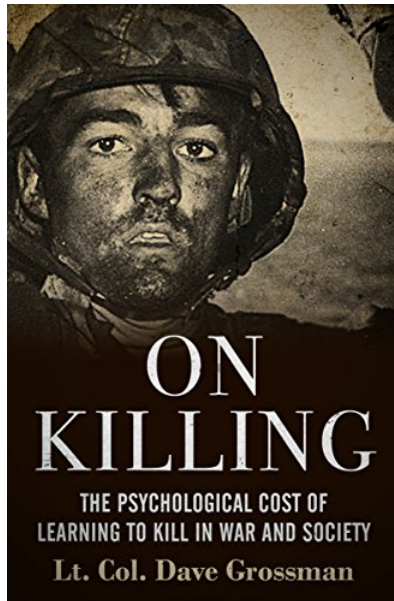# YC4ys [GET] On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society

A controversial psychological examination of how soldiers' willingness to kill has been encouraged and exploited to the detriment of contemporary civilian society.   Psychologist and US Army Ranger Dave Grossman writes that the vast majority of soldiers are loath to pull the trigger in battle. Unfortunately, modern armies, using Pavlovian and operant conditioning, have developed sophisticated ways of overcoming this instinctive aversion.   The mental cost for members of the military, as witnessed by the increase in post-traumatic stress, is devastating. The sociological cost for the rest of us is even worse: Contemporary civilian society, particularly the media, replicates the army's conditioning techniques and, Grossman argues, is responsible for the rising rate of murder and violence, especially among the young.   Drawing from interviews, personal accounts, and academic studies, On Killing is an important look at the techniques the military uses to overcome the powerful reluctance to kill, of how killing affects the soldier, and of the societal implications of escalating violence.

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