

Soul Injury

Liberating Unmourned Loss & Unforgiven Guilt



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www.OpusPeace.org

www.soulinjury.org

SOUL INJURY:

An Overlooked, Unassessed Wound

- Historical Background and Source of Information
- “More than just PTSD”
- Dying people know things the rest of us don’t!
- Awaken to “I matter!” (the “gift”)
- Meeting Maker: → Unvarnished Truth
Unburdening of the Soul
- A Privileged witness... “window of perspective”



“Bearing Witness” to SOUL INJURY

- Do we know how to “bear witness” to emotional pain?
- Are we prepared to “bear witness” with each other?
- Are we prepared to “bear witness” to our own selves?
- Does our **fear** of emotional pain interfere with the “witnessing” process?
- How could an understanding of SOUL INJURY help dissipate that fear?

SOUL INJURY:

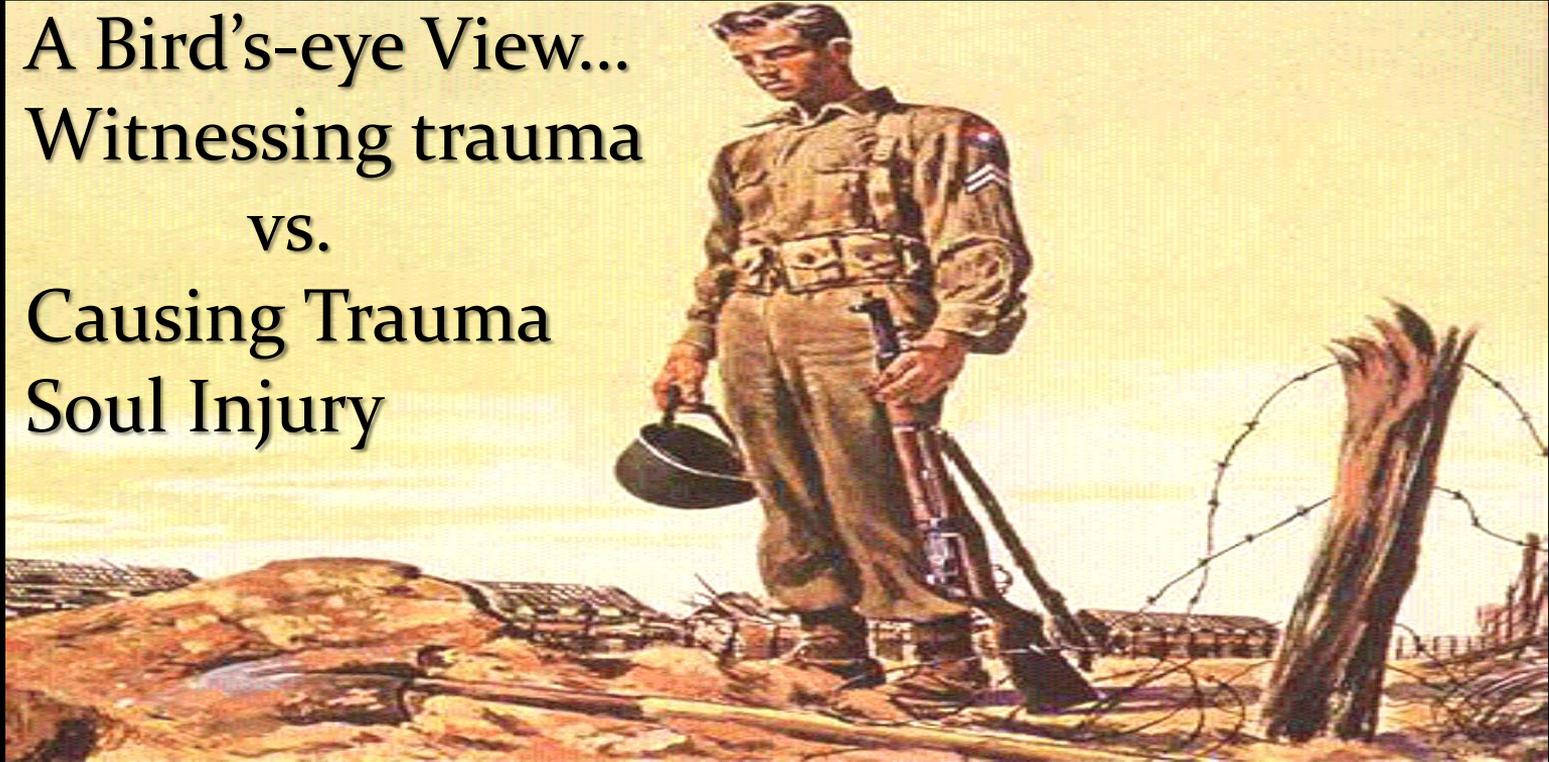
An Overlooked, Unassessed Wound

- Trauma morphs at the end of life (weakening of conscious mind → unbidden memories → agitation)
