGGER ROLE IN MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF DECISION

MAKING. HOW DO YOU SEE MINDFULNESS IN THE FUTURE COMPARED TO MINDFULNESS THAT YOU'VE PRACTICED TO DATE?

PIATT: WELL, I THINK HOW WE'RE PROCESSING IT NOW IS ABSOLUTELY VITAL FOR THE FUTURE. I THINK OUR MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS AND THE WAY WE'D PUSH FUTURE-- WAY WE'D ENVISION FUTURE WARFARE AND STRUGGLES, THEY'RE VITAL. WE HAVE TO BE PREPARED. WE HAVE TO THINK THINGS THROUGH. BUT WE HAVE TO ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT WAR IS THE UGLIEST OF HUMAN INVENTIONS. AND NO AMOUNT OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT IS GOING TO MAKE WAR EASY, NOR IS IT GOING TO MAKE IT SAFE, NOR IS IT GOING TO GUARANTEE VICTORY ON ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER. AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND WE CANNOT BE BLINDED BY TECHNOLOGY. TECHNOLOGY WILL ENABLE IT. IT CERTAINLY WILL HELP US MANEUVER, BUT IT'S GOING TO HAVE TO START WITH OUR COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS. I'M JUST CONVINCED OF IT. WE CANNOT PULL CLEAR-THINKING HUMANS OUT OF THIS BECAUSE IT IS SO DANGEROUS. WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO SEE THINGS FOR WHAT THEY ARE AND NOT FOR HOW WE'RE TRAINED TO SEE THEM. AND NO AMOUNT OF TECHNOLOGY IS GOING TO BE ABLE TO PUT THAT ENVIRONMENT TOGETHER AND BE ABLE TO SEE THE UNIQUENESS OF HOW THINGS COME TOGETHER. THROUGH MOST OF OUR TECHNOLOGY, EVERYTHING CAN LOOK LIKE A TARGET. EVERYTHING ISN'T A TARGET. AND TO BE ABLE TO PAY ATTENTION IN THAT MOMENT AND TO SEE THE COMPLEXITY. AND TO BE ABLE TO POINT OUT THAT ONE OR TWO THINGS IN THERE TO BE ABLE TO

DISCERN THAT THIS IS NOT A THREAT OR IT IS A THREAT WILL REMAIN A BASIC SKILL THAT SOLDIERS WILL HAVE TO DO NOW AND IN THE FUTURE. AND MINDFULNESS GIVES YOU THE TOOLS TO DO THAT. AND I THINK IT'S ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. I MEAN, YOUR WORK SHOWED US THIS, WHAT YOU DID IN 25TH ID IMPROVED PERFORMANCE. SO YOU'RE UNDERPRESSURE, YOU HAVE TO ACQUIRE TARGETS, YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO HIT A TARGET, BUT YOU HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT IT IS A TARGET. I MEAN, PEOPLE FORGET ABOUT THAT. THAT IS THE FIRST STEP. I MEAN, IT'S ONE THING TO BE ABLE TO BE VERY GOOD WITH YOUR WEAPON. IT'S ANOTHER THING TO BE ABLE TO KNOW WHEN NOT TO USE IT. BOTH ARE ABSOLUTELY VITAL FOR SOLDIERS; BOTH SKILLS. THEY HAVE A SPLIT SECOND TO DECIDE, AND WE WANT THEM TO BE AT THEIR VERY BEST AND VERY CLEAR OF MIND WHEN THEY'RE MAKING THAT DECISION. AND THIS IS WHY IT'S FUNDAMENTAL. AND I THINK THE WORK THAT DR. JHA HAS DONE AT UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI HAVE SHOWN THIS IS IMPORTANT. THIS IS WHY THE RESEARCH IS SO IMPORTANT. THIS IS WHY THE SCIENCE IS SO IMPORTANT. THIS IS NOT SOME KIND OF GIMMICK. I THINK THE SCIENCE WILL SHOW YOU THAT THERE ARE WAYS THAT YOU CAN PRACTICE THAT WILL EXERCISE YOUR MIND TO GIVE YOU THE SKILLS TO BE AT YOUR VERY BEST, YOUR VERY CLEAREST WHEN THINGS ARE AT THEIR VERY WORST.

