



MORAL INJURY

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OBJECTIVES

- **TRAUMA INFORMED CARE**
- **DESCRIBE MORAL INJURY**
- **DIFFERENTIATE MORAL INJURY FROM PTSD**
- **CURRENT TREATMENTS FOR MORAL INJURY**
- **ADDRESS POSSIBLE CLERGY APPROACHES TO HELPING VETERANS WITH MORAL INJURY**
- **CONSIDER WHEN TO REFER VETERANS TO MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS**

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

A program, organization, or system:

- **REALIZES THE WIDESPREAD IMPACT OF TRAUMA AND UNDERSTANDS POTENTIAL PATHS FOR RECOVERY**
- **RECOGNIZES THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA IN CLIENTS, FAMILIES, STAFF, AND OTHERS INVOLVED WITH THE SYSTEM**
- **RESPONDS BY FULLY INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT TRAUMA INTO POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND PRACTICES**
- **SEEKS TO ACTIVELY RESIST RE-TRAUMATIZATION**

6 Key Principles to Trauma Informed Care

- **SAFETY**
- **TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRANSPARENCY**
- **PEER SUPPORT**
- **COLLABORATION AND MUTUALITY**
- **EMPOWERMENT, VOICE AND CHOICE**
- **CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND GENDER ISSUES**

<https://www.samhsa.gov/programs>



WHAT ARE MORALS?

- **PERSONAL AND SHARED FAMILIAL, CULTURAL, SOCIETAL, AND LEGAL RULES FOR SOCIAL BEHAVIOR.**
- **THE FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HOW THINGS SHOULD WORK AND HOW ONE SHOULD BEHAVE IN THE WORLD.**
- **CAN BE DEFINED BY FAMILY OF ORIGIN, RELIGION, COMMUNITY, CULTURE, AND MILITARY.**
- **LITZ B.T, STEIN N., DELANEY E., LEBOWITZ L., NASH W.P, SILVA C., MAGUEN S. (2009). MORAL INJURY AND MORAL REPAIR IN WAR VETERANS: A PRELIMINARY MODEL AND INTERVENTION STRATEGY. *CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW* 29 (2009) 695-706**

	Ethics	Morals
What are they?:	The rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture, etc. It defines how things are according to the rules.	Principles or habits with respect to right or wrong conduct. It defines how things should work according to an individuals' ideals and principles.
Source:	Social system/Military/External	Individual/Internal
Why we do it?:	Because society /military says it is the right thing to do.	Because we believe in something being right or wrong.
What if we don't do it?:	We may face peer/societal/military disapproval, or even be fired from our job.	Doing something against one's morals and principles can have different effects on different people, they may feel uncomfortable, remorse, depressed etc.
Flexibility:	Ethics are dependent on others for definition. They tend to be consistent within a certain context, but can vary between contexts.	Usually consistent, although can change if an individual's beliefs change.
The "Gray":	A person strictly following Ethical Principles may not have any Morals at all. Likewise, one could violate Ethical Principles within a given system of rules in order to maintain Moral integrity.	A Moral Person although perhaps bound by a higher covenant, may choose to follow a code of ethics as it would apply to a system. "Make it fit"

WHAT IS MORAL INJURY

“Perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.” (Litz et al., 2009)

“Disruption in an individual’s confidence and expectations about one’s own or others’ motivation or capacity to behave in a just and ethical manner, brought about by bearing witness to perceived immoral acts, failure to stop such actions, or perpetration of immoral acts, in particular acts that are inhumane, cruel, depraved, or violent, bringing about pain, suffering, or death of others.” (Drescher et al., in press)

“Betrayal of what’s right by someone who holds legitimate authority in a high-stakes situation.” (Shay, 2010)

“Stress resulting from witnessing or perpetrating acts or failures to act that transgress deeply held, communally shared moral beliefs and expectations.” (Nash et al., in press)

NO STRICT CONSENSUS ON DEFINITION

MORAL INJURY

- 'MORAL AFFRONT'
- 'MORAL DISTRESS'
- 'MORAL PAIN'
- 'MORAL TRAUMA'
- 'MORAL WOUNDS'
- 'MORAL DISRUPTION'
- 'EMOTIONAL INJURY'
- PERSONAL VALUES INJURY'
- 'LIFE VALUES INJURY'
- MORAL BETRAYAL
- MORAL PERPETRATION

