



Arizona Faith Council

Faith Communities and Veteran Healing

December 5, 2019

OBJECTIVES

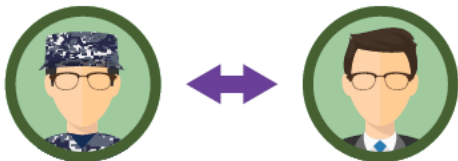
- Highlight some of the needs, challenges & issues facing service members/veterans/family members.
- Provide information on the “soul wound” or what is now being called moral injury that some veterans experience
- Review the role of spirituality on veteran wellness and healing.
- Show how Faith-Based Communities can get involved.

ARIZONA'S MILITARY/VETERAN POPULATION



ACTIVE DUTY

- 5 military installations
- 20,600+ service members



NATIONAL GUARD & RESERVE

- 13,600+ service members



VETERANS

- +/- 600,000 veterans of all eras
- 25% live in rural areas
- High concentration of OEF/OIF/OND relocating to AZ



FAMILY MEMBERS

- Spouses, significant others, children, parents, siblings, etc.

CHALLENGES VETERANS FACE

- Isolation
 - Fear of Large Crowds
 - Over stimulating environments (noise)
- Internal struggle
 - Dealing with stages of grief from loss of friends
 - Necessary actions for survival during combat create “soul wounds”
- Feeling Disconnected
 - Having a hard time relating to others (civilians)
 - Having a hard time relating to family
- Employment and education
- Family Challenges
- Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Trauma

TOPIC AREAS OF CONCERN



EMPLOYMENT



FAMILY &
SOCIAL
SUPPORTS



FINANCES



HIGHER
EDUCATION



HOUSING &
HOMELESSNESS



LEGAL



MENTAL HEALTH



PHYSICAL HEALTH



SPIRITUALITY

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

- Post-Traumatic Stress may develop after exposure to an event or ordeal in which death, severe physical harm or violence occurred or was threatened.
- Can include military combat, violent personal assaults (MST), natural or unnatural disasters and accidents.
- Activates the fight/flight/freeze response.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder>

Spirituality can improve post-trauma outcomes through:

- Reduction of behavioral risks through healthy religious lifestyles.
- Expanded social support through involvement in spiritual communities.
- Lessening of feelings of isolation, loneliness & depression related to grief and loss.
- Enhance coping skills & understanding trauma that result in meaning-making.
- Improve physiological mechanisms (i.e. "relaxation response") through prayer or meditation.
- Places veterans amongst caring individuals who can provide encouragement, emotional support, & financial assistance.

WHAT IS MORAL INJURY?

- Moral injury:
 - The pain that results from damage to a person's moral foundation.
 - "Moral injury is not officially recognized by the Defense Department. But it is moral injury, not PTSD, that is increasingly acknowledged as the signature wound of this generation of veterans: a bruise on the soul, akin to grief or sorrow, with lasting impact on the individuals and on their families."
 - David Wood, "The Grunts: Damned If They Kill, Damned If They Don't" March 18, 2014
- Its symptoms include:
 - Sorrow, Grief, Regret, Shame, Alienation

