

Moral Injury

JUST THE FACTS



DON'T SPEND YOUR LIFE SUFFERING IN PUNISHING,
SELF-SOLITARY SILENCE. YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

What is Moral Injury?

Moral injury happens when a person's core moral foundations are violated in high stakes situations. This violation recasts the way people see themselves, others, and the world and causes changes in behavior that signal a loss of trust, connection, self-worth, and meaning.

MORAL INJURY IS A RELATIVELY NEW FIELD, SO STATISTICS ARE NOT READILY KNOWN. WE DO KNOW THAT ...

MILITARY

25-34%

Of combat-related PTSD has resulted in moral injury



1 in 3 soldiers deployed to Iraq have killed an enemy combatant



65% of Iraq and Afghanistan vets were exposed to dead bodies or human remains



60% of Iraq and Afghanistan vets saw wounded civilians and couldn't help.



HEALTHCARE

Potential moral injury in health care workers during COVID-19 pandemic were similar to rates among U.S. military veterans who served after September 11, 2001.

46% & 50%
of military veterans & of healthcare workers

experienced other-induced moral injury

24% & 18%
of military veterans & of healthcare workers

experienced self-induced moral injury



LAW ENFORCEMENT

In one study of police officers, moral injury predicted PTSD as well as symptom groups.

73%

of refugees have other-induced moral injury or both self- and other-induced moral injury



Michele is a therapist, clinical ethicist, writer, and researcher who's spent the last two decades on a "souljourn," studying trauma generally, moral injury and lost innocence specifically, and resilience.



Michele DeMarco, PhD, Rev.
micheledemarco.com

Moral injury can happen to anyone.

Don't go it alone.



Moral Injury

DO I HAVE IT?



HONORING PAIN, RECONCILING DIFFICULT TRUTHS, TRANSFORMING WAYS OF THINKING AND BEING, AND RESTORING MORAL INTEGRITY STARTS NOW.

Signs & Symptoms



- Shame
- Guilt
- Anger
- Disgust
- Contempt
- Grief
- Anxiety
- Despair
- Worthlessness
- Helplessness
- Powerlessness
- Alienation
- Isolation
- Numbness
- Queasiness
- Loss of Trust
- Intrusive Thoughts
- Rumination
- Apathy
- Shutdown
- Suicidal Thoughts

Types of Moral Injury

SELF-INDUCED

YOU took some action that violated your moral foundation, core values, or sacred beliefs.

OTHER-INDUCED

SOMEONE ELSE or an **INSTITUTION** took action that violated your moral foundation, core values, or sacred beliefs.

SELF & OTHER

YOU and **SOMEONE ELSE** or **INSTITUTION** took action that violated your moral foundation, core values, or sacred beliefs.

Moral injury can happen to anyone.

Don't go it alone.



Causes of Moral Injury

Risk for moral injury includes experiences that involve high stakes situations, such as life and death, a high risk of failure, no clear right or wrong choices, and harm done. A few examples include... >>

- Killing, whether intentional, unintentional, or unavoidable
- Not being able to prevent a tragedy
- Inability to change a situation
- Betrayal
- Conflict or war
- Violence and terrorism
- Abuse: sexual, emotional, or physical
- Infidelity
- Oppression or discrimination
- Neglect, abandonment, or deprivation
- Medical injury, illness, or procedure
- Being wrongly accused
- Incarceration
- Human trafficking
- Forced migration
- Natural disasters
- Accidents



Michele is a therapist, clinical ethicist, writer, and researcher who's spent the last two decades on a "souljourn," studying trauma generally, moral injury and lost innocence specifically, and resilience.

Michele DeMarco, PhD, Rev.

micheledemarco.com

Resources

- **The Soul Console Community:** soulconsole.com
- **Shay Center for Moral Injury**
- **The Moral Injury Project at Syracuse University**
- **Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School**
- **Moral Injury Article at the Veteran's Administration**
- **Moral Injury Support Network for Servicewomen**