SPIRITUAL INJURY

- SOUL LOSS
- SOUL WOUND
- SOUL INJURY
- SPIRITUAL INJURY
- RELIGIOUS INJURY

MODEL OF MORAL INJURY



**Sheila Frankfurt, Ph.D., VISN 17 Center of Excellence for Research on Returning War Veterans,
“Impact of Moral Injury on Post-deployment Mental Health”**

RELIGIOUS EXAMPLES

- **SODOM AND LOTS FAMILY: GENESIS 19**
- **KING DAVID IS AN EXAMPLE OF TESHUVA: 2 SAMUEL 12:1-23**
- **MUHAMMAD'S COMMUNITY IN MEDINA FIGHTING POLYTHEISTS: QUR'AN 2:190-193)**
- **BUDDHIST STORY OF THE REDEMPTION OF ANGULIMĀLA: PALI CANON**
- **HOMER'S *ILLIAD* AND *ODYSSEY***



Acts of betrayal by peers, leaders, or self

Disproportionate violence inflicted on others

Death or harm to civilians

Violence within military ranks

Concealed acts of cowardice, failure to do duty

Exposure to body parts

Inability to prevent death or suffering

Resulting in ethical dilemmas or moral conflicts

MILITARY EXAMPLES



- Dehumanization of Enemy
- Killing
- Survivor Guilt
- Grief
- Encountering and Handling human remains
- Participation in torture or atrocities
- Betrayal by Authorities
- Doubt (uncertainty about goals or mission)



MORAL CHALLENGES OF WAR



IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

- **MORAL TRANSGRESSION IS SUBJECTIVE**
- **BASED ON VETERAN'S OWN MORAL STANDARDS, EXPECTATIONS, AND INTERPRETATION**
- **ROOTED IN PERSON'S FAMILIAL, CULTURAL, OR JOB SETTING VALUES**
- **INFLUENCED BY RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL/PHILISOPHICAL BELIEFS**

