



CARING FOR VETERANS

Is It PTSD or Moral Injury?

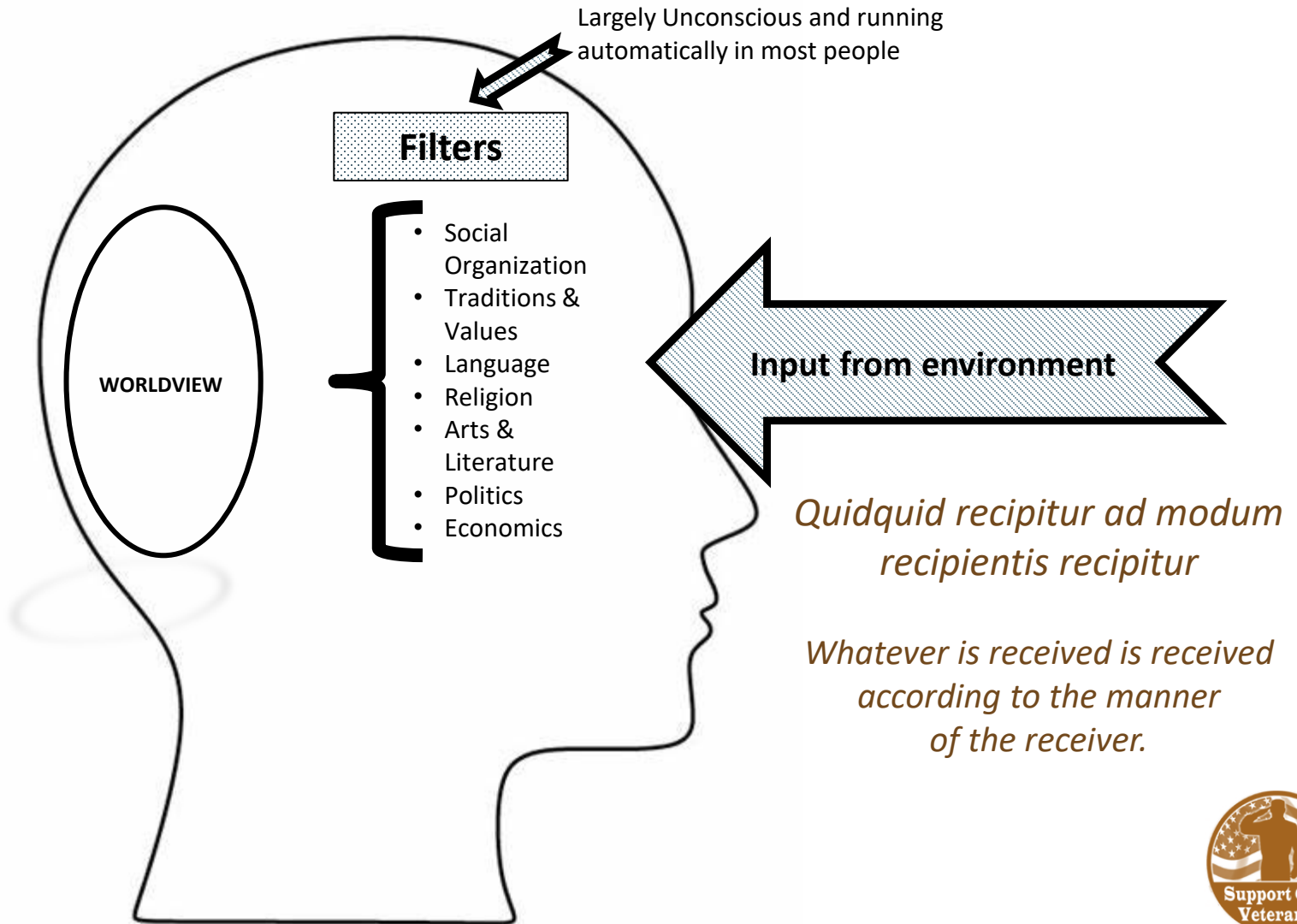
PAUL DORDAL, DMIN, BCC-MH
CHAPLAIN, NATIONAL PROGRAM MANAGER, NCS

NOT ALL WOUNDS ARE VISIBLE



PTSD OR MORAL INJURY?

Shaping Your Moral Worldview



PTSD May Not Be The Signature Wound Of The Iraq/Afghan Wars

“**PTSD** has become a hallmark injury among returning veterans.” (>20%)

-- Williams & Hansman, 2012

“It is **Moral Injury**, not PTSD, that is increasingly acknowledged as the signature wound of this generation of veterans....” (>75%)

-- David Woods, 2015



Defining PTSD

“**PTSD** is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event - either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.” (Mayo Clinic, 2014)



Broadening PTSD

“Veterans’ pursuit of mental health services appears to be driven more by guilt ... than by the severity of their PTSD symptoms....”

(Fontana & Rosenheck, 2004)

*“Persistent negative emotional state (e.g. fear horror, anger, **guilt, or shame**).”*

(Update to the DSM-5, 2013)



Defining Moral Injury

“Moral injury is present when (1) there has been a betrayal of what is morally correct; (2) by someone who holds legitimate authority; and (3) in a high-stakes situation.” (Shay, 2013) [betrayal; moral injury by other]

Moral injury occurs when one “perpetrates, fails to prevent, bears witness to, or learns about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.” (Litz, et al, 2009) [perpetrator; moral injury by self].

“Moral injury is damage to a person resulting from a intense/extreme contradiction of deeply held moral expectations. (Nash, 2011)



History of PTSD/Moral Injury

- **1000 BC: King David** (Philistine Battles w/ Israelites) “... O LORD, I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years with groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak...” (Psalm 31)
- **800 BC: Achilles** (Homer’s Iliad) “My comrade is dead, /Lying in my hut mangled with bronze, /His feet turned toward the door, and around him, / Our friends grieve. Nothing matters to me now.” (19.222-26)
- **Civil War: Soldier’s Heart.** “Cardiac” like symptoms, described as “overstimulation of the heart’s nervous systems.”
- **WWI: Shell Shock**
- **WWII: Battle Fatigue/Combat Stress Reaction**
- **Vietnam: PTSD** (Formally in 1980 in the DSM-III)
- **OIF/OEF: Moral Injury**



SOLDIERS OF CONSCIENCE



PTSD OR MORAL INJURY?

Moral Injury: Qualitative Research

Experiences	Signs/Symptoms
Use of Lethal Force	Social Problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small arms fire; mechanized warfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolation; aggressive behavior
Betrayals	Trust Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leaders; peers; civilians; self	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intimacy impairment
Abusive Violence	Spiritual Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Atrocities; disproportionate violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of faith
Collateral Damage	Existential Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women; children; elderly	Fatalism; deep sorrow
Within-Ranks Violence	Negative Self-Concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual assault; fragging; suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-loathing; damaged

From Kent Drescher, MDiv, PhD, *Moral Injury and Clergy* (Presentation)



Moral Injury: Quantitative Research

❖ Study 1 (Nash, et al, 2013)

- Moral Injury associated with higher levels of Depression, Anxiety, PTSD, Negative Affect, and lower Social Support

❖ Study 2 (Bryan, et al, 2014)

