

Mental Recovery Guide

Returning to Balance and Life After War

CAPTAIN IL - MISSION HOPE

*To fight is courage.
To feel is bravery.
To choose to live – that's victory.*

A Personal-Community Guide for Mental Recovery After War

As part of Mission Hope

With the joy of returning hostages and the end of another phase of the war, many still carry the battle in their hearts and souls. Soldiers, reservists, those who have returned, those still in uniform, and those beyond the border – all carry within them the same internal war.

This is not just an external war of tanks and borders, but also an internal battle for returning to breath, trust, and routine. The hardest part often comes after – when the quiet outside reveals the noise within. The moments when the body is already home, but the mind is still there; the nights, the memories, the lack of words, and the feeling that no one fully understands.

This journey is not weakness – it is a process of healing and growth.

We are here to learn to heal ourselves, to return the soul to its place, and to rediscover peace, meaning, and hope. This guide was written with great love for reservist soldiers, but it is relevant to every Israeli wherever they are – to anyone carrying the stress, burden, and pain from recent times, seeking a way to return to balance and fuller life.

The heart fights, the body returns home – but the soul is still on its way.

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■ Chapter 1 – What Happens to the Soul During War?

Normal Reactions in an Abnormal Period

When exposed to danger, death, uncertainty, or extreme experience – the body and soul enter emergency mode. This is a natural, primal response whose purpose is survival. The physical and mental system release adrenaline and cortisol, increase alertness and reduce pain sensation – to enable us to function under pressure.

Common reactions include:

- Muscle tension, accelerated pulse, sweating, constant alertness
- Difficulty falling asleep, light sleep or recurring nightmares
- Heart palpitations, trembling, headaches or constant fatigue
- Irritability, anger, sudden crying or feeling confused
- Emotional detachment, feeling distant or losing sense of time
- Strong need for control or conversely – difficulty making decisions

■ All these are completely normal reactions to an abnormal situation. They are evidence that the soul and body are mobilizing their forces to protect themselves – even if it feels "strange."

■ How the Survival Mechanism Works

During danger, the brain activates the "fight, flight, or freeze" system. It takes over the body in a split second, before thought can process what's happening. This response saves lives — but it also exacts an emotional and physical toll when it continues over time.

When the threat passes, the system should relax and return to balance. But after long periods of stress – the brain has difficulty understanding that the danger has ended, and the body continues to operate as if the battle is still ongoing: tense, stressed, exhausted.

The reactions you're experiencing now are not weakness – they are testimony to a body and soul that experienced extreme conditions and did everything to survive. Understanding this – is already the beginning of healing.

"The soul doesn't need orders to heal – it just needs a safe space to breathe."

■ Chapter 2 – Reactions and Symptoms of "Returning to Routine"

When the War Outside Ends – But Inside It Still Continues

After the dust settles and life is supposed to "return to track," a new period begins. From the outside everything looks normal – but inside, something has changed. The body may be home, but the soul is still in survival mode.

■ Normal Reactions After War

These are natural and common reactions in the weeks and months following war:

Emotional:

- Sadness, sudden crying, hypersensitivity or impatience
- Guilt feelings ("why me and not them?"), confusion or temporary loss of interest
- Difficulty feeling "true happiness" or connection to things that once moved you
- Recurring thoughts about what happened, or desire to completely distance from the subject

Physical:

- Increased fatigue, weakness or difficulty sleeping deeply
- Heart palpitations, sweating, muscle tension, or chest pressure
- Changed appetite, stomach aches or persistent headaches

Behavioral and Social:

- Need for quiet, temporary isolation, or social distancing
- Recoiling from crowded places or loud noises
- Desire for increased activity ("staying busy") to avoid stopping and feeling

■ These reactions are considered normal. The soul is learning again how to live in quiet after a period of noise.

■ Signs of Distress – When Reactions Continue or Worsen

If some of these feelings continue for more than two months, or begin to worsen – this is a sign that the soul needs professional help or more meaningful support.

