

Moral Injury of War

Introduction

What is Moral Stress?

by Zachary Moon

Humans are moral creatures. We ask moral questions and develop a system that makes sense of our place in the world and defines God's role. But life is full of stress, and that stress becomes so familiar that most of us may not even think about its impact until certain situations generate stress that overwhelms our normal coping. Medical models understand these experiences as trauma, but this perspective doesn't tell the whole story.

The moral dimension of trauma is an emerging field. A number of notable scholars, including theologian Rita Nakashima Brock, have contributed to our collective understanding of moral injury. Moral injury is an enduring fragmentation of moral orientation caused by actions or inactions that transgress one's moral expectations. Much of the attention in the early development of the terminology of moral injury has concerned military service and experiences in war.

Whether we have served in the military or not, we all can understand how war could be morally stressful. The circumstances of modern warfare present additional moral stressors including fighting an enemy who cannot be clearly identified on battle lines that are constantly changing. But war is not the only context where moral stress is experienced and it is important to broaden our exploration to consider the sources of moral stress elsewhere.

The core moral expectation in human communities is the value of life and our society is held together by our shared commitment to be responsible for one another. When harm is done, society responds in a way that seeks to reestablish a collective equilibrium. But this ideal is not consistently realized.

In situations where the moral ideal is not fulfilled, at a personal, interpersonal or societal level, moral stress is created. Examples are found everywhere we look.

(1) In August 2014, many of us were morally outraged by a handful of very public incidents involving police officers killing unarmed African-American persons. There were different perspectives on these incidents, and each response was rooted in our respective values. The upsurge in activism was a coping response to the moral stress experienced by many.

(2) Many of us work in institutional settings that do not share our personal values. Our occupations in the midst of such contexts – military, medical, judicial and correctional, educational – may become a source of moral stress in certain situations. Consider the heavy emphasis of school testing that may come at the expense of more holistic engagement of teachers and students. Or consider the nurse who is required to provide certain medications given a certain diagnosis but may notice that there are issues that are not being addressed adequately leading to the patient's continued suffering. In such situations, persons experience moral stress related to their

sense of responsibility for others. Their value of human life is in conflict with their responsibility to the institution that employs them.

(3) Many of us have experienced divorce and other significant transitions in our families. In such situations, our moral expectations for marriage or family may come to be at odds with the persons involved. Moral stress may be generated when doing what's best for oneself or one's children does not match religious, familial, or cultural expectations.

Because moral stress can be experienced in many events in our lives, we need to consider its impact and aftermath in the life of our congregations. We may be helping or hurting persons experiencing moral stress without realizing what we are doing. Congregations are powerful sources of moral authority and uniquely contribute to our ability to recover and integrate following overwhelming life events.

Working with Moral Stress

In each example of moral stress, there is a sense of responsibility and a set of values that come to be in conflict. Some may choose to deny or avoid the source of moral stress and suppress other emotions or needs. Some may get angry, blaming others or blaming self. Some may take that complaint to God as evidenced in the Biblical lamentations.

Guilt and shame may be the emotions most commonly experienced. These emotions can help a person to see more clearly their own culpability in the results of a certain event, and thereby help that person to make important changes in future actions. But these emotions can have adverse effects when the person experiencing them is not also connected with a stable source of compassion for self. Guilt and shame can also negatively affect one's interpersonal connections, leaving a person to sort through a difficult experience in isolation from necessary support.

Moral Emotions

Guilt is a critical evaluation of a specific behavior whose outcomes include a perceived infraction to relationship with others. Guilt discloses the loss or potential loss of a valued relationship and therefore challenges us to return and reconcile with the one harmed. However, when guilt remains unaddressed and unresolved it becomes toxic and generates further personal and interpersonal harm.

Unlike guilt, which has a discernable cause and context and motivates reconciling action, shame totalizes negative evaluations, losing connection with actual events or behaviors, which can generate self-degrading thoughts of worthlessness and powerlessness. Whereas guilt can lead to positive outcomes including reparative actions, renewed relationships, and increase in interpersonal empathy, shame activates social isolation responses including substance abuse and other high-risk behaviors.

Anger can take on a certain moral dimension in the form of condemnation. While this can be directed outwardly, it is most harmful when it is directed at self. Self-condemnation, like shame, can push one further out of important relationships, silence

reparative and reconciling conversations, and further damage a sense of inner-value and dignity.