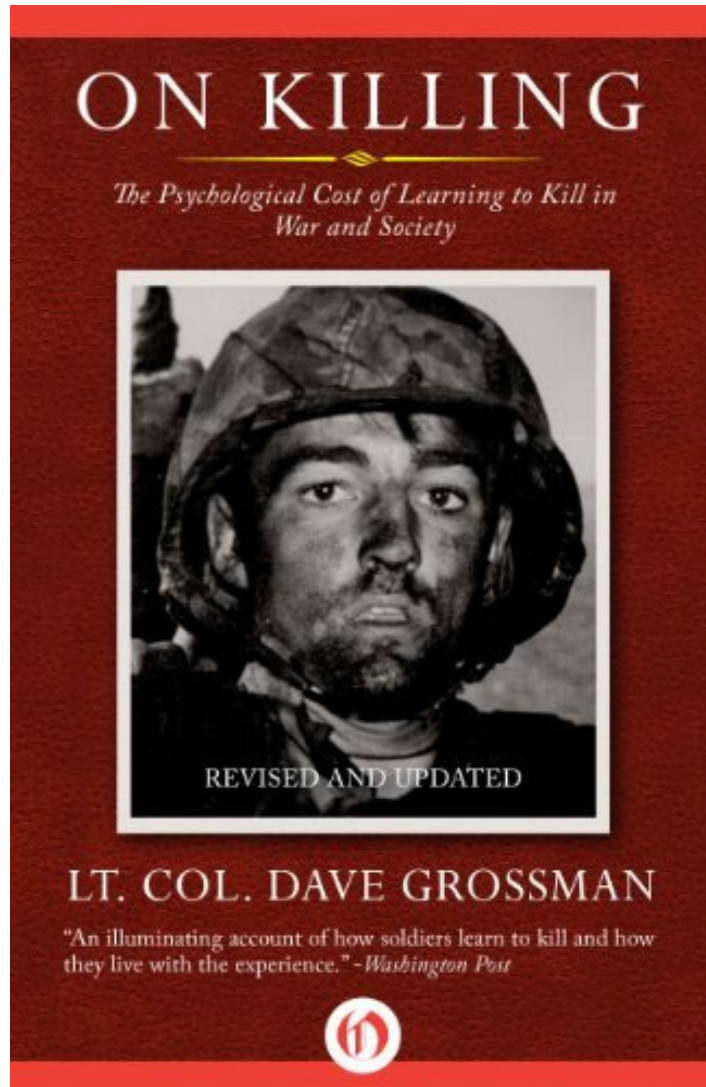
- Higher exposure to MI Events (Self, Other) among active-duty service members with history of suicide attempt. Higher exposure to MI Events (Self) associate with suicide ideation (past week).

❖ Study 3 (Currier, et al, 2013)

- Association between Moral Injury and work/social adjustment, PTSD, and depressive symptoms (including suicidality) after controlling for combat exposure.



On Killing: Lt. Col Dave Grossman, PhD



In WW II “80 to 85 percent of riflemen did not fire their weapons at an exposed enemy, even to save their own lives and the lives of their friends. In previous wars, non-firing rates were similar.”

Why? There exists “a powerful, innate human resistance toward killing one’s own species...”



Moral Injuries of OEF/OIF

- Unjust War
- Mission Ambiguity
- Civilian Deaths
- Political Instability
- Infrastructure Destruction
- Immoral Actions of Leaders
- Suicide of Soldiers



Soldier Suicides: My Story of Moral Injury

- Gen. Pete Chicharelli - Suicide: A Zero Defect Mission
- MP Wall of Heroes - Veterans Day, 2009, Iraq
- Alvarez & Pacleb + 5 On Return (No Honors; Threat of Court Martial)
- Chaplains Were Held Responsible
 - (LTC Marc Garcia)
- My Dried Carnation (VA-Aspinwall Parking Lot)



PTSD OR MORAL INJURY?

Delivering Humanitarian Aid?



PTSD OR MORAL INJURY?

Differences Between PTSD/Moral Injury

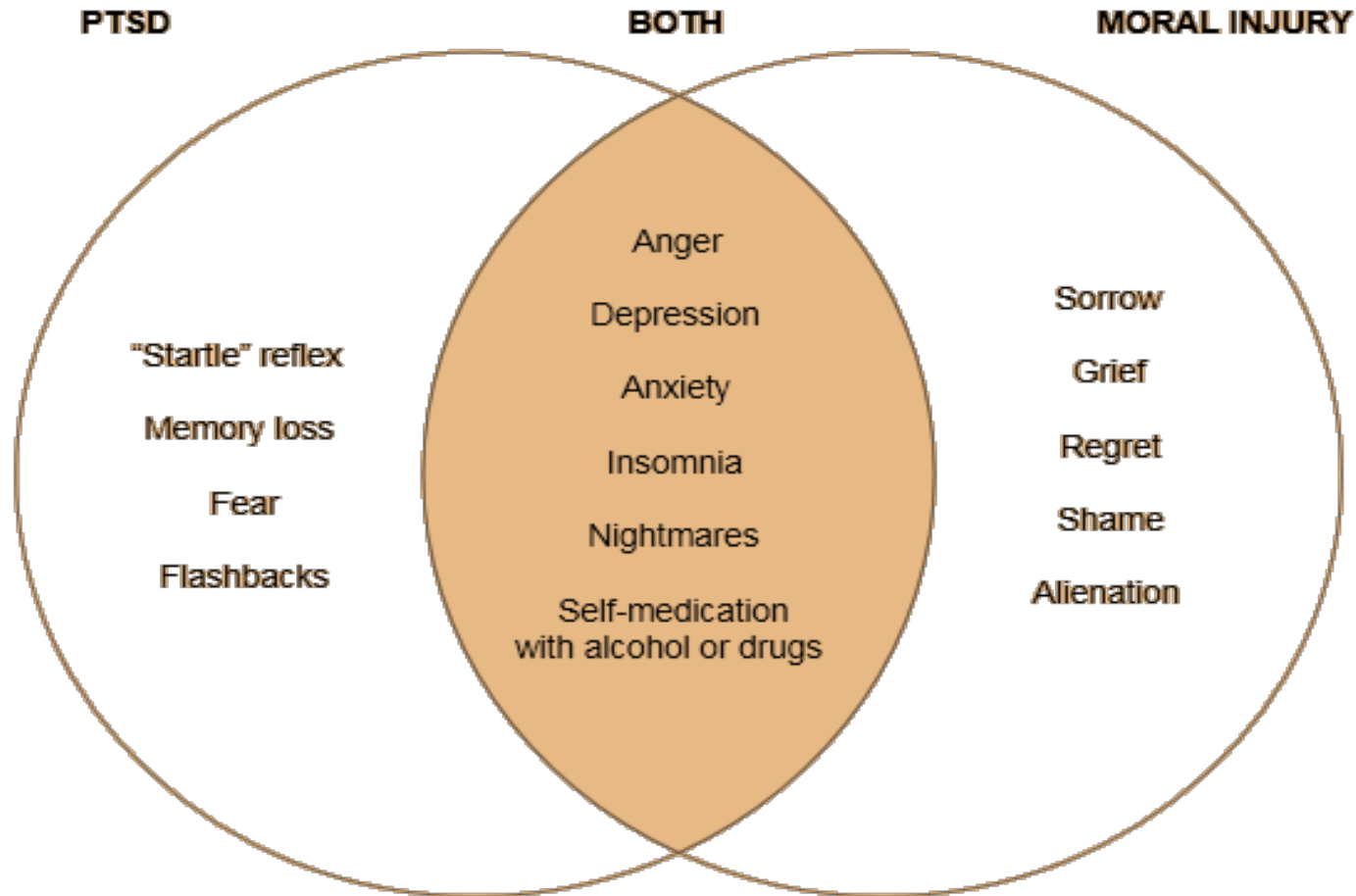
Criterion	PTSD	Moral Injury
Triggering Event	Actual or threatened death or serious injury	Acts that violate deeply held moral values
Role at time of event	Victim or witness	Perpetrator, victim, or witness
Predominant painful emotions	Fear, horror, helplessness	Shame, guilt, outrage, grief
Re-experiencing	YES	YES
Avoidance	YES	YES
Cognitive/mood changes	YES	YES
Physiological arousal	YES	NO
What is lost?	Safety	Trust
What is needed?	Safety	Forgiveness

-- Jonathan Shay, MD, PhD



PTSD OR MORAL INJURY?

