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War and the Soul

David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave”

Interviews Edward Tick, Ph.D.

(Transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio.com](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio.com) by Renata Sielecki)

**Excerpt:** Psychology doesn't tend to take into account enough regarding our coming of age experiences--the way we turn into young men and young women, what was going on that time and the experiences we had. Psychology has been prejudiced since Freud toward early childhood experiences. Well, of course, growing up during a war is profoundly affecting and whether we went or didn't go, what we did during the war or instead of the war profoundly affects the rest of our lives.

Introduction: That was the voice of my guest, Edward Tick, Ph.D., who is a psychotherapist, writer, poet, mythologist, international journey guide and transformational healer. He's been working with veterans and survivors of violence and trauma for 30 years and he's founder and director of the non-profit Soldier's Heart Foundation, dedicated to creating community-based veteran's safe return initiatives across the country. He guides educational, healing, therapeutic and reconciliation projects nationally and internationally. He leads regular healing journeys to Vietnam, Greece and other countries.

Dr. Tick is author of the award winning book, *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*. Other books by Dr. Tick are *The Golden Tortoise: Journeys in Viet Nam*, *The Practice of Dream Healing: Bringing Ancient Greek Mysteries into Modern Medicine* and *Sacred Mountain: Encounters With the Vietnam Beast*.

In all this work, Dr. Tick applies his own innovative, holistic and spiritually-based model of post-traumatic stress disorder treatment based on worldwide research into war and the warrior tradition to

support the survivor in developing an enlarged and strengthened identity and spirituality that can carry, integrate and give meaning to the traumatic experience.

Now, here's the interview:

Dr. Dave: Dr. Edward Tick, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Edward Tick: Thank you Dr. Dave. I'm honored to be with you.

Dr. Dave: Well, I'm really happy to have you here and I should let our listeners know that my son, Matthew, who lives in New York City is visiting. And he's going to be on the call with us. He's here in the studio, as it were, with me. And of course, Ed, you're located where?

Edward Tick: I'm in Albany, New York.

Dr. Dave: Albany, New York. And Matthew, you want to say a word here?

Matthew Van Nuys: Hi, everyone. It's a pleasure to be here. Uh, that's it.

Dr. Dave: Okay, great. So Ed, actually, it was one of my listeners who called my attention to your work and gave me a link to a speech that you had given that was on the Internet. And so, I listened to that speech and it was such a wonderful and moving talk that I immediately knew that I wanted to have you as a guest on Shrink Rap Radio. And then you were kind enough to send me a copy of your most recent book, *War and the Soul*, and I've been reading in that. And that's really wonderful. And to get us started, I would like to have you read the first couple of paragraphs from your introduction on page one. If you just read those first two paragraphs.

Edward Tick: I'd be happy to. "The mortars have stopped falling. The tracers have stopped screaming. The mountains, jungles and

villages have stopped smouldering. But years later, veterans still have nightmares and flashbacks in which old battles still rage. They still watch for threats and stand poised for danger. Their hearts respond to every day situations as though they were vicious attacks and to ordinary relationships as though they were with long-gone comrades and enemies.

Though hostilities cease and life moves on, and the loved ones yearn for their healing, veterans often remain drenched in the imagery and emotion of war for decades and sometimes for their entire lives. For these survivors, every vital human characteristic that we attribute to the soul may be fundamentally reshaped. These traits include how we perceive; how our minds are organized and function; how we love and relate; what we believe, expect and value; what we feel and refuse to feel; and what we judge as good or evil, right or wrong. Though the affliction that today we call post-traumatic stress disorder has had many names over the centuries, it is always the result of the way war invades, wounds and transforms our spirit.”

Dr. Dave: That's such a good lead-in to the book and to your work. And by the way, if there are other passages that you'd like to share with us as we move on into the interview, please feel free to put them in wherever it makes sense.

So, perhaps you could tell us a bit about your work and how you came to write this book.

Edward Tick: Well, I am not a veteran myself. I am of the Viet Nam Generation. I'm 56 years old now. I turned 18 in 1969 at the height of the war. And psychology doesn't tend to take into account enough regarding our coming of age experiences--the way we turn into young men and young women, what was going on that time and the experiences we had. Psychology has been prejudiced since Freud toward early childhood experiences. Well, of course, growing up during a war is profoundly affecting and whether we went or didn't go, what we did during the war or instead of the war,

profoundly affects the rest of our lives.