Guilt, shame, and condemnation are not the only emotions with moral dimension. Deep sadness and grief can have moral significance. Lamentation is the practice of expressing such grief and calling forth just response. A situation that has generated moral stress may demand both private and public lamentation.

Compassion is also a vital moral emotion. It invites us into relationship with others and sustains important relationships during times of strain. Shame and condemnation can diminish the compassion we demonstrate for others and/or extend to ourselves, but compassion is often the needed balm to shame and condemnation. Compassion invigorates our interpersonal courage, sense of inner value and the dignity of others, and promotes empathy and openness.

Theologies of Suffering

Our beliefs about suffering contribute to how we experience moral stress. There are many sources of these beliefs, but congregations play a unique role. Within the Christian traditions there are very different theologies of suffering.

Suffering as Punishment

In this view, human suffering is a consequence of sin. We suffer because God is punishing us for turning away. Such belief is found in the Bible in the accounts of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, and so on.

In this understanding of suffering, persons are responsible. This can be useful in sustaining accountability to self, community, and God. But that same sense of responsibility can be devastating in circumstances that don't allow for good choices. A belief that suffering is punishment can fuel self-condemnation and survivor's guilt, and block out compassion, forgiveness and grace.

Suffering as Redemptive

Human suffering is also a consequence of sin in this interpretation; however, here God's action is not to punish but to redeem. Suffering is meant to turn us back toward God, or perhaps to turn others back toward God. Such belief is found in the Bible in the image of the suffering servant, first seen in Isaiah 53 and later shaping much of the Christian theology of the crucifixion of Christ.

Unlike suffering as punishment, redemptive suffering may be undeserved by the one who suffers. Suffering is meant to call out the complicity of self or others, to invite repentance, and to evoke a compassionate response toward the one suffering. While it is possible to interpret some situations of human suffering through this frame of redemptive, it can be problematic in instances where no redemption is evident. If we expect resurrection in some form, and it does not come, we slide back into the punishment modality and blame the one who suffers.

Suffering as Injustice

In this understanding, human suffering is not caused by God for punishment or redemption; here suffering is caused by actions against God's will. Such belief is found in the Bible in the Psalms, Lamentations, and the books of the prophets. In these accounts, persons faithfully call out to God for answers and just action.

Unlike the first two interpretations, suffering as injustice does not provide a clear vision of God's plan and our responsibility in our own suffering. God neither causes nor desires our suffering, but what of God's power to protect the faithful?

No one of these interpretations is essentially better than the others. Each is Biblically-founded and established within the Christian traditions. Each provides something important for our journeys of faith, and each includes potential problems.

Rebuilding the house

Consider one's moral identity as a house. Each person's house is unique with its own floor plan. Some have many windows. Some have comprehensive security systems. Each house is built over many years, by many hands, with building materials from different sources – religious, political, personal, and so on.

When overwhelmingly stressful events takes place, it is like a storm that puts strain on the house, and at times can leave it damaged and uninhabitable. The emotional experience of the event itself may be difficult, but it can also be devastating to be left out in the cold, exposed and vulnerable to the elements. Standing in the yard, witnessing the collapsed roof, the crumbled walls, and the cracked foundation, can generate deep sadness and grief at the loss, anger and blame directed at those responsible, and guilt and shame for the outcomes.

What happens next? Some will turn away from the rumble and leave the premises altogether, believing that they no longer deserve a house. Some will curl up in the midst of the destruction and sink into the despair of the tragedy. And some, when ready, will begin again to build.

When facing such a task there are three key questions:

1. What in the rubble is worth keeping to be utilized in this new house and what new materials are needed?
2. What remnants need to be disposed of because when the time came they were not strong enough to serve their purpose?
3. Who can contribute in the building process?

It is likely that our first houses were largely built by others' designs –family members, religious leaders, mentors and teachers. It is also likely that some deferred maintenance played a role in the house's vulnerability to life's events. Building the house of one's moral identity is a collaborative project and necessitates ongoing attention, upkeep, and occasional renovations.

When a person is building a new house, s/he doesn't need to build it all by themselves, but it is important to discern what special skills and knowledge are needed and who can best contribute. If you are a religious leader, chaplain or therapist, you have likely been asked to build someone's house for them, to give them the design and building plan. It is critically important that a person is empowered to be the architect and interior designer of his/her own house. A house built by someone else will not be viable when the next life event shakes the foundations. A successful building project can be immensely invigorating but discerning the answers to those key questions is a challenge.