- Thousands of Hospice & PTSD professionals
- Handful of professionals specializing in BOTH
- Confluence of these two patient populations (Dying + Trauma) is yielding lessons not previously appreciated – lessons for the world.



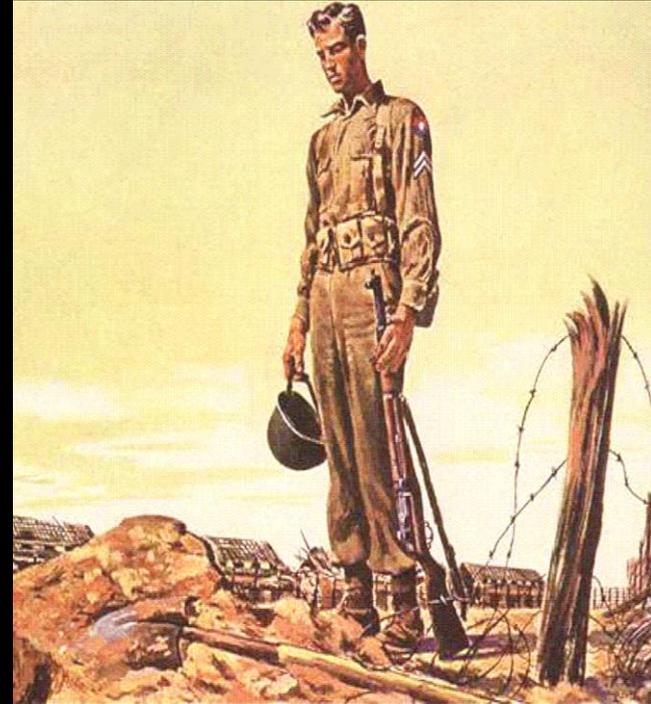
Hospice: A Laboratory of SOUL Truth

A Bird's-eye View...
Witnessing trauma
vs.
Causing Trauma
Soul Injury



Soul Restoration Process: Liberating Pain & Shame

Began with *opening* to the pain/shame
he had been fleeing.
Shame separated him from
his sense of self and inner goodness
Telling his story of shame to a receptive
“witness” → **RE-OWN** the lost part of self
Forgiving self → **RE-HOME** self
(exile changed into safety)
Dying Healed (next day)



Few Can Relate to “Slitting Throats”

- Many can relate to “Traumatic Soul Injury”
(about 50% of population – probably more:
abuse, crime, natural disasters, car accidents,
sexual assault, domestic violence, etc.)

SOUL Truth: A Story of “Ordinary”