TEYHEN: FOR MINDFULNESS TO WORK IN MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS, WE REALLY NEED TO BE PRACTICING IT IN GARRISON. AND OUR RESEARCH AT

THE WALTER REED ARMY INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH HAS FOUND THAT WHEN SOLDIERS PRACTICE AT THREE TO FOUR DAYS A WEEK, YOU GET THE BEST BENEFITS. SO, FOR EXAMPLE, WE FOUND THAT OF ALL THE VARIABLES, IT IMPROVES STRESS SHOOT ACCURACY BY 20PERCENT. BUT OUR LIVES ARE VERY BUSY, SO HOW DO YOU PRACTICE MINDFULNESS WITH THIS IN GARRISON WITH THE SPEED OF OPERATIONS THAT WE'RE CURRENTLY FIND YOURSELF IN?

PIATT: WELL, I WOULD SAY, "HOW DO YOU NOT?" I THINK THE HARDER THE DAY IS, THE MORE YOU WANT TO SAY THAT SOUNDS EASY. EVERY SINGLE DAY AFTER PHYSICAL TRAINING, THAT'S WHEN I FIND IT THE MOST CONVENIENT TIME FOR ME. ESPECIALLY I LIVE ON FORT MYERS, SO I HAVE WONDERFUL VIEWS OF THE CITY. AND AT 4:30 OR 5 O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING, THERE'S NORMALLY NOBODY THERE EXCEPT MAYBE THE MILITARY POLICE ARE OUT. BUT IT'S PEACEFUL. AND IT GIVES ME A TIME TO BE BY MYSELF WITHOUT MY PHONE, WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS AND TO PRACTICE. BUT THEN YOU GET INTO THE BUILDING AND THEY CAN START AND IT'S JUST CAN BE ABSOLUTELY CRAZY. SO YOU FIND MOMENTS WITHIN THE DAY TO JUST WALK THROUGH THE COURTYARD TAKE MINDFULNESS WALKS, LEARN HOW TO EMBED MINDFULNESS PRACTICES INTO DAILY ACTIVITIES I THINK IS THE WAY TO APPROACH IT BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY ACTIVITIES WE CAN DO THAT DON'T REQUIRE A DEVOTED TIME ISOLATION OR A SEPARATE PLACE WHERE WE'RE ALL ALONE. THERE'RE LITTLE THINGS THAT WE DO. WE PRACTICE IT EVEN BEFORE-- I GO TO A

MEETING BEFORE I LEAVE IN OFFICE JUST TO SIT AND BE STILL JUST
EVEN FOR TWO MINUTES. IT'S SOMETHING THAT GROUNDS YOU IT
BALANCES YOU AND ALLOWS YOU TO DO IT OR WALKOUT IN THE COURTYARD
AND I HAVE A HABIT OF STARING AT TREES IT SOUNDS KIND OF FUNNY
BUT IT WAS A WAY TO FOCUS MY MIND SO I WOULD NOT ALLOW MY MIND
TO WANDER. AND IT'S VERY HELPFUL TO ME, BUT A LOT OF FOLKS DO IT
IN OTHER WAYS TOO. SO I DO IT I THINK THAT IN THE ARMY WE PUT SO
MUCH EMPHASIS ON TIME MANAGEMENT AND DOING PHYSICAL TRAINING
THEY'RE-- AND WE SAY WELL THERE'S NOT ANY MORE TIME IN A DAY FOR
SOLDIERS TO DO ONE MORE THING I WOULD SAY THERE IS REALLY IF
YOU'RE GOING TO MANAGE THE TIME YOU HAVE TO DO THIS ONE MORE
THING AND IF YOU DO THIS ONE MORE THING IF YOU PRACTICE IF YOU
PUT IT INTO YOUR DAILY ROUTINE YOU'LL FIND THAT YOU ACTUALLY
HAVE MORE TIME AND THAT YOU WERE ACTUALLY WASTING TIME ON THINGS
THAT JUST NEED TO BE DONE.

