

**VETERAN DISCUSSION GROUP PROGRAM**

**“Dialogues on the Experience of War”**

**Max Group Size:** 12

**Reserve Seat:** Please email Chris Weimer at cweimer@mcrdmhs.org. Seats will be reserved on a first come first serve basis and we ask that participants be able to attend a minimum of six of the discussions to qualify for the associated benefits.

**Group Purpose:** To gain a better understating of how the experience of war shapes us as groups and individuals. To better understand how the Command Museum can tell a more in depth and accurate story of those experiences to the public at large.

**Each program participant will receive the following (must participate in a minimum of 6 discussions to qualify):**

* Program Booklet with overview and areas for note taking
* Continental Breakfast for each session
* 1-year membership to Command Museum Foundation
* 1-year membership to Japanese Friendship Garden & free enrollment in the Path to Wellness Program
* 1-year membership to the USS Midway with private tour and simulator experience
* Copy of book: Service Poems

**Day 1**

**Date: Monday, March 26th**

**Time: 0800-1000**

**Location MCRD Command Museum**

**Topic Orientation & Back to Boot Camp**

* Introduce moderator and veterans
* Overview of program and definition of the “experience of war”
* Use scene from Boot Camp video to broach discussion on transitioning.
* View VRC Gallery and discuss how feelings surrounding decision to enlist.
* View Forward Deployed Gallery to broach discussion on deploying to and from combat.
* Topic: The Process of Transitioning. Remind veterans of the beginning of the transition from civilian to Marine. This is often the first of many major transitions in the life of that individual.
* Discuss the process of transitioning in relation to military service and the difficulties and challenges associated with it.
* Purpose: Focus the veteran’s minds and discussion on the principles, processes, and merits surrounding the process of transitioning from civilian to Marine, from combat to non-combat, etc. as it specifically relates to their beliefs and military experience.

**Day 2**

**Date: Monday, April 30th**

**Time: 0800-1000**

**Location: Japanese Friendship Garden Balboa Park**

**Topic: Path to Wellness Transition**

* The Transition Walk has five points that challenge the veterans to reflect on the transitions that have occurred due to their military experience and potentially how to view past and future transitions in a positive way.
* Purpose: Transitioning is a huge component to one’s experience in the military. Veterans often find the hardest transition occurs after life in the military. The goal is to do a deeper dive into those transitions and explore how they have shaped their views. This will help us, as a group, to gain insight on the true experiences and effects of transitioning.

**Day 3**

**Date: Monday, May 21st**

**Time: 0800-1000**

**Location: MCRD Command Museum**

**Topic: Command Decisions, the Media, and Operational Reality**

* Use Bruce Lack’s book on Service Poems to facilitate discussions about the experience of War on a variety of levels, but more specifically cultural perception both within the U.S. and abroad.
* View various displays in the museum dealing with culture as well as specific artifacts such as pieces of I.E.D.’s, tactical equipment, and forward deployed gallery to promote discussing modern warfare tactics and how perception of culture is changed by propaganda and experience.
* Purpose: Gain a better understanding of the “lens,” our service men and women view the local populous and cultures abroad and who those views shaped their experience. We also wish to gain a better understanding how their fellow U.S. citizens viewed them, their actions, and how that also shaped the views of their experiences

**Day 4**

**Date: Monday, June 25th**

**Time: 0800-1000**

**Location: USS Midway**

**Topic: Propaganda, Culture, Media, & Perception**

* Use excerpts from the book “Decision Points,” by George W. Bush to discuss the validity surrounding command decisions by individuals both “on the ground,” and outside where events occur.
* Use various images from the media portraying military and civilian leaders, on both Iraq and Afghanistan, to discuss media portrayal accuracy, leader image, and subsequent effects of the combination. i.e. President Bush press conference with banner saying: Mission Accomplished in the background.
* Purpose: To explore the effects of leadership, the decisions leaders make, and how they relate to the experiences of the men and women who carried out their orders. Also explore how the media portrays and effects those decisions.

**Day 5**

**Date: Monday, July 30th**

**Time: 0800-1000**

**Location MCRD Command Museum**

**Topic: Veteran Life**

* Discussing the many aspects of what does it mean to be a veteran? What is veteran life like? What challenges as a veteran does one attribute to their active duty service
* Purpose: The experience of active duty service does not end with the end of active service and is carried on through the rest of the servicemember’s life. The topic is meant to guide a discussion to identify what being a veteran in today’s world means to each participant and how their veteran life was/ is directly affected as a result of experiences through their active duty service.

**Day 6**

**Date: Monday, August 27th**

**Time: 0800-1000**

**Location: VFW Escondido**

**Topic: Veteran Life Cont’d**

* Continue to identify and define concepts and challenges from the previous month’s discussion pertaining to the veteran definition and challenges. Additionally, opening a discussion about what solutions are available to address the aforementioned challenges to provide resources and information on how to best address these challenges.
* Purpose: Identifying and recognizing challenges veterans face is the first step, addressing them and providing lasting positive impact is the second. An open discussion on the various experiences each veteran has had in finding solutions to their specific challenges will act as a sharing of information and creation of a network of resources each participant can rely on should they find themselves in need of any of the services/ resources discussed.

**Day 7**

**Date: Monday, September 24th**

**Time: 0800-1100**

**Location: Japanese Friendship Garden Balboa Park**

**Topic: Path to Wellness Gratitude**

* The Gratitude Walk has five points that encourage veterans to look back on all their experiences and relationships that have been forged in combat/ military service, both good and bad, and explore all the good things that have come as a result.
* Purpose: Often experiences in war and sometimes the military can be clouded with traumatic and negative experiences. This exercise will help identify positive aspects of military service, and even the shared experience of combat, and provide insight to how we can share those stories will the public at large. The goal is also to open participant’s minds to the positive experiences to help counter the negative.

**Day 8**

**Date: Monday, October 29th**

**Time: 0800-1000**

**Location: MCRD Command Museum**

**Topic: Recap**

* Final discussion about experiences of war and military service in a time of war. How have their views changed or potentially broadened? Has anything changed about anything in the way each veteran views a part of their time in the military?
* Discuss pros and cons of programs, lessons learned, and potential ways to improve for future.