

This companion book offers a way home from the darkness, disconnection, grief and pain of aloneness. It will walk with you into healing and meaning through connection to Tribe. Its presence will be your guiding light and compass.

You Are Not Alone

A Veteran and First Responder Companion

by Barry Zworestine

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BARRY ZWORESTINE

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

A Veteran
and First Responder Companion



FOREWORD BY

Maj.Gen.Gregg F. Martin, USA (Ret.) and

Maj.Gen.Dan McDaniel, DSC, AM, DSM, Australia (Ret.)

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WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT

“You Are Not Alone - A Veteran and First Responder Companion”

Let me say this clearly: “You Are Not Alone” is more than a resource. It is a lifeline. It is for the Protector sitting in the quiet hours of the night wondering if anyone truly sees them. It is for the families and professionals trying to understand. It is for the Protector who has fought hard and now needs to rest, reflect, and remember that they still matter. To every Protector who picks up this book: this journey may be hard, but you do not have to make it alone. Barry’s words are steady footsteps beside yours. Let this book guide you home to your Tribe, to your wellness, and to a faith that perhaps you thought you had lost but was waiting to be rediscovered all along.

Gregg F. Martin, PhD

Major General, US Army (Retired)
Author, “BIPOLAR GENERAL: My Forever War
with Mental Illness”

For every veteran who has felt the quiet weight of unspoken experiences, or the pull of solitude, this work offers a hand on the shoulder. It invites

reflection without judgement, connection without pressure, and identity without expectation. May it help you find steadiness in stillness, purpose in quiet, and rediscover the parts of yourself that war never took—only set aside for a time.

**Major General (Ret.) Dan McDaniel, DSC, AM,
DSM**

Authenticity and trust matter. I trust Barry Zworestine, and I trust his message. The insights in this book, drawn from real experience, offer meaningful guidance for anyone seeking to grow. My family has benefited from his work, and yours will too.

-Colonel Greg Daly
DSC, AM-former Commanding Officer-The
Australian SAS Regiment

Mentorship does not require rank, position, or permission. It requires only a willingness to show up for someone else, just as others once did for us. This book offers a way to do that. Within its pages, there is something for everyone, those preparing to leave service, those already adjusting to civilian life, and those still finding their footing years later. It provides a structure for reflection, conversation, and growth.

But more importantly, it provides a bridge: a way to turn your lived experience into support for others who may be walking through moments you recognise, even if their story is not the same as your own.

COL Matt Stevens, DSC, CSC

Former Australian SAS Patrol, Troop and Sabre Squadron Commander. Former CO 1st Commando Regiment.

I'm a long-time friend of Barry and one of the reasons I love him and his writing so much is he doesn't preach or prescribe. It feels as though he is walking beside you. His words remind veterans and first responder that scars don't mean you're broken, they mean you've endured. This book brings you back to Tribe, Faith, and Wellness. It's presence in the silence, hope in the grief, and proof that you still matter. Carry it with you and let it remind you of the truth... you are never actually alone.

-Jon Macaskill,

Navy SEAL Commander (Ret.)

Every once in a while, a book doesn't just speak to you — it sits beside you. "You Are Not Alone - A Veteran and First Responder Companion", does

exactly that. Written by my friend Barry Zworestine, a combat veteran who knows the silence that follows service, this isn't just a book. It's a companion for anyone who's ever carried the invisible weight of duty and loss. Barry opens with an invitation that hits straight to the heart: "Come as you are. Come broken. Come tired. Come hopeful. Just come." Those aren't words from a writer trying to sell a book. They're words from a man who's lived through the isolation, the grief carved deep, and the long climb back toward connection — and who now reaches back for the rest of us still finding our way. From the start, it's clear this isn't a lecture. It's a circle. It names the things most won't — the moral injuries, the disconnection from Tribe, the hollow drift of life after service. But it doesn't leave you in the dark. It walks beside you through poems, reflections, and raw honesty, showing that these struggles are shared, real, and survivable. The 100 daily reflections are where the work becomes personal. One page, one spark at a time. It's not about rushing forward; it's about steady steps toward yourself again. Later chapters move beyond the page — the six Cs of healing, the letters from veterans and families, and the stories of those still building bridges back to Tribe (Sara Correll, David Tharp, Shad Meshad). These aren't theories. They're living proof that connection is still out there if you reach for it. By the end, Barry doesn't just leave you inspired. He leaves you equipped. His affirmations