So I was in college protesting the war. My first year in college, the student deferments were ended and the lottery system was instituted. And I really wasn't sure what I would do if I were pulled from college and drafted. I was utterly against the war and actively protesting it. I thought about going to war as a medic because I felt responsibility and obligation to serve and to be by the side, sharing the dangers that some our generation wore. But I was also against the war and I was working on my conscientious objector plea. And then I got a high lottery number and suddenly, personally, I was off the hook. The war still went on, of course. Lots of people stopped protesting when they were no longer personally endangered. I kept protesting and then the war ended, you'll remember, in 1975.

Fast-forwarding a few years now, after college I relocated to a rural part of central New York State and it was an area in which many Viet Nam veterans, both from rural and poor families and also New York City refugees who could no longer handle the stress of a big city, all relocated to this rural area. And by the late '70s, I was a young psychotherapist beginning to learn and practice the art and calling. And veterans started to come into my practice. Now, post-traumatic stress disorder was not entered as a diagnostic category in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual until 1980. So this was before we in the contemporary world knew about PTSD. But it was very clear to me, working with these veterans what was wrong, how profoundly distorted and disturbed they had become by their war experiences. And in contrast what I had escaped and what others of our generation escaped and didn't suffer.

Dr. Dave: Yes, I escaped as well. I was in graduate school at the time and so was able to get a deferment by virtue of both being in graduate school, being married, eventually having children. But I don't want to interrupt your narrative. Go ahead.

Edward Tick: No, but your comment is important in that, whatever we experienced at the time, whether we went to war or avoided it

and how we avoided it, profoundly affected how we developed as adults, our later behaviors and values and lifestyles. And I'll throw in the footnote that I've worked with so many men of the Viet Nam Generation who are not veterans and most of them as well, have had to come to terms with not serving and how that shaped and affected them. And whether or not they feel like they ever became men or ever gave forms of alternative service. So what we did or didn't do is of utmost importance.

Dr. Dave: Yes, I see.

Edward Tick: Well, what happened for me was that, beginning to work with veterans, I felt profound concern and compassion for them and also, I'm thinking of James Hillman's book, *A Terrible Love of War*. I felt in myself the curiosity and attraction. Not to war in that I wanted to go but a fascination with trying to understand, really comprehend from within what the experience of war was like. What happened to our peers in Viet Nam. What they went through, what they saw, what they did, what is the impact on them, what happened to the Vietnamese. And it became a compelling area of investigation for me.

In addition, the need was so great as it is today, for veteran's healing and there, in our contemporary culture, seems to be so little known about how to treat it that I really got swept up into this work as into a life calling.

Dr. Dave: Well, let's talk about there for a moment because in the book you say conventional treatment for people with PTSD is not sufficient. So maybe you can talk about in what ways it falls short.

Edward Tick: Sure.

Dr. Dave: It sounded like I derailed you from somewhere else that you were going also. Feel free...

Edward Tick: [laughter] [overlapping speech] That's all right.

Dr. Dave: ...to finish that thought. [laughs]

Edward Tick: [laughs] I'll put them together, thank you.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Edward Tick: Thank you for noticing that but I can put the end of my story together quickly with your important question about treatment. I gave the best conventional therapy I possibly could at the time for my first eight years of work with veterans. And by the mid-1980s, when I had had quite significant numbers of cases and enough years of experience with veterans--and it wasn't only treatment, I became very involved with veteran advocacy, I was an advisor to a number of their organizations and also training other therapists in doing veteran work. So what I discovered is that the experience of war is so debilitating, so terrifying, so utterly unlike anything in civilian life, it penetrates to the core of our being. It changes every aspect of the self. As I said in the introductory remark you had me read, it changes how we think, how we feel; it changes the shape of our minds; it changes us physiologically; it propels us into questions of ultimate concern rather than everyday trivial concern. Why am I here? Why did I survive? What makes human beings able to be so cruel and bestial? It changes our moral sensibilities. We become, in war, we become agents of death and destruction when, in life, we want to be agents of creation and life affirmation.

So I learned through the doing of psychotherapy as best I could and also through investigating this problem quite extensively with other therapists, with veterans and eventually doing worldwide study and search of the warrior tradition around the world in other times, other places, other cultures both present and past, that war wounds us too holistically, too thoroughly on every level of our being such that conventional therapy can be helpful certainly and can help mitigate or ameliorate post-traumatic stress disorder and its symptoms but it doesn't penetrate us deeply enough. It doesn't go

far enough. It can't touch us and transform us holistically enough by itself so that post-traumatic stress disorder truly heals.

