

MORAL INJURY. WHO CARES?



WE CARE!

Moral Injury Awareness—Program for Faith Communities



WE HELP THOSE WHO CANNOT
HELP THEMSELVES

Moral Injury Awareness—Program for Faith Communities

The Problem:

Moral Injury is a wound to the person’s moral beliefs, disrupts their sense of right and wrong, could impact their faith/spiritual beliefs and cause them to question many aspects of life. Moral Injury is defined by Litz et al. 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., Stein, N., Delaney, E., Lebowitz, L., Nash, W., Silva, C., & Maguen, S. (2009). Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy. *Clinical Psychological Review*. 29:695-706.)

Causes of Moral Injury:

Witnessing a horrific event that took place
A result of one’s personal actions
Harming/killing others
Watching a person die/witnessing losses
Preventing a death from taking place
Failing to prevent immoral acts done to others
Giving/receiving orders that go against one’s moral values

(Real Warriors, Real Battles, Real Strength

<http://www.realwarriors.net/active/treatment/moralinjury.php>)

<http://www.realwarriors.net/multimedia/profiles/dundas.php>.

How a person experiences Moral Injury:

When a person experiences a Moral Injury, they can react either emotionally or behaviorally, their faith/spirituality can be impacted therefore causing them to question their beliefs and what they know to be right and wrong. Examples of how they could be affected by Moral Injury:

Behavior	Substance abuse, isolation, suicide ideation, lack of trust, re-experiencing the event, avoidance & sleep problems
Emotional	Shame, guilt, depression, anxiety, emotional numbing & conflicted/questioning meaning of life
Faith/spiritual	Where was my higher being? What do I believe in? Can I be forgiven?

Cognitions (self-beliefs)	I should have done more, I should not be alive right now, I should have seen it coming, I am a horrible person, I do not know who I am anymore
Somatic (physical reactions)	Depression, withdrawal & sleep problems

(Real Warriors, Real Battles, Real Strength

<http://www.realwarriors.net/active/treatment/moralinjury.php>)

Difference between Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Moral Injury:

Often times, Moral Injury is mistaken for PTSD because some symptoms of the two overlap, specifically depression, hopelessness and beliefs about the “self”. However, PTS is the result of a fear conditioned response as a result of being in sustained fight or flight modes needed in war zones to survive. It is highly adaptive in combat. Moral Injury is not just the working through of hypervigilance/startle responses but an alarming of the soul and reconciliation/resolution of right and wrong. Moral Injury is an existential dilemma that shatters one’s worldview and their beliefs about themselves. It is the sense of one’s goodness and trust in self and humanity that is shaken. We ask our military to be at the “tip of the spear” for their society but they carry the burden of sanctioned aggression or morally ambiguous situations encountered in war exposures with them. Therefore, efforts to resolve moral injury require approaches/treatment that assist with restoration and self-forgiveness of the self, evaluating choices in impossible situations and personal responsibility. (Gibbons-Neff, Thomas, “Why distinguishing a moral injury from Post Traumatic Stress is important” Stars and Stripes, March 9, 2015)

How to approach someone who has a Moral Injury:

Create a safe place for the person to talk
Listen with love and compassion
Learn how the experiences has affected their spiritual beliefs
What do they believe they need in order to heal
Ask how they would like to receive help
Resist rushing into interventions
Watch to depression/suicidal ideation
Make referrals to professional help if needed

The Solution:

There are many different actionable item ideas your faith community can provide to help people understand Moral Injury and bring people together. Here is a list, **but not**

limited to these suggestions, of items your faith community can do to generate a community for Service members/veterans and their families:

- Create a resource room with materials regarding VA services such as health care/benefits, programs/services in local community for military personnel, Moral Injury information and other materials related to military topics that would be valuable/helpful
- Identify a member of the congregation who is a Service member/veteran or a family member to be the **point of contact** for other military personnel/their family to reach out to in case they have questions, want to know more information or to have someone to speak with if they are struggling with an issue and this person can be the one who oversees any and all military ministry and activities
- Create a small group for Service members/veterans to meet on a regular basis to talk about whatever topics they would like to speak about. Make sure the person who is overseeing the group is either a religious figure or knows about the military culture from a VA/Vet Center, a military focused organization or a veteran
- Create a small group for the loved ones of the Service members/veterans to meet on a regular basis to talk about whatever topics they would like to speak about. Make sure the person who is overseeing the group is either a religious figure or knows about the military culture from a VA/Vet Center, a military focused organization or a spouse/family member
- Create a kids group for the kids in military families so they can connect with other kids who have been or are going through the similar experiences to create friendships and a sense of safety. This can be done through arts & crafts days, playdates at the park, outings to various attractions throughout town/city etc...
- Bring in outside help to help host workshops on military related issues or speak about military topics. This can be done by contacting your local VA/Vet Centers by using the following link to find local VA/Vet Centers: http://www.va.gov/landing2_locations.htm. Another way to bring in outside help is through Veterans Service Organizations that are located throughout the whole country and within communities. Here is the link of the various Veterans Service Organizations, some of which may be in your area: <http://www.va.gov/vso/>
- Plan a retreat—the following are links to help you plan a retreat:
<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/checklist-for-retreat-planning>
<http://welcoming-spirit.com/2009/02/how-to-plan-a-retreat-the-beginning/>
<http://welcomingspirit.blogspot.com/2009/03/how-to-plan-retreat-putting-together.html>

There are a number of retreats centers around the country that plan retreats just for Service members/veterans and their families. The information for those retreat sites are located the “Retreat information” section of the resources area

and the names of the retreat centers are **Boulder Crest Retreat, Lone Survivor Foundation Retreat, Eagle Rock Camp, Project Sanctuary and Operation Heal Our Patriots**—some basic information on the retreat centers is provided as well as the websites and contact information.

- Art groups—could be weekly or monthly—bring in an art therapist who knows about the military culture (<http://www.socialwork.career/2012/03/11-tips-for-conducting-art-therapy-with-htmlm1.html>)
- Expressive writing group—could be weekly or monthly (<http://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/journal-therapy>)
- Talk therapy/talking circles—ensure the person overseeing the group is either a preacher of some sort or someone who knows the military culture well (Service member/veteran, social worker etc http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/talkingtogether/facilitated_talking_circle_fact_sheet.html)
- Religious groups/gatherings that can focus on religious topics or how to regain religious beliefs if a person feels they have lost their sense of faith
- Plan events/outings that can be just for veterans, just for their families, to bring together veterans and civilians within the community or events to bring everyone together. Some examples are movie nights, golf outings, family picnic days **
*please be sure to be able to accommodate people who might have physical problems. Also, some Service members/veterans are not able to handle being in big groups of people, tight places or lots of noise so be mindful when planning outings to certain places*** Here are some links to help aid in the planning process of an event:
<http://smartchurchmanagement.com/church-event-planning/>
<http://www.wildapricot.com/articles/eg-how-to-plan-an-event>
<http://www.wildapricot.com/articles/eg-event-checklist>
- Plan a breakfast/lunch/dinner event that is focused on the topic of Moral Injury (or other military related topics) and brings in speakers about the topic (can be found through the VA/Vet Centers or Veterans Service Organizations that are listed above). Create a panel of people who have Moral Injury or have a loved one with Moral Injury and have them talk about their experience with Moral Injury and how they are recovering and where/how they sought help
- Plan a service project either through your own faith community or reach out to large organizations that focus on service such as the Mission Continues (<https://www.missioncontinues.org/>), Team Rubicon (<http://www.teamrubiconusa.org/>), Habitat for Humanity (<http://www.habitat.org/>), American Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org/>) and other various organizations such as these or look within your own community to see what volunteer /service projects there are available

Moral Injury Awareness Video

The following video is of James H. Mukoyama, Jr., Major General, U.S. Army – Retired and the President & CEO, Military Outreach USA. General Mukoyama served as a platoon leader in the demilitarized zone in the Republic of Korea and as an infantry company commander in the 9th Division in Vietnam. In 1989, he became the first Asian-American to command an Army division. General Mukoyama's awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Legion of Merit, 3 Bronze Stars, Purple Heart, Parachutist Badge, Expert Infantryman's Badge, and Combat Infantryman's Badge. He is a life member of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. He is also a disabled veteran. In the video, he speaks about what Moral Injury is, shares his personal story of his Moral Injury and explains how someone who has this type of injury (or knows someone who might have it) can receive help either through their house of worship, by speaking with someone they trust or seeking professional help through the VA system.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B78lvTd4GokQeFVDUWZGTmo3N2c/view?usp=sharing>