Moral Injury

HOW IT DIFFERS FROM PTSD



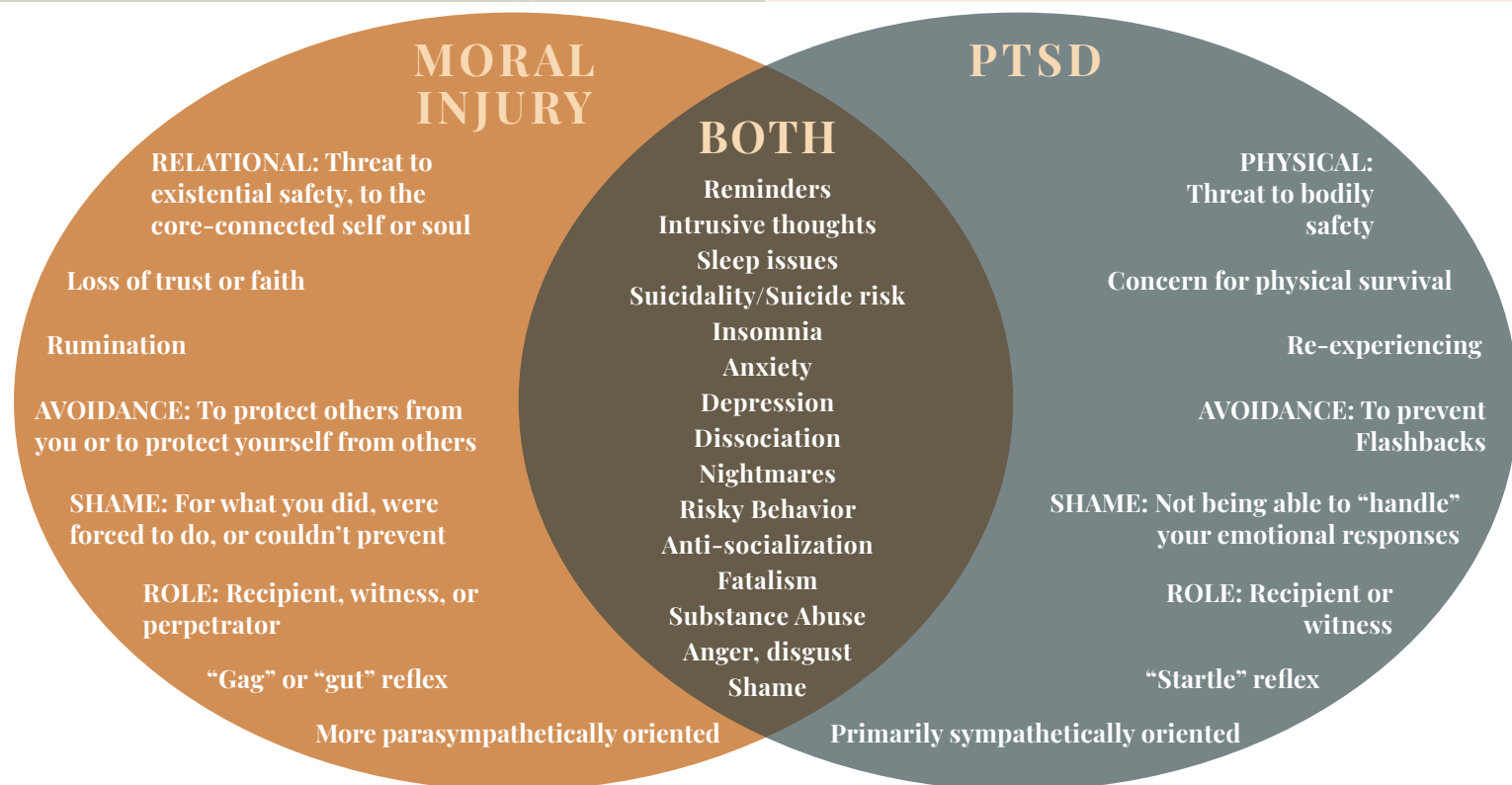
CARRYING THE INVISIBLE SCARS OF MORAL INJURY MAY FEEL UNBEARABLE AT TIMES. BUT THIS PAIN IS ACTUALLY A MARK OF ABIDING GOODNESS – AND THE STARTING POINT FOR HEALING.

What is Moral Injury?

Moral injury happens when a person's core moral foundations are violated in high stakes situations. This violation recasts the way people see themselves, others, and the world and causes changes in behavior that signal a loss of trust, connection, self-worth, and meaning.

What is PTSD?

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), once called "shell shock" or "battle fatigue syndrome," is a condition that can develop after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event in which there was serious physical harm or threat. It's a lasting consequence of trauma that causes intense fear, helplessness, or horror.



Michele is a therapist, clinical ethicist, writer, and researcher who's spent the last two decades on a "souljourn," studying trauma generally, moral injury and lost innocence specifically, and resilience.

Michele DeMarco, PhD, Rev.
micheledemarco.com

©2022 MICHELE DEMARCO | ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Moral injury can happen to anyone.

Don't go it alone.



Moral Injury

HOW IT AFFECTS ME?



MORAL INJURY IS A TYPE OF TRAUMA THAT IS LITTLE KNOWN, BUT UNIVERSALLY FELT. IT TRANSCENDS TIME AND CROSSES CULTURE AND CAN CHANGE A PERSON AT THEIR CORE.

Moral Injury Affects the Whole Person

SOMATIC

Bodily responses

Hyper- and hypoarousal, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, numbing, shutdown, sleep problems, gastrointestinal problems, queasiness, high and low blood pressure, anhedonia, pain.

COGNITIVE

Thoughts and beliefs

Negative self-appraisals (e.g., thinking one is bad, evil, weak, a monster, unworthy); fractured global meaning systems (e.g., concluding the world no longer makes sense or is unsafe, lost sense of humanity and goodness, loss of faith, weakened spirituality, negative attributions to God or a higher power); impaired or negative cognition (excessive blame and condemnation, distrust in self and/or other, an inability to forgive, rumination, dissociation).

EMOTIONAL

Emotions, feelings, mood

Shame, guilt, contempt, disgust, anger, resentment, grief, remorse, worthlessness, hopelessness helplessness, powerlessness, alienation, self-loathing, decreased empathy, otherizing.

BEHAVIORAL

Actions and expressions

Avoiding intimacy, social isolation, interpersonal relationship problems, impairment of social/personal/occupational functioning, reduced hygiene, increase in risky behavior, substance abuse and other self-handicapping activities, suicide ideation, and other attempts at self-harm, poor self-care, self-defeating behaviors.



Michele is a therapist, clinical ethicist, writer, and researcher who's spent the last two decades on a "souljourn," studying trauma generally, moral injury and lost innocence specifically, and resilience.

Michele DeMarco, PhD, Rev.
micheledemarco.com

Resources

- **The Soul Console Community:** soulconsole.com
- **Shay Center for Moral Injury**
- **The Moral Injury Project at Syracuse University**
- **Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School**
- **Moral Injury Article at the Veteran's Administration**
- **Moral Injury Support Network for Servicewomen**