And while I had very good experiences and success in helping many veteran clients, I took the calling to look for healing from post-traumatic stress disorder very seriously and began studying, investigating, practicing more spiritually-based and holistic forms of healing and then adapting them to working with veterans and other war survivors and found that, in fact, when we add other components, in particular spiritual components and draw on archetypal and mythological traditions and use them in therapy, and also when we step beyond the therapy setting and respond to the pain, anger and grief that is in the center of post-traumatic stress disorder and in the center the veteran's experience, and look for real-world action steps that directly answer the wounds that we really can bring significant and even sometimes complete healing and transformation to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Dr. Dave: Well, we'll come back, maybe towards the end of the interview we'll come back more to some of the actual treatment interventions that you've developed but I'm interested in exploring more the mythological and the spiritual dimensions here that you've alluded to. You talk about this as being a wound to the soul. That the soul is kind of ripped out of the soldiers. And I have to say that you write beautifully about the soul in talking about what the soul is. Some of the best writing on that topic that I've seen. Very clear and down-to-earth, and really not all that mystical. So perhaps you can say something about why you've chosen to see this as a wound to the soul and just exactly how you define the soul.

Edward Tick: Well, perhaps we'll start with how I define the soul.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Edward Tick: And then talk about how it's wounded. I actually find it one of the many tragic dimensions of the age in which we love...uh, live. The age in which we love. [laughs]

Dr. Dave: And live. [laughs]

Edward Tick: Let's stop there [laughter]. One of the tragic dimension of our age is that we even have to try to define the soul and enter into arguments about whether there is a soul and try to provide scientific validity for a concept that has been around as long as human beings have. And that most cultures, most times and places, have taken as a defacto aspect of existence. So the simplest way I would call, I would say that the soul is the center of our being: the divine spark that is planted in everyone of us. That mysterious thing that differentiates us from dead matter.

But we can't know the soul directly and instead we know it by all of its traits and attributes. And it has been defined variously throughout time by philosophers and theologians and poets, really by its attributes. So the soul has been known as the center of human consciousness and experience--that which makes us aware, that which gives us self-consciousness. It's been differentiated from the body. It's not the body but the principle that awakens and vivifies the body, that turns matter into something more, something special. It's been known as the vital spirit that creates and preserves life.

Dr. Dave: I think you also talk about it as the part of us that is drawn to beauty and appreciates beauty.

Edward Tick: Yes, Plato said that beauty is the food for the soul and the soul is that...just what you said. That which is drawn to and appreciates and perceives beauty. It's also been associated with the heart. Some cultures say that our soul dwells in our heart and that what we feel and how we feel and why we feel comes from the soul.

It's also been associated with our moral sensibilities and this is very important in understanding the impact of war because our morality is turned on its head during war and destruction. So Socrates said that the soul is that in us that differentiates right from wrong, good

from evil. And so we can say the soul is the seat of our moral system as well.

Other philosophers have said the soul is the seat of our will and that we know that we are soulful people because when we are motivated from within, driven by our will, that comes from the soul. And we can observe people who have been wounded in their soul by people who don't have inner drive or will or motivation. There's something trying to unfold in us, we have a daemon or a genius or a purpose that we're driven towards and the soul wants to fulfill that purpose. And if we are flat and without will or motivation then we may be wounded in the soul and lost our sense of uniqueness and purpose. So all I define the soul as the source and the seat of all of these traits.

Dr. Dave: In your book, you tell stories of interactions with veterans who seem to respond immediately to addressing them about issues of soul.

Dr. Dave: Oh, it's quite remarkable and beautiful. And this actually helps us understand unique dimensions of the war experience. Veterans, of course, have been transformed by both their military and their war experiences. And it's even important to differentiate those because the military experience is transformative and it's meant to be. So people who have been in the military, even if they've never been to war but only served state-side, served perhaps during peacetime or had safe, secure state-side jobs or overseas jobs and were not exposed to violence have still been transformed by military training and duty and service.