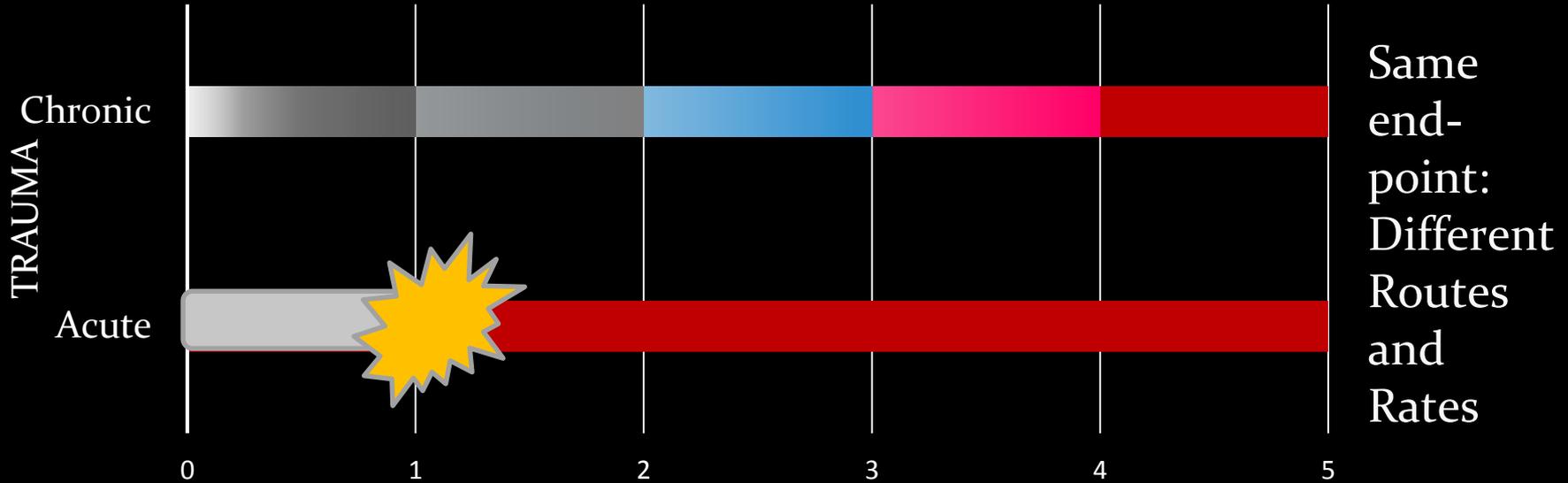


Soul Injury (Sol In -jun-re)

noun

1. A penetrating wound that separates one from their “real” self, affecting one’s sense of “being”, corrupting how they perceive themselves.
2. An aching wound perpetuated by unmourned loss, unforgiven guilt/shame, and diminished self-compassion.
3. A long-lasting response to a person or situation that causes one to feel personally defective, inadequate, or unworthy

UNDERSTANDING SOUL INJURY: A SPECTRUM of Wounds



Webster's Dictionary: 3 Definitions of "Insidious"

- Developing so gradually as to be well established before becoming apparent
- Harmful but enticing
- Awaiting a chance to entrap
- Caused by decades of loss → Insidious Soul Injury
- Ashamed of the part of myself feeling pain, numbing, dead inside. Loss of Personhood grew over time
- All of us have ACQUIRED insidious soul injuries.



What are the Symptoms of SOUL INJURY?

Often includes:

- A vague *emptiness* or a profound *aching* and feeling of *meaninglessness*
- A sense of *betrayal* by parents, spouse, friend, colleague, themselves, an organization, an institution, society, God, their religion, etc.
- **DEFINING ourselves** by the SOUL INJURY (impacting roles, relationships, etc.)



Why Should We Be Addressing Soul Injury?

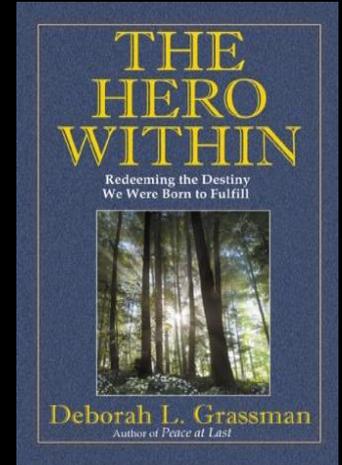
- The approach to SOUL INJURY is different than traditional PTSD or chronic stress interventions
- The approach includes learning how to grieve losses/failures/disappointments → releases the loss
- Learning how to forgive self and others → releases shame
- These are not routinely taught in PTSD programs, nor in healthcare curricula in general
- Addressing and responding to SOUL INJURY fills a gap, enhances treatment/outcomes for PTSD and chronic stress.

What 10,000 Dying Veterans Have Taught Us...

Lesson #1: As a culture, we are categorically
afraid of emotional pain.