Shared Between PTSD/Moral Injury



Signs and Symptoms

❖ Moral Emotions

- Shame, guilt, anger, contempt, hatred

❖ Moral Beliefs About Self/Others

❖ Spiritual Struggle/Issues w/ Forgiveness (Self/Others)

❖ Avoidant or Self-Destructive Behaviors

- Risk taking, Substance use, Active/Passive Self Harm

❖ Alienation/Social Isolation

- Job/School/Family/Relational Issues

❖ Mental Health Disorders



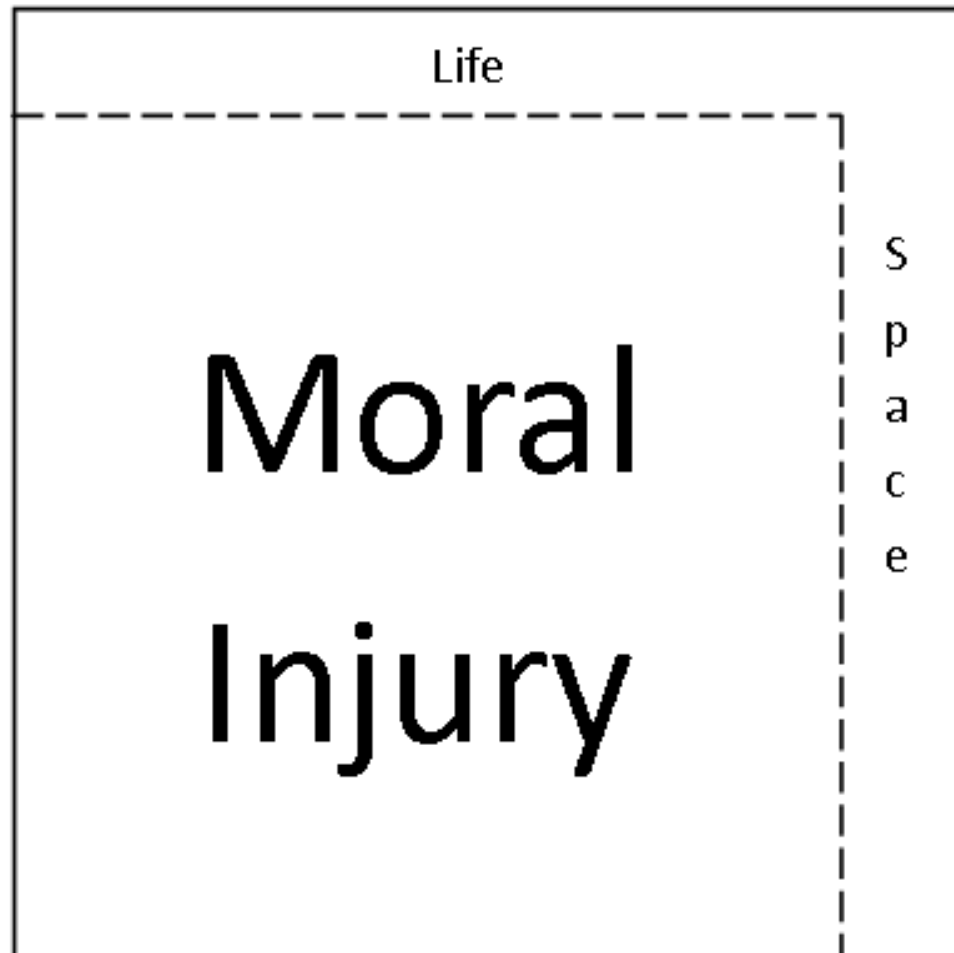
Care Implications/Strategies

1. Often times *Moral Injury* is explicitly tied to a spiritual concern. (God; meaning-making;
2. Provide a safe place to talk about these issues (non-judgmental/non-anxious).
3. Be prepared and willing to go to some very dark places.
4. Be prepared for the long haul. There is no quick fix. Soul repair takes time.
5. Explore widening the spaces for understanding existential issues.



