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See *Comedy Warriors: Healing Through Humor*, a Documentary About Wounded Veterans Doing Stand-Up Comedy

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Go to see *Comedy Warriors: Healing Through Humor*, a remarkable documentary about five severely-wounded Iraq/Afghanistan veterans who become stand-up comics.

Oh wait, you can't see it, because it's not on TV and it's not playing any place. (I saw it at the Palm Beach International Film Festival). So ask for it! Ask your cable station or local PBS station to air it. Ask your local movie theatre to play it.

Why? Because it is a remarkably moving, funny, and inspiring film about a project based on the premise that humor heals.

You may find it hard to believe that there's something funny about being injured in a war and that making jokes about it can actually help heal the psychological wounds of war both for the performers and for their audience, including other wounded veterans who have to learn to live with or overcome major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and more.

But this documentary shows it. We learn about the lives and losses of [five veterans](#) and about their amazing families who have stuck by them. We see them hone their comedic skills with coaching from [eight first-rate comedians and comedy writers](#). And we see them on stage breaking up their audience with jokes about their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, and about their everyday lives.

One of the comedy warriors, Bobby Henline, jokes about suffering burns over 38 percent of his body, losing 1.5 ears and a hand, and having 45 skin graft surgeries. So much skin was moved from the unburned parts to the burned parts of his body, he says, that he "can't tell his ass from his elbow."

Darisse Smith points to her protruding pregnant belly and assures us that, "This is not my combat injury." She lived with so much pain as a result of spinal injury from piloting a Kiowa helicopter in Iraq that she became addicted to opiate painkillers.

Rob Jones, who lost both legs above the knee, jokes about how he gets thanked a lot for being wounded, then adds, "I really got to give most of the credit to the terrorist who planted that land mine. He really did do all the work."

Joe Kashnow tells us that he insisted that his amputated leg get a proper Jewish burial, and Steve Rice, who also lost a leg, tells us that his experience was a "blast."

All of these veterans might have slipped into despair, as many veterans do. [Major depressive disorder, PTSD, substance abuse disorders, and suicide are unfortunately prevalent](#) among veterans. Several of the comedians tell us that they still live with PTSD. Having a sense of humor, they all say, is what saves them.

It seems to me that there's a lesson here for those who are trying to help veterans who have returned home with mental disorders. Formal treatment can be very helpful and more veterans need to get access to it, but laughter can also be a great healer.

At the showing that I attended, Bobby Henline said that he hopes that the Comedy Warriors will be able to connect with the Veterans' Administration so that they can bring what they've learned to hundreds of veterans struggling to re-enter American society and helping them to health with humor. It's hard to imagine a more productive partnership.

Much credit for this project goes to the professionals who coached the Comedy Warriors: Lewis Black, Mark Brazill, Zach Galifianakis, Bernadette Lockett, Bob Nickman, B.J. Novak, Kevin Rooney, and Bob Saget .

John Wager (director/producer) and Ray Reo (producer) came up with the idea to match up veterans and comedy -- an amazing idea. And they pulled together a [team](#) that also included Steven Beer (executive producer) and Bernadette Lockett (co-producer). Hopefully, they will get the recognition they deserve for this exquisitely-produced and presented film.

Someone in the audience called out that they should get an Academy Award. No argument from me!

To get a sense of the film for yourself, take a look at the [trailer](#) on their website.

If you decide you want to help, visit their website and [donate](#).

And contact your local PBS station, your favorite cable station, or your local movie theatre and ask them to show [Comedy Warriors: Healing Through Humor](#). You'll play a great part in helping a lot of people to heal.

Need help? In the U.S., call 1-800-273-8255 for the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#).

For more by Michael Friedman, L.M.S.W., [click here](#).