Start right where you are...

Whether you are in the midst of a situation right now that is generating moral stress, or whether you are remembering

and reflecting on a past situation, it is very important to first and foremost show yourself compassion and connect with a sense of God's compassion and grace for you. Spiritual practices are one way to connect with compassion. Prayer, journaling, listening to a piece of beautiful music, making art, and taking a walk in a serene area are just a few examples of spiritual practices that can connect or reconnect us with God's love and a sense of our inner goodness and dignity. These practices can serve as tools in the building or renovation process.

Consider how others may have an important role to play in this process. For many of us, the default response to moral stress involves internalization and privatization. This common response may be driven by certain values and beliefs about responsibility and can be fueled by moral emotions like guilt and shame. It is exceedingly difficult to compassionately respond to moral stress in isolation. When reaching out to others, the time and place will need to be found to open up and let the light in.

We can be proactive in nurturing the kinds of relationships and communities that can engage moral stress. We are never perfect in dealing with such situations, but when we increase our capacities to demonstrate courage, compassion and creativity, we are on our way to fostering the kinds of relationships that can both weather the storms and also make the necessary remodeling projects a reality.

How have you responded when a friend has shared a morally stressful life situation? What emotions and thoughts emerged as you heard his/her story? Are these the same emotions and thoughts you would have for yourself in a similar situation, i.e. did you feel compassion for your friend, but wouldn't show yourself the same care?

In our congregations, do we speak about the experience of moral stress with compassion? From the pulpit? In community prayer? In meetings? Do we publicly demonstrate the values and beliefs that would support us in times of moral stress? Do we have compassionate and constructive conversations about grief, anger and shame? ■

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Understanding Moral Injury

From the Soul Repair Center

(with special thanks to Dr. Coleman Baker)

“Moral Injury is disruption in an individual's confidence and expectations about his or her own moral behavior or others' capacity to behave in a just and ethical manner....

The lasting impact of [moral injury] in war remains chiefly unaddressed.”

—Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy, B. T. Litz, N. Stein, E. Delaney, L. Lebowitz, W. P. Nash, C. Silva, and S. Maguen, (Dec. 2009) Clinical Psychology Review, 29, 695-706.

When is war really over?

- Veterans have a 3 times greater risk for suicide than civilians (22 vets per day).

- The greater the sense of personal responsibility for an act of war, the higher the suicide risk.
- Veterans who have killed have a 3 times greater rate of suicide than other vets, independent of other factors such as PTSD, depression, and addiction.
- Rates in younger vets have been rising since 2005.

How Moral Formation Happens

- Mimicry Behaviors form neural Pathways via Attention & Repetition (Dumbfounding—we behave morally without conscious intent).
- Ritual Delivers Meaning and Feeling to Linguistic Patterns and Narratives (religion).
- Moral Reasoning Grounded in Meaning Frames.
- Ritual Reconditioning Creates New Moral Systems.
- Conflicts Can Occur When Transitioning from One System to the Another.

The Moral Emotions

Moral emotions ...linked to the interests or welfare either of society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent:

- Courage, Honor, Pride
- Anger, Outrage
- Embarrassment
- Guilt—outward moving to repair relationship
- Shame—comprehensive self-condemnation, isolating
- Remorse—regret and urge to make amends

Power of Military Training to Change Moral System

- Basic Training Socializes to a New Moral System
- Intense, prolonged, severe reconditioning of whole person
- Strong, ritual aspects
- Focused group ethos and bonding
- Emphasizes positive moral codes: candor, commitment, courage, confidence, competence, camaraderie.
- Military Training is thorough and prepares people for rigors of service in war.
- War proves value of training
- Failure of duty has life and death consequences

War Can Be Morally Disrupting

- Reflexive Fire Training
- Dehumanization of Enemy
- Encountering and Handling human remains
- Killing
- Noncombatants
- Friendly fire or deliberate attack on own
- Rage, elation, or vengeance killing
- Failure to Save Others
- Failure of Leadership
- Doubt (uncertainty about goals or mission) (disrupts inner confidence)
- Betrayal by Authorities
- Sexual Assault

Losses in Coming Home

- Loss of closest friends; isolation
- Loss of innocence or sense of goodness
- Loss of unit discipline and system
- Loss of weapon
- Loss of role / purpose for others

- Loss of family or capacity for intimacy— conflict / divorce
- Loss of faith and meaning community
- Loss of self

What is Soul or Spirit?