Resources:

VA Resources/Veteran groups/Military One Source:

For all information in relation to the VA (such as health care and benefits):

<http://www.va.gov/>

For professional help, please contact your local VA. To find your local VA or Vet Center:

<http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp>

For information on the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and to find a local post:

<http://www.vfw.org/>

For information on the American Legion and to find a local post: <http://www.legion.org/>

Military One Source is a website for all things military related:

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/>

Videos:

How to heal a Moral Injury <http://projects.huffingtonpost.com/projects/moral-injury/healing> Honoring the **Code**— <http://www.honoringthecode.com/>

A video that interviews those who have been to war and that have been affected by a Moral Injury.

Overcoming Moral Injuries by Joshua Mantz— speaks about his experiences that lead to his Moral Injury, how it has impacted him and how he is handling it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORBf73HiJns&sns=em>

The moral obligation to know our Veterans by Mike Haynie—shares story about how our society is accepting and welcoming of veterans but know very little about the struggles they face and that in order to better help veterans, our society needs to learn more about the struggles they face daily.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSWhlUiGang>

The moral injury of war by Eric Hodges—speaks about the boundaries that exist for soldiers re-entering the civilian world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3B5m6OUXCA>

Websites:

Veterans Crisis Line

<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/?account=Military%20Chat>

National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

Huffington Post—‘I’m a Good Person And Yet I’ve Done Bad Things’ A Warrior’s Moral Dilemma by David Wood

<http://projects.huffingtonpost.com/moral-injury>

The Moral Wounds of War Being Healed By a Retired U.S. Army General

<http://www.exodustrekkers.blogspot.com/2016/01/the-moral-wounds-of-war-being-healed-by.html>

Military Outreach USA—a non-profit that provides links to resources, programs, and has a Military Caring Network so that you can serve those who have served us.

<http://www.militaryoutreachusa.org/>

Retreat information:

Boulder Crest Retreat

18370 Bluemont Village Lane, PO Box 117, Bluemont, Virginia, 20135

Phone number: 540-554-2727

Email: infor@bouldercrestretreat.org

Website for more information: <http://www.bouldercrestretreat.org/>

Description: Boulder Crest Retreat is the nation's first privately-funded rural wellness center dedicated exclusively to combat veterans and their families. Open to combat veterans (anyone who deployed to a war zone) from any generation/conflict and welcomes active-duty, reserve and National Guard personnel, veterans and family members, to include Gold Star families. Provides short-duration, high-impact retreats. The Our Family Retreat program provides combat veterans and their families with the opportunity to stay, for 2-7 nights, in one of the cabins at no charge. The PATHH

programs focus on combat-related stress, and are 1, 3, 5 and 7 days in length. One key element of success is something that any service member or veteran can relate to - the concept of focus. The main goal is to provide combat veterans and their families with the rest, reconnection and recharging they deserve so they can learn to live in the present and focus on their future.

Lone Survivor Foundation Retreat

2636 S. Loop West Suite 280, Houston, TX 77054

Phone number: 832-581-3593

Contact person/email: Ann Brown ann@lonesurvivorfoundation.org

Website: <http://lonesurvivorfoundation.org/healing-retreats/> **link for application is on this page on the left hand side of the page where it says "Join Us at a Retreat!" and click the link to be taken to the application**

Description: Lone Survivor Foundation is committed to providing support to service members and veterans struggling with invisible injuries such as combat trauma stress, mild traumatic brain injury, chronic pain management and military sexual trauma. The main goal is to support both the individual and the family through education, coping skills and reducing their symptoms of stress. Focus on wellness and therapeutic support. Retreats are conducted over a five day weekend (Thursday fly in, Monday fly out) at scenic facilities, allowing ample opportunity for the healing effect of nature and relaxation. Serves all military branches and backgrounds; focus is toward combat stress, mTBI and chronic pain issues, with an emphasis on service members and veterans from Operation New Dawn, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. There are individual service member retreats, couples retreats and family retreats offered, with the goal of taking the individual and family out of their normal environment, open the mind and emotions and provide tools for moving forward successfully. There are separate retreats for survivors of Military Sexual Trauma. The retreats provide support for invisible injuries through psycho educational groups, Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) using the EAGALA method, as well as individual sessions focused on brief stress reduction exercises to reduce symptoms of traumatic stress and pain.