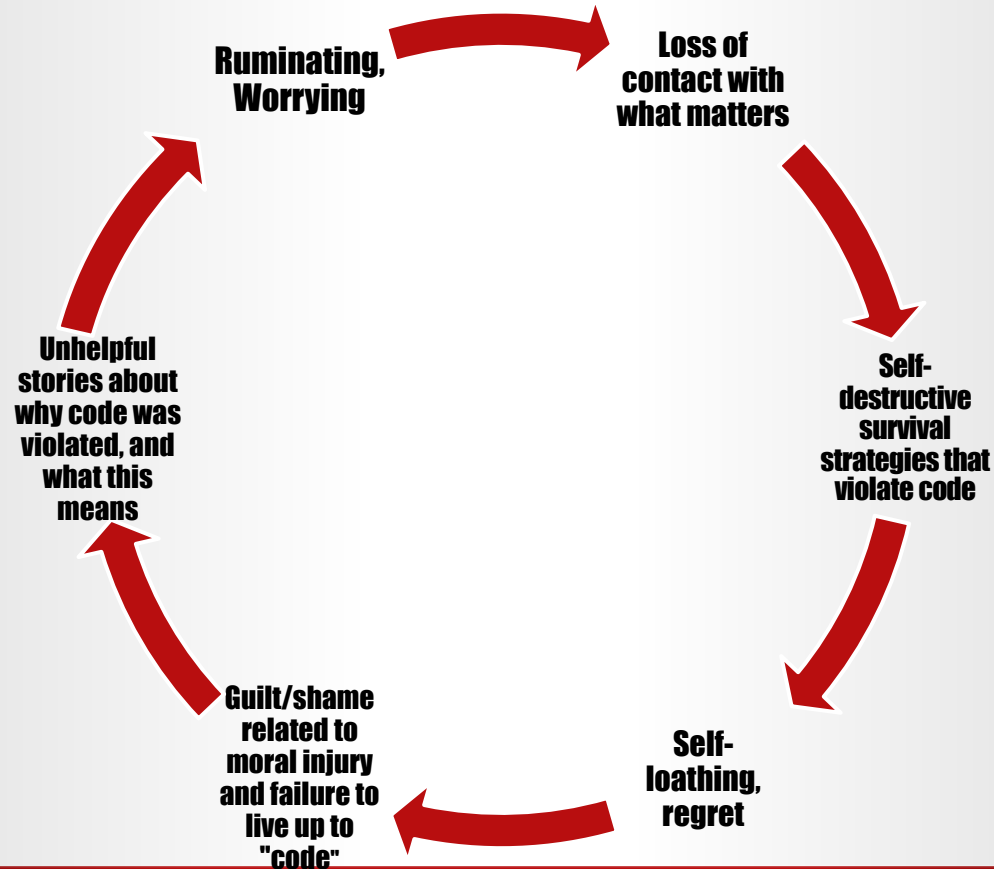


Biological/ physical injury	Psychological/ emotional injury	Social/ familial injury	Spiritual injury
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insomnia • "Startle-reflex" • Alcohol abuse • Drug addiction • Loss of memory • Self-sabotage / • Self-harm • Suicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger & Betrayal • Shame, Guilt, Sorrow • Loss of trust in self • Loss of trust in others • Fear and Anxiety • Re-experiencing the moral conflict/Flashbacks • Nightmares • Gambling addiction • Sexual/Porn Addiction • Self-deprecation • Loss of self-worth • Depression • Suicidal ideation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spousal/Partner Disconnection • Child-Parent Disconnection • Family Disconnection • Collegial Disconnection • Occupational dysfunction • Professional Disconnection • Legal and disciplinary issues • Community/Cultural Disconnection • Social Alienation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger & Betrayal • Shame, Guilt, Sorrow • Loss of trust in self • Loss of trust in others • Loss of faith/ belief • Moral pain /dissonance • Questioning morality • Self-condemnation • Spiritual/existential crisis • Loss of purpose in life • Fatalism • Loss of caring • Ontological loss of meaning. • Feeling "haunted"