- Existential Self-Awareness
- Empathy and Conscience
- Vicarious emotions: bodily and emotional awareness of distress in internal state of other but not personal distress (not emotional contagion but emotional engagement with others)
- Awareness of difference between self and other that evokes desire to help without confusing self and other (does not require sympathy)
- Mental flexibility, perspective, and self-regulation (i.e. pain regulation and effortful self-control)=integration of feeling and thinking
- Deep Connection to All that is Good, True, and Beautiful in Ourselves, in Others, and in Creation
- Capacity for Trust, Love, Gratitude, Play, Inner Peace

Individual/Social Dimensions of Long-term Recovery

- Writing personal narratives; externalizing inner struggle and telling story to others
- Talking to benevolent moral authority
- Integrating memory/story into larger picture
- Reconnection with estranged others;
- Veteran support systems; finding community
- Rehumanization of Enemies
- Companions for Support
- Long-term accountability community ■

—The Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School was established in 2012 to research and better understand recovery from the extreme distress that results from moral injury. The Center educates the public about the ways to enable the return to ordinary life of those who experience moral injury.

— Dr. Coleman Baker is the Program Manager of the Soul Repair Center and teaches biblical studies at Texas Christian University. Dr. Baker is a biblical scholar whose interest includes religious identity, particularly the role of biblical texts and social memory in social identity formation. He is the author of *Identity, Memory, and Narrative in Early Christianity: Peter, Paul, and Recategorization in the Book of Acts*, “Social Identity Theory and Biblical Interpretation” (Biblical Theology Bulletin) and “Early Christian Identity Formation: From Ethnicity and Theology to Socio-Narrative Criticism” (Currents in Biblical Research). He is also the co-editor (with J. Brian Tucker) of *The T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*. While his work focuses on the role of biblical texts in identity formation in early Judaism and Christianity, his interests extend to identity formation in contemporary religious communities and culture.

What Can A Congregation Do About Moral Injury?

by Rifa Nakashima Brock

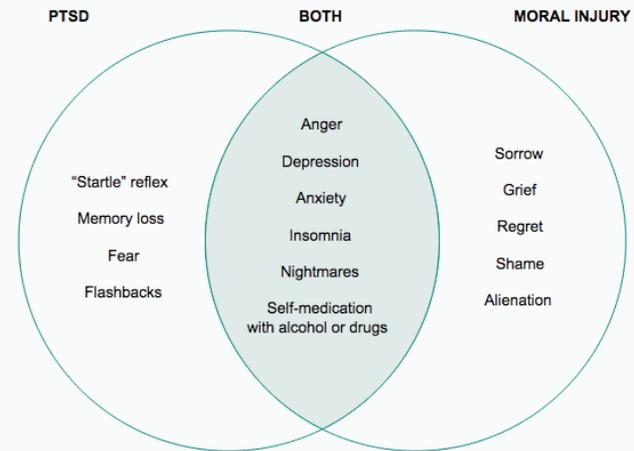
“War is the foyer to hell; coming home is hell” - Capt. Tyler Boudreau (former US Marine), author of *Packing Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine*

What is the consequence to your soul of violating your deepest moral values?

In late 2009, a group of VA clinicians distinguished post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from moral injury in veterans and said treatments for PTSD do not address moral injury. Since 2012, the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School has responded to this need by educating the public and conducting research on how religious communities can support recovery from moral injury.

WAR TRAUMA SYMPTOMS

The definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder doesn't cover all the symptoms of moral injury, the lasting wounds to the soul caused by participation in morally ambiguous combat events. Here are the symptoms of each, and those that overlap.



Source: The Huffington Post (<http://projects.huffingtonpost.com/moral-injury/the-grunts>)

Moral injury is the damage to or collapse of a person's moral foundations in extreme conditions, such as war. While it may not afflict a person immediately, it can occur when a dangerous situation has no good choice; when one becomes elated by killing, kills one's own or kills for vengeance; or when one feels betrayed by leaders. It can also occur when one experiences extreme losses, encounters repeated exposure to violent death and gore without time to process bodies respectfully, or witnesses something that is profoundly disturbing to one's inner sense of what is right or humane. No one finds it easy to accept or talk about inner moral anguish, so for many combat veterans, coming home is even harder than fighting in war.

