

## Slide 1: Understanding Moral Injury

## Slide 2: Objectives

- Define moral injury.
- Understand the causes and consequences of moral injury.
- Identify strategies to heal and recover from moral injury.

## Slide 3: Introductory Questions

- Have you ever done something that you felt was morally right, but also felt that it challenged you emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually?
- Have you ever done something that is at odds with your core code of ethics and values? How?
- Have you ever witnessed an act that challenged your ethical beliefs or values?
- Have you ever been affected by these experiences for a long time afterward?
- How has your sense of self and your outlook on life been shaped by your own or others' moral choices?

## Slide 4: Moral Injury Quotes

"You are praying that the decision you make is the right one, and if it is the wrong one – which a couple of decisions were the wrong ones – you are paying the price and you are living with it."

~ Former Service member Sendio Martz

"Moral injury does not necessarily imply that the injuries are inflicted by others, like when a soldier is ordered to perform a morally dubious task...in some cases, we injure ourselves through acts of commission or omission, through direct participation or indirect approval."

~ Former Service member Tyler Boudreau

## Slide 5: Moral Injury Definition

- Moral injury is "the lasting psychological, biological, spiritual, behavioral, and social impact of perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations"

## Slide 6: Potentially Morally Injurious Experiences

- Causing injury or pain to others, even when ethically justified in doing so
- Betrayal by leaders who make bad decisions with disastrous consequences
- Witnessing harm to fellow Service members

## Slide 7: True or False

- Moral injury can be determined by reviewing a list of a Service member's experiences
  - **False**

## Slide 8: Moral Injury Scenario

- What would you recommend to a friend to heal and recover from something that strongly violated his or her moral core?
- What do you think a person needs from friends and family after doing or seeing something that violated his or her moral core?

## Slide 9: Consequences of Moral Injury Quote

“People try to make sense of what happened, but it often gets reduced to, ‘It was my fault,’ ‘the world is dangerous,’ or, in severe cases, ‘I’m a monster’.”

~ Peter Yeomans, Staff Psychologist, VA Medical Center in Philadelphia

## Slide 10: Consequences of Moral Injury

- Being haunted, avoiding reminders
- Disinterest, detachment from family and friends
- Low motivation, alienation, purposelessness
- Broken moral compass
- Shame and guilt
- Reduced trust in others and in social contracts
- Poor self-care
- Self-handicapping
- Loss of faith

## Slide 11: What to Look For

- Significant changes in behavior may include:
  - Withdrawal and disconnection
  - Problems communicating about inner experience
  - Problems expressing caring feelings
  - Problems feeling good in situations that used to bring pleasure
  - Poor self-care
  - Self-handicapping

## Slide 12: Healing Moral Injury: Moral Repair

- Pain means hope
- Goodness is reclaimable
- Forgiveness and repair are possible
- Healing is a process

## Slide 13: Supportive Behaviors for Others

- Some support strategies are listed below:
  - Be non-judgmental, patient, compassionate
  - Give small, but consistent, doses of loving and caring
  - Make yourself available to talk about what is bothering the Service member or veteran
  - Get in touch with Service branch or VA care providers who can advise you
  - Foster help-seeking by the Service member or veteran

- In general, what type of support do you prefer?
  1. Having a support person present who is not actively involved in problem-solving
  2. Having a support person who is proactively involved in problem-solving
  3. Having a support person who is ready to be actively involved in problem-solving but only when asked
- In general, what type of support do you, the support individual, prefer to provide to others?
  1. Being present and not actively involved in problem-solving
  2. Being proactively involved in problem-solving
  3. Being ready to be actively involved in problem-solving but only when asked
- Can you be flexible in the support you provide depending on the type of support the other person wants?
- Are you able to talk with members of your social support network about what types of support you need?
- Are you able to recognize when your attempts at support are not working for the person you are trying to support?

## Slide 14: Supportive Behaviors for Self

- Sharing experiences with natural support systems
  - Family, friends, clergy
- Doing things that correct harm done
  - Giving to others, doing good, volunteering
- Connecting to faith communities (if applicable)
- Getting in touch with branch or Veterans Affairs (VA) care providers
  - Seek help and support when suffering

## Slide 15: Resources

- [National Center for PTSD website](http://www.ptsd.va.gov) at [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)
  - [Moral Injury](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/cooccurring/moral_injury.asp): [www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/cooccurring/moral\\_injury.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/cooccurring/moral_injury.asp)
  - [Where to Get Help for PTSD](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/gethelp/index.as): [www.ptsd.va.gov/gethelp/index.as](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/gethelp/index.as)
- [Veterans Crisis Line website](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net) at [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net) or call: 1-800-273-8255
- PTSD resources may be able to provide support.

## Slide 16: Review of Objectives

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## Slide 17: Understanding Moral Injury