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# 2024

## Statewide Symposium in Support of Service Members, Veterans & Their Families

April 17-18 | Phoenix, Arizona

arizona coalition  
for military families





# Faith & Spirituality

Session 1

Moral Injury Healing  
Methodologies



# Facilitator



**Mike Wold**

ARIZONA COORDINATOR

Institute for Healing of Memories North America





# Session Goals

- 1. Session Presentations**
- 2. Questions?**
- 3. Session Evaluation before leaving**

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# Faith & Spirituality Track

## Session 1

### **1<sup>st</sup> Talk**

## Introduction and Moral Injury Overview

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# Moral Injury Healing Methodologies

*Building Spiritual Strength – Linda MacLeish*

**Healing Memories Workshop – Mike Wold**

# Agenda

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- ▶ Introduction and Moral Injury Overview
- ▶ Building Spiritual Strength Program
- ▶ Healing Memories Workshop



# PTSD and Moral Injury

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- ▶ Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people **who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event** such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape or other violent personal assault.
- ▶ Moral injury is an **injury to an individual's moral conscience** and values resulting from an act of perceived moral transgression on the part of themselves or others, which produces profound feelings of guilt or shame.

# PTSD and Moral Injury

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# Moral Injury - Spiritual Distress

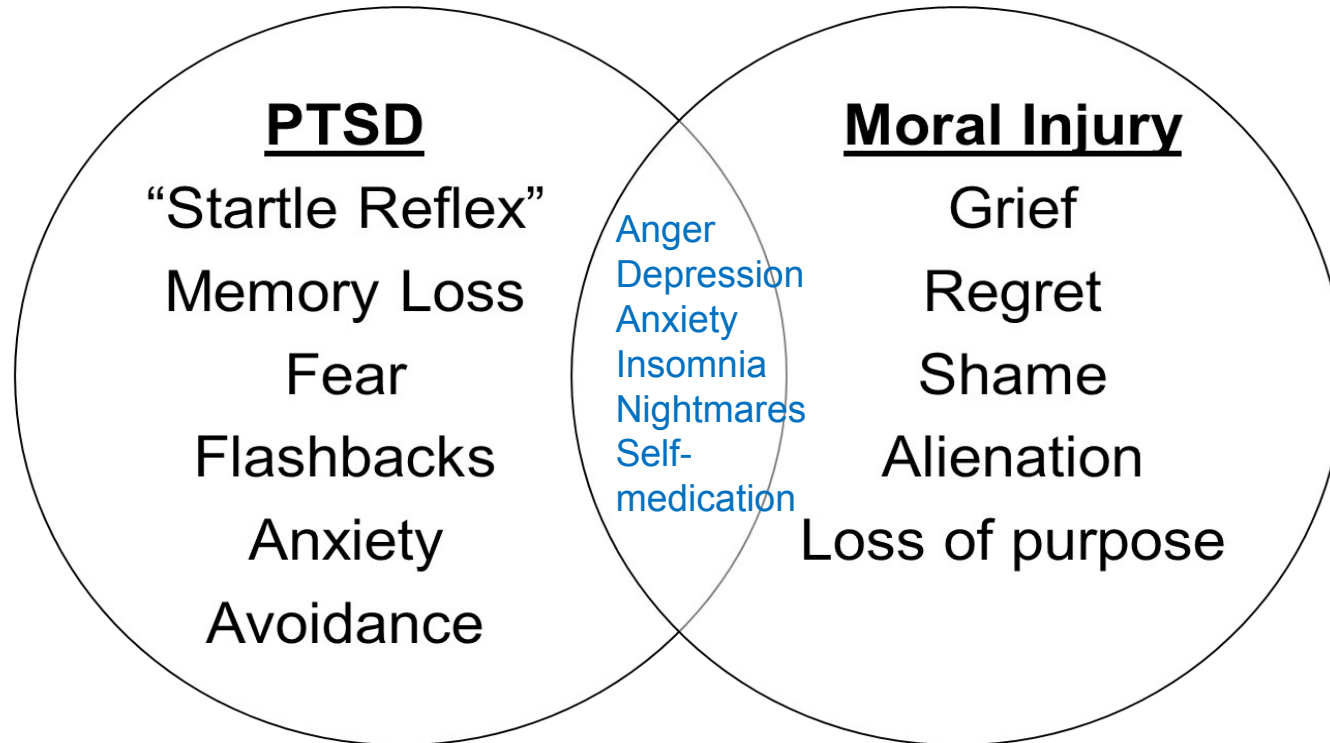
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- ▶ **Alienation from one's Higher Power**
- ▶ **Religious or existential guilt/shame (inappropriate)**
  - Often attempts to blame self to create an illusion of control
- ▶ **Withdrawal from family/community**
- ▶ **Difficulty forgiving self/others/Higher Power**
- ▶ **View of Higher Power or faith community as abandoning/punishing**
- ▶ **Loss of religious faith and purpose/meaning in life**
- ▶ **Internalizing vs. Externalizing**
- ▶ **More severe psychological disorder symptom/duration**
- ▶ **Spiritual distress predicts PTSD symptoms (reverse not true)**