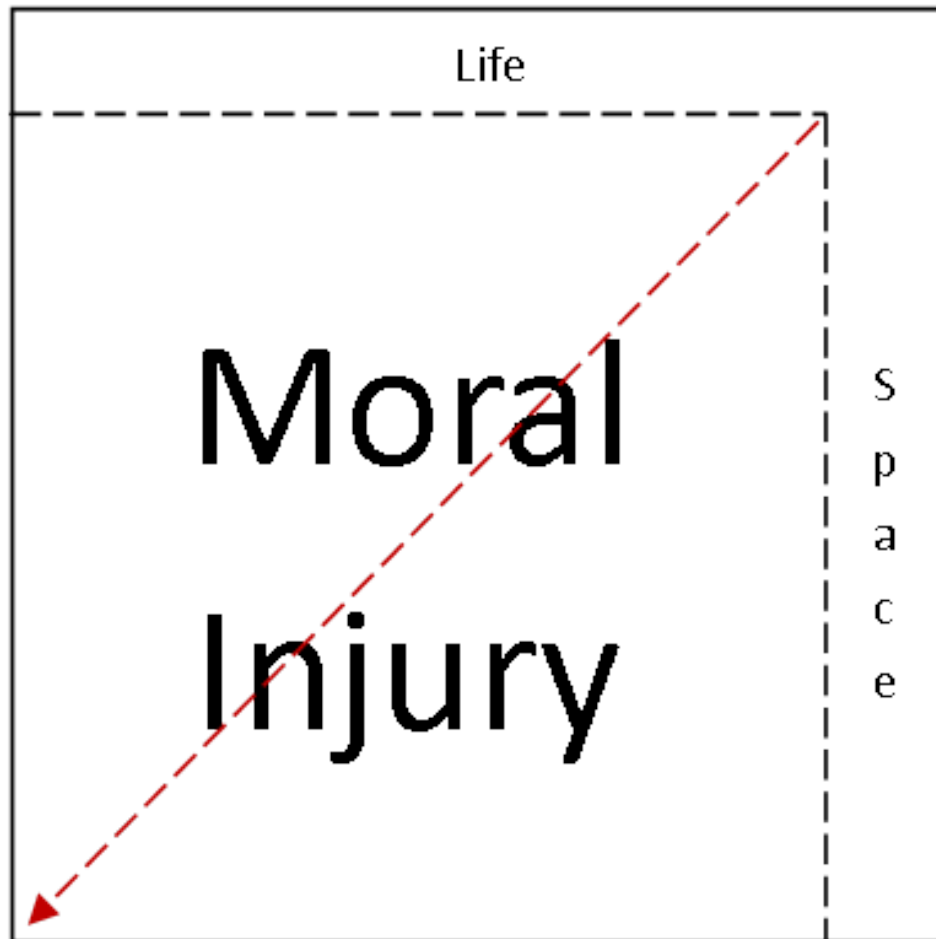
Widening The Life-Spaces

Moral Injury Taking Up Too Much Life Space



Widening The Life-Spaces

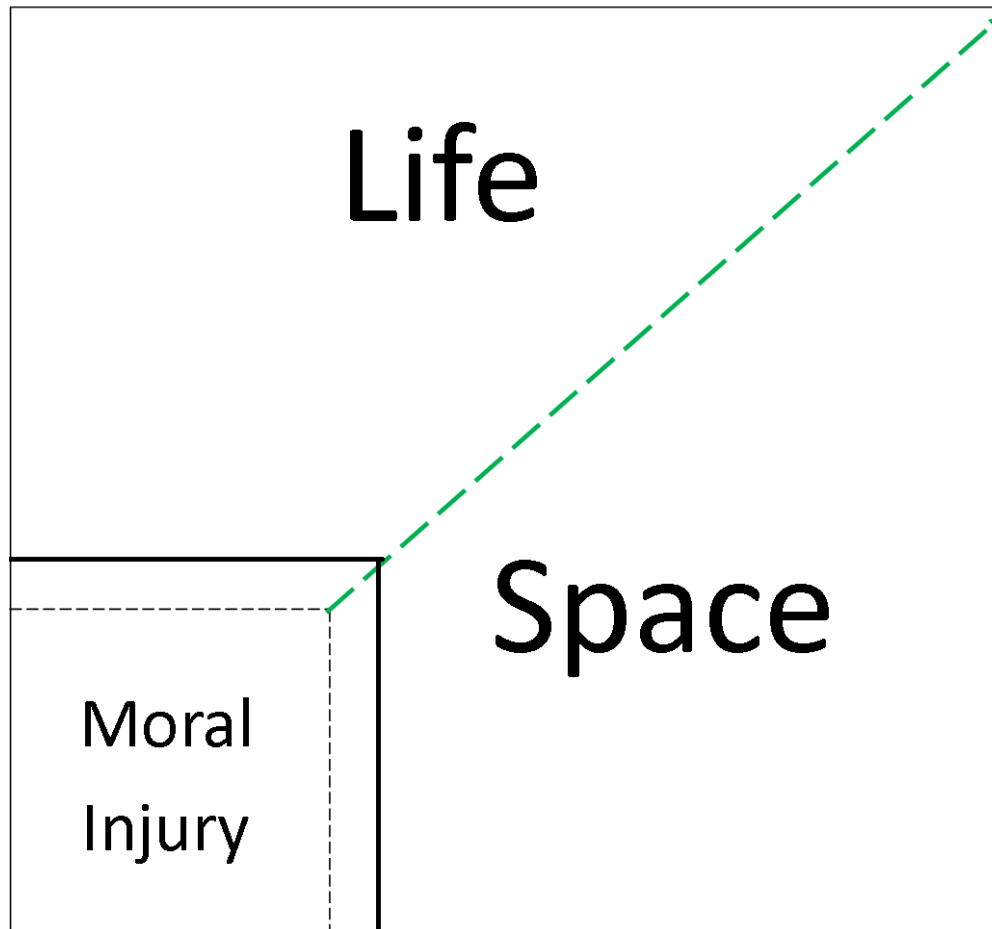
Can't Reduce The Space It Occupies



PTSD OR MORAL INJURY?

Widening The Life-Spaces

Increase The Life Space: Expand the Options, Choices, and Beliefs



Traveling the Path Towards Healing

Person Speaks
About
MI/Trauma
Event

Previous
Understandin
g and/or
Resources
Inadequate

Begin to look
at new
sources or
resources with
a trusted
person/group

Exploration
produces new
awareness
and options
for change

Scope of
action widens
with new
meanings and
actions



Moral Suffering

Moral Distress - aware of a moral dilemma and we are unable to resolve inner turmoil

Moral Injury - psychological [psycho-spiritual] wound

Moral Outrage - externalized expression of indignation

Moral Apathy - ignoring the suffering of others

“The key to transforming these challenges into benefits is to actualize the capacities of compassion. It is grounding ourselves in grace to recall our intentions for our work as a calling.”

-- *Roshi Joan Halifax, PhD*



TREATMENT OPTIONS

- **ACT for Moral Injury – Acceptance & Commitment Therapy**
- **Collaborative Moral Injury Groups – MH/Chaplain Groups**
- **BSS – Building Spiritual Strength**
- **CBT/CPT for Moral Injury – Cognitive Behavioral Therapy/Cognitive Processing Therapy**
- **PTG – Post-Traumatic Growth**



THANK YOU!

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SKY Resilience Training: A Multi-Modal Approach to Healing the Whole Person

LESLYE MOORE
NATIONAL DIRECTOR
PROJECT WELCOME HOME TROOPS

My Journey Healing My Own Moral Injury

- ▶ The Rwandan Genocide
- ▶ The Bosnian Genocide & War Refugees



Emmy -Nominated Almost Sunrise Documentary

The subject matter of the film is moral injury. The film captures an intimate portrait of two friends suffering from the unseen wounds of war as they discover an unlikely treatment: the restorative power of silence and meditation.



Moral Injury Defined by A Veteran's Experience:

“PTSD is what wakes me up at night and moral injury is what keeps me from going back to sleep – it’s an injury to the soul.”

- Anthony, Almost Sunrise

SKY Resilience Training

- ▶ The SKY Resilience Training is delivered online or in person over five consecutive days.
- ▶ A multi-modal mind-body resilience program.
- ▶ Employs breath work, yoga, guided meditation, daily self-reflection, and small group processes that create connection and emotional intelligence.



Transforming Veterans' Lives

Project Welcome Home Troops improves the quality of life for veterans and their families. The SKY Resilience Training teaches breath-based tools that:

- Reduces suicidal ideation & moral injury (anecdotal reporting by veterans)
- Decreases stress, anxiety, and depression
- Improves sleep quality
- Restores well-being & mental focus
- Fosters the power of connection
- Reduces cravings and addictions
- Reduces anger – creates emotional regulation

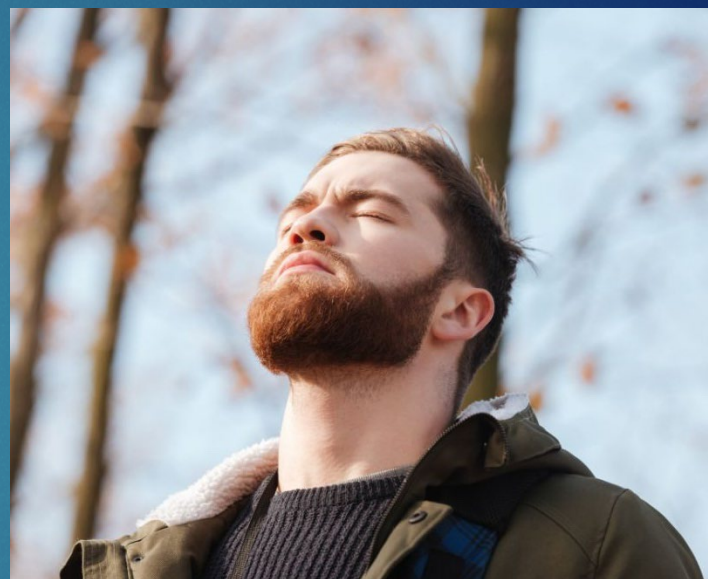
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SKY Breath Meditation

CORE TECHNIQUE:

The SKY Breath (Sudarshan Kriya) practice is a sequence of specific rhythmic breathing patterns that aid in delinking strong emotions associated with traumatic events from the mind and body



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Our Approach: Healing the Whole Being

Seven Levels of Existence

- Body
- Breath
- Mind
- Intellect
- Memory
- Ego
- Self

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Tendency of the
Mind:

It vacillates between
past, present and
future

**SO YOU'RE TELLING ME EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
MAKES IT EASIER TO MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS
AND CARE FOR MYSELF AND OTHERS?**

EXCELLENT

makeameme.org

Emotional Intelligence

Utilizing practical yet powerful wisdom 'keys' to build upon the wisdom and life experience of veterans

The Healing Power of Connection

Our ability to cultivate and nurture human connections can profoundly benefit our mental and physical well-being.