Eagle Rock Camp

137 Cross Center Road, Suite 222, Denver, NC 28037

Phone number: 704-257-6382

Website: <http://www.eaglerockcamp.org/index.html> **to request an application, an email needs to be sent through the website by clicking on the "Contact Us" tab**

Description: Eagle Rock Camp reconnects military families at therapeutic retreats that are faith based, build a healthy spirit and strong family bonds. The retreat is secluded and in very special settings that are free from the distractions of daily life. This allows military families to focus on each other and to better handle the challenges of invisible

and visible wounds. Families attend 6 day/5 night retreats at no charge to them. The entire family learns life skills that provide positive, life changing experiences so they can recharge their energy and spirits, while learning to live life better and enhance family relationships. The combination of interactive workshops, therapeutic recreation and family fun, creates an environment that builds trust, takes down barriers and starts the healing process. Families choose to participate in activities that will benefit them the most. The workshops focus on healthy marriages, healthy parenting and family finances. While the parents are in workshops, the children will be with trained counselors, doing age and skill appropriate activities and may be indoors or outdoors. There is “free time” and that time can be used to take naps, walks, personal meetings with our counselors / trainers, reading etc.

Camps are conducted throughout the year at Camp Harrison, NC.

Project Sanctuary

PO Box 1563, Granby, CO 80446

Email: Info@ProjectSanctuary.us

Website: <http://projectsanctuary.us/serving-military-families/our-program/> **to find out the retreat schedule/location, hit the “Retreat Schedule” on the page, click the “Retreat Application” for the application and “What to Expect” to learn more**

Description: Project Sanctuary supports military families where they are right now. After years of working with military families, they have become a recognized leader in bringing health and wellness to our military families. By addressing mental health first, we take our families from battle ready to family ready. Retreats are structured to be six days, giving the family adequate time to begin to decompress, de-stress and really commence the healing cycle. Include the entire family (children and spouse)/support system. No chain-of-command reporting eases professional concerns and allows for open and honest discussion. Held in a secluded environment, without the interruption of cell phones, TVs or internet. Encouragement is offered from individuals who can empathize with what the family is going through. Most volunteers are returning family members who are able to give peer-to-peer understanding and support while growing the network of families. Participants are a mix of active duty, veterans, and wounded warriors and are from all five branches of the military, giving the families opportunities to learn of other services and coping strategies utilized from a wide base of sources. Only six to twelve families attend each retreat to ensure that each family’s specific needs are met and to provide each family dedicated time for their situation and needs. The retreat is free.

Operation Heal Our Patriots

Samaritan’s Purse

PO Box 3000 Boone, NC 28604

Phone number: (828) 262-1980

Email: send email through the website by clicking “Contact” under the “About” tab

Website:

Description: Operation Heal Our Patriots gives wounded veterans and their spouses the opportunity for spiritual refreshment, physical renewal, and marriage enrichment. Couples participate in Biblically-based seminars that help strengthen their relationships with God and others and enjoy the beauty of God’s creation with outdoor activities at our Alaskan wilderness lodge. We continue to support these men and women after their initial stay, keeping their spiritual needs and marriages a priority.

Readings about/related to the topic:

Joe Palmer – *They Don’t Receive Purple Hearts*—available through www.militaryoutreachusa.org

Jonathan Shay—*Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character and Odysseus in America*

Ed Tick—*Warrior’s Return: Restoring the Soul After War, War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation’s Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, The Golden Tortoise, Scared Mountain: Encounters With the Vietnam Beast and The Practices of Dream Healing: Bringing Ancient Greek Mysteries into Modern Medicine*

Nancy Sherman—*Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers, The Untold War: Inside the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of Our Soldiers and Stoic Warriors: The Ancient Philosophy Behind the Military Mind*

Rita Brock—*Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*