MORAL INJURY CAUSES

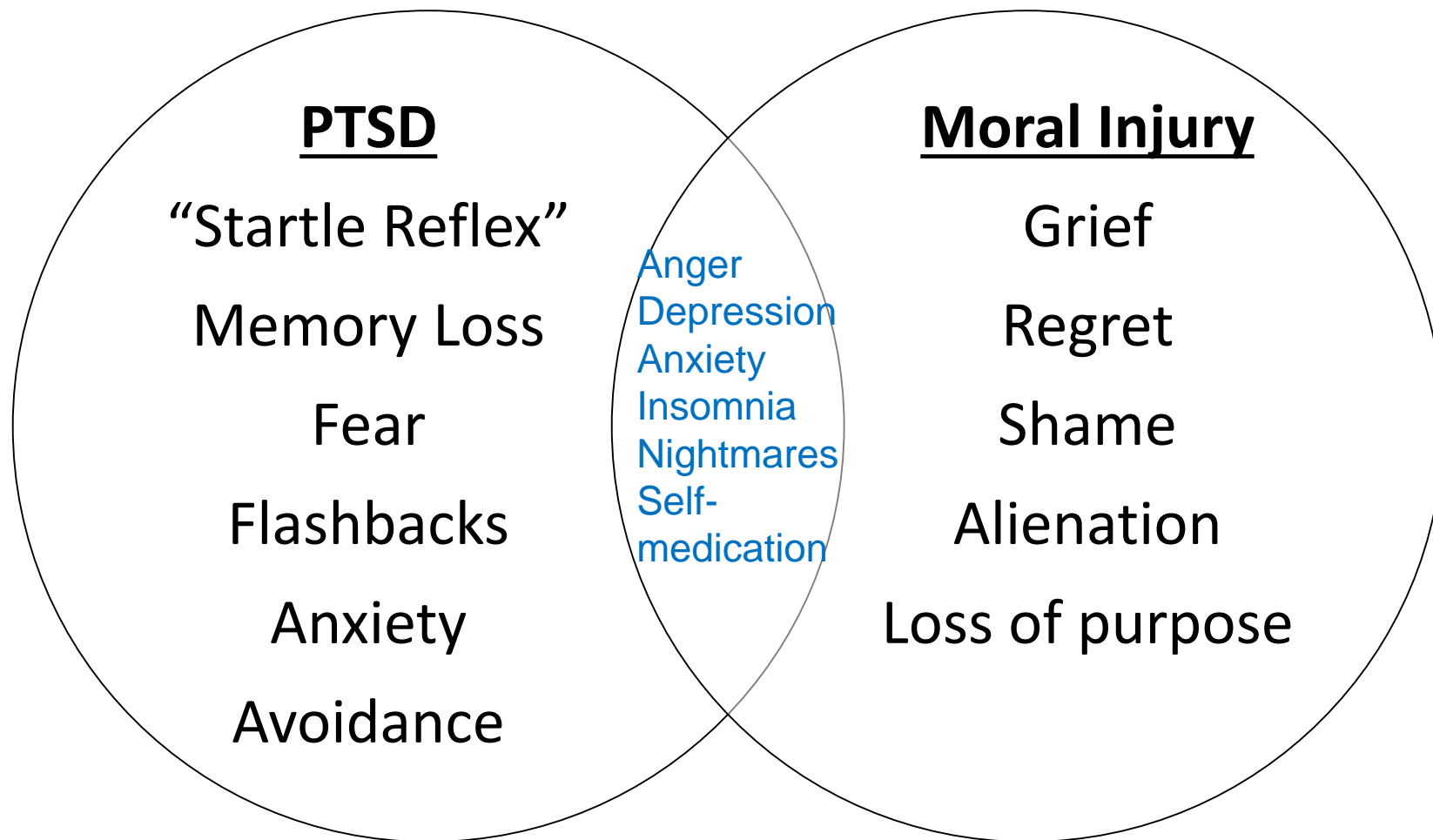
- Moral injury results from committing, *witnessing, imagining*, or failing to prevent acts or events that can be judged as evil or harmful & that violate foundational social and ethical taboos.
 - Can emerge long after events or experiences.
 - Differs from post-traumatic stress (PTSD).
 - Increasingly acknowledged as the **signature** wound of this generation of veterans.
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- Symptoms include: Sorrow, Grief, Regret, Shame, Alienation, Betrayal

The Suffering from Good Conscience: Moral Injury and Paths to Spiritual Resilience, Rev. Rita Nakashima Brock, Ph.D.

