

MARINE SERGEANT JEFFREY LEONE

In this case study, we have a triage situation where a veteran was on the verge of committing suicide due to his PTSD.

In the fall of 2018 Hueston Middleton, a high official with the US Treasury, had attended a Future Life meeting where he learned about the capabilities of Face2Face. Soon afterwards, Hueston was in Manhattan seated in a sports bar. A man in his late thirties accompanied by a service dog sat down next to him. Hueston began petting the dog and fell into conversation with the man, Retired Marine Sgt Jeffrey Leone. Burly and haggard with a shaved head, Leone was at the end of his rope. During three combat deployments to Iraq at the height of the invasion he had lost 22 friends and been wounded multiple times himself. Since transitioning back, others of his unit had committed suicide.

Hueston listened as Leone bared his soul. PTSD symptoms had destroyed his life. His wife had left him, claiming that his nightmares, mood swings, and exaggerated startle responses were indicators of violent tendencies. She filed for divorce. Despite the fact he had never been physically assaultive toward her, she obtained a restraining order against him as a “dangerous combat veteran”. Now Leone could only see his sons, ages one and three, a few supervised hours per week. He was angry and depressed. After all he had given to his country he’d been betrayed by friends, family and society. The VA had not been able to provide him with meaningful therapy, maintaining him, instead, on a cocktail of anti-psychotic medications, a virtual emotional straight jacket. He'd recently stopped the medications, telling Hueston, the best action he could now take was to commit suicide. Hueston asked if he would accept a call from Dr. William d’Alelio, a Future Life researcher and therapist who worked with veterans. He agreed. Dr. d’Alelio tells what happened next:

I connected with Sgt. Leone early the next day. He agreed to have the Face2Face technology map his emotions as we spoke. He described how he was completely disgusted and enraged at himself and the world. He had suicidal impulses. He felt he was unfit to live. This is the story captured by Face2Face that unfolded as we talked.

He had lost 22 members of the 90 some Marines with whom he served in Charlie Company, on March 23 2003 in the Battle of [Nasiriyah](#). At least 10 of them were killed by friendly fire from a Pennsylvania Air National Guard Unit A-10. The images from that incident were part of what he was experiencing as flashbacks (See Fig. xx of one of the Amphibious Assault Vehicles that was destroyed to get a sense of what he saw done to his friends by his own forces).



Fig. xx

Four members of Charlie Company had committed suicide in the months preceding the Sergeant's conversation with Hueston, and a fifth had hanged himself just the day before.

Though he had never laid a hand on her, the Sergeant's PTSD symptoms terrified his wife. A year after their second child was born, she filed for divorce.