Religious communities can support recovery, but to do so requires some preparation and understanding of moral injury. Here are ways to do this (the **Soul Repair Center** website, www.brite.edu/soulrepair has materials mentioned below on our Resources page).

Educate yourself: The process of recovery means the lifelong rebuilding of a moral identity that can carry the memories of tragedy, death, and trauma forward and integrate them—S. Rambo's book *Spirit and Trauma* is a good theological resource for clergy who want to understand this carrying of trauma. That slow integration process can be impeded by expectations that people do what we want or need them to do, rather than helping them struggle with the moral, theological, or spiritual issues that haunt them. At least half of all veterans are not religious, so supporting a recovery process can be derailed if our support has hidden strings or agendas. Some vets may never return to a

former faith and be unable to participate in church or traditional religious activities, but if they do, it needs to be on their own terms, not ours. More helpful books are listed here: <http://brite.edu/academics/programs/soul-repair/resources/books>

Give your congregation learning opportunities: Form a reading group that explores the experience of war, so people are prepared for the harrowing experiences and trauma people experience. This can be done via a memoir, novel, or nonfiction work. A group of veterans prepared a six-week study guide for Soul Repair: *Recovering from Moral Injury After War*, which is posted on our website: <http://brite.edu/academics/programs/soul-repair/resources/study-guides>

Attend or host a training event: The Soul Repair Center hosts a variety of training events. Check here for current events or contact r.n.brock@tcu.edu if you are interested in hosting an event: <http://brite.edu/academics/programs/soul-repair/events>

Address moral injury from the pulpit: Raise congregational awareness and let veterans and their families know that they are taken seriously by bringing this issues into worship. You can preach or speak about moral injury. You can create new ritual processes for people transitioning back to civilian life, especially rituals of lamentation. Our website is updated regularly as we receive more resources for preaching and rituals as people send them to us and seminary classes create projects: <http://brite.edu/academics/programs/soul-repair/resources/church-resources>

Establish a moral injury meeting: A key piece of recovery from moral injury is to be able to tell one's story many times and some of the first tellings must be in the presence of one or more benevolent moral authorities who understand moral anguish and will not condemn or judge the person. Often, this means veterans will only trust their stories to other veterans who understand what they have been through. The Soul Repair website has a guide for establishing a moral injury meeting, similar to an AA meeting, for veterans and their families and friends to create a story-telling process.

Create one or more deep listening groups and explore nonjudgmental, compassionate, heart-based listening as a process of mutual vulnerability and receiving of the gift of truth from another. It's a still, quiet, mutually-transformative listening that is a ministry of incarnational presence—it takes the anguish of another deep into our hearts and shares another's burden. This openness can be hard because what you hear may be traumatizing to you as the listener, which is why preparation is important. Veterans too often find that people cannot handle what they hear, or are vaguely and voyeuristically entertained by war experiences. They will not trust listeners who are not prepared to befriend and journey with them on their long road home—and that means facing into our own civilian responsibility for having sent them to war with our taxes and our responsibility for the sons and daughters, parents, siblings, and friends of those who serve: http://briedivinity.org/pdf/Soul_Repair_Meeting_Book.pdf

Give veterans ways to contribute: Veterans have been taught to be strong and care about the fate of others. They can resent being patronized as victims or people with a disorder. Moral injury is a normal response to the extremities of war and violence, and offering veterans a way to be of service to others and to contribute to the life of a community is a powerful gift that religious communities can provide. It's a way to participate in restoring the balance of good in the world when you've seen so much death and destruction.

There are many other ways to support veterans with moral injury. You can go to a VA Stand Down and offer pastoral counseling services (<http://www.va.gov/homeless/events.asp>).

We have only begun to understand how complicated and important recovery from moral injury can be, so more ways to help will continue to unfold in the coming years. I promise this, however: if any congregation undertakes this work, it will discover that moral injury is not limited to veterans of the military, and undertaking this work will help many others. It will also make your congregation spiritually stronger. ■

—Rev. Rita Nakashima Brock, Ph.D. is Research Professor of Theology and Culture and Founding Co-Director of the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas (www.brite.edu/soulrepair). A Commissioned Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), she is the co-author, with Gabriella Lettini, of *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury After War*.

Historic Peace Churches and Veterans: A New Sunday School Curriculum

From the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network

A newly released Sunday school curriculum invites pacifists and veterans to walk with one another on a common journey toward peace.

