

Stronger Than Before: A Tactical Growth Mini-Guide

7-Day Kickstart

*An Action Guide based on
Hiding In Plain Sight*

DOUG WHITE

tell this story.

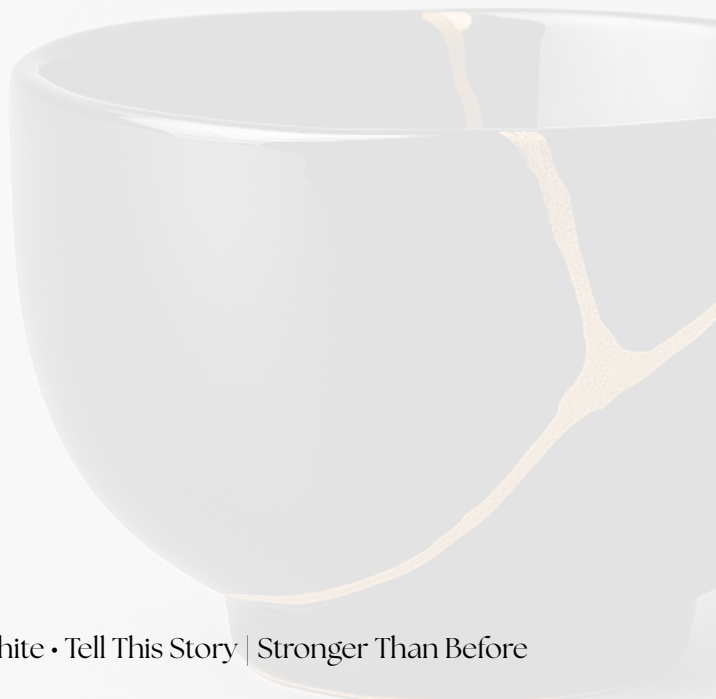


Legal & Medical Disclaimer

This guide draws on my 30 years of lived experience in military and law enforcement service, plus insights shared by peers and subject matter experts. It is not a medical or psychological treatment.

If you are in crisis, call 988 in the U.S. or use Copline (1-800-267-5463).

Consult a qualified professional before acting on any advice herein.





Why This Matters

This is not theory. This is lived experience. I didn't write this as a clinician or a coach. I wrote this because I nearly lost everything—my health, my family, and my identity—to the weight of service and silence.

I've walked the path from high-functioning survivor to healed and healing. I spent over 30 years in military and law enforcement service, trying to outwork what was chasing me. This eBook isn't the whole story—it's the distilled version. A roadmap. Five simple truths and steps that helped me move from surviving to living. I offer them to you now because I believe you can do the same.

Most people in our line of work don't need a full-on intervention—they need a way forward. A place to start. A flashlight in the dark. That's what this is. Whether you're still wearing the badge or you've hung it up, these next few pages are for you. I want to give you something I wish I had: a real, unfiltered look at what it takes to get better—and stay better.

You are not broken. You are not weak. You are not alone.

How to Use This Guide (2 minutes → 7 days of momentum)

Scan the 5 Keys in the following pages.

Highlight one that hits home.

Commit to the 7-Day Challenge.

Small, daily wins compound.

Write directly in the boxes.

Make this YOUR field manual.

Share one takeaway with a teammate, spouse, or counselor because growth spreads through conversation.

When you're ready for the full mission plan, unlock the 30-page Tactical Growth Handbook.

"This isn't about bouncing back. This is about becoming better."
—Doug White

The 5 Keys to Getting Stronger Than Before

Own Your Story.

Name the truth. What happened, how it shaped you, and what it doesn't control anymore.

Reset the Body.

Sleep, fuel, and movement: the physiological tripod that supports the mind.

Build the Tribe.