MORAL INJURY SYMPTOMS



Litz (et al 2009) factors contributing to Moral Injury



SYMPTOM OVERLAP

PTSD

Moral Injury

Fear
Disgust
Horror
Helplessness

Avoidance
Re-experiencing
Mood changes
Physiological arousal

Shame
Guilt
Anger
Outrage

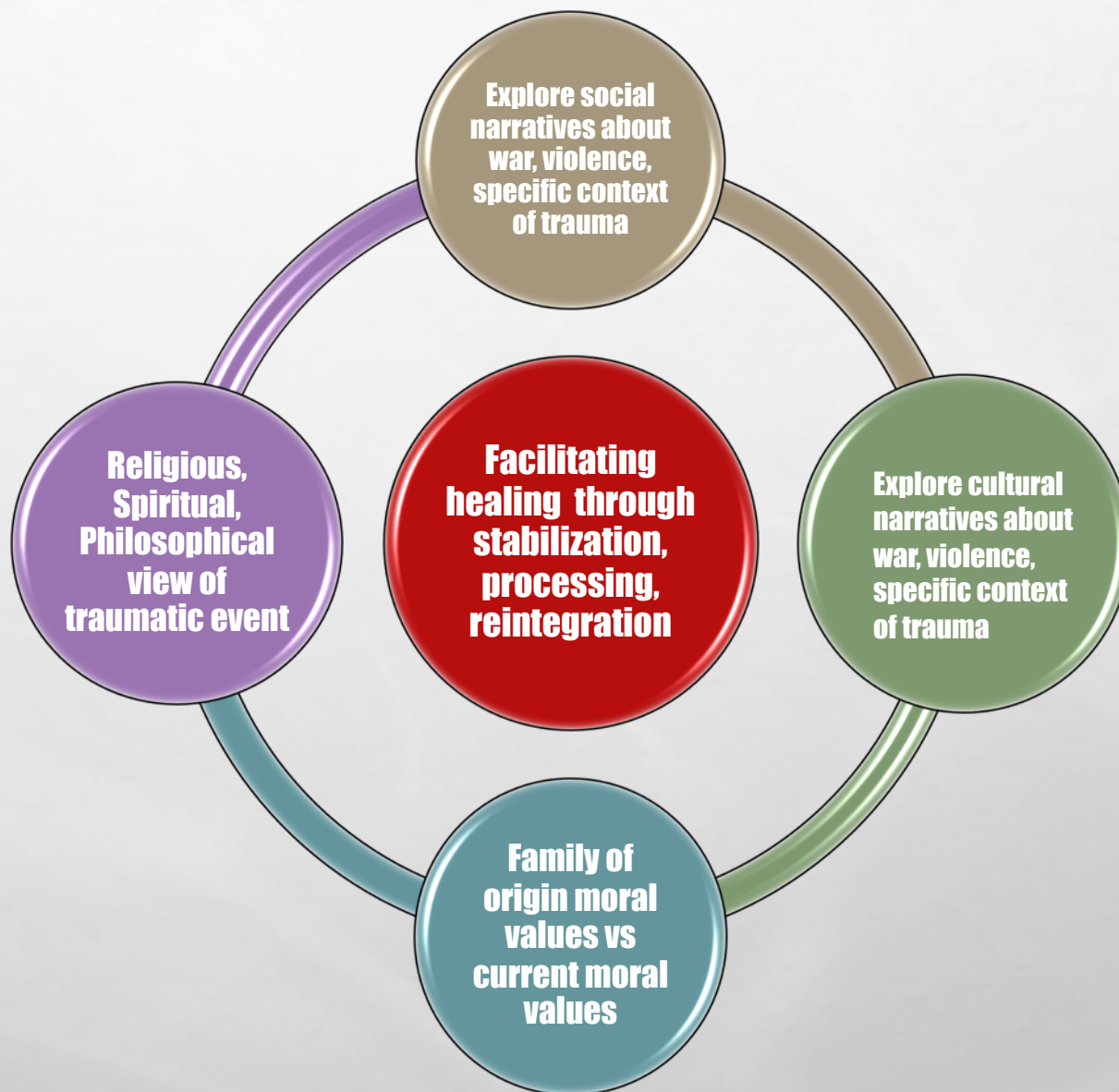
DSM-5	PTSD	Moral Injury
Stressor (A)	Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence	Acts that violate deeply held [moral] values
Individual's role at time of the event	Witness, victim or direct exposure	Witness, victim [or failed to prevent]
Intrusion Symptoms (B)	YES	YES
Avoidance (C)	YES	YES
Cognition and Moods (D)	Persistent fear, horror, anger, guilt or shame	Guilt, shame or anger
Arousal and Reactivity (E)	YES	NO
What necessity is lost?	Safety	Trust, [Self- or other compassion, forgiveableness, faith]

Adapted and updated from William P. Nash, M.D., *Moral Injury and Moral Repair: Overview of Constructs and Early Data*. Presentation at 13th Annual Force Health Protection Conference August 12, 2010. Input from Sidney Davis, Kent Drescher, Kimberly Gronemeyer, Brett Litz, Lowell Kronick, William Nash, Jason Nieuwsma, Jonathan Shay.

WHEN VETERANS COME HOME TO INTERPERSONAL MORALITY

- **REMOVED FROM CONFLICT CONTEXT**
- **NOT WITH BUDDIES/UNIT**
- **WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND**
- **PERSON NO LONGER UNDERSTANDS OWN ACTIONS**
- **DISCONNECT FROM COMMUNITY**
- **FEEL OUT OF PLACE IN DAILY LIFE BECAUSE OF MORAL TRANSGRESSION**
- **FAITH/RELIGIOUS CRISIS**
- **WILL BE PUNISHED BY HIGHER POWER FOR ACTIONS/LACK OF ACTION**