Returning Veterans, Returning Hope: Seeking Peace Together is a six-week series designed to assist congregations to think theologically and practically about war's trauma, healing from trauma and Jesus' way of peace.

The curriculum is written by Mennonite peace leaders Jason Boone and Titus Peachey and Iraq War veteran Evan Knappenberger, a student at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. Boone is coordinating minister of the Peace and Justice Support Network, a partnership between Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network, and Peachey is peace education coordinator at Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

"Veterans who engaged in the horrors of combat or witnessed such horrors can carry the physical, emotional and spiritual wounds of war far beyond the length of their service," wrote Jason Boone and Titus Peachey. For some veterans, these wounds include "moral injury," or "... the wounding of conscience that can leave veterans with guilt, shame and feeling like an enemy of God ..."

Building communities between historic peace churches and veterans may seem strange, Boone and Peachey wrote. "But it surely is no stranger than the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus' clarion explanation of who it is we are called to love."

Peachey noted that one lesson in the series emphasizes this theme: "As a society, we have failed to find alternatives to our persistent use of bombs, tanks and bullets. So we all share responsibility for the wounds and scars that veterans bring home."

The curriculum, which is appropriate for churches with and without veterans, is available in online format only. It can be accessed at pjsn.org and mcc.org/veterans-curriculum.

For additional information, please contact Titus Peachey at 717.859.1152 or tituspeachey@mcc.org. ■

—The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is a global, nonprofit organization that strives to share God's love and compassion for all through relief, development and peace and advocate for policies that lead to a more peaceful world.

—Mennonite Church USA believes God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

—The Menninite Mission Network believes that the church is the primary messenger for the transformative mission of God into the world. It leads, mobilizes and equips the church to fulfill its mission to bring God's healing and hope to the world.

Resources on Moral Injury

Compiled by Quaker House

The following resources were compiled by Quaker House, a full-time peace project in Fayetteville, NC. Started in 1969, Quaker House provides counseling and support to service members who are questioning their role in the military; educates them, their families, and the public about military issues; and advocates for a more peaceful world.

How We Can Help our Service Members and Veterans

1. Contact homeless shelters, soup kitchens, etc., and ask for help identifying veterans who need help and/or volunteer to sponsor support groups for them at their location or yours.
2. Conduct Mindfulness, yoga, writing, and/or art classes for active service members and/or veterans. All are excellent for PTSD treatment.
3. Begin a community gardening project and invite veterans to join you.
4. Invite other faith communities to work with you in supporting service members and veterans.
5. Invite mental health professionals that you know to join **Give an Hour**, a nonprofit organization offering free mental health services to US military personnel and their families affected by Iraq and Afghanistan.
6. Many soldiers love getting the mail, and they feel good knowing someone at home cares' enough to drop them a line. There are several organizations that will connect you with soldiers around the world. For instance, **A Million Thanks** was actually started by a teenager, Shauna Fleming, to send letters, CDs, and DVDs to the troops. Other organizations that conduct letter writing campaigns are **Operation Military Support** and **Letters From Home Program**.
7. Sending a care package is a great way to show support. Simple things like sunscreen, cards, and more can make a soldier's day. You can send your own care package or offer a donation to send packages to troops. One organization that sends care packages to troops is the **USA Cares Program**. You can also send care packages through the **Any Soldier Program**, **Treats for Troops**, or the **Soldiers Angels**.
8. Volunteering your time to an organization can be very rewarding. There are plenty of organizations that need your help in supporting troops at home and overseas. **The Veterans' Administration** has a list of ways you can offer your time. Also, you can check with [<http://usafreedomcorps.gov>] **USA Freedom Corps** for more ways to volunteer.
9. You can foster a service member's pet while they are away. **The Net Pets Military Pets Foster Program** helps find temporary homes for all kinds of pets while their owners are away.
10. While we tend to associate the deployment of troops for war purposes, there are military service members stationed all over the world for humanitarian efforts. You can support the troops'

efforts by supporting the schools and communities they are trying to assist. **The Adopt a Platoon Program** can connect you with a platoon's humanitarian efforts.

11. If you and your friends have extra cell phones sitting around, you can donate those phones to **Cell Phones for Soldiers**.

12. It is very hard for soldiers to get special occasion cards to send home. **The Cards for Soldiers Program** sends homemade greeting cards to the troops so they can send them to those they love.