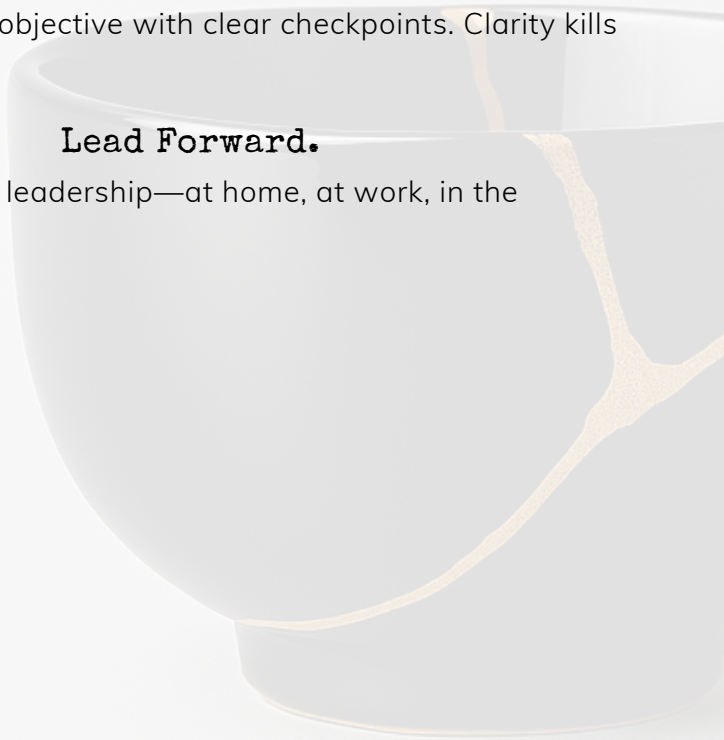
We DO NOT do anything alone. Select three people who get a backstage pass to your life.

Plan the Mission.

Define a 90-day objective with clear checkpoints. Clarity kills overwhelm.

Lead Forward.

Turn lessons into leadership—at home, at work, in the community.



Key 1
Own Your Story.
You're Not Broken—
You're Injured



Post-traumatic stress is not a disorder. It's an injury. A wound. Like a broken leg, it deserves care—not shame. What happened to you reshaped your nervous system. That's not failure. That's biology.

In my career, I saw the worst of humanity—up close and personal. But it wasn't the calls that nearly took me out. It was the silence. The slow rot of carrying it all alone. You can't treat what you won't name. And you can't heal what you won't face.

This key is about awareness. Awareness that what you're dealing with isn't weakness—it's injury. And like any injury, it needs attention, rest, treatment, and a plan. It means giving yourself permission to stop pretending everything's fine when your body is screaming otherwise.

So many of us walk around armored up, clenching our teeth through migraines, broken sleep, memory loss, irritability, and burnout—convincing ourselves it's just part of the job. That's the lie. The truth is you can't fix what you refuse to acknowledge.

Reflection Prompt:

Write the one sentence that best describes the story you've been afraid to speak.

WRITE IT HERE:

KEY 2 – Reset the Body

“Sleep is the tide that raises all physiological ships.”

Dr. Kirk Parsley, former Navy SEAL physician & sleep optimization expert

Dr. Parsley spent years inside Naval Special Warfare clinics tracking why elite operators were breaking down. His takeaway was simple: miss sleep and every other system misfires. Six hours or less for just five nights drives testosterone down, cortisol up, and reaction time to the level of a 0.05 BAC.*

Translation: you can't out-train, out-supplement, or out-motivate chronic sleep debt.

Tactical Targets

Pillar

Sleep - 7+ hrs., dark & cool (65-68°F) - Hormone reset, memory consolidation, emotional regulation.

Fuel - 1 hand-size protein + veg every meal; hydrate ½ oz. water per lb. body weight - Stabilizes blood sugar, supports neurotransmitters.

Movement - 30 min daily Zone 2 cardio or strength; walk 5 min every hour on shift
Increases BDNF*, lowers stress hormones, preserves joint health.

Dr. Parsley's Rule-of-Thumb: "If you're nodding off in briefing, you're already impaired. Prioritize sleep FIRST—then layer training and nutrition."

Action Box – Pick the Weakest Link

Circle the pillar that needs the most attention this week.

Sleep Fuel Movement

Write one micro-action you'll execute tonight (e.g., set phone to Do Not Disturb at 2100, prep tomorrow's protein, 10-min walk after dinner):

Source for BAC comparison: Dr. Kirk Parsley, "Sleep to Perform" lecture, Naval Special Warfare Resiliency Symposium (2018).

*Data and standards adapted from Dr. Parsley's Sleep to Perform™ protocols and TEDxReno talk "Sleep is a Weapon" (2015).

Key 3 – Build the Tribe

My wife Michelle saw the cracks long before I admitted them. She watched me disappear into anger, silence, and exhaustion. The conversation that changed my life didn't come from a therapist or a doctor. It came from her.

That conversation saved me. Not because it was easy, but because it was true. Vulnerability is not weakness. It's honesty. And that honesty saved my life.

You have to have the hard conversation.

Start by telling yourself the truth. Then tell someone who's earned your trust. Your spouse, a sibling, a teammate, a chaplain, or a counselor. Someone. The longer you wait, the more it costs.

Build a tribe of 3 to 5 people that you can trust, who add value to your life, and who you aspire to be more like. Your network is your net worth holds true on a mission of growth.

