Ten (10) Things You Should Know To Bring Our Veterans Home

1. Veterans are not the same people they were prior to deployment. However, do not assume that their transformation is a bad thing. In fact, veterans often come home with more confidence, better problem-solving skills, a deeper sense of gratitude, a greater sense of purpose, and a sense of direction. Even though veterans may have deep wounds in their soul and spirit, the good news is that there are tremendous resources out there to help heal the wounds of veterans and their families.

2. What happened to veterans during deployment is not a simple black-and-white situation. In many cases, there are positive things that had come out of their deployment experience. Likewise, there are very difficult issues that veterans had to face in their return back home. The bottom line is to not make any assumptions about the experiences of veterans.

3. Veterans may be physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually exhausted when they get back home. They often do not have the energy or focus to talk for long periods of time. It may take veterans time to adjust, so the best approach is to follow their lead.

4. It is quite common for veterans to have the need to go back to the war zone. The reasons could be a need to finish a mission, support their buddies, or sometimes a feeling that they can no longer fit in the American society. Regardless of reason, it would be polite to simply accept any of the reasons expressed by veterans.

5. The worst question to ask a veteran is “Did you kill anyone?” The United States military personnel do not take killing lightly and it would be inappropriate for anyone to discuss such a sensitive issue or pass judgment with veterans. If veterans do bring up the issue, it would be wise to simply listen and show empathy.

6. It is very difficult for veterans to describe weather temperatures during deployment in a war zone, so it would be best not to ask them about it. Instead, simply imagine putting on every piece of your winter gear in multiple layers, wear a metal bowl over your head, turn your oven on to 120 degrees, climb inside, and live there for six (6) months.

7. No matter what the veteran’s opinion about the war, every service member had taken a solemn oath to support and follow our Commander-In-Chief, the President of the United States, and therefore cannot say anything derogatory about him.

8. Veterans are as varied in their political beliefs as everyone else in America. Some are adamantly against the war, others staunchly support it, and everyone else falls somewhere in between. Do not assume that everyone who joins the military is a card-carrying right-winger.

9. Veterans do not think of themselves as heroes, no matter how extraordinary their skills, courage, or actions. Their heroes are those who are still deployed and those who made the ultimate sacrifice of coming home in flag-draped box.

10. OIF stands for Operation Iraqi Freedom, also known as the Iraq War, and it began on March 20th, 2003. OEF stands for Operation Enduring Freedom and is a multinational military operation aimed at dismantling terrorist groups, mostly in Afghanistan. It officially commenced on Oct. 7, 2001 in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks.