

EDITOR'S MANUSCRIPT EVALUATION

56: Living with PTSD

Eduardo Felipe Habacon

Summary:

After years spent working as a dive instructor and paramedic, the author grapples with the harsh reality of PTSD, realizing it's not something that sheer toughness can overcome. His experiences in EMS, especially in the brutal Manitoba winters and under the stress of high-risk calls involving powerful medications like morphine and fentanyl, exposed him to overwhelming trauma. This led to his decision in August 2023 to seek medical help, a healing journey that he chronicles in this book. The manuscript builds on his previous work and is structured around his father's medical career, the author's dangerous dives in Thailand, the emotional collapse of a jailed instructor, facing racism in Canada, stories from hoarding households, complex psychological calls, the PTSD diagnosis process, and living with PTSD. It closes with insights gained from Miyamoto Musashi's *Dokkodo*, which shows how ancient wisdom helped guide the author's personal recovery.

BISAC codes:

BISAC or Book Industry Subject and Category codes are numbers that represent book categories. Whereas the search keywords are to help the reader locate your book, the BISAC codes are in place to help the retailer or book seller know in which section to stock or list your book. You are allowed a maximum of three codes for any given book, and they are sorted in order of relevance.

BIO036000 – Biography & Autobiography/Fire & Emergency Services

BIO017000 – Biography & Autobiography/Medical

BIO026000 – Biography & Autobiography/Personal Memoirs

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The following are some key thematic phrases based on the content of your book to get you started on reviewing and selecting your marketing keywords. We recommend you perform a Google search to understand what kind of results these phrases bring up. This will enable you

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to adjust or refine your keywords accordingly. If you would like additional support, please contact your publishing specialist.

- Living with PTSD
- Recovering from PTSD
- PTSD and emergency responders
- PTSD and paramedics
- PTSD memoir
- PTSD and healthcare workers
- PTSD medication

Opening Comments:

Thank you for submitting your manuscript to FriesenPress for review. This is a lively, honest, heartfelt account of what causes PTSD, what it's like to suffer from it, and the steps required to overcome it. It deals with some heavy issues, but you've also employed a crucial coping mechanism—humor—to help bring light to what can be a dark and debilitating condition. Considering all the pressure that has been placed on healthcare workers and first responders over the past few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, I see a large audience for this book. What follows is a more thorough editorial evaluation of your manuscript, detailing some of its strengths and potential areas of improvement as well as my recommendations for next steps.

Strengths:

One of the strongest aspects of this manuscript is how much of *you* is embedded throughout. One the one hand, this is a book about a topic—PTSD—but on the other, it's a firsthand account of your experience with this condition, including the problems it's posed for you and your attempts to find a solution or at least a way of accommodating your life to its debilitating effects. This is a comprehensive chronicle, going so far as to include your journal entries and detailed exchanges with your healthcare providers, so we can see how certain aspects of your struggle have played out in "real time." This level of honesty forges a strong emotional bond with your readers. By placing this level of trust in us, our tendency is to reciprocate. It also establishes you as authoritative on this issue. You're not just spinning fancy theories. It's clear from this book that the life lessons you draw from your experiences were built from the ground up through a process of trial and error. Once again, witnessing your learning process, which is still ongoing, helps normalize what others are experiencing. It's also inspirational because it makes the idea of recovery or at least progress seem achievable. Your frank discussion of your experiences with various medications is also illuminating and helpful. With opiate addiction having reached epidemic levels, the more honest conversations we can have around this issue,

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the better. Throughout it all, you keep your sense of humor intact, which creates a non-threatening, conversational tone.

Something else I appreciate about this book is your frankness about the reality of death and the need to face it. In this regard, the opening chapter helps set the appropriate tone. Unlike so many other parts of the world, North Americans tend to keep themselves well insulated against the reality of death. Therefore, when it happens, it's all the more shocking, increasing the chance of those who experience it developing PTSD. Showing how hearse drivers in the Philippines turn death into a sort of game or competition is macabre, but it also seems to be a healthy response to confronting rather than denying this reality. I also like how this chapter establishes the context for the rest of your life. Witnessing tragic accidents, firecracker injuries, alcohol-fueled car crashes, and violent stabbings caused you to become desensitized to physical trauma but deeply affected by human suffering, which is a fine line to walk. There's no question that someone who had such a unique childhood would eventually choose to follow the career path you have chosen. As someone who has minimal contact with Filipino culture, I also appreciated this fascinating window into that world.

Your writing style is also exciting and engaging. Not only are the more reflective sections honest and forthright—including your encounters with racism—your depiction of dramatic moments like your dive to the HTMS *Khram* with Ingrid and the other divers keeps readers on the edge of their seat. We know something bad is going to happen, but you take your time getting there, which keeps the pages turning. Thankfully, the outcome isn't tragic. After the close call, the image of Ingrid sitting in the bow of the boat, smoking, feels like her attempt to spite death. If it couldn't take her down there, it's not going to take her up here! In this way, not only do you do a good job of describing the experience; you also have a knack for conveying the characters in your stories. This includes characters like Bitiling the undertaker and Mang Manuel the mango farmer. You do a good job of blending humor, cultural observations, and grim reality.

Finally, I think the book is structured well. You provide some backstory, share some of your experiences in the Philippines, Thailand, and Canada, then show the consequences of these experiences and your attempts to deal with them. This is a clear, logical flow that makes sense in light of the subject matter and your purpose for writing. I also like how you summarize things by extracting life lessons at the end of various sections, making it easy for readers to get to the key points. Your use of scuba diving as a metaphor for knowing when to ascend and seek help is also highly effective. Long after readers forget the details of your book, this sort of image will stick in their mind as a reminder of the steps they need to take to deal with trauma. The same goes for your "riding" therapy and the key role your dogs have played in your healing. Readers may not emulate these solutions exactly, but it could inspire them to find similar forms of self-help that suit their lifestyle.