NASSIF: [MUSIC] LIEUTENANT GENERAL PYATT IS THE AUTHOR OF TWO
BOOKS. SHE CAME TO THE DOOR TO WAVE GOODBYE. A SOLDIER'S THOUGHTS
ABOUT FAMILY LIFE AND THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN. AND PAKTIKA THE
STORY OF THE 2ND BATTALION 27TH INFANTRY WOLFHOUD IN PAKTIKA
AFGHANISTAN. WE WILL CONCLUDE OUR DISCUSSION WITH THE GENERAL IN
OUR NEXT EPISODE. [MUSIC]

THIS NEXT PRACTICE, COMPASSION PRACTICE, IS VERY RELEVANT TO TODAY'S TIMES. MANY PEOPLE STRUGGLE WITH FEELING SAFE. PEOPLE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HEALTH WITH THE PANDEMIC AND HAPPINESS CAN BE ELUSIVE DUE TO THE SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SOCIAL DISTANCING THAT MANY FOLLOW TO PROTECT THEIR HEALTH. AND IF WE'RE NOT FEELING SAFE, HEALTHY, AND HAPPY THAT CAN STAND IN THE WAY OF FEELING FULFILLED AND AT PEACE. AND THIS ALSO IS RELEVANT TO THE DEPLOYED ENVIRONMENT WHERE YOU'RE SURROUNDED OFTEN TIMES BY ENEMY COMBATANTS. SAFETY AND HEALTH BECOME MAJOR CONCERNS AND WORRIES FOR OUR SOLDIERS AND OUR SERVICE MEMBERS AND ALSO BEING SOCIALLY ISOLATED FROM LOVED ONES BACK AT HOME FOR MONTHS AT A TIME. SO THE STRESS OF DEPLOYMENT CAN LEAVE MANY OF OUR SERVICE MEMBERS UNFULFILLED AND FEELING UNABLE TO FIND PEACE OF MIND SO THIS COMPASSION PRACTICE CAN REALLY HELP EXPAND OUR INNER CIRCLE, SO INSTEAD OF JUST HAVING COMPASSION FOR OUR LOVED ONES, OUR FAMILY, OUR FRIENDS, AND OUR COMRADES, WE CAN PERHAPS BEGIN TO EXPAND THAT COMPASSION TO OTHERS THAT WE DON'T KNOW AS WELL, THAT WE'RE NEUTRAL TOWARDS, OR THAT WE MIGHT EVEN HAVE DIFFERENCES WITH. RESEARCH ON COMPASSION PRACTICES HAS SHOWN STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE BRAIN IN AREAS THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR EMPATHY AND COMPASSION. AND SO, THE MORE WE PRACTICE THESE TYPES OF COMPASSION PRACTICES, THE MORE POSSIBLE THAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MAKING HARD CHANGES IN OUR BRAIN, REWIRING THOSE NEURAL CIRCUITS OF EMPATHY AND COMPASSION, WHICH MAY ALTER THE WAY WE

RESPOND TO SITUATIONS, SOME OF WHICH CAN BE VERY DIFFICULT IN OUR ENVIRONMENT. AND SO, BY EXPANDING THE CIRCLES OF WHOM WE SHARE OUR COMPASSION WITH AND OUR UNDERSTANDING WITH, THE MORE LIKELY WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS AND THE MORE LIKELY WE'RE ABLE TO REGULATE OUR EMOTIONS AND RESPOND MORE EFFECTIVELY TO LIFE'S CHALLENGES.

AND SO, THIS PRACTICE CAN HELP US IN A MYRIAD OF WAYS AND, AS GENERAL PIATT WAS QUOTED AS SAYING, COMPASSION CAN BE MORE POWERFUL THAN BULLETS.

AND SO, WE BEGIN THIS COMPASSION PRACTICE BY FINDING A COMFORTABLE POSITION EITHER SEATED OR LYING DOWN, EYES OPEN OR CLOSED, AND BEGIN TO SETTLE IN TO YOUR BREATH, BREATHING IN AND OUT.