Behavioral:

- Prolonged isolation, detachment from close people
- Persistent loss of interest in work, studies, or hobbies
- Excessive use of alcohol, medications or sedatives
- Daily dysfunction – difficulty getting up, eating, or maintaining basic routine

Emotional:

- Deep sadness, feeling of despair or persistent emptiness
- Constant fears, alertness that doesn't subside, feeling of constant danger
- Heavy guilt feelings, feeling worthless, or thoughts of "no point"

Thoughts and Expressions:

- Statements like "I see no future," "I'm fed up with everything," "better if I wasn't here"
- Recurring thoughts about death or about friends who are gone
- Severe confusion, difficulty making decisions or inability to concentrate

*The battle may be over – but healing has just begun.
 The way back to yourself begins with listening to what you feel.
 To breathe. To feel. To let go. To return.*

■ Chapter 3 – How to Begin Healing the Soul

From the Moment the Body Returns – Until the Soul Begins to Breathe

Sometimes the quiet after the storm subsides is the most unsettling of all. The body may have returned to routine, but inside there's still an echo. This is the stage where the healing process begins – gentle, personal, sometimes slow, but always possible.

■ **The body is the first home of the soul.** When it feels safe – the soul also begins to calm down.

■ First Stage – Returning to the Body

To heal the soul, you must start with the body. It is the living memory of everything we've been through, and it is also the gateway to healing.

What helps at this stage:

- **Sleep:** Restore regular sleep hours – even if gradually
- **Nutrition:** Eat real, simple, life-giving food
- **Breathing practice:** 4 seconds inhale, 7 hold breath, 8 exhale (10 times)
- **Movement:** Any gentle movement restores life to the body – walking, yoga, swimming, dancing
- **Touch:** Hugging, massage, or even gentle self-touch – calms the nervous system
- **Being in nature:** Walking barefoot in sand or grass, sitting by a tree, watching sunset
- **Grounding:** Stop and notice what you're feeling now – feet touching ground, breath going in and out

■ Second Stage – Returning to the Soul

After the body calms down, it's time to meet the emotion. This is not a process of "forgetting," but of giving space to what was – so as not to get stuck in it.

What helps here:

- **Conversation and writing:** Talk, write, share. Don't hold it inside
- **Creative expression:** Drawing, poetry, music, photography – any way that brings out what has no words
- **Support:** Seek professional help – psychologist, counselor, support group
- **Connection with people who experienced something similar:** Understand you're not alone
- **Meeting with emotions:** Don't fear crying, anger, longing. Every emotion is a message

■ The soul doesn't need "fixing" – it needs space. When given room to breathe, it finds the way to heal itself.

■ Third Stage – Returning to Meaning

When the pain begins to ease, a new question arises: "So what now?" This stage deals with rebuilding – of identity, values, hope, and sense of mission.

What helps here:

- **Action with heart:** Volunteering, helping others, contributing to community – restores sense of value and meaning
- **Personal vision:** Set a new goal, even small – learn, travel, establish something, start a new chapter
- **Connection to values:** Faith, people, family, nature – anything that provides sense of roots and stability
- **Creation from pain:** Turn personal experience into story, art, or inspiration for others
- **Return to naturalness:** Not to what was "before," but to who I am now – with all I've discovered along the way

*Pain is not weakness – it's a sign of a brave heart that lived fully.
True healing is the courage to continue – in light, in love, and in faith.*

■ Chapter 4 – Daily Coping Tools

Small Steps of Healing – Every Day Anew

Healing is built from small, simple, consistent steps – actions that remind the brain and heart: I am alive. I am here. Everything is okay.

■ The Captain's Toolbox - For Returning to Balance, Breath, and Hope

First – Calm the Body ■■

■ 4-7-8 Breathing

4 seconds inhale, 7 hold, 8 exhale

"5 Senses" Grounding

Identify what I see, touch, hear, smell, and taste



Nature Walk

Minutes of air, sky, sun, and wind



Hug and Touch

20 seconds or hand on heart with deep breathing



Hydration & Nutrition

Care for body: water, nourishing food, rest



Dance and Movement

Release from body through rhythm and free movement



Physical Activity

Moderate exercise restoring sense of strength and control



Small Smile

Even one smile changes your energy



Body Shaking

Releases tension and balances nervous system



Ice Bath

Hormetic tool strengthening mental resilience

Give Space to Heart and Emotions ■

- ☰ **Liberating Writing:** Write what you feel, without judgment

- ■ **Count Successes:** 3 small things I succeeded at today

- ■ **Moment of Gratitude:** Choose 3 things to be grateful for

- ■ **Talk with Safe Person:** Share with someone who feels safe and truly listens
- ■ **Creation and Art:** Draw, sing, dance or create – give free expression to emotion
- ■ **Healing Music:** Listen to a song that evokes hope or relaxation
- ■ **Voice Release:** Emotional expression through voice, shouting or humming to release suppressed emotions
- ■ **Listen to Heartbeat:** Quiet meditation of connecting to inner rhythm