ADDRESSING MORAL INJURY THROUGH EXPLORING LARGER SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT



Assessments for Moral Injury

Instrument	Key focus	Specialty	
Spiritual injury scale/index (24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guilt • Anger or resentment • Grief or sadness • Lack of meaning or purpose • Despair or hopelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling that God/life abandoned • Religious doubt or disbelief • Fear of death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health • Spiritual Injury • Moral Injury
Impact of Event Scale— Revised (IES-R) (25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traumatic Events • Intrusion into life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyper-arousal • Avoidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Military & veterans • PTSD/Moral injury • Health & emergency service personnel
Moral Injury Events Scale (MIES) (26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betrayal • Morality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immorality • Ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Military & veterans • PTSD/Moral injury
Spiritual Distress Scale (13) ^R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guilt • Sadness/grief • Resentment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger/ • Despair/hopelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health • Military & Veterans • PTSD/Moral Injury • Suicide
Moral Injury Questionnaire—Military (MIQM) (27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betrayal • Guilt • Retribution • Humanization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence • Destruction • Death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health • Military & Veterans • PTSD/Moral Injury
Modified Military Moral Injury Questionnaire (MMIQ) (11) ^R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immoral acts (witnessed and/or perpetrated) • Death/injury (civilians, military, enemy) • Betrayal (self & others) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical dilemmas (decision-making, humanization) • Disproportional violence/retribution • Grief, shame and unresolved issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral injury • Existential/spiritual • Ethics/morality • Military & veterans
Moral Injury Symptoms Scale—Military (MISS-M) (28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betrayal • Guilt • Shame • Moral concerns • Religious struggles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Meaning/purpose • Forgiveness • Self-condemnation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health • PTSD • Moral Injury • Military & Veterans

^RInstruments presented in chronological order ^R(13) developed from (24) Spiritual Injury Scale; ^RMMIQ: Based on the MIES (26) and the MIQM (27).

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENTS FOR MORAL INJURY

IMPACT OF KILLING IN WAR (IOW)

- **A 10-SESSION INDIVIDUAL THERAPY THAT HELPS PATIENTS EXPLORE THE FUNCTIONAL IMPACT OF NOT FORGIVING ONESELF, DEVELOP A FORGIVENESS PLAN (E.G., INCLUDING LETTER WRITING TO THE INDIVIDUAL(S) KILLED) AND HELPS PATIENTS DEVELOP AN AMENDS PLAN TO HONOR THE VALUES THAT WERE VIOLATED IN THE ACT OF KILLING. IT IS INTENDED TO BE A PHASED TREATMENT DELIVERED AFTER PTSD TREATMENT.**

ADAPTIVE DISCLOSURE (AD)

- **A 12-SESSION INDIVIDUAL TREATMENT THAT HELPS PATIENTS PROCESS MORAL INJURY THROUGH IMAGINARY DIALOGUE WITH A COMPASSIONATE MORAL AUTHORITY, BY APPORTIONING BLAME, MAKING AMENDS AND IN SOME VERSIONS, SELF-COMPASSION AND MINDFULNESS MEDITATIONS.**

ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY (ACT)