Crisis Resources

Toll-free, confidential hotlines:

- The **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*** is a 24-hour hotline for anyone in emotional distress: 1-800-273-TALK (8255). There is also an online **Lifeline Chat*** available from 5pm to 1 am EST, weekdays.
- The **Veterans Crisis Line** connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with VA responders through a 24/7 hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255), PRESS 1. There is also a 24/7 online Confidential Veterans Chat or text message support at 838255.
- The **National Domestic Violence Hotline*** offers 24/7 anonymous access to shelters and domestic violence programs as well as legal advocacy, public education, and training: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).
- The **National Sexual Assault Hotline*** operated by RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is a 24/7 resource to link victims to counseling and legal advice: 1800-656-HOPE (4673). There is also a **National Sexual Assault Online Hotline*** for messaging.
- The **National Child Abuse Hotline*** is a 24/7 resource you can contact if you suspect a child is being abused, if you fear you might hurt your child, or if you have been abused: 1-800-4-A-CHILD (422-4453).

General Resources for Family and Loved ones

Family members and close friends sometimes neglect their own needs when they commit themselves to caring for someone with PTSD. Most US States have a National 211* referral line that connects people with important community services (employment, food pantries, housing, support groups, etc.). Dial 2-1-1.

- **The SIDRAN Institute*** is a nonprofit organization that helps people understand, recover from, and treat traumatic stress and offers a referral list of therapists for PTSD. You can contact the Help Desk via email or by leaving a confidential voicemail: 1-410-825-8888.
- **The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)*** offers a Family-to-Family Education Program for caregivers of people with severe mental illness. You can also email or call the Information Helpline: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264).
- You can find more resources on our **Web Links: Families page**.

Resources for Loved Ones of Veterans and Service Members

Some of the resources listed above are specific to Veterans and Service Members. Additional resources are listed below:

- **The VA Caregiver Support program** provides services to support family members who are taking care of a Veteran: 1-855-260-3274
- **VA's Coaching Into Care program** helps family and friends of returning Veterans find the right words to help their loved



one get into care. For free, confidential coaching email or call: 1-888-823-7458

- **The Vet Center Combat Call Center** is a 24/7 call center for combat Veterans and their families to talk about their military experience or issues about readjustment to civilian life: 1-877-WAR-VETS
- **The Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) 24/7 Outreach Center** offers information and consultation in mental health and traumatic brain injury: 1-866-966-1020. DCoE also offers email and online chat support.
- **The National Resource Directory** links to over 10,000 services and resources that support recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration for wounded, ill, and injured Service Members, Veterans, their families, and those who support them.
- **Give an Hour*** is a nonprofit organization offering free mental health services to US military personnel and their families affected by Iraq and Afghanistan.
- You can find more resources in our **Web Links: Section page** for Families, Military Resources, and Veterans Service Organizations.
- **Courage Beyond, couragebeyond.org**, provides confidential, no-cost or low-cost programs and services to warriors and their families facing PTSD and other invisible wounds of military service.
- **The Red Cross** provides support groups and workshops.

Resources for Children with a Parent Who has PTSD

Children respond to their parents' PTSD symptoms. A child may behave like the parent to try to connect with him or her. Some children take on an adult role to fill in for the parent with PTSD. If children do not get help with their feelings, it can lead to problems at school, in relationships, or with emotions (like worry, fear, or sadness).

- **MilitaryKidsConnect*** (MKC) is an online community for military children (age 6-17) with resources for children to give support before, during, and after a parent's or caregiver's deployment.
- Sesame Street offers a **Talk, Listen, Connect*** parent toolkit to help military families coping with deployment.
- It is important children know that a parent's PTSD symptoms are not their fault. An interactive workbook for teens may help: **Finding MyWay: A Teen's Guide to Living with a Parent Who has Experienced Trauma***

Vet Centers:

In addition to the medical centers and clinics, VA has 209 Veterans Readjustment Centers known as "Vet Centers." They have a considerable degree of autonomy and thus can tailor services and staffing to meet the specific cultural and psychological needs of the veterans they serve. Although the centers get some support from VA health centers, they are separate entities and guarantee that anything said at the Vet Center stays at the Vet Center.

VA is implementing plans to expand the number of Vet Centers to 232 within the next two years. Every Vet Center has at least one VA qualified professional on staff. In FY 2006, the Vet Center program had 1,066 assigned staff positions of which 159 were outreach specialists and 876 were authorized counseling staff (58 percent of whom were licensed mental health professionals). Vet Centers are generally small, storefront buildings with four or five staff members, two-thirds of whom are veterans (Batres 2007).