Source: Chaplain Timothy Usset, Research Team Member - Dr. Irene Harris, Minneapolis VA Center Study on the Role of Faith in PTSD Healing

# PTSD & Moral Injury

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Source: Chaplain Timothy Usset, Research Team Member - Dr. Irene Harris, Minneapolis VA Center Study on the Role of Faith in PTSD Healing

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# **Faith & Spirituality Track**

## **Session 1**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Talk**

# **Healing of Memories Workshop**



# One Step Forward: Healing Through Storytelling

*Mike Wold, Arizona Regional Coordinator  
Institute for Healing of Memories*

[Michael\\_w\\_wold@msn.com](mailto:Michael_w_wold@msn.com)

# Our Topics for Today

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- ▶ **Healing of Memories for Veterans Workshop Introduction**
- ▶ **Workshop Design and Content**
- ▶ **Results**
- ▶ **Q & A**

*“Everyone has a story to tell and every story needs to be heard, acknowledged and respected.”*

# Healing of Memories for Veterans Workshop

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## ▶ History

- Rooted in need for healing in South Africa after the anti-apartheid movement
- Father Michael Lapsley formed the Healing of Memories Institute in 1998 in South Africa
- Hundreds of two day Healing of Memories Workshops throughout the world – South Africa, Rwanda, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Bangladesh, New Zealand and North America
- Workshops started for vets in the USA in 2008
- Workshop brought to Arizona in 2013 – nearly 400 men and women Arizona vets have attending the workshop





# About the Healing of Memories Workshop

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## ▶ **Weekend Workshops – In Person**

- Goal is to help veterans make one step (often a major step) forward in their healing
- Two day retreat format – Friday evening to Sunday afternoon
- Day 1 – Introductions and ground rules
- Day 2 – Life map and story telling in small groups under very professional facilitation
- Day 3 – Celebration and release of painful memories
- Always free to veterans

# About Healing of Memories for Veterans Workshop

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## ▶ **Workshop attendees**

- Women and men veterans of all era's and a wide range of ethnicities and ages (youngest 22; oldest 91)
- Women veterans only with women facilitators

## ▶ **Why does it work?**

- Power of multiple acknowledgement and affirmation (“They really understand”)
- Allows forgiveness – self and others
- Spirit of community fights tendency of vets to isolate themselves (“I am not the only one.”)
- Generates hope
- Very competent facilitators – they are not therapists – they share their own stories and bond with the participants