The Secret Sauce

- ▶ Self-love and self-empathy are intrinsic to the program and emerge from a deepening self-awareness
- ▶ Reconnection to self
- ▶ Meaningful and powerful connection to peers
- ▶ "I now know I am not alone."
- ▶ Experience in connection and belonging
- ▶ Feeling of hope

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WELCOME HOME TROOPS

What Veterans Are Saying

“I got my life back”

“This workshop is a game changer”

“I slept through the night, unaided, for the first time in years.”

“I don't want to die anymore”

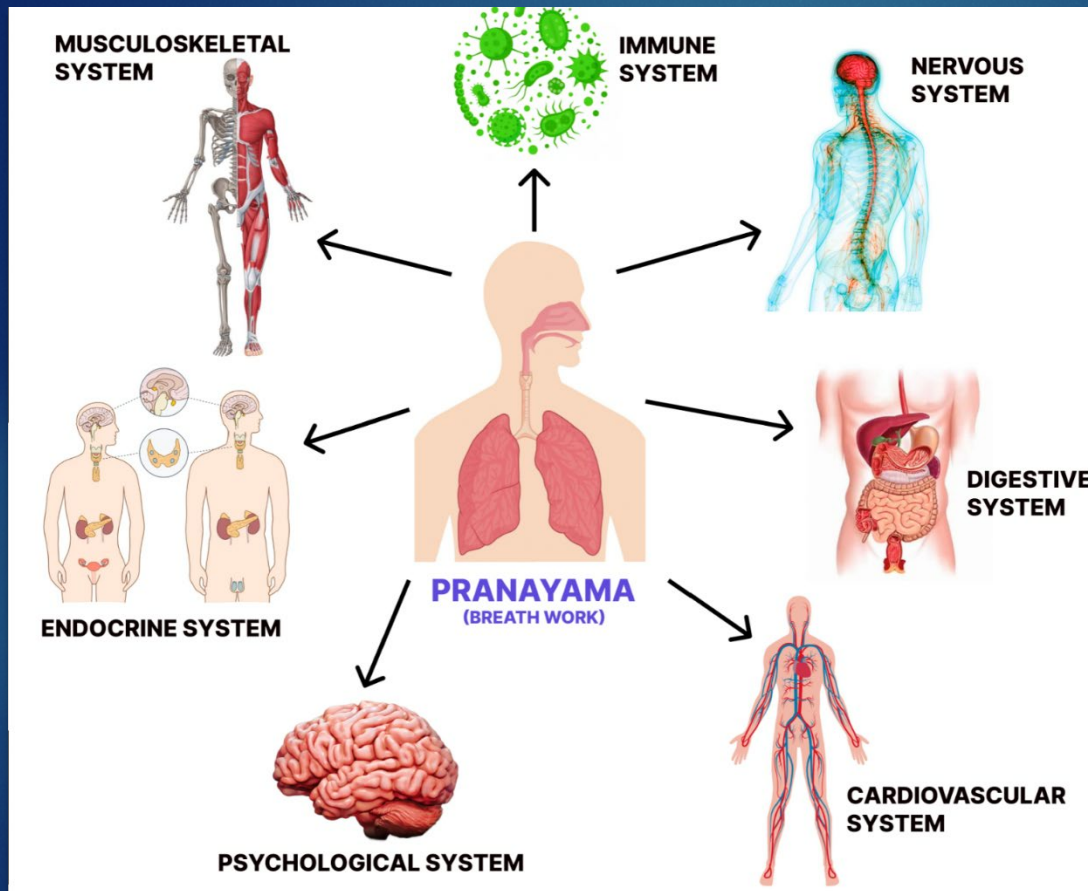


360 Support to Participants

- ▶ Pre-workshop intake calls to assess any special needs and to explain what they may experience during the workshop.
- ▶ Instructors are available for questions and support outside class hours and after the workshop.
- ▶ Materials and recordings are provided to veterans to support them in their daily practice of SKY.
- ▶ Weekly live one-hour SKY Resilience follow-ups with an instructor and power breath graduates.
- ▶ Additional programs are available to those interested in expanding their practice.

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WELCOME HOME TROOPS



The Science & Art of Breathing:

Effect of
Pranayama
(controlled
Breathing) on
Psycho-Neuro-
Endocrine-
Immunology (PNEI)

The BMJ 2022: Randomized clinical non-inferiority trial of breathing-based meditation and cognitive processing therapy for symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in U.S. military veterans. Findings:

SKY Breath Meditation was just as effective as therapy in treating PTSD

SKY Breath Meditation was as effective as CPT in treating depression

Only SKY improved symptoms at a physiological level, as measured by Heart Rate Variability (HRV)



Journal of Traumatic Stress

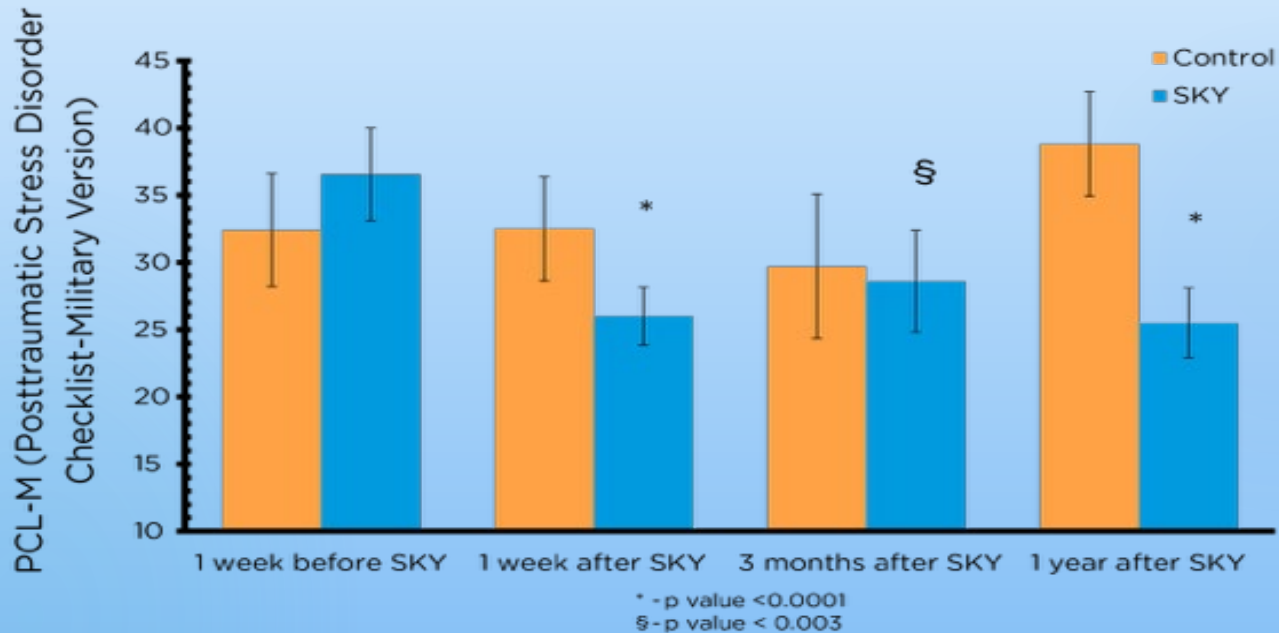
August 2015, 27,397-406

Breathing-Based Meditation Decreases Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms in **U.S. Military Veterans**: A Randomized Controlled Longitudinal Study

<https://emmaseppala.com/research/>
(5 min 20)

