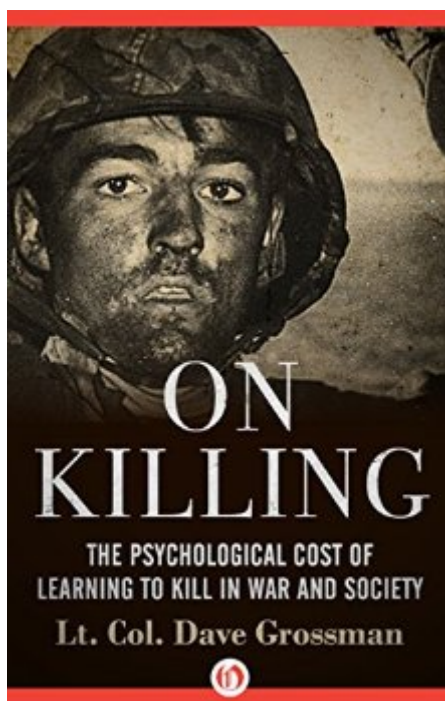


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# On Killing



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lt. Col. Grossman's systematic and thoughtful study of why people kill -- and why they do not -- is

important. His analysis on the role of conditioning on overcoming the natural resistance to killing another person provides helpful insight into how and why American society has become increasingly violent in recent decades. The last few chapters, which takes the lessons learned in the rest of the book and applies them to American society, ought to be required reading for those who insist on blaming the tools of violence for the existence of violence. Thanks, Lt. Col. Grossman, for studying this topic with such rigor and for explaining your work so cogently.

An interesting study on killing during war, from the Civil War to the present. Contrary to what one sees through Hollywood's eyes, there is an extreme reluctance for one human being to kill another, even in time of war. Further, the author's findings help explain PTSD, a frequent result found in our combat veterans. Then applied to our society's current ills, he identifies the logical explanation for random mass murders and other mayhem. Overall, it's a thought-provoking read.

This book has answered many questions I have had since being involved in the VietNam war (67-68). "Once you have drank from the dark waters primevil, you can drink no other" sums up the last 44 years of my life. Now i know the 'whats' and the 'whys'. I would highly reccomend this to be 'required reading' by therapists or anyone who deals with folks who have taken human life and are haunted by it.

As a police officer I just went through a major shooting incident. As I read this book, Col. Grossman went through it with me. He described to a tee every emotion I experienced. Reading this book was extremely helpful.

Does your lead character crap his pants? Do your corpses void their bladders? What really happens in PTSD? In this classic book, required reading at the military academies, Quantico and most police forces, Grossman lays out the very real facts of facing the act of killing another human being. And they are serious, long-lasting, and devastating. If your hero kills off a bad guy and walks away whistling--well then you're writing fantasy. Backed with solid fact, Grossman is not some peacenik, he sees soldiers who won't fire at the enemy (about 80% in World War 2) as a PROBLEM and is looking for the cause and the ways to overcome it. There is no rhetoric here, it's all about statistics and facts.

MANY other authors recommended this book & now I understand why. I already had a great

appreciation for our military and law enforcement personnel. This book was filled with very insightful information that caused my appreciation to grow even more.

LtCol Grossman has done the US Armed Forces a major service by writing this book. Those of us who look over his shoulder are likewise edified. This is not a book on how to kill. It's a book on the mental/emotional problems faced by the soldier (or sailor or airman) who is expected to kill as part of his/her job. It examines the psychiatric results that usually follow from such killing - and a plethora of other considerations that wouldn't occur to most people commanding their subordinates to kill other human beings. I'm only 2/3 of the way through the book, and it has already profoundly affected my attitude toward those who must kill to survive, or kill to obey direct orders.

very good book, well researched.....when it comes down to actually taking the life of another.....its easier from a distance, as opposed to close up and personal.I was a medic during VietNam,.....I can attest to the horrors of battlefield wounds.....it is not a pretty sight. On Killing hits the nail on the head.

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