and reflections remind you that you're not only surviving, but you're also creating again. You're not just healing. You're becoming. This book isn't about fixing you. It's about walking with you. It's that quiet hand on the shoulder that says, "I see you. I've been there too." It's a fire built from many voices — a place to rest, reflect, and remember that you're still part of the Tribe. If you've ever felt adrift, unseen, or unsure of your place after service — or if you love someone who has — "You Are Not Alone - A Veteran and First Responder Companion", is the kind of book that brings you home.

-Steve Giblin

Navy SEAL Master Chief (Ret.)
Author of *Walking In Mud*

WITH THANKS

It is such a gift for me that you hold this book in your hands. It is my deepest hope that it becomes a Companion for you too. I look forward to walking with you through its pages, step by step, word by word as you find your way not just through, but back to yourself. As a token of thanks to the welcome, care, connection, home and Tribe that “The Power Of Our Story”, and “Project Healing Heroes” have brought to my life, all funds raised from the sales of my book will be donated to these groups as well as to my Brother Shad Meshad’s organisation “The National Veterans Organisation”.

With profound gratitude to April Minatrea, for the sound meditation “Letter to the One Feeling Alone.” Begin this book by listening. Let it hold you when words fall short. Return to it in the quiet hours, in the ache of isolation, and remember that your aloneness has never meant abandonment.

<https://www.aprilminatrea.com/notalone/>

With much care

Barry

DISCLAIMER

This book is intended as a resource to support personal growth, healing, and transformation. It is not a substitute for professional advice, assessment, diagnosis, or treatment. The contents are offered for informational and reflective purposes only and should not be considered a form of therapy, psychological intervention, or medical guidance.

How readers choose to interpret and apply the insights, reflections, and tools presented is a matter of personal discretion. By engaging with this material, readers accept full responsibility for any outcomes or impacts resulting from its use. The author disclaims any liability for the choices, actions, or consequences experienced by readers in response to the content of this book.

Throughout this book, I have chosen to use the collective term “Protectors” to refer to Veterans and First Responders. Although this companion was focused on this Tribe, I also want to speak to the wonderful Families of the Fallen that have touched my heart so deeply and from who I have gained such insight.

You Are Not Alone

The word Protector, for me, embodies the shared heart and purpose that unite these three Tribes. While Veterans have served their nations in defence and conflict, often in foreign and dangerous territories, First Responders serve daily on the home front as police, firefighters, paramedics, and others who protect our streets, they attend to the injured and respond to crises and disasters. The Families of the Fallen carry forward the sacred duty of protecting memory itself through preserving the legacy, love, and service of those no longer with us. Though their experiences differ, each embodies the same instinct to serve, to safeguard others, and to uphold values greater than self.

The use of “Protectors” is made with the deepest respect and gratitude and is in no way intended to diminish or blur the individuality or sacrifice of any group. Rather, it reflects the shared calling of all who stand, or have stood, between danger and safety, despair and hope, memory and forgetting. Finally, if you are experiencing significant emotional distress or mental health challenges, it is strongly recommended that you seek support from qualified health professionals or services in your area

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PART 1:
THE BOOK BECOMES YOUR
COMPANION

“A Companion walks where words fall short. A presence that needs no explanation. A quiet strength, a steady heart that does not waver. Not to lead or to follow, but simply to stay beside you. Come sit by the fire of shared stories, where silence rests without fear. Here, your burdens are lighter, your heart can breathe again. This book and its voices form a circle of care that holds you close”.