And the military, of course, seeks to transform a civilian into a soldier or sailor or marine and substitutes different shapes to all soul traits so that people are trained to think and to feel and to act and to believe differently according to military rules and dictates. In addition to that, someone who has been to war is transformed again by, and this certainly gets us into the mythological dimension, a person who has been to war has been to hell.

When general Sherman famously said, "War is hell," from the civilian world we tend to take that as a metaphor. War is like hell or war is like how we imagine hell to be. But war survivors are not speaking metaphorically. War really is a living hell and people who have been to it have been transformed by their time in hell and so all of the soul functions have been affected and transformed according to the rules and principles of hell. Now, veterans often, because they've been to hell and because one of the ways we can understand post-traumatic stress disorder is a consciousness that has been shocked by its descent into hell and got stuck there, PTSD is a form of consciousness--an altered state of consciousness whereby the mind and the heart and the soul are still operating as if they are at war, as if they are still in hell. They haven't come back.

And so vets understand and readily talk about the ultimate dimensions. The very first case I report in my book, *War and the Soul*, was of a Viet Nam combat veteran who was at the Siege of Khe Sanh. And he, on his own, spontaneously during our very first therapy session described to me his experience of losing his soul during the battle at Khe Sanh. I often introduce soul language and soul talk and I use mythical stories and language with veterans and they quite readily respond. It's very easy for them to describe their combat experiences in soulful terms or with reference to mythological stories.

Dr. Dave: Let me just interject for a moment. That's very interesting because these are people who are famously edgy, suspicious, often angry, hostile, particularly to people who have not been to war themselves and who've not shared that experience. Somehow you're able to very quickly bond with them and get them to accept you.

Edward Tick: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: Why do you think that's the case?

Edward Tick: I'd say there are a few reasons. One is that, as we're

saying, I immediately do soul talk with them. I know they've been utterly transformed and are living in a different realm of consciousness and I speak...uh, there's a shamanic analogy here as well and later we can talk about the usefulness of shamanism in helping to heal PTSD. But of course, the essence of shamanism is that the shaman travels in the spirit world in service to his patients. And whenever I'm with a veteran, especially a combat veteran, I know that they're in another world. They're souls are still there. And I think if post-traumatic stress disorder as that condition. The soul is stuck in the underworld.

And so, I go there with them and talk and seek to join them where they are in the underworld and create a relationship there showing them that I know the ways of the underworld, I get it. Veterans are looking for people who get it. Who really comprehend how profoundly disturbed, distorted, violent their world is and the consciousness they're stuck in.

So I don't try to drag veterans back to the civilian world. I don't believe that the civilian form of consciousness is necessarily better. I don't assume that they should be functioning in our everyday form of consciousness but rather I seek to join them in the archetypal world they are dwelling in because of their descent into hell. And then we work together to find our way back out of that world.

Dr. Dave: Now, you talk about war as a rite of passage and it seems like our culture in particular is lacking in rites of passage that other cultures have had, particularly for adolescent males who seem to have a drive for adventure and risk and so on. And I know that as an adolescent, late adolescence, I put my life at risk from what an adult perspective would now seem kind of foolish ways.

Edward Tick: Didn't seem foolish at the time. Right?

Dr. Dave: No, it didn't it didn't seem foolish at the time

Edward Tick: No, in fact...

Dr. Dave: Also I think, growing up during World War II as I did, and then also living through the Viet Nam Era, I, as a male, I was always girding myself psychically for war.

Edward Tick: Yes.

Dr. Dave: Dreading it but I figured it was inevitable that I might have to go to war and so the games of childhood and adolescence often centered around that kind of preparation and testing of courage and so on.

Edward Tick: Yes, well, that was true for me as well and that was the dominant experience for almost all males growing up, not just in American culture but in most times and places in history. Of course, there are variations between individuals and cultures about the degree to which males are prepared for war as they grow up and also the attitudes toward war and how we should prepare. But beyond those individual and cultural variations, warfare has been nearly universal experience throughout recorded history. I don't think it's so throughout all of history but since we've had mass urban civilizations and since we transitioned from the matriarchy to the patriarchy and since we've had written records. So we're talking about approximately the last 5000 or so years of history.

Scholars count over 15,000 wars with definitive outcomes in the last 5000 years. They don't even try to count all the wars that were fought to a draw. So we're talking about 3 or 4 wars a year going on anywhere around the world for all of recorded history. And there are very few cultures we know of that did not have wars, warriors or even a word for war. There are a few but those cultures were quite isolated. They weren't threatened by neighbors. They didn't have to compete for land or food supplies. So some tribes in the Amazon rainforest, Minoan civilization in ancient Crete didn't have or need warriors. But beyond that, it seems to be nearly universal human experience.