AND FOCUS IN ON THE AREA OF YOUR CHEST AND YOUR HEART AND JUST BREATHING IN AND OUT THROUGH THIS AREA OF THE BODY, LENGTHENING THE BREATH ON THE INHALE AND EXHALE, AND BEGIN BY BRINGING TO MIND SOMEONE WHO HAS SUPPORTED YOU IN YOUR DEVELOPMENT OR IN YOUR OVERALL LIFE. IT MIGHT BE A BENEFACTOR, MENTOR, LEADER OR TEACHER, AND WITH THIS PERSON IN MIND, WISH THEM THE FOLLOWING REPEATING TO YOURSELF, MAY YOU BE SAFE. MAY YOU BE HEALTHY. MAY YOU BE HAPPY. MAY YOU BE FULFILLED AND AT PEACE.

[SILENCE]

AND NOW SHIFT YOUR ATTENTION TO SOMEONE YOU LOVE, LIKE A FAMILY MEMBER, A FRIEND, OR A PET, OR A SIGNIFICANT OTHER. AND WITH THIS PERSON IN MIND, WISH FOR THEM, "MAY YOU BE SAFE. MAY YOU BE HEALTHY. MAY YOU BE HAPPY. MAY YOU BE FULFILLED AND AT PEACE."

[SILENCE]

NOW BRING TO MIND SOMEONE YOU FEEL NEUTRAL ABOUT. PERHAPS SOMEONE YOU WORK WITH OR YOU SEE AT THE COFFEE SHOP OR CAFE OR DINING HALL OR STORE. SOMEONE YOU DON'T HAVE ANY STRONG FEELINGS TOWARDS ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. AND WITH THIS PERSON IN MIND, WISH FOR THEM, "MAY YOU BE SAFE. MAY YOU BE HEALTHY. MAY YOU BE HAPPY. MAY YOU BE FULFILLED AND AT PEACE."

[SILENCE]

NOW BRING TO MIND SOMEONE WITH WHOM YOU HAVE DIFFERENCES WITH, SUCH AS A DIFFERENT CULTURE, DIFFERENT OPINIONS, OR BELIEFS. AND WITH THIS PERSON IN MIND, WISH FOR THEM, "MAY YOU BE SAFE. MAY YOU BE HEALTHY. MAY YOU BE HAPPY. MAY YOU BE FULFILLED AND AT PEACE."

[SILENCE]

NOW BRING TO MIND AN IMAGE OF YOURSELF, EITHER AT THE PRESENT TIME IN YOUR LIFE OR WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER. AND WITH THIS IMAGE OF YOURSELF IN MIND, WISH FOR YOURSELF, "MAY YOU BE SAFE. MAY YOU BE HEALTHY. MAY YOU BE HAPPY. MAY YOU BE FULFILLED AND AT PEACE."

[SILENCE]

WE'RE TAKING A MOMENT NOW TO NOTICE IF YOU FEEL DIFFERENTLY THAN FROM WHEN YOU FIRST BEGAN THIS PRACTICE, SINCE WE'VE EXPAND THE CIRCLES OF THOSE WHO WE SHARE OUR COMPASSION WITH. AND BEGIN TO DEEPEN THE BREATH AND AWAKEN YOUR BODY AS YOU SLOWLY BEGIN TO RETURN TO THE ROOM WHERE YOU NOW SIT, AND, AS YOU'RE READY, OPENING YOUR EYES AND RETURNING TO THE PRESENT MOMENT.

WRAIR MINDS IS HOSTED BY ME, CAPTAIN TOM NASSIF. IT'S A PRODUCT OF THE WALTER REED ARMY INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH, COMMANDED BY COLONEL CLINT MURRAY AND THE US ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND, COMMANDED BY BRIGADIER GENERAL MICHAEL TALLEY. SPECIAL THANKS THIS WEEK TO COLONEL DEYDRE TEYHEN, COLONEL SUNSET BELINSKY OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS OF THE ARMY, AND OF COURSE, TO GENERAL PIATT. TODAY'S FINAL THOUGHT COMES FROM SEAMUS HEANEY, WHO WROTE, "BEAR WITH THE PRESENT. WHAT WILL BE WILL BE. THE FUTURE IS CLOTH WAITING TO BE CUT."

THANKS FOR LISTENING.

WE'LL SEE YOU IN TWO WEEKS.