# Some Quotes from the Veterans

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- ▶ **“It [the workshop] definitely gave me hope and identified and gave me awareness of where to go from here and where I should focus.”**
- ▶ **“[I learned that] the feelings I have were shared and experienced by others. I learned I wasn’t alone. I learned I was more normal than I thought I was based on my experiences.”**
- ▶ **[The benefit was] “To have been able to release myself from my personal prison I had put myself into.”**
- ▶ **“This is the first time I thought of a group as brothers and sisters.”**
- ▶ **“I learned the technique of purging old memories of negative experiences and in the results having the ability of growing in the good in my heart, mind and soul.”**

# Some More Quotes from the Veterans

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- ▶ **“Healing of Memories is the master key to my healing and good health of mind, body and spirit.”**
- ▶ **“Drawing my life journey really helped me to see it in a new light. I was able to see things that I have been hanging on to – negative, poisoning things.”**
- ▶ **“I was empowered to view life as positive, to move ahead and not let the past overpower me.”**
- ▶ **“I waited 24 years to tell this story.”**

# Qualitative Assessment Process

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## ▶ Two questions on Institute for Healing of Memories worldwide assessment form

Were your expectations met?

Yes, definitely (70% – 90%)

Partly (10% - 30%)

Hardly at all (near 0))

In no way (near 0)

How useful was this weekend as a process towards healing?

Excellent (80% - 95%)

Good (10% - 20%)

Fair (near 0)

Poor (near 0)

# Quantitative Assessment Process

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- ▶ **Assessment design based on review of the 4 research studies**
- ▶ **Goal: Identify “hoped for outcomes” and measure them (Identified 14 outcomes)**
  - ▶ **Hopefulness (more)**
  - ▶ **Anxiety (less)**
  - ▶ **Forgiveness (more able)**
  - ▶ **Empathy (more)**
  - ▶ **Anger (less)**
  - ▶ **Guilt (less)**
  - ▶ **Sleeplessness (less)**
  - ▶ **Fearful dreams (less)**
  - ▶ **Depression (less)**
  - ▶ **Openness (more)**
  - ▶ **Trust (more)**
  - ▶ **Sense of belonging (greater)**
  - ▶ **Painful memories (more ability to let go)**
  - ▶ **Resentfulness (less)**

# Quantitative Assessment Process

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- ▶ **Assessment process designed by Dr. Jerry Diller, PhD – retired professor of psychology at the Wright Institute in Berkley, CA**
- ▶ **Online assessment forms (pre, post and 60 day) contain 14 questions each of which match one of the hoped for outcomes (e.g., “I am generally a hopeful person.” “I experience high anxiety frequently.”)**
- ▶ **We use a 5 level Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)**
- ▶ **Questions are mixed up so that a “good result “ answer could be a 1 or a 5**
- ▶ **Participants assess how they feel before the workshop, immediately after the workshop and 60 days after the workshop**
- ▶ **Results consistently show improvement in most of the 14 areas both immediately after and 60 days after the workshop**

# Upcoming Healing of Memories Workshops

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## ▶ **Healing of Memories Workshop – All Veterans**

- Friday May 17, 2024 (6pm) – Sunday May 19, 2024 (1pm),
- Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center, Carefree. AZ

## ▶ **Healing of Memories Workshop – Women Veterans**

- Friday Nov. 15, 2024 (6pm) – Sunday Nov. 17, 2024 (1pm)
- Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center, Carefree. AZ



# Summary

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- ▶ **Healing of Memories Workshop has its history in the Apartheid struggle in South Africa and subsequent need for healing of the country**
- ▶ **Answers the need for veterans' stories to be heard, acknowledged and affirmed and for healing from psychological and spiritual wounds including moral injury**

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**Please go to:**

**[www.healingmemoriesna.org](http://www.healingmemoriesna.org) for more information on the  
Healing of Memories Workshop**

**or**

**contact Mike Wold at: [Michael\\_w\\_wold@msn.com](mailto:Michael_w_wold@msn.com)**

**Thank You!**



# Questions?





# Session 1: Evaluation

We want to hear from you!