War in traditional times and among traditional peoples was much more limited in the extent of danger, damage, destructiveness that was practiced. And Jungian psychology has recognized that we have what we call a warrior archetype built into our psyches that needs to be developed, expressed, its energies and traits need to be channeled. So all of these things say to me that some form of conflict and the identity of warrior are universal or nearly universal in human experience and we can't just wish or want to be at peace but rather need to face and channel the competitive and conflicting and aggressive parts of ourselves and develop some kind of warrior identity. And that males in particular have this built into our psyches and will seek, as you rightly observe, spontaneously seek risk-taking behavior, challenging ordeals and need rites of passage to develop the warrior part of ourselves.

Bigger problems emerge, of course, in the ways particular cultures, especially our American culture, uses or misuses, misdirects the urge towards warriorhood for violent political and economic ends.

Dr. Dave: Okay, I think, Matthew wants to ask a question, make a comment.

Matthew Van Nuys: Yeah, that's really interesting to me, Ed, when you were speaking about over a 5000 year span 1,500 wars being fought and of course....

Edward Tick: 15,000, Matthew. I wish it were...

Matthew Van Nuys: Oh, 15,000. I'm sorry. I was wondering [overlapping speech]

Edward Tick: No, I wish it were only 1,500.

Matthew Van Nuys: [laughter] 15,000 in 5000 years...I'm sorry, so...and this idea that it spans almost every culture, every civilization, this idea of warriorhood. And I was going to ask, it sounds like this is what you're getting to now but how our culture

has, where one warrior might be fighting over territory or for agricultural purposes or what have you, and then taking a war like the Viet Nam war, where so many of the young men who must have had to go and fight and a lot of the young men who didn't, how arbitrary that war must have seemed. And especially the process like a lottery, how arbitrary that might have seemed and how they might have prepared themselves for that. Is that...?

Edward Tick: Yes, that's a very good point. And it really gets to the heart of our challenge here. If we discover together that the warrior archetype is built into us, especially us males and we need to test it, train it and prove it somehow. And we are attracted to risk-taking behavior and will get involved in challenging and confronting activities in order to evolve the warrior part of us, that's one part of us that is biological, psychological, spiritually based. And men of all times and places are attracted to it and we play games in childhood to prepare for it and we try to unfold it in our adulthood.

That is really different than mass technological warfare as we practice it in the modern era. Two men facing off on an open field with fists or swords or spears are a different matter than 10,000 men facing off with weapons of horrific destructive capabilities wiping each other out in horrible numbers and maiming the ones who aren't killed and driving everyone else crazy. So war has transformed from a rite of passage and an ordeal of testing--a form of male development--to a practice of mass slaughter that kills, maims or drives mad nearly everyone who participates in it.

However, it's extraordinary how attractive war still is to people. Our military uses the old form of attraction to hook people into signing up. So we see commercials on television, for example, or in the movie theatres or literature showing a proud marine with a sword or a laser beam slaying a dragon. We are told: "Be an army of one."

Dr. Dave: Right.

Edward Tick: There's no such thing as an army of one.

Dr. Dave: [laughter]

Edward Tick: You can't be an army of one and in the modern era, if you try to be an army of one, you might last a second on the battlefield. But the mythic attraction to warriorhood is still used to call people into service and its manipulated and more profoundly, it's what young people are looking for.

So we're at a very strange place in our evolution where war has become so destructive that it is anachronistic to the mythic calling but young people, by the millions are still attracted to the mythic calling and will enlist and go off to war thinking that they can fulfill it, that they can be a grail knight who is going off to rescue Iraq all by themselves. And part of the trauma is, when you get to the battlefield, you find out, "Oh, there's no glory here. There are no heroics here." It is, in fact, a mass destruction and matter of utmost chance who lives and who dies. It's not about me being smarter or faster or a better swordsman or a more clever spy. It's just where the mortars and bombs fall and where the shrapnel flies.

And so we seek warriorhood for experience....and the mythic warrior is wiped out by the experience of modern war.

Dr. Dave: You know, that might relate to something else that you said in the book, where you say PTSD is not best understood as a stress disorder but rather as an identity disorder.