One of the distinguishing features of the Vet Center program is its authority to provide services to veterans' immediate family

members. As noted earlier, family participation can be critical to the success of treatment. Therefore, family members are included.

You can find more resources on our **Web Links: Children and Teens** page. ■

Simple Steps Faith Leaders Can Take to Educate Congregants, Parishioners and the Public about Moral Injury

- **Educate yourself.** Read books and articles (*Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War* by Rita Nakashima Brock & Gabriella Lettini OR *Moral Injury*, a three part series from Huffington Post at <http://projects.huffingtonpost.com/moral-injury>).
- **Mention the topic in a sermon.** You don't have to advocate a position for or against war to shine a light on the spiritual crisis a service member is experiencing through moral injury.
- **Lead a discussion of Moral Injury in an adult religious education class or youth program.** Use the materials mentioned above and/or link it to a scriptural passage.
- **Post a short blurb** in your faith community's listserv or online bulletin board.
- **Write a Letter to the Editor** of your local newspapers.
- **Encourage your national denomination** or similar conferences to sponsor an educational session on Moral Injury at its yearly gathering or convention.
- **Create a task force of your faith community** to learn, discuss, and then create an outreach program to welcome and support veterans in the community or your faith community who suffer from moral injury. Where possible, include those veterans on the planning task force. This would be both informative to the group and therapeutic for the veteran.
- **Develop a support group** for veterans at your faith community.
- **Sponsor a table at community events** that promote materials about Moral Injury.
- **Create and sell t-shirts** that expose the public to the Moral Injury term. ■

Presentation on Moral Injury

Here is a pdf of a presentation on Moral Injury put together by Quaker House: <http://bit.ly/qh-moralinjurypres>. ■



Ashes, Stones & Flowers: A Litany of Mourning & Rebirth For Veterans of War, Terrorism, & Torture

For vibrant lives suddenly and shamelessly sacrificed we lift up the ashes of our loss, O Source of Life.

For the lives that continue, haunted forever by the pain of absence, we lift up the ashes of our remorse, O Wellspring of Compassion.

For the conflagration of flames and nightmare images forever seared into our memories we lift up the ashes of our pain, O Breathing Spirit of the World.

For the charred visions of peace and the dry taste of fear we lift up the ashes of our grief, O Infinite.

For all the deaths that have been justified by turning the love of God or country into fanatical arrogance, we lift up the ashes of our shame, O God.

As we cast these ashes into the troubled water of our times, Transforming One, hear our plea that by your power they will make fertile the soil of our future and by your mercy nourish the seeds of peace.

The people recite the names of the dead.

[The people recite the names of the dead.]

The people cast the ashes in silence into the river (or a large urn or bowl of water).]

For the ways humanity pursues violence rather than understanding, we lift up the stones of our anger, O Breathing Spirit of the World.

For the ways we allow national, religious and ethnic boundaries to circumscribe our compassion, we lift up the stones of our hardness, O Wellspring of Compassion.

For our addiction to weapons and the ways of militarism we lift up the stones of our fear, O Source of Life.

For the ways we cast blame and create enemies we lift up the stones of our self-righteousness, O God

As we cast these stones into this ancient river, Transforming One, hear our plea:

Just as water wears away the hardest of stones, so too may the power of your compassion soften the hardness of our hearts and draw us into a future of justice and peace.

[The people recite the names of the dead.]

The people cast the stones in silence into the river (or a large urn or bowl of water).]

For sowing seeds of justice to blossom into harmony, we cast these flowers into the river, O Source of Peace.

For seeing clearly the many rainbow colors of humanity and earth, we cast these flowers into the river, O Infinite.

For calling us to life beyond our grieving, we cast these flowers into the river, O Breathing Spirit of the World.

As we cast these flowers into this ancient river, Transforming One, hear our plea:

Just as water births life in a desert and gives hope to the wounded, so too may the power of your nurturing renew our commitment to peace.

[The people recite the names of the dead.]

The people cast the flowers in silence into the river (or a large urn or bowl of water).]

[A shorter version of this litany was originally written by Rev. Patricia Pearce, then pastor of Tabernacle Church in Philadelphia, for the first anniversary of 9/11. It was expanded and revised by Rabbi Waskow for Armistice Day / Veterans Day 2003.]
