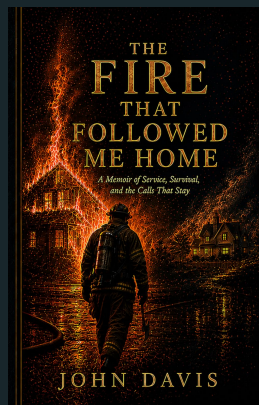


A REFLECTION GUIDE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS, FAMILIES, AND ANYONE CARRYING WHAT CAME
AFTER

The Calls That Stay

A practical guide for making room for what follows us home.



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A note before you begin

The work of coming home

Some calls end when the scene is cleared. Others stay with us. They show up in the quiet, in the body, in the way we speak to the people we love, or in the things we work hard not to think about.

This guide is not a test and it is not a substitute for professional care. It is a place to begin: to slow down, name what is present, and make room for an honest next step.

You do not have to answer every question at once. Take what helps. Leave what does not. Return when you are ready.

Strength is not silence. Asking for help is not weakness.

How to use this guide

Set aside ten quiet minutes. Write a few words, talk through a prompt with someone you trust, or simply notice what comes up. If a question feels too close, pause. Ground yourself. Reach out to a qualified professional or trusted support person if you need more help.

John A. Davis is a retired fire-service professional, counselor, and author of *The Fire That Followed Me Home*.

Name what is still with you

You do not need to relive every detail to acknowledge an experience had weight. These prompts are invitations, not demands.

01 The call that returns

Is there a call, season, loss, or moment that still comes back to you? What does it seem to be asking you to notice?

02 What the body remembers

When stress is high, how does your body let you know? Consider sleep, irritability, tension, isolation, restlessness, or a need to stay busy.

03 The role you learned to play

What did service, work, or responsibility teach you about being strong? Which parts of that lesson still serve you, and which parts may no longer fit?

A small practice

Put both feet on the floor. Take one slow breath. Name five things you can see. Remind yourself: I am here. This moment is not that moment.

Make room for the next honest step

04 The people who carried it with you

Who has seen more of your story than you may give them credit for? What might they need to know about what you have been carrying?

05 What helps you return

What is one practice, person, place, or routine that brings you back to yourself? How can you make it easier to choose this week?

Write your next step

Complete this sentence: **This week, I will make room for myself by...**

Small steps count. A conversation. A walk. A call. A boundary. An appointment. A moment of rest. The goal is not to solve everything today. It is to move toward what helps.

You may be carrying it, too

Loving someone who serves, or who has served, can mean living with the parts of the work that cross the threshold at home. You may not have the same memories, but you may carry the silence, the schedule, the worry, or the distance.

Three ways to begin a better conversation

01 Lead with care, not interrogation

Try: “I have noticed you have seemed weighed down lately. I am here, and I do not need you to have the right words.”

02 Ask what support looks like

Try: “Would it help to talk, to take a walk, to sit quietly, or to find someone who understands this work?”

03 Care for your own capacity

Your support matters, but you do not have to carry everything alone. What support, rest, or honest conversation do you need?

Remember

You cannot force healing. You can help make the relationship safer for honesty, connection, and the next step toward support.

There is still a way forward

The work of coming home is rarely finished in one conversation or one day. It is built in small choices: telling the truth, accepting support, paying attention, and choosing connection over silence.

If you need immediate support

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 911. In the United States, call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. For ongoing support, consider a licensed mental-health professional, a peer-support program, a chaplain, a trusted clinician, or an organization that understands first-responder and family life.

Continue the conversation

The Fire That Followed Me Home is John A. Davis's memoir of service, survival, trauma, faith, and the calls that stay. *Fireline Protocol* brings those stakes into a fire-rescue thriller about truth, loyalty, and the systems built to save people.

Visit drjohnadavis.com for books, articles, resources, and the Reader & Resource List.

You are not weak because it followed you home.

You are human.