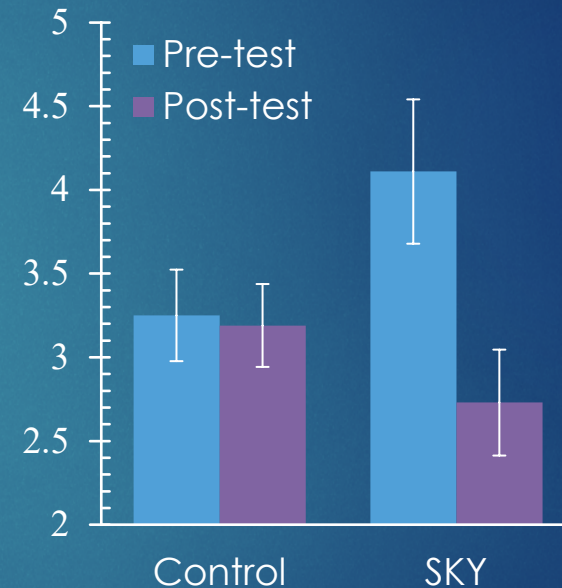
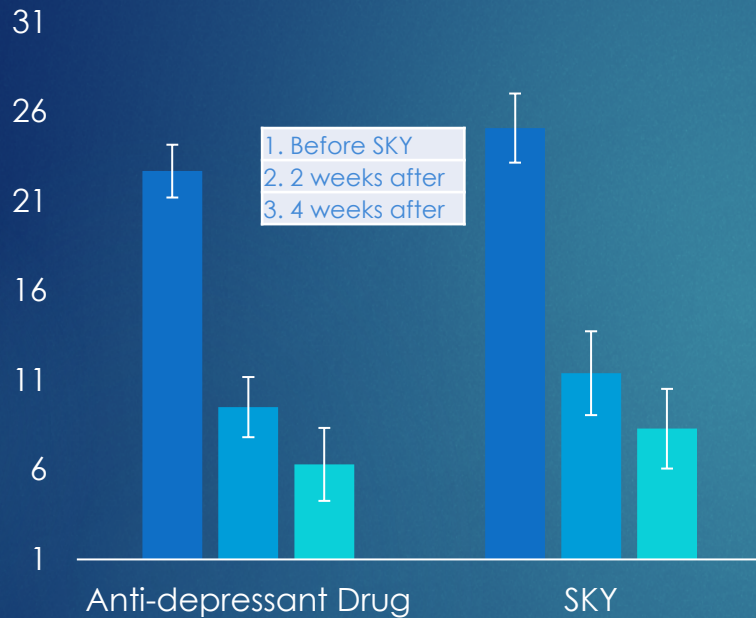
Seppälä, E. M., Nitschke, J. B., Tudorascu, D. L., Hayes, A., Goldstein, M. R., Nguyen,

SKY significantly reduces PTSD



Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who practiced SKY had significant reductions in PTSD symptoms after just one week of SKY practice. Results persisted for one year with no follow-up sessions, demonstrating long term benefits.

SKY sign decreases clinical & non-clinical Depression

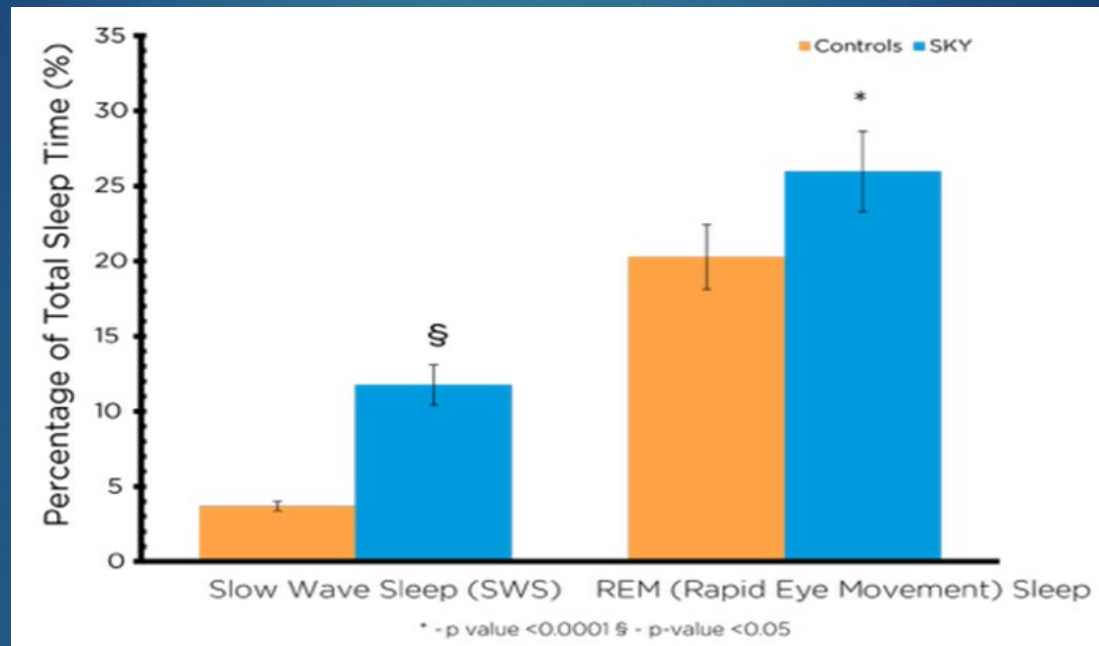


SKY significantly reduced major depressive disorder as effectively as anti-depressant drug therapy, yet is free of unwanted side effects.

N.Janakiramaiah et al.(2000)

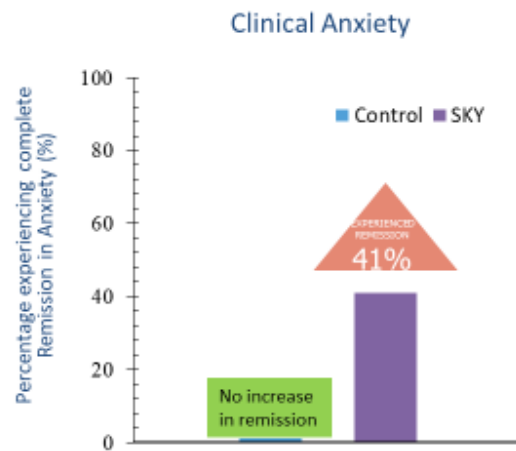
SKY reduced everyday blues (non-clinical depression) by one third in four weeks.
Kjellgren et al. (2007)

SKY Significantly Enhances Restful Sleep



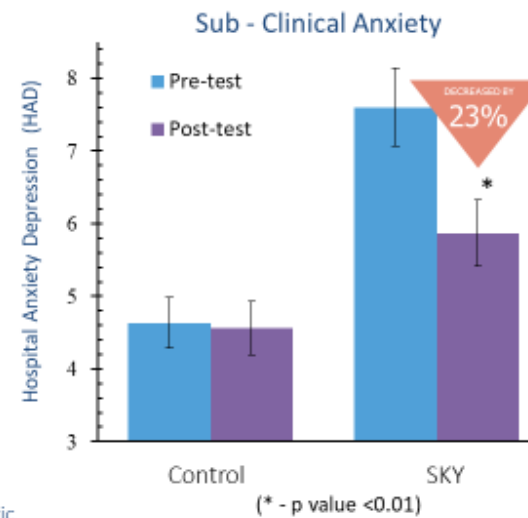
SKY practitioners spend three times as much of their total sleep time in deeper sleep (slow wave sleep), than controls.