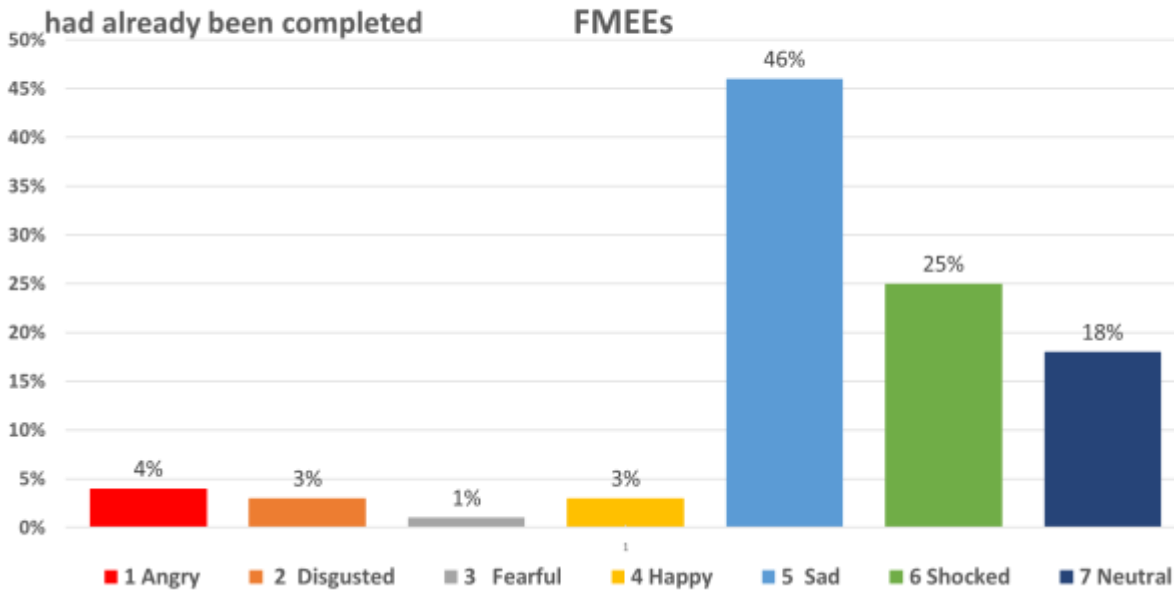
She apparently told the Judge the Sergeant was armed and dangerous. Despite the fact that no weapons were found in the house, the court decided her fears were valid. The judge granted a “Stay Away” restraining order that removed Leone from the marital home, much of which he’d renovated by hand, and left him without a place to stay. His visitation with his 1 and 3 year-old sons was limited to a total of eight hours a week with no overnight visitation. That restriction remained in place even after he found housing close to his job, but two hours from his children.

Sgt. Leone couldn’t understand how he had gone to war for his country, served honorably, and then in a hearing without him present, he was assumed to be dangerous.

Leone was in truth, searching for trust and love. Life had been unfair and unjust leaving him hopeless and devastated. Trying to find a reason to live seemed pointless. As he said in the clip we just saw he felt as if everyone saw him as a bad person because he was a combat veteran. The rage he felt only seemed to prove he really was that bad person. He felt he might be doing the world a service to end his life.

The Face2Face data revealed a deeper truth. It captured a portrait of a man stricken by grief, heartsick and heartbroken. Our first F2F teleconference map is below:

ID:JL080818 Date: 8/18/18 Dx Impression: Exacerbated PTSD/TBI
Code: 5-6-7 Status: Plans and preparation for suicide in less than 12 hrs.