MORAL INJURY EXAMPLE

- Gene is a 42-y.o. retired U.S. Army veteran who has seen combat tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Although he never mentions it to his family or counselor at the VA, he is carrying a great deal of guilt because of an incident that happened in Afghanistan.
- While on patrol one afternoon, he shot and killed an Afghan teen who was wearing explosives while running towards their Humvee. He knew he had made the “right” choice in taking the shot, but the responsibility for the youth’s death weighs heavily on him.

PTSD & Moral Injury



MORAL INJURY HEALING

- **Congregation Work**
 - Educate/preach on moral injury
 - Offering ministries of presence & open acceptance
 - Practice deep listening
- **Ritual Practice Group** (meditation, prayer, yoga, labyrinth walking)

“The Suffering from Good Conscience: Moral Injury and Paths to Spiritual Resilience,” Rev. Rita Nakashima Brock, Ph.D.

“Remember that moral injury is not a disorder, but a normal human response to extremity and the disruptive impact on the human soul of violence and moral failure. Respect for veterans means we must be willing to listen and learn from them, to accept our responsibility for what they were asked to do on our behalf (whether or not we agreed with it) and to befriend them, rather than thinking that we are taking care of or saving them.” Brock

UNIQUE ROLE OF FBCS

- Faith-based communities can play a major role in healing and reintegration of veterans.
 - FBCs are in nearly every community of our state.
 - Military personnel, veterans and their families may be cautious about who they allow to engage with them; Veteran-competent FBCs can earn their trust.
 - FBCs often have ministries already in place to that can be called on to help military personnel, veterans and their families.
 - Veterans may have spiritual, as well as psychological and physical wounds.
 - Faith communities can provide a supportive “home.”

Faith Based Initiative

To engage faith-based communities (FBCs) to provide effective care and support to Arizona's 600,000+ service members, veterans & their families and to connect them to the right resources at the right time.



FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE

- Raise awareness among FBCs about the contributions and needs of service members, veterans & their families.
- Engage FBCs in providing effective care & support by equipping key staff/volunteers with information, training and resources.
- Connect FBCs into the network of organizations that serve the military & veteran community.
- Train faith-based organizations on the BE CONNECTED campaign to connect service members, veterans and family members to resources and support.

**The goal of the faith-based initiative is a
CALL TO ACTION.**



Contact information:

1-866-4AZ-VETS | www.BeConnectedAZ.org

connect@arizonacoalition.org

Who can help people **Be Connected**?



Everyone!



**The support
line is for everyone:**
Those who need help and
those who are helping

Some reasons a community member may call 866-4AZ-VETS:

- A caller needs help finding resources for his/herself, a family member or someone they are helping
- A caller is concerned about a friend/family member who is struggling and the caller is not sure what, if anything, should be done next
- A caller is seeking guidance on how to support a friend/family member who is encountering barriers to treatment and support
- A caller feels overwhelmed by services and/or how to access those services
- A caller wants to be better equipped to help the community and is unsure how to get involved



**Personalized Resource
Matching & Navigation**

Be Connected offers tools to find
the right resource at the right time:
www.ResourceCommand.org

Please click on the topics of interest to you. [Select All](#)

We will prioritize matching content based on these topics. Note: You can change these at any time in your profile.

Employment

Family & Social Supports

Finances & Benefits

Higher Education

Housing & Homelessness

Legal

Mental Health & Substance Use

Physical Health

Spirituality

Is a navigator helping set up this profile?

Which organization, if any, referred you?

[Go to my dashboard!](#)



Training and skills to
equip yourself to help

**offers training
statewide, in person and online,
to equip everyone in our
community to help**



**Military/Veteran Resource Navigator | Suicide Prevention | Military Culture
Over 100 online courses | Annual Statewide Symposium**

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

1. Discuss what you have learned with your faith community leaders and others in your community.
2. Arrange for a presentation by one of the Faith Based Initiative “ambassadors” for your community.
3. Become a faith-based partner to receive training, best practice info and connect with other faith communities.

See: <https://arizonacoalition.org/our-initiatives/>

Then click on the “Begin the Process” link under “Interested in Becoming a Be Connected Partner?”