Edward Tick: Yes, it relates well. Veterans tend to hate the phrase PTSD because it pathologizes them and because it rates them in relation to civilian functioning when they know they have become something else. They're identity has been changed forever by the experience of both the military and combat if they were in it. Since the entire person has changed and they are in a new identity, it makes much more sense to help them recreate an identity that includes the military and war experiences with the thoughts, the feelings, the meanings, the values that a warrior carries.

Dr. Dave: Well, let's talk about that because I know you've studied many traditions to develop an approach to the healing of these wounded warriors and you've drawn on shamanic practices, the ancient Greeks, Native American traditions, Vietnamese traditions and others. And out of all of that, you've developed some specific techniques to promote soul healing.

Edward Tick: Yes.

Dr. Dave: Go ahead and tell us about that.

Edward Tick: Well, of course, most people are aware that we do a woeful job in bringing our veterans home. We spend so much time, effort and money transforming them into soldiers, sailors and marines and then giving them the military experience. And then homecoming is supposed to be quick and easy, as if it were simply enough to take them out of the war zone, get them home as quickly as possible, tell them they're out of danger now and get back to civilian life. It's not possible and the extent of PTSD and all the associated problems, suicide and homicide and substance abuse and homelessness, broken marriages, failed employment. All of that is evidence of that you cannot just be taken back home, dumped on safe soil and told to get on with your life. It doesn't work.

Dr. Dave: And evidently, even tribal traditions acknowledge that, knew that. The Native Americans, I think you talk about traditions that they had for re-integrating the warrior back into tribal life.

Edward Tick: Yes, as you rightly observed, I've studied that and practiced with Native American people and also with other traditions to study this very question. Since other traditions had warriors, I hoped and assumed that they might have had more wisdom in how to bring their warriors home. So, for example, the Native American tradition: tribes had extensive ceremonies and rituals by which they brought their warriors home. And they didn't wait, as we do, for a year or two or three, in the combat zone before they began working

to heal the impact of war.

But rather, for example, in my book I extensively reference the practices of the Papago people. It's a great example. There are others we could quote as well, but among the Papagos they had a 19 day ceremony of return for a young warrior after his first battle experience in which he had encounters with death. So you could be on the battlefield for one hour and you would need almost three weeks of attention in order to return safely to your home. And there were many aspects of the ritual of return that are worth studying carefully to see how we can transform our warrior's identities from young man whose innocence has been blown away to mature warrior who can carry the experience.

Some of the qualities of the rituals--and these are cross-cultural qualities--include the necessity for purification and cleansing after a combat experience. The importance of storytelling. Some of our contemporary practices don't even allow veterans to tell their war stories but rather say, for example, stress reduction techniques often teach trauma survivors to avoid the memory and never talk about the story because that'll trigger the symptoms. That's exactly the opposite of traditional wisdom that says the stories must be told, there is healing power in storytelling and the stories must be told to the tribe you served. So we need purification...

Dr. Dave: And I think that the story would honored. That that would be part of it.

Edward Tick: Yes, that's quite an important part. Yes, the story is honored and the warrior is never condemned for his part in the story. The story is even more than honored. The individual warrior's story becomes the warrior mythology of the tribe or culture. So its even more than honoring the story. It's letting the survivor know that he is held in high regard and that what he did was for the people to preserve and protect the people.

The primary purpose of participating in war was not to cause death

and destruction but rather a warrior actually has positive and affirmative motivations of protection and preservation of the people. So even if people disagreed with the conflicts or the politics behind it, they didn't blame the warrior for that as we unfortunately did during Viet Nam. But they saw that the warrior's impulse was to preserve and protect the people and that he was willing to give great sacrifice, even into sacrificing his life.

And so that willingness and sacrifice was always honored. And even further, another necessary ingredient that traditional cultures practice and we don't is restitution, in the family and the nation, where the warrior returning home goes through processes of transferring the responsibility he feels for the actions he took to the tribe or to the culture.

So in Native American societies, part of the ritual for bringing the warrior home was hearing his stories in all kinds of ways--verbal storytelling, what we would call expressive art therapy, you know painting your shields, painting your stories on your teepee, doing the war dance. The war dance was originally not to whip oneself into a frenzy to go off and fight. The war dance was psychodramatic reenactment of the battle after you came home. To turn the energies of combat into an art form that could tell the stories to the culture and also discharge the emotions and the physiological reactions that are still galloping through the warrior.

