

How Trauma Hurts / How Trauma Heals

Families and the Spiritual Wounds of War, September 2008¹

What is psychological trauma?

- The individual's ability to integrate his or her emotional experience is overwhelmed; or
- The individual experiences a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity.
- People react differently and an experience that is wounding to one person may not be to another.

Trauma affects our ability to function in six key areas of our lives:

<p>1. Feelings Skills: The Three Self Capacities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner connection to others • Feeling worthy of life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What makes a person worthy? – What does your tradition say about this? • Managing feelings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recognizing feelings – Modulating feelings – Tolerating feelings – Integrating feelings 	<p>2. Judgment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence • Insight • Sense of perspective • Ability to foresee and weigh consequences • Interpersonal skills
<p>3. Beliefs & Psychological Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Trust/Dependence • Esteem • Intimacy/Connection • Control • Morality 	<p>4. Frame of Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity (inner experience of self and self-in-world) • World View (life philosophy, moral principles, theories of causality) • Spirituality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – meaning and hope; – connection with God (or something beyond the self); – awareness of all aspects of experience and of non-material aspects of life
<p>5. Memory & Perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative, verbal 	<p>6. Body and Brain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The physiological impact of

¹ Rev. Jackson H. Day, Executive Director, International Conference of War Veteran Ministers (jday@warveteranministers.org)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual imagery • Sensory, somatic • Affective, feeling • Interpersonal, behavioral 	<p>prolonged stress, terror, pain, and physical neglect goes across systems in the body (autonomic, sympathetic, neurochemical, muscular, skeletal, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma affects a survivor's body, gender, and sexuality, and his or her relationship to each
---	--

Risking Connection in Faith Communities: A Training Curriculum for Faith Leaders Supporting Trauma Survivors

Five Propositions on which Risking Connection in Faith Communities is based:

- ***Trauma can wound all aspects of a person.***
- ***Relationships are central to healing from trauma***
- ***Trauma impacts spirituality, and spirituality impacts healing from trauma.***
- ***Helpers can be personally affected by supporting survivors.***
- ***Communities are essential to recovery.***

Framework for understanding trauma

- Symptoms are adaptations
- Trauma shapes basic beliefs
- A relational framework facilitates healing. Four essential components of a growth-promoting relationship are **Respect, Information, Connection, Hope (RICH)**

Psychological Trauma violates our sense of trust in life. It therefore wounds our relationships with others, with ourselves, and with God.

Relationships and Attachment

Attachment and Stress Regulation

- **Attachment is the foundation for regulation and management of stress; an innate biological function.**
- Danger/vulnerability → Physiological arousal → Heightens attachment needs → Offspring emits distress signal → Draws attention of caregiver who re-establishes proximity and protection → Reunion reduces physiological arousal and emotional distress
- Markers of Secure Attachment are Nurture, Protection, Availability, Dependability, Understanding

Characteristics of Secure Attachment (Greenspan, 2002, *The Secure Child*).

- Ability to Utilize Relationships
- Ability to Communicate a Full Range of Feelings, Desires
- Ability to Solve Problems and Take Initiative

- Ability to Use Ideas to Express Worries
- Ability to Reason and Think
- Ability to Grasp Multiple Causes and “Gray Areas” of Issues and Feelings
- Ability to Create an Internal Standard—A Sense of Self

Healing from Trauma: Growth Promoting Relationships

The relationship is a major tool in healing. Interactions can be healing, whether the contact is one-time or long-term, frequent or intermittent.

Growth Promoting Relationships are RICH. They incorporate:

- Respect
- Information
- Connection
- Hope

How Relationships bring healing

- They provides a “secure base” to help heal attachment wounds. Secure base attachments include relationships to:
 - One person
 - Several people
 - Communities or institutions
 - God
- They endure over time
- They contradicts survivors’ negative assumptions about relationships.
 - They can defuse stigma
 - They can help survivors make use of other helping relationships
 - Any time a basic assumption is challenged, a window of opportunity opens for a new belief.
- They decrease survivors’ sense of isolation; they allow survivors to accept others in their lives as helpers and supporters.

Healing from Trauma: Spiritual Connection

Connection with others heals; Connection with God also heals

Defining Spirituality and Religion

- Spirituality: One's connection with God, the human need to connect with something beyond our human relationships, sense of meaning and purpose in life
- Religion: A set of beliefs, rituals, traditions and practices that serve as a way to express spirituality

Spiritual Distress	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnection from God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Loss of faith – Loss of spiritual intimacy – Sin – Guilt & shame – Loss of meaning • Disrupted feelings and faith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disrupted judgment • Disrupted spiritual beliefs and needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Safety – Trust and feelings of betrayal – Spiritual esteem – Spiritual empowerment – Spiritual identity

Spirituality that Promotes Healing

- RICH spirituality (embodying Respect, Information, Connection, Hope)
- Acceptance
- Supporting Spiritual Self-Capacities
 - Inner connection to God
 - Sense of self as deserving life, love and kindness
 - Ability to use spiritual resources to manage feelings.
- Searching for and finding meaning and purpose
- Identifying and challenging negative beliefs
- Practicing humility
- Addressing desires for or barriers to forgiveness

Communities (including Congregations!) as Holders of Hope		
By their existence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence • Speaking out 	By their welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity • Generosity • Kindness 	By their vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing beyond present difficulties • Believing in possibilities

You can obtain copies of *Risking Connection in Faith Communities: A Training Curriculum for Faith Leaders Supporting Trauma Survivors* online at www.sidran.org.