Strengthen Mind and Meaning ■

- ■ **Examining Thought:** Ask: "Is this really true?" and see if there's another perspective
- ■ **Guided Imagery:** To change inner perception of past events
- ■■ **Mindfulness:** Few minutes of quiet and conscious breathing
- ■ **Good Boundaries:** Know when to say "not now," to protect yourself
- ■ **Small Good Deed:** Good word, smile, help – good for others heals us too
- ■ **Setting Small Goals:** Choose realistic goal and celebrate every step
- ■ **Empowerment Workshops:** Join meetings, learn, strengthen
- ■ **Digital Detox:** Intentional moments of disconnecting from screens
- ■ **Reading Books:** Connect to stories that remind and illuminate hope and light

Remember – Not Alone in the Journey ■

- ■ **Support Groups:** Join circles, groups or community that understand you
- ■ **Captain IL Reservists Community:** Space for sharing, inspiration, and connection
- ■ **Time with Loved Ones:** Meet, hug, laugh and remember how love heals
- ■ **Seek Professional Help:** It's allowed and recommended to ask for support. This is bravery, not weakness
- ■ **Mutual Support:** Connect with a "hope partner" for support and listening

■ Recommended Reading List for Healing and Strengthening the Soul

- "Man's Search for Meaning" – Viktor Frankl
- "The World Cannot Exist Without You" - Moshe Sharon
- "The Wonders of Anger" - Moshe Sharon
- "The Tree of Good Lives" - Aharon Darmon
- "The Power of Now" – Eckhart Tolle
- "The Journey" – Brandon Bays
- "Loving What Is" – Byron Katie
- "The Soul Bird" - Michal Snunit

Hope is not a destination – it's a way. Every day, every breath, every opening heart.

■ Chapter 5 – Sources of Support, Community, and Help

Healing Doesn't Happen Alone

Soul recovery is a personal journey – but it never happens alone. Friends, family, community, and professionals are a network of hearts holding together the way back to life.

■ Sources of Emotional Support

- **Friends and Family:** Don't be afraid to ask for help. Those who love you want to know how to help
- **Mutual Support Communities:** Sharing with others experiencing similar things allows the soul to breathe anew

■ Official Support Sources – For Reservists and Their Families

Emergency Hotlines, Support and Emotional & Professional Assistance (24/7):

- IDF Mental Health Center: *6690
- "One Soul" Hotline: *8944
- Combat Stress Unit: 03-6401400
- National Trauma Victims Center: 1-800-363-363
- ERAN – Mental First Aid: 1201
- "Safe Passage" Center: *3362
- "In Good Hands" Center: *3757
- "Eye Contact" Center: 1111 ext. 6
- Reservists Aid Fund: 1111 ext. 4
- IDF Combat Stress & Mental Support Unit: 03-6401400

- Rehabilitation Division – Ministry of Defense: Recognition and support for military service casualties (via 1111)

- "Paths" Program: Vocational and mental rehabilitation for discharged soldiers and reservists

- "One Heart" Association: Support and aid for soldiers, families and anxiety victims

- "Returning to Life" Association: Help coping with post-trauma and loss

Don't stand alone. Asking for help is bravery – not weakness.

■ Recommended Programs, Associations and Communities by The Captain

- **Salon 448:** Home and active community for soldiers and reservists in Herzliya Marina - hatashtit.co.il/448
- **Amit Program (Ministry of Defense):** Free toolkit for reservists - amit.movement4life.co.il
- **Returning to Routine Program:** 8 free nature meetings - shavimback.com
- **Future for Survivors and Wounded Association:** Emotional and vocational support - lanizolim.co.il
- **Hormesis Club (Tel Aviv):** Wellness complex with special benefits for reservists - hormesis.club
- **CAPTAIN IL Reservists Community on Facebook:** Open warm community for reservists to share and support

Together We Heal and Dream

■ Chapter 6 – Advice for Family and Friends

- You are not just the home front – you are the heart holding it all together.

How to Be There – Without Rescuing, Just Holding Space

- To families, mothers, fathers, siblings and friends – you are the home front holding the heart. Healing doesn't only happen with the fighter, but also at home, in the heart of those who wait, listen, and contain.