So after the stories were told in these many different ways, then the civilians of the tribe would turn to the warrior and through ritual, lift the responsibility for the actions off the warrior. So they essentially said, "You did these actions in our name. Therefore, we are all responsible. We carry, whatever feelings you have are our feelings. You're not guilty, you don't have to be ashamed. You did this for us. We are responsible for carrying it."

This is something that our culture has utterly refused to do. We leave the burden of the actions during war on the individual soldiers and when our wars are so morally and politically suspect as they

have been throughout our lifetimes, the soldiers collapse under the moral pain and trauma of their actions while our culture doesn't take responsibility and lift them off the veterans.

Dr. Dave: Well, that sounds like such wonderful work. And I know that you've taken these notions and you've concretized them in your own work in terms of developing rituals and other processes to use with groups of veterans. I wish we had more time. Unfortunately, it's got to be a somewhat time-limited interview here. I have lots more questions. Your book is so provocative but we probably need to begin to wind down here. I'm under the impression that you're working on another book. Can you say anything about what you're working on?

Edward Tick: Oh, yes. Thank you for inviting that. Well, I just have a monograph that just came out and you would be interested and some of your listeners as well, I think. It's called *Wild Beasts and Wandering Souls* and it is specifically the use of shamanism for understanding and treating post-traumatic stress disorder. That's hot off the press from Elik Press in Salt Lake City. It's just a 30 page or so monograph focusing on shamanism and how I use it for veterans.

Beyond that, I'm presently working on a book that should be out by next summer or fall, which is, in answer to some of the questions you're asking, many clinicians and clergy and community leaders from around the country have read my book, *War and the Soul*, and they've basically said, "How do we do this? Thank you for helping us understand post-traumatic stress disorder from the standpoint of the soul but how do we really do the work and what kind of programs should we be creating in our houses of worship and in our communities that can truly help our veterans transition home from these new wars?" So my new book is going to be a guidebook for how to actually do soul-based and community-based healing with veterans and war survivors.

Dr. Dave: Wonderful. Wonderful. And I know that you've also got a

workshop coming up in September, somewhere in the mid-West. What can you tell us about that?

Edward Tick: Thanks. Several upcoming events that your listeners might be interested in. The weekend of mid-September, September 13th-16th, I'm running an intensive retreat in Wheaton, Illinois, right outside Chicago. At the national headquarters of the Theosophical Society. And this'll be a four day intensive retreat for veterans, clinicians, clergy, family members of veterans, where we will immerse together in the soul healing work necessary for helping veterans come home.

I'll be in your territory in mid-October. Also the middle of October, it's the 16th through the 19th, I'll be presenting this work at the annual Bioneers Conference in San Rafael.

Dr. Dave: Oh, yes, that's just down the road from me. I hope you'll let me know about that. I'd love to get together with you.

Edward Tick: Great. Let's plan that. Thank you.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Edward Tick: And then, right after that on the 19th, I lead healing journeys back to Viet Nam every year for veterans and others because all of us Americans have reconciliation work to do with Viet Nam. So from the Bioneers Conference, I leave directly for Viet Nam and take about a dozen vets and their loved ones and anyone else interested in a profound healing journey back to Viet Nam. So those are all coming up in the next couple of months.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Edward Tick: Some of the ways that I make this work active.

Dr. Dave: Great. I'll try to let the...I'll put...definitely will put a link to your website on the show notes of this show...

Edward Tick: Wonderful. Thank you.

Dr. Dave: ..so that people will be able to track you down.

Matthew Van Nuys: Edward, thank you for allowing me to sit in on the interview. Fascinating, fascinating and I think, really important work. I had a number of questions but I could see the time winding down and I really didn't want to cut into my dad's time. But I look forward to reading the book myself. I read a couple of passages and I agree with everything that my dad said. It's a compelling, very emotional read. So thank you for allowing me to sit in on your interview. And best of luck.

Edward Tick: Oh, you're welcome. Happy to have you and it is of utmost importance that in every form we can, we get people gathering in small groups and large all over the country and world, really wrestling with these issue.

Matthew Van Nuys: I agree.

Edward Tick: Yeah. So I'm glad you're here.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Dr. Edward Tick, thanks so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Edward Tick: You're welcome. Honored to be with you, Dr. Dave.

[end of interview]