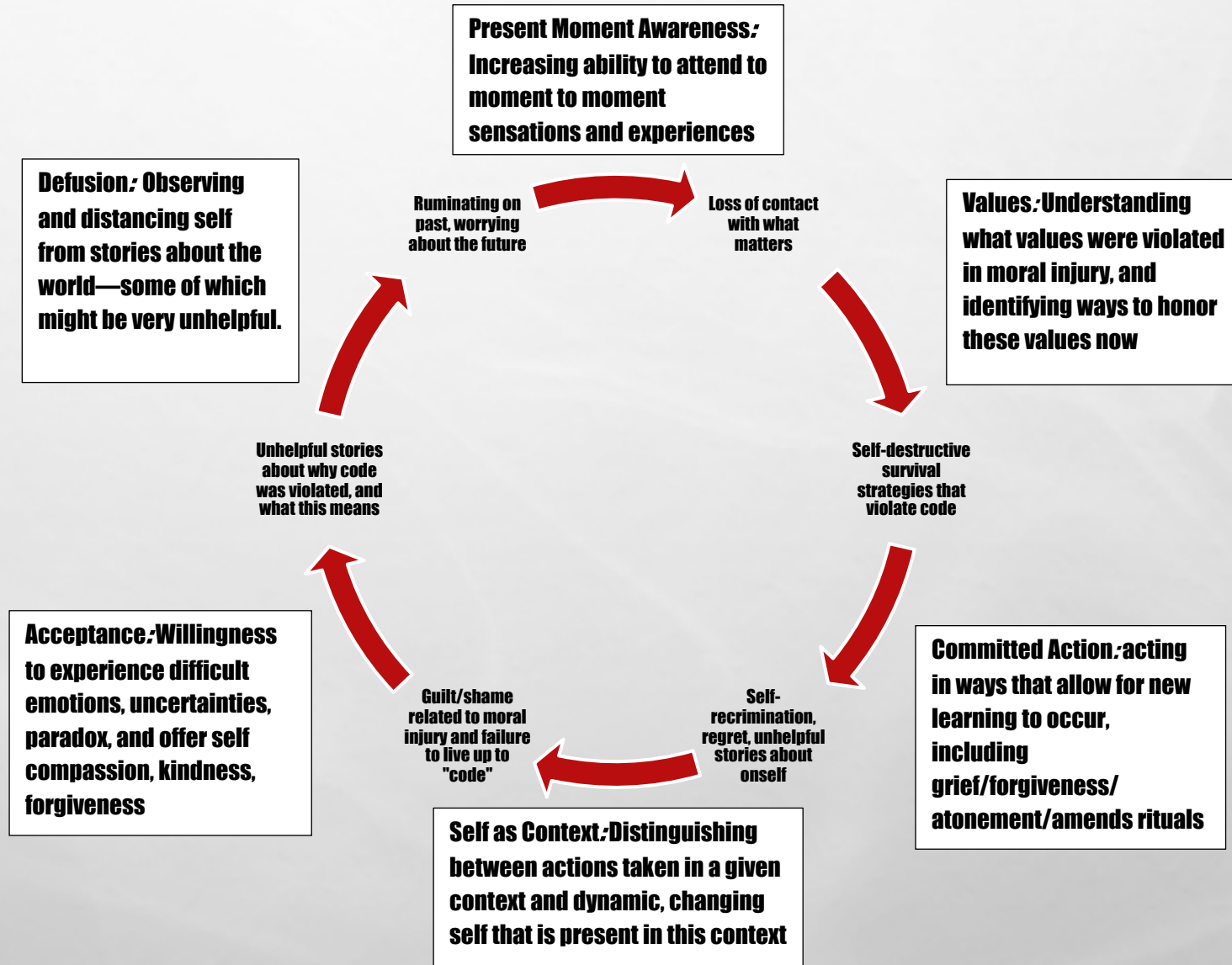
- **PRESENT MOMENT AWARENESS, VALUES, COMMITTED ACTION, SELF AS CONTEXT, ACCEPTANCE, DIFFUSION**

TRAUMA INFORMED GUILT REDUCTION THERAPY

- **A 6-SESSION INDIVIDUAL THERAPY THAT HELPS PATIENTS IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE BELIEFS SUCH AS HINDSIGHT BIAS AND RESPONSIBILITY THAT CONTRIBUTE TO GUILT AND SHAME, IDENTIFY IMPORTANT VALUES INCLUDING THOSE THAT WERE VIOLATED DURING THE TRAUMA, AND MAKE A PLAN TO LIVE IN LINE WITH THOSE VALUES GOING FORWARD**

ACT FOR MORAL INJURY

ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY



MORAL INJURY HEALING IS MULTI- DIMENSIONAL

**THERE ARE MANY IDEAS AND WAYS OF LOOKING AT HOW TO
FACILITATE MORAL HEALING**



MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MORAL REPAIR

Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sleep• Reduce stress load• Restore physical health (diet, exercise, play)• Restore authority of prefrontal cortex
Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Face demons• Tolerate intense negative moral emotions (shame, guilt, anger)• Assess culpability (self and others)• Clarify distorted thinking (e.g., overgeneralizations)
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connection• Trust• Love• Seek true justice (not revenge)
Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• God• Prayer• Meditation• Religious practices• Beauty



The diagram consists of four concentric circles. From the outermost to the innermost, they are: a light blue circle labeled 'spiritual', a dark blue circle labeled 'social', a green circle labeled 'psychological', and a red circle labeled 'physical'. The circles are arranged in a circular pattern, with the 'spiritual' circle being the largest and the 'physical' circle being the smallest.