CHAPTER 1:

An Invitation from the Author

Dear Brothers and Sisters, fellow Protectors

Thank you for beginning this journey with me.

This companion book was born from my personal experiences and times of deep aloneness. It was born from the silence too many Protectors endure as they struggle with the loneliness of returning to a world that often cannot see or hold the weight of their service. They struggle with the profound grief and loss of loved ones.

The spark that lit this book came from a moment of painful honesty. A Protector brother once shared, “I sat alone in my unit surrounded by the darkness of despair, grief, isolation, and hopelessness.” His words never left me. They landed in my heart and stirred memories of my own, of nights wrapped in silence, of grief etched into bone, of longing for someone to reach out to me.

You may know those same shadows. You may feel untethered from family, disconnected from systems that failed to understand you, or cut off from the Tribe that once had your back. You may be holding the burden of pain, grief, or a sense of purpose that has slipped away. Perhaps your faith feels

threadbare. Your wellbeing frayed. But here's the truth. You are not alone. Not here, not anymore.

This book is not just words on a page. It is a companion and a quiet hand on your shoulder. It is a guide to help you find your way home, not just to a place, but to yourself. It offers a way to rekindle your faith, not only in something greater but in your own strength. It is an invitation to reconnect with your Tribe and those who understand without needing to ask. This Companion is here to support you to restore your wellbeing, body, mind, and spirit, one step at a time.

This is not my story alone. Over these chapters, you'll hear from the voices of Families of the Fallen as well as the Protectors, First Responders, and Veterans I've walked alongside for more than two decades. This book isn't about one path. It's about ours. It was born from more than 22 years of listening, deeply and respectfully, to the stories, struggles, and triumphs of Protectors across generations, from World War II to today's current serving members and the family members of these Protectors. These pages are not merely my reflections. They are a conversation between us, and they carry the truths of your pain, the resilience in your silence, and the wisdom forged through your journey.

This book did not start as something I planned. It came to me in the early hours of morning, whispering in my ears. In many ways, I feel as though this book "wrote me." I see all of us as having a shared authorship of this book. It is not MY book but OURS. I did not write it. We all wrote it. I simply put pen to paper. I felt the companionship of what was taking shape under my hands. It grew with a force of its own, a life of its own that felt apart from my intent but deeply rooted in my heart. This book has been a profoundly healing experience for me. It has allowed me to reach out, to touch the hearts of those I am honoured to call friend, brother, sister. Their courage, pain, wisdom, and love are woven into every page.

This book is a circle, not a lecture or manual. It is a fire lit by many voices. It is a gathering place where healing begins, not with advice or solutions, but with presence, understanding, and shared humanity. Here, you are invited to return to Tribe. To rediscover belonging and to reflect, reconnect, and find companionship in your healing. What you are beginning now is not the end of something, but the beginning of something profoundly important.

In service, we are shaped by shared values such as reliability, mutual respect and dependability. These are not just habits. They are the moral spine of

what it means to be a Protector. Service is about connection. It's the kind forged in hardship and loss and sealed by trust and healing in Tribe. It is about knowing that someone else is watching your back. And you're watching theirs.

As a Rhodesian, and combat veteran from the Rhodesian Bush War in 1975, I was raised with the African philosophy of Ubuntu: "I am because of who we all are". It teaches that our identity is not formed in isolation, but in community. It holds that strength is not about going it alone, but about standing together, especially when the ground shakes. For you, Ubuntu is not a foreign concept. You lived it every day you were in service. Ubuntu is the Protector's code extended into life beyond service. It is a leadership of compassion, presence, and shared responsibility. It is not behind you, rather it is still within you.

There were times in my life when every day felt like a mountain I had to climb with no summit in sight. I moved through the world carrying a silent weight, a grief that was not just emotional, but physical. I lived not just with memories of war, but with the aching echoes of lost Tribe, family, and children. This book and the words in it are reflections of that journey as I navigated through numbness, sorrow, and the long road of finding joy, love, and belonging again.