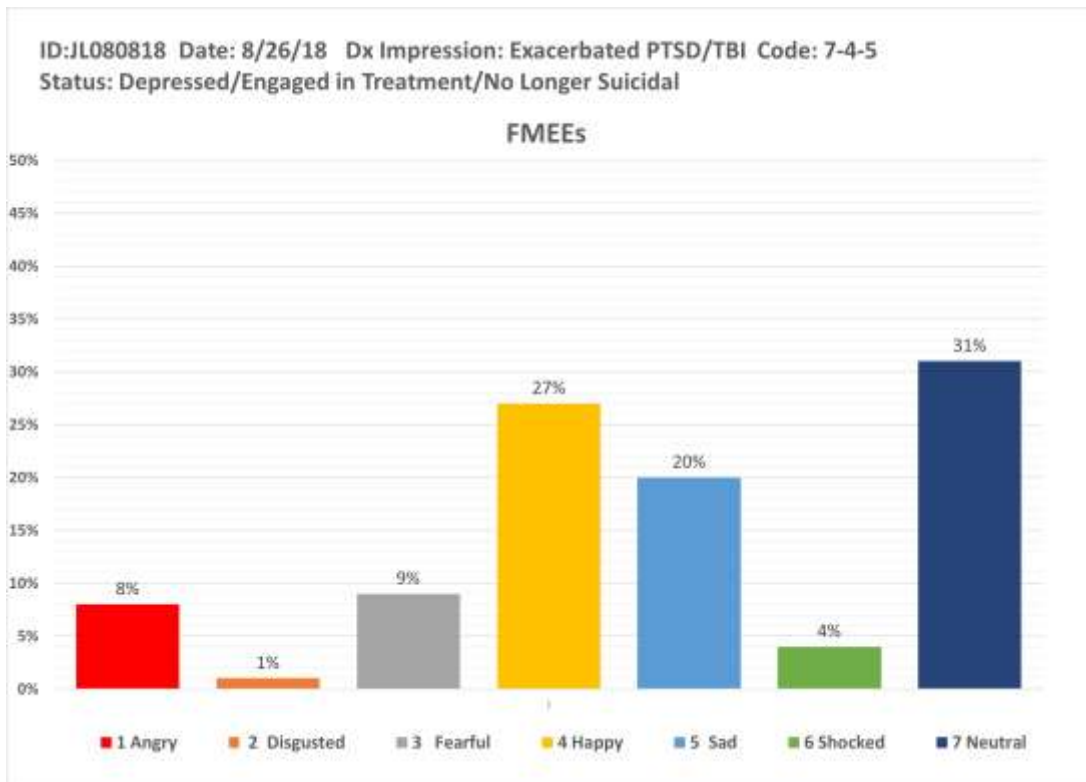
I shared this data with Sergeant Leone. And I connected the Sergeant's experience of his profound feelings of grief and sadness convincing him that his heartbreak illustrated his power to love, not hate. And that he had the capacity to love which could start with himself. I told the Sergeant that far from doing a *service* to the world by leaving it, he was doing a *disservice* to those who needed all hands on deck to build a world based on love rather than fear or self-interest. The Sergeant wept. He said he felt no one who'd never been to war could ever understand him or other combat veterans. He asked what he should do. First, since he refused hospitalization, he agreed to a "no harm" contract: he wouldn't kill himself or harm others in any way. He and I devised a plan of who he would call and what he would do to help him cope with the impulses and intrusive thoughts he was having. Next, we set up a schedule of intensive tele health treatment sessions, one per day for the next week. The sessions involved supportive therapy and CBT with me on an alternating day schedule with Mindfulness Training. The program started the next day.

Sergeant Leone was as good as his word. He worked with me to reframe his thinking from being the hapless victim of a society that uses and discards its warriors to being the active designer of the path his life would take. He began to focus on practical solutions to the legal problems arising from his divorce, including getting the venue for most of the proceedings transferred to Veteran's Treatment Court. He contacted his physician for a medication consult and began taking the anti-depressant medications she prescribed. He started working with his lawyer to meet the expectations of the court to get overnight visitation with his boys. He began the daily mental exercises to master the basics of Mindfulness Practice. He learned and began to use 8 self-soothing techniques to manage emotional crises. He established three Mindful "Mission First" goals to give him a renewed sense of purpose and worth:

1. Be a loving and active, available, and loving father to his sons.
2. Become an advocate for other combat veterans suffering from PTSD and problems reintegrating into civilian life.
3. Help build bridges between the civilian and military communities to the benefit of both.

Eight days later he had a second Face2Face emotional mapping session (Fig. xx).

Note the dramatic changes:



Future Life’s Face2Face technology enabled the Sergeant to see hard data measuring his unrecognized deepest emotions, to see the truth of his heart, mind and soul. His work with me has been tapered off to an “as needed” basis, with his care being delivered locally in New York. Sergeant Leone is recovering, working hard to build strong relationships with his sons, and is committed to helping other veterans. Here is a photograph of the Sergeant meeting Hueston in the same sports bar where they had their chance meeting to thank him for saving his life.



The other photos show



Sgt. Leone with Ben King, the mindfulness practitioner and me when, as part of his treatment, we paid honor visits to the grave sites of the members of Charlie Company killed on 03/23/2003; and, finally, a photo of Sergeant Leone reading to his children at the public library during a visitation. Sergeant Leone returned on Memorial Day, May 27, 2019 to join me and Ben King at Arlington Cemetery. He carried an American Flag with over two hundred signatures memorializing those members of his company who had died in combat.