

UKRAINE

NOSTOI



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Kiev. Yana is the founder of a battalion of war doctors that provides aid to the wounded on the front line. Yana was paralyzed after a car accident in the war zone. Now she is studying medicine at the University of Dnipro.



Kiev. Lera, a war veteran, walks with her son in a park near her home.

How do veterans of the Donbas conflict return to a normal life?

The conflict in the Donbas has never truly ended. And while the attritional trench war continues, Ukraine is facing the fundamental question of how to socially reintegrate the hundreds of thousands of veterans of this conflict. The theme was already examined in the ancient Greek poem *Nostoi*, which tells the story of the fighters returning home after the destruction of Troy. Of course, once upon a time the Soviet tradition saw vodka as the way to get through problems of post-traumatic stress, but today? How is it possible to prevent survivors falling into a dramatic spiral of alcohol, drugs and violence? What are the best physical and mental strategies to foster a gradual return to normality?

Ukraine has had to start from scratch but the best responses to this emergency have not come from the government. A number of NGOs specialized in this field are particularly active, such as the association *Probatimi* and its innovative "bodydynamic" technique or *Warrior's Heart* that focuses on somatic problems in order to provide more holistic support. But dealing with trauma also involves a resumption of daily life: there are veterans who perform in concerts, others who are involved in competitive sports events and others who help former comrades and share their experiences in schools. As with the case of the Greek heroes, not all pathways are the same but reintegration into society is a process that requires one essential ingredient: time.



Chernihiv. A treatment session at a rehabilitation centre. Veterans and soldiers visit the centre to receive physical and psychological support.



Kiev. Veterans concert. Nadia Savchenko sits next to a group of young soldiers. Nadia is one of the best-known and most controversial veterans of the Ukrainian conflict. During her imprisonment in Russia, she was considered a national heroine. Now she is accused by the Ukrainian government of being involved in a terrorist conspiracy.



Kiev. A team of veterans and psychologists takes part in the "Legion Run" sporting event.



Ivano-Frankivsk. A room at the Pizzeria Veterano. The restaurant was opened by Donbas veterans in the capital and then became a successful brand that has spread across Ukraine. Most of the staff are former soldiers. Veterans who come here to eat get a discount.



Lviv. Mykola works on the land that the government has allocated to veterans. Since returning from the war, Mykola has decided to become a strawberry farmer.



Kiev. The ATO (anti-terrorism operation) veterans' soccer team.



Ternopil. Valery with his son at the restaurant. Valery was one of the commanders of the Ukrainian forces deployed near Donetsk airport. Because of their ability to survive in extreme conditions, the Ukrainians who defended the airport are known as "Cyborgs".



Ivano-Frankivsk. Max, a war doctor, takes a brief break from the Bodynamic programme for war veterans to stand in the rain.



Kiev. Onlookers cry during the procession of veterans on Independence Day.



Kiev. Training session for the Invictus Games. All athletes at the Invictus Games are servicemen or veterans who have been seriously injured. Vadim lost all four limbs during the battle of Debaltseve.



Lviv. Taras at home with his daughters. Taras is a veteran who works in a centre for veterans.



Lviv. A school class in "Defending the Motherland". Veterans of the war teach students how to assemble Kalashnikovs and provide rudimentary medical aid in a conflict situation.



Kyiv. The main square of the capital and symbol of Ukraine is the venue for a celebration of 100 years of war against the Russian occupation.



Ivano-Frankivsk. The Probratimi association organizes courses to teach veterans how to help other veterans. The method used is called Bodydynamic and is based on the relationship between the body and disorders.



Kiev. Portrait of a veteran inside Pizzeria Veterano during a meeting of former soldiers.



Kiev. A veteran and his family relax in a park.



Kiev. Training session for the Invictus Games. All athletes at the Invictus Games are servicemen or veterans who have been seriously injured. On the right is a swimmer from the Ukrainian team.



Kiev. A place where veterans and soldiers in transit through the Ukrainian capital can rest and eat.



Kiev. A team of veterans and psychologists takes part in the "Legion Run" sporting event.



Kiev. Rehabilitation course for veterans' wives. Studies have shown that in some cases PTSD can last longer in soldiers' relatives than in soldiers themselves.



Kiev. Tolik travels home after a demonstration for disabled rights.



Zhytomyr Region. Yulia, known as "Valkiria", left Russia at the age of 18. After moving to Ukraine, Yulia joined the Aidar Battalion to fight against her native country. Despite having spent five years at war, Yulia is still fighting to get Ukrainian citizenship.

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