This book is not an answer but a companion. If the silence is loud around you, please know that I see you. I have sat in that same room. And I have made it my mission to bring warmth, connection, and hope into those very spaces that once felt lifeless.

Within the chapters ahead, you'll find a standing invitation to return to living, breathing Tribes and to a space of shared purpose, mutual care, and authentic peer connection. Here you will find a place where your story matters, your presence is honoured, and your healing is held in trust.

You will not find instructions here. You will not find formulas or fixes. What you will find is presence. A voice in the dark that says: You are not alone. What you will find is an invitation to let the silence be filled with truth, and to feel held.

So come as you are. Come broken. Come tired. Come numb. Come hopeful. Just come. Bring your story. Bring your longing. Bring your scars. There is room here for all of it and for all of you.

You are not alone. And this is just the beginning. You are my brothers. You are my sisters. We may be separated by continents, generations, wars and service but this does not define us. We beat with One Heart. Through our service, our hearts know each other across generations and time. We are One Tribe, One Heart, Ubuntu.

You Are Not Alone

So, let the journey begin.

With deep care and respect.

Barry

CHAPTER 2:

An Invitation from Your Book Companion

Dear Protector,

Pick me up and hold me in your hands. I may look like ink and paper, but I am more than that. I was created to walk beside you, through silence, through grief, through the shadows of disconnection, and into the light of belonging. When the nights are long and your mind won't rest, I will sit with you. When the world feels distant, I will remind you that you are not alone. When your heart doubts that healing is possible, I will whisper courage back into your bones. This is not a book to be read once and forgotten. This is a 6-part journey, a call to adventure and a map into healing and belonging.

In Part One, I become your companion. Here, we begin with chapters of discovery and truth. You will hear my purpose. You will encounter poems that rise from grief, loss, and longing. You will meet the three great pillars of healing: Faith, Tribe, and Wellness. Together we will face the 11 challenges of the Protector's life after service, from the struggle of shifting from soldier to civilian, to the ache of broken relationships, moral injuries, grief, loss of

purpose, and the hollow emptiness of disconnection from Tribe. These are not here to weigh you down. They are here to name your struggles, to show you that they are real, shared, and survivable.

In Part Two live the 100 Reflections. This is your practice ground. Here, I invite you into 100 days of reflections and renewal. Each reflection is like a spark, small enough to hold but steady enough to guide you forward. Through daily practice, you begin your inner mission of remembering to listen again to your heart. You don't have to sprint. You need only take one step, one day, one reflection at a time.

In Part Three, we begin to focus on bridging the gap. Healing is not only inward. It is outward. Here you encounter the 6 C's: Consider, Commit, Carry Through, Cross Over, Consolidate and Create. This is the rhythm of change, the movement from old wounds into new ways of living.

In Part Four you will discover the power of letters from Veterans, First Responders and Families of the Fallen. Perhaps their words will echo your own. Perhaps you will feel inspired to write your own. Here, I become a canvas. Not just a book to read, but a space for your story to unfold. Here, silence breaks open. You will hear, read and witness their

voices in letters written in truth. Some are raw, some hopeful and sometimes aching. As you read, you may feel recognised. You may hear your own voice rising between the lines.

In Part Five you will be invited to bridge into Tribe. The letters have prepared you. Now, the bridge is built. Here you meet those who have made healing their mission. You will meet Sara Correll from “The Power of Our Story”, David Tharp from “Project Healing Heroes” and Shad Meshad from “The National Veterans Foundation”. These chapters are not theory. They are living proof that Tribe is waiting.

Finally, in Part Six, you will be invited to explore what it takes to become empowered and find a new beginning. This is the horizon. Here, you can gather all you’ve learned and walked through. You will understand the Veteran Informed Approach. You will be reminded that every ending is also a beginning and that you are not only a survivor but a creator. That you are not only healing but are becoming.

