

Moral Injury Presentation



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Brief overview of the connection between suicide and moral injury

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OBJECTIVES

CONSTRUCT

Picture of Moral Injury
Definition
Background

RECONSTRUCTION

Components
Principles
Application

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Picture of moral injury

Diagram by William Nash, M.D., USN ret., Greater Los Angeles VA Source: The Huffington Post

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Definitions of moral Injury

- *Jonathan Shay*: "...moral injury is present when 1) there has been a betrayal of what's right [in the soldier's eyes] 2) by someone who holds legitimate authority 3) in a high-stakes situation." (Shay, J. 2011." Casualties." *Daedalus* 140(3):179-88, p. 211.
- *Brett Litz*: "Potentially morally injurious events, such as perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations may be deleterious in the long-term, emotionally, psychologically, behaviorally, spiritually, and socially." (Litz, B. T., Stein, N., Delaney, E., Lebowitz, L., Nash, W. P.,

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Types of Moral Injury

You as the "victim" OR you as the one at fault

- An **act of commission** (something you did alone or with others)
- An **act of omission** (failing to get involved, not doing "enough")
- Carrying **dehumanizing** memories

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MILITARY examples of Moral Injury

- Acts of betrayal by peers, leaders, or self (abandoned)
 - Disproportionate violence inflicted on others (M203 into house with civilians)
 - Violence within military ranks (Blanket Party)
 - Concealed acts of cowardice, failure to do duty
 - Inability to prevent death or suffering (includes medical & first responders)
 - Perceived “errors” or “mistakes”
- Resulting in ethical dilemmas or moral conflicts

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CASE Study

34 year Veteran that served 8 years in the military as an officer. Veteran is divorced, has a two children that lives out of the State Veteran lives. Veteran has good and supportive relationship with parents. Veteran is struggling with orders that he gave that led to the death of a child, as a result is impacting his relationship with his own children. Veteran grew up in the Roman Catholic Church, but not current involved with his faith. I met this Veteran in my spirituality group while Veteran was in substance abuse and PTSD residential treatment program for 3 months. At the time I met Veteran, he was struggling with guilt, regrets, and sorrow for the orders he has given that led to the death of a child.

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Case study

- Veteran shared that he has been struggling with guilt, sorrow and regrets in relation to his military experience as an officer, and lack of connection with his units based on the order he gave that led to the death of a child. Veteran shared about sense of betrayal and disappointments within himself in relation to giving orders to his unit. Veteran shared about struggles with depression, anxiety, flashbacks and self-medication with alcohol over the years. Veteran shared about the effect of his military experience on his faith. According to Veteran, “I grew up in the church, I want to believe and use my faith, but am just not there, norm at times”. Veteran shared about his pain, hurts, and disappointments with himself.

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CASE Study

Veteran talked about the physical, phycological, spiritual and emotional struggles he has been going through that contributed to his divorce. Veteran acknowledged his internal struggles with God's love and forgiveness towards him. Veteran expressed his need to experience forgiveness and enjoy his life and family.

Veteran shared about his pain, hurts, and disappointments with himself. Veteran talked about the physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional struggles he has been going through that contributed to his divorce. Veteran acknowledged his internal struggles with God's love and forgiveness towards him. Veteran expressed his need to experience forgiveness and enjoy his life and family.

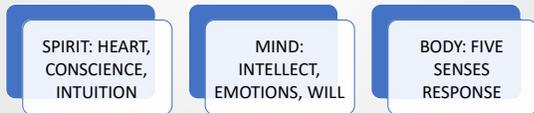
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AFFECTS of Moral injury

- Event (or person's response) violated values and changed person's view of self, others and/or the world.
- **Self:** person no longer feels "strong," "good," or "worthy."
- **Others:** no longer seen as "benevolent," "kind," "humane," "reliable," or "honest."
- **The World:** no longer safe, benevolent, or meaningful.
- Core Symptoms (Depressive): regret, horror, sadness, bitterness, grief, loss, anger (at powerlessness), shame, futility, low worth, hopelessness, low self-esteem, and inertia.

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THE WHOLE PESON: Interwoven, YET DISTINCT



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Application:
spiritual response FOR WHOLENESS

Principles of forgiveness: process, condition of heart, living vs existing, humility, whole person.

Role of forgiveness towards healing, and peace:
Relational dynamics with self, others, God

Self-reflection of forgiveness: the release of pain, hurts, disappointments

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REFLECTION thoughts

Understanding of forgiveness, healing, and peace.

Effect of forgiveness emotionally, physically, spiritually, mentally, and socially.

Role of forgiveness in dealing with the hurts, pain, sufferings, and disappointments.

Contrast between living and existing.

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Application:
Mind Response FOR WHOLENESS

Intellect

Emotions

Will

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Application:
physical Response FOR WHOLENESS

Sleep

Reduce Stress

Healthy Choices

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Components of Process

- Put event(s) in context: You may have been under the influence or in a military context
- What happened is only a fraction of who you are (and what you have done) in a lifetime
- Weigh the event in terms of the whole of who you are & your values
- Carry the responsibility that is yours and release the rest
- Accept you are fully human
- Consider Divine or self-forgiveness/making amends

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Question and answer to culminate presentation.
I will field your questions at this time.

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