■ What's Important to Know

- The soul needs time. Returning to routine doesn't happen in one day – sometimes not in one year
- Unusual reactions are normal. Sudden crying, anger, silence, confusion – these are expressions of pain, not weakness

- There's no "right" way to feel. Everyone reacts differently, and every pace is legitimate
- Quiet is not always serenity. Sometimes it's a defense mechanism. Don't pressure to talk, just be there

■ The key is patience – not judging, not rushing to fix, just being.

■ What TO Do

- **True Listening:** Sit beside them. No phones, no advice. Just listen
- **Gentle Presence:** Sometimes it's enough to know someone is nearby
- **Ask Open Questions:** Instead of "what happened there?", try "how do you feel today?"
- **Give Choice:** Ask if they want to talk, go out, rest. Don't force anything
- **Help with Small Details:** Cooking, organizing, driving. Simple actions create security
- **Encourage Movement and Activity:** Walking, beach, friends gathering – but no pressure
- **Remember Yourself Too:** To support – you need to breathe. Don't forget to care for yourself

■ What NOT to Do

- ■ **Don't say "be strong"** – it closes off
- ■ **Don't compare** ("I was also in a tough situation") – it invalidates
- ■ **Don't try to "fix" or solve**
- ■ **Don't push to open up** – real conversation happens only when the heart is ready
- ■ **Don't ignore.** Be present, and gently ask if and how you can help

■ Sometimes quiet presence is worth more than a thousand words.

■ When to Seek Professional Help

If you notice any of the following – it's important to encourage seeking professional support:

- Prolonged isolation or complete detachment from close people
- Sharp changes in behavior or mood
- Signs of despair, meaninglessness or talk about death
- Increased use of alcohol, pills or addictive substances
- Recurring anger outbursts or verbal/physical violence
- Extreme reactions to noises, news, smells or daily situations

■ Professional help is not a sign of weakness – it's an act of courage and responsibility.

*If you meet a broken person, sit with them
On the threshold of the cursed break
Don't try to fix
Don't want anything
In awe and love of others
Sit with them, so they won't be there alone.
(Smadar Weinstock)*

■ Summary – The Hope Journey with Captain IL: Turning Pain into Power

Sometimes the path to healing begins with one small step – with a heart ready to feel.

After all we've been through – the body, soul and heart need time, space, and compassion. There is no one right way to return to routine, and no uniform pace for healing. There is only listening – to yourself, to the environment, and to this moment.

When we suppress pain or try to "move on" too quickly, feelings that didn't receive space can become deep scars – and sometimes lasting trauma. But when we give these feelings expression – through conversation, writing, crying, touch, breathing – we allow them to pass through us, without controlling who we are.

Healing is not erasing pain, but the ability to carry it – and create from it meaning, compassion and strength. This is a process that occurs slowly, within daily life, where every moment of awareness, breathing and sharing – is a step of bravery.

■ This is the time to give space to everything that arises: fear, confusion, anger, longing or hope. Emotions are not the enemy – they are a compass. They are the way the body and soul tell what still seeks healing.

When we learn to listen to them – we gradually return to ourselves. And just as an entire nation fought – so an entire nation also heals.

This journey is not just ours as individuals – it is a collective journey of awakening hearts, learning to breathe, let go, feel, and build together a new world where vulnerability is not weakness – but courage.

*Precisely through the cracks the light enters,
And within every difficulty hides an opportunity to be reborn.*

■ Captain IL: Mission HOPE

Captain IL: Mission HOPE is a social-community initiative born from the heart of the people of Israel. An inspiration and healing movement connecting combat systems, reserves, families and communities in Israel and worldwide, aiming to transform personal and national pain into power of hope, connection and action.

If this guide touched you, if you feel the call to continue this light – you can take part in the journey and help the project grow, flourish and reach more souls.

The project operates independently, and every support helps keep it alive and breathing – producing new content, expanding activities, and continuing to spread hope.

■ Share your healing, recovery and hope journeys in the Captain IL reservists community – to awaken light, inspiration and togetherness.

■ Follow **Captain.IL** on Facebook and Instagram, and join the movement of love, unity and healing.

■ Support the project via Bit: 052-6363203

With love and gratitude – for every heart joining the mission of light, hope and healing.

Captain IL

Mission HOPE is not just an initiative – it's a journey of brave hearts.

Even from the fragments – we choose light, love, and resilience.

#CAPTAIN.IL
With God's Help