Protector, the Journey Awaits

I am your companion, your guide, your mirror, your Tribe in print. You can walk through me step by step, or open to any page at random. However, you choose, remember that Faith, Tribe, and Wellness

You Are Not Alone

are waiting. Your story is not over. You are not alone.

So, take a breath. Pick me up. And let us begin. I am not just a book. I am your companion and I am your Tribe calling you home.

CHAPTER 3:

Rediscovering the Meaning of Companion

“Companion” is a word we often use casually, but its roots run deep, and its meaning holds powerful relevance for those who have known isolation, disconnection, or the long silence after service. Before we continue this journey together, it is worth pausing to reflect on what the word truly means.

A companion is one who accompanies another, especially on a journey or in a shared experience. It is a person who walks alongside, who spends time with you, who shares both the road and its burdens. A companion may even be something less tangible, a presence that offers understanding, comfort, and steadiness along the way.

Each of these meanings reminds us that a companion is far more than a fellow traveller. A companion is someone, or something, that remains when others fall away. A true companion is a steady presence that does not try to erase your pain but chooses not to walk away from it either.

For many veterans and first responders, the return home is not marked by parades or celebration. Instead, it is often marked by quiet disorientation,

invisible wounds, and a deep ache for the tribe left behind. It is marked by the haunting question: Who understands this version of me now? Isolation does not come because you are weak. It comes because your world has shifted, and the world around you has not noticed. That is why a companion matters.

This book was created to be your companion. Not a guidebook. Not a therapy session. Not a set of rules or “how-to” instructions. Rather, it is a companion in the truest and oldest sense of the word. It something that walks beside you, day by day. It asks nothing of you but your presence. It invites you not to perform, not to fix, but simply to sit, to breathe, to reflect, and to be.

If you have ever felt the world move on and forget you, if you have sat in silence unsure of where you belong, or if you have wished for a voice that offers presence rather than pressure, then this book is your companion.

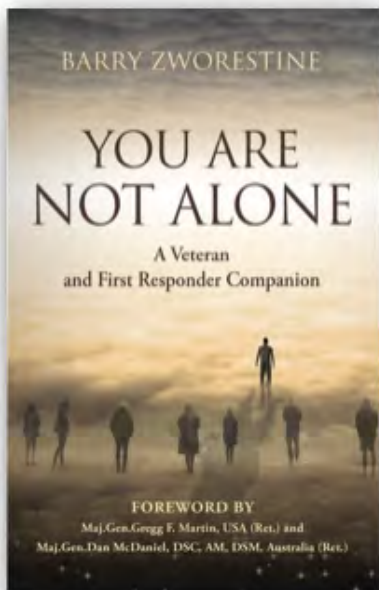
As you move forward, you are invited to draw inward, not as retreat, but as return. You are not being asked to fix yourself or to change. You are being asked only to listen with care, with compassion, and without expectation. What rises to the surface, whether memory, emotion, grief, confusion, or clarity is not here to harm you. These

are the many parts of yourself asking to be heard, to be respected, and to be held with gentleness.

This is not about solving. This is not about judging. This is about being with yourself, with your truth, and with all that has shaped you. Let these pages be your place of stillness. Let them be the quiet fire you sit beside. Let them be the voice that says, without condition: *You are not alone.*

May you find in this companion Book a presence that walks beside you. You have carried others. Now let this carry you. These pages are not here to instruct but to walk beside you. Each word is a hand on your shoulder, a light in the dark. This is not about fixing you. It is about honouring you. Step by step, let this book become your quiet ally. Your journey is sacred, and you do not have to walk it alone.

Even when the world forgets, your story still matters. You are not broken. You are becoming. You walk with your companion, and your companion walks with you.



This companion book offers a way home from the darkness, disconnection, grief and pain of aloneness. It will walk with you into healing and meaning through connection to Tribe. Its presence will be your guiding light and compass.

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A Veteran and First Responder Companion

by Barry Zworestine

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