William P. Nash, "Common Goals for Preventing and Repairing Moral Injury," DCoE Chaplains Working Group Teleconference, 4 March 2015.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- **Crucial for coping**
- **Protective factor**
- **Provides evidence that:**
 - **World is benevolent, meaningful**
 - **Survivor is deemed worthy**
- **Pastoral care = an understanding confidant**
- **Groups = mini-community**



SPECIAL CLERGY QUALIFICATIONS

- **SPECIALIST IN GUILT, SHAME, FORGIVENESS, RESTORATION, COMMUNITY, AND RITUAL**
- **MORAL/ETHICAL AUTHORITY**
- **REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DIVINE**
- **LESS STIGMA THAN A MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER**

INDISPENSABLE QUALITIES OF CHAPLAINS AND CLERGY

- **NON-JUDGMENTAL**
- **NON-ANXIOUS**
- **COMPASSIONATE**
- **EMPATHETIC**
- **PATIENT WITH STRUGGLE**
- **TRANSPARENT (APPROPRIATELY)**
- **ENGAGING WHERE THEY ARE**



IDEAS FOR LEADERS TO ADDRESS MORAL INJURY

- **HELPING PEOPLE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE RHYTHMS OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR WHICH ENCOURAGES RENEWAL (HELPING TO DEVELOP NEW NEURAL PATHWAYS) WHICH CAN ALSO LEAD TO TRANSFORMATION VIA CONSTANT REPETITION OF RENEWAL**
- **THE INCLUSION OF SACRAMENTAL STRUCTURE FOR ONE'S LIFE (E.G., PENANCE AND ABSOLUTION)**
- **DRAMATIC RE-ENACTMENT AND IMAGINATION OF PAST SACRED STORIES OF REDEMPTION THAT CORRELATE/RELEVANT FOR THE HERE AND NOW**
- **THE POWER OF ART (IN ITS MANY FORMS) TO TOUCH THE HEART AND ASSIST INNER HEALING**
- **EQUINE FACILITATED LEARNING**
- **OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL THERAPY**
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AROUND SPECIFIC TOPICS LIKE TRAUMA, SUFFERING, WAR, CONFLICT, COMMUNITY/RELIGIOUS CALLING TO SERVE OTHERS**
- **SEND-OFF AND WELCOME HOME RITUALS**
- **WORSHIP AND RITUAL**

CARE IDEAS CONTINUED



SUPPORT GROUPS

- **COMMUNITY BUILDING**
- **LESS THREATENING DUE TO COMFORT LEVEL WITH OTHER VETERANS OR COMMUNITY**
- **TAILORED TO UNIQUE NEEDS**
- **CAN ENGAGE FROM A SPECIFIC THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**



SUPPORT GROUP SESSION TOPIC IDEAS

- **INTRODUCTION TO MORAL INJURY**
- **SYMPTOMS (AWARENESS)**
- **MEDITATION/MINDFULNESS, DIFFUSION ACTIVITIES**
- **DISCERNING REALITY**
- **SPIRITUAL/RELIGIOUS/PHILOSOPHICAL BLOCKS**
- **POWER OF WORDS, INNER NARRATIVES**
- **EXPLORE SHAME, GUILT, AND FORGIVENESS**
- **THEODICY – “PROBLEM OF EVIL”**

VETERAN SUPPORT GROUP SESSION TOPIC IDEAS CONTINUED

- **WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?**
- **MAKING CONNECTIONS**
- **SPIRITUAL PRACTICES**
- **HOSTILITY AND FORGIVENESS**
- **SELF-FORGIVENESS**
- **VALUES**
- **MAKING MEANING**
- **CREATE RITUAL/SELF-DESIGNED CEREMONY**
- **PHYSICAL HEALTH- DIET AND EXERCISE AS A RELIGIOUS RITUAL: CARING FOR YOUR BODY AS A TEMPLE OF THE DIVINE**

DISCUSSION

**WHAT IS A NEXT STEP YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP
VETERANS IN YOUR COMMUNITY, EITHER IN
GROUPS OR ONE-ON-ONE?**

WHEN TO REFER

- VETERAN IS SUICIDAL
- VETERAN IS HOMICIDAL
- VETERAN NEEDS MEDICINES
- VETERAN BECOMES DISRUPTIVE
- VETERAN'S SYMPTOMS DON'T IMPROVE
- YOU'RE AT YOUR WIT'S END
- VETERAN HAS EXPRESSED CONCERNS THAT RELATE TO MORAL INJURY



WHERE TO REFER

- **NEAREST VA**
- **VETERANS CRISIS LINE**
- **NEAREST ER**
- **COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC**
- **PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER**
- **VA CHAPLAINS**



IF CONCERNED ABOUT VETERAN'S IMMEDIATE SAFETY, IT'S BEST TO ESCORT

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QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?