SKY Significantly Decreases Clinical & Sub-clinical Anxiety



73% of individuals suffering from Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) despite 12 weeks of standard psychiatric care (drugs and psychotherapy) experienced significant reductions in anxiety, and 41% achieved remission, 4 weeks after learning SKY.

Katzman MA et al. , (2012)



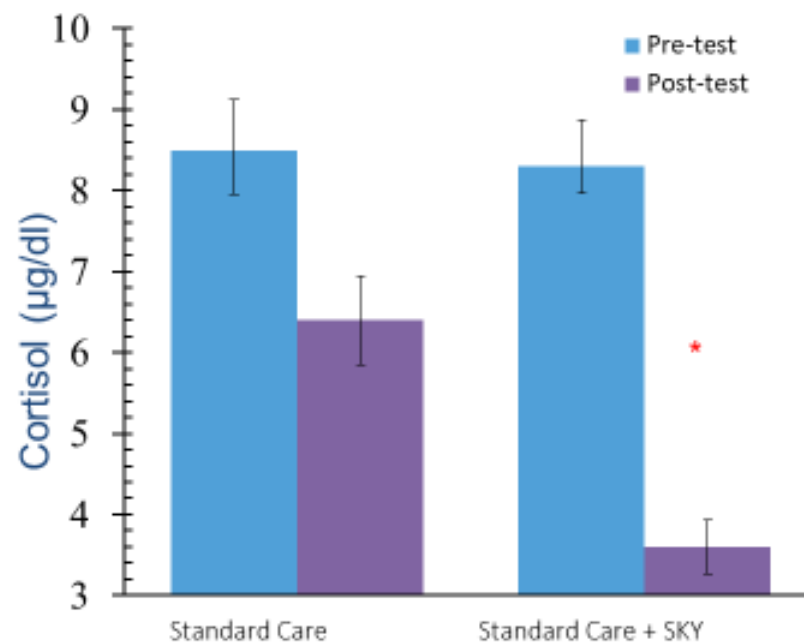
SKY significantly decreases everyday anxiety.

Kjellgren et al. (2007)

Autonomic homeostatic & accompanying resilience indicators:

- ↑ **Heart Rate Variability:** (Kharya, C. et al. 2014)
- ↑ **Antioxidant production** (Agte, V.V. et al. 2002; Sharma, H. et al. 2003; Sharma, H., et al. 2008,)
- ↑ **Natural Killer Cell count** (Kochupillai, V., et al., 2005)
- ↑ **Sleep quantity and quality** (Sulekha, S. Et. Al 2006; Sloan, R.A., 2020)
- ↑ **Mental Focus:** (Bhatia, M., et al., 2003)
- ↑ **Wellbeing: optimism, happiness, serenity, social connection, resilience** (Seppala, E. Et. Al, 2020, Goldstein, M., et al. 2016; Newman, R.I, et. al. 2020, Kjellgren, A. Et al 2007)

SKY Sign. Decreases Cortisol Levels (Stress Hormone)



* - p value <0.05

Adding SKY to conventional treatment for individuals in recovery for substance use was twice as effective in reducing Cortisol levels as conventional treatment alone.

orthachar et al.(2006)



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WELCOME HOME TROOPS

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Moving Upstream: Supporting Veterans through Whole Health

The Whole Health System



SCOTT HERRLE, MD, MS, FACP

NATHAN BLAKELEY, PT, DPT, OCP

Live Whole Health.
va.gov/wholehealth

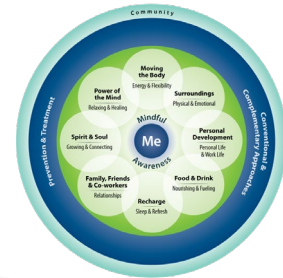
VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

What is Whole Health?



- An approach to health care that **empowers and equips** Veterans to take charge of their health and well-being and to live their life to the fullest.
- Comprehensive, person-centered care that is individualized to the unique needs of each Veteran.
- Change from the traditional model of episodic health care interactions to one of continuous engagement that provides ongoing support to Veterans.

The Whole Health Circle of Health

- Veteran is at center and is surrounded by “self-care” factors that influence well-being
- Professional care (healthcare team) focuses on prevention and treatment of medical conditions
- Community represents the individuals with whom a person interacts



The Whole Health Equation



Moving Healthcare From Downstream to Upstream



- The U.S. healthcare system focuses on treating diseases and chronic illness and frequently ignores the reasons why these conditions develop
- Healthspan is becoming much shorter than lifespan

“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”

- Bishop Desmond Tutu

Changing the Focus



- Whole Health changes the focus from “what’s the matter” to “what matters most”
- Focuses on the person rather than a disease

Importance of Identifying a Purpose

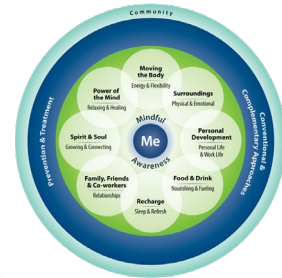


Alimujiang A, Wiensch A, and Boss J. Association between life purpose and mortality among US adults older than 50 years. JAMA Netw Open 2019; 2(5): e194270.

- Study of 6,985 adults
- Life purpose is significantly associated with all-cause mortality
- Those individuals in highest life purpose category are **2.3x less likely** to die than those in lowest life purpose category



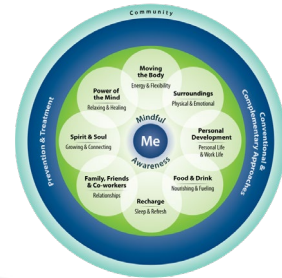
The Personal Health Plan (PHP)



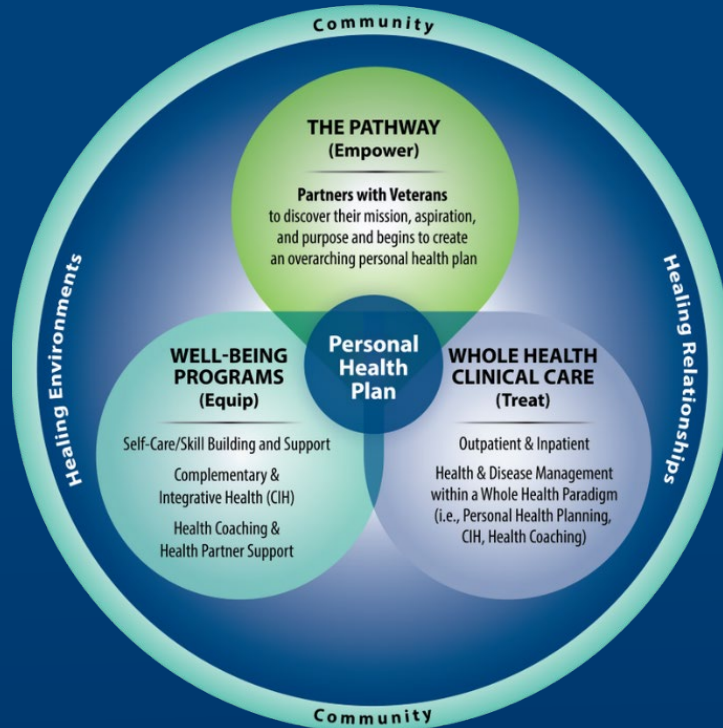
- Designed to be the integrator of care used as the standardized communication, referenced and developed by all clinicians and staff caring for the Veteran



Whole Health Model of Care



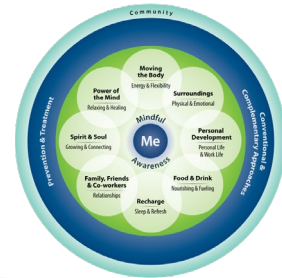
The Whole Health System



3 major categories of Whole Health services:

- 1) Pathway
- 2) Well-being
- 3) Clinical care

The Whole Health Pathway: Health and Wellness Coaches



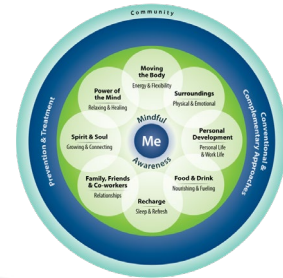
- Coaches partner with Veterans with goal to facilitate self-directed, lasting changes, aligned with the Veteran's values, which promote health and wellness and, thereby, enhance well-being
- Health coaching is future oriented with agenda set by Veteran
- Coaches utilize a guiding style to help Veterans identify their mission, aspiration, and purpose (MAP)
- Emphasis is on health enhancement and identification of strengths and aspirations

The Whole Health Pathway: Introduction to Whole Health



- Best way to get started with Whole Health!
- Participants explore how Whole Health is transforming health care by putting the Veteran's goals first
- Introduces the Personal Health Inventory
- Veterans have the opportunity to learn about current program offerings and how to get connected to these offerings

Personal Health Inventory (PHI)



Live Whole Health.



PERSONAL HEALTH INVENTORY

Use this circle to help you think about your whole health.

- "Me" at the center of the circle. This represents what is important to you in your life, and may include your mission, aspirations, or purpose. Your care focuses on you as a unique person.
- Mindful awareness is about noticing what is happening when it happens.
- Your everyday actions make up the green circle. Your options and choices may be affected by many factors.
- The next ring is professional care (tests, medications, treatments, surgeries, and counseling). This section includes complementary approaches like acupuncture and yoga.
- The outer ring includes the people, places, and resources in your community. Your community has a powerful influence on your personal experience of health and well-being.



Rate where you feel you are on the scales below from 1-5, with 1 being not so good, and 5 being great.

Physical Well-Being 1 NOT SO GOOD 2 3 4 5 GREAT

Mental/Emotional Well-Being 1 NOT SO GOOD 2 3 4 5 GREAT

Life: How is it to live your day-to-day life? 1 NOT SO GOOD 2 3 4 5 GREAT

What matters most to you in your life right now? Write a few words to capture your thoughts:

Live Whole Health.



18 10-930

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PHI614

Where You Are and Where You Would Like to Be

For each area below, consider "Where you are" and "Where you want to be." Write in a number between 1 (low) and 5 (high) that best represents where you are and where you want to be. You do not need to be a "5" in any of the areas now, nor even wish to be a "5" in the future.

Building Blocks of Health and Well-being	Where I am Now (1-5)	Where I Want to Be (1-5)
Moving the Body: Our physical, mental, and emotional health are impacted by the amount and kind of movement we do.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Recharge: Our bodies and minds need rest in order to optimize our health. Recharging also involves activities that replenish your mental and physical energy.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Food and Drink: What we eat, and drink can have a huge effect on how we experience life, both physically and mentally.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Personal Development: Our health is impacted by how we spend our time. We feel best when we can do things that really matter to us or bring us joy.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Family, Friends, and Co-Workers: Our relationships, including those with pets, have as significant an effect on our physical and emotional health as any other factor associated with well-being.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Spirit and Soul: Connecting with something greater than ourselves may provide a sense of meaning and purpose, peace, or comfort. Spiritual connection can take many forms.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Surroundings: Surroundings include where we live, work, learn, play, and worship—both indoors and out. Safe, stable, and comfortable surroundings have a positive effect on our health.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Power of the Mind: Our thoughts are powerful and can affect our physical, mental, and emotional health. Changing our mindset can aid in healing and coping.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Professional Care: Partnering with your health care team to address your health concerns, understand care options, and define actions you may take to promote your health and goals.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Reflections

Now that you have thought about what matters to you in all of these areas, what would your life look like if you had the health you want? What kind of activities would you be doing? Or how might you feel different? What area might you focus on?

What might get in the way? How might you start?

After completing the Personal Health Inventory, talk to a friend, a family member, your health coach, a peer, or someone on your health care team about areas you would like to explore further. Or visit www.va.gov/wholehealth.

<https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTHLIBRARY/docs/Personal-Health-Inventory-Brief.pdf>

The Whole Health Pathway: Taking Charge of My Life and Health



- Explores Veteran's life mission, aspiration, and purpose (MAP)
- Practice goal setting, skill building, and proactive management of Veteran health and well-being
- Each component of the Personal Health Plan will be developed for proactive partnership with providers to support Veterans through the change process

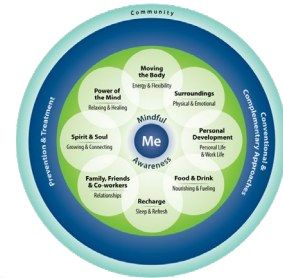
Live Whole Health.

Supporting a Veteran's Lifelong Health and Wellness Journey



- Many traditional medical programs are of finite duration and typically end when goal(s) is/are accomplished
- Whole Health wellness programs can provide support as long and as frequently as desired by each individual Veteran
- Whole Health equips Veterans with skills that encourage them to be active participants in their health journeys

Whole Health Wellness Programs at VAPHS



- Gerofit
- Vetfit
- MOVE!
- BAAM
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Mindfulness



Gerofit and Vetfit



- Structured exercise programs for Veterans:
 - **Gerofit**: Veterans 65 years of age and older
 - **Vetfit**: Veterans under 65 years of age
- Each program involves baseline fitness assessment including body composition being performed and is prescribed an individualized exercise prescription
- Virtual and face-to-face groups
- Open gym times



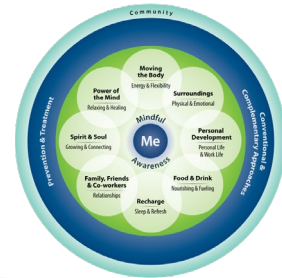
MOVE!



- A comprehensive lifestyle intervention for weight management
- Encourages healthy eating, increasing physical activity, developing behavior change skills, and promoting even small weight losses
- Can help Veterans reduce health risks, prevent or reverse certain diseases, improve their quality of life
- Groups are offered both in-person and virtually; early morning (7 am) and late afternoon (5 pm) virtual classes are also offered



BAAM (Be Active and MOVE!)



- A HIT-style exercise program for Veterans enrolled in the MOVE! Program
- Currently held in virtual format



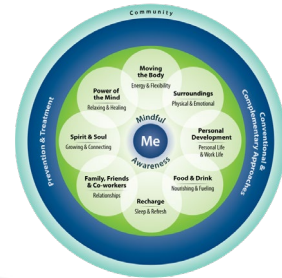
Yoga



- VAPHS has full-time yoga instructor
- We currently have a variety of in-person and virtual offerings including chair and gentle yoga



Whole Health Clinical Programs



- Veterans can be referred to these programs when deemed appropriate by care team and desired by Veteran to treat underlying medical conditions



Complementary and Integrative Health (CIH) Offerings



- Provides an additional opportunity to manage a variety of medical conditions non-pharmacologically when clinically indicated
- Currently available services include traditional acupuncture, battlefield (auricular) acupuncture, therapeutic massage therapy, meditation/mindfulness/guided imagery, and biofeedback



Pharmacologic Weight Management Program



- Designed for Veterans who are interested in weight loss pharmacotherapy after participation in the MOVE! program
- Veterans partner with Whole Health Clinical Pharmacist and General Internist and are supported by exercise physiologists, health coaches, MOVE! dietitian, and other Whole Health Providers

QUESTIONS?

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System