Reflection Prompt:
Who is in your tribe?

Prompt: What will you ask them first to keep the conversation real?

Key 4 – Plan the Mission

Build a New Framework—Mind, Body, Spirit.

For over 30 years, I had a mission. A badge. A reason to kit up every day. But when it ended, I had no idea who I was anymore. Without a uniform, I felt invisible and useless.

Service gives you identity, purpose, and direction. But if you're not careful, it becomes your only identity. That's what happened to me. When the badge came off, I wasn't sure who Doug was without it.

We confuse structure with identity. The truth is, you're not the job. You are the discipline, the drive, the values, and the grit that made you successful in the job, and those things still matter now. You still matter now.

Your mission or purpose didn't end when your career did. It evolved.

Your new mission might be raising your kids with intention. Repairing your marriage. Building something bigger than yourself. Speaking truth to power. Or just learning to be still without falling apart.

The mission now is to become the strongest, most honest version of yourself for you, and for the people who stuck with you.

If you're alive, you're not done.

WRITE IT HERE:

Reflection Prompt: What parts of yourself have you abandoned that you want to recover?

90-Day Objective Worksheet

Objective: _____

Why it matters: _____

Checkpoints (30/60/90 days): _____

Tip: Clear targets beat vague hopes every time.

KEY 5 — Lead Forward: Progress, Not Perfection

There is no finish line. You don't "win" healing. But you do get stronger. You learn how to carry it differently.

This work isn't sexy. It's daily. It's messy. But it works. You won't get it all right. You will backslide. You'll forget everything you've learned on some days. But if you keep working, you will get better. Your lows will be less frequent and less severe. Your bounce back will be quicker. Your strength will start showing up in unexpected ways.

The monster I used to hide from is now a reminder of how far I've come. I still fall, but I don't fall as far. And when I do, I know how to get back up. Progress is slow sometimes. But it's always worth it.

There's no big blue ribbon moment. Just choices. Daily decisions. Get up. Move. Reflect. Connect and Serve. Try again.

Growth is not linear. You'll zig, zag, stall, and surge. But keep walking. Keep choosing to show up. For yourself, for your people, for the next mission.

Reflection Prompt:

If you keep doing what you're doing now, where will you be in 6 months?



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The Way Forward

7-Day Kickstart Challenge

Day 1 – Walk one mile. No music. Just your thoughts.

Day 2 – Tell one person one truth you've been avoiding.

Day 3 – Write a one-line journal entry: "Today, I noticed..."

Day 4 – Spend 45 minutes outside, between 0700 and 1000 hours if possible. Feel the sun. No sunglasses.

Day 5 – Move your body. Gym, ruck, yoga. Just move.

Day 6 – Eat one meal with no distractions.

Day 7 – Send a message to someone who helped you through a hard time.



Need backup?

Here are crisis and growth resources you can reach right now:

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988, or chat: <https://988lifeline.org>

Copline — 24/7 confidential law-enforcement hotline
(1-800-267-5463) or <https://copline.org>

Boulder Crest Foundation — Post-traumatic growth programs
<https://bouldercrest.org>

UCF RESTORES—Evidence-based PTSD treatment & research
clinic <https://health.ucf.edu/ucf-restores>

Blue Line Rescue—Peer-support network for LEOs
<https://bluelinerescue.org>

Red Line Rescue — Peer-support network for Firefighters
<https://redlinerescue.org/>

Gold Line Rescue — Peer-support network for dispatchers and
their families.
<https://goldlinerescue.org/>

THE WAY FORWARD STARTS HERE

If this hit home, don't stop here. This is just the beginning.

Unlock the Full 30-Page Tactical
Growth Handbook
Instant PDF download



You've carried a heavy story. It's time to tell a better one.
You are not alone. You are not done.
You are stronger than before.
Doug

 Get your copy today!

Hiding in Plain Sight: The Truth About Trauma, Service,
and the Way Forward.



Listen to the Tell This Story Podcast:



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Ready for the Next Mission?

You just knocked out seven straight days of intentional growth—sleep, breath, tribe, and truth.

More work (and wins) are still ahead:
90-Day Mission Plan – map your objective, resources, and weekly AARs.

30+ pages of worksheets, scripts & checklists to turn injury into unstoppable growth.

Scan the code, grab the complete Tactical Growth Handbook PDF, and keep moving forward.



GET THE FULL HANDBOOK

If you or someone you're with is in immediate danger, call **911**.

National Suicide Prevention Line

1-800-273-8255

or

988 (Press 1 for Veterans)

CopLine

1-800-267-5463

Firefighter Behavioral Health

1-847-209-8208