(Not taught how to lose, fail, grieve;
Encouraged to flee and numb)

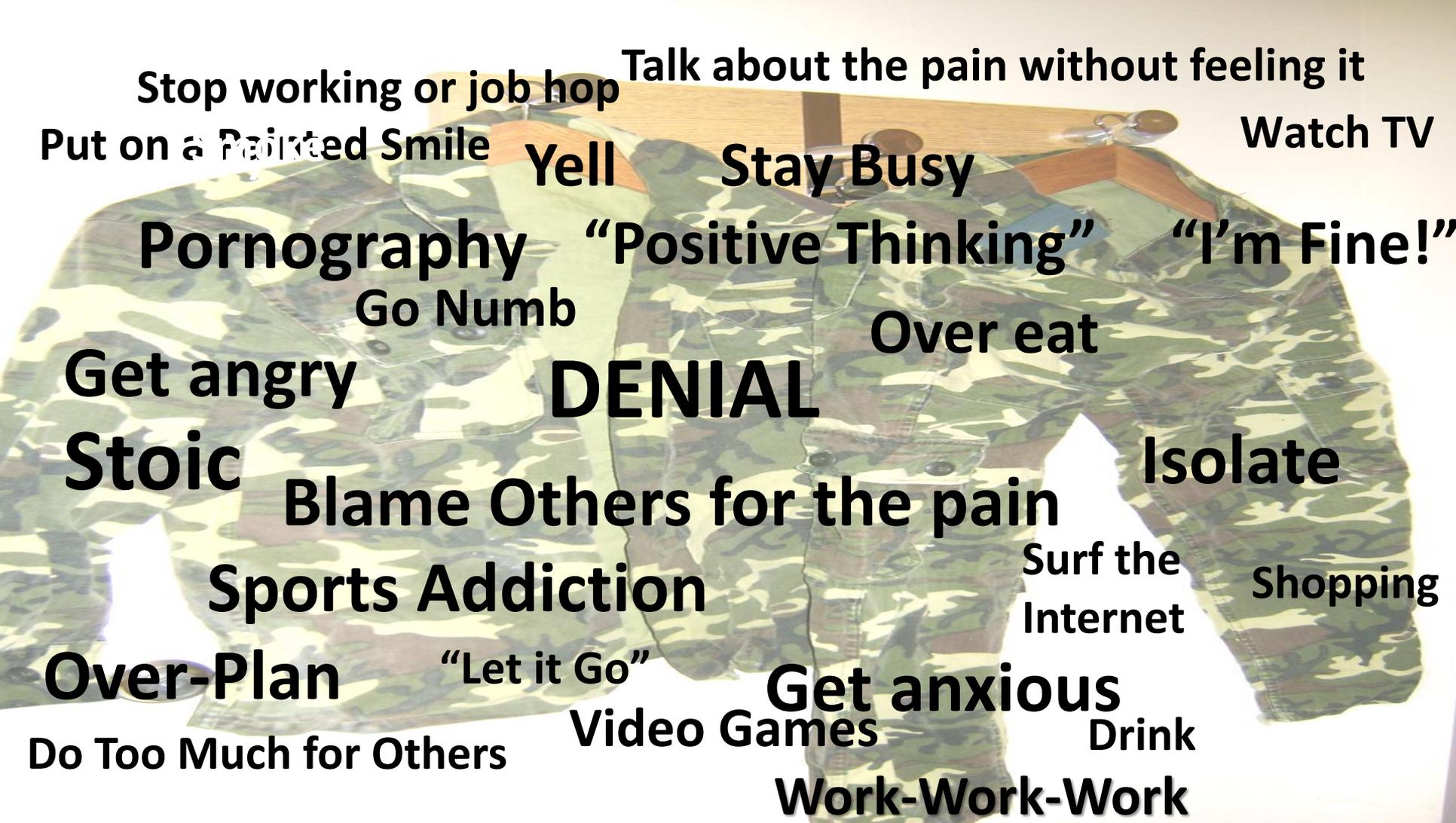
- Never have to say “good-bye”
- “You don’t have to learn to let go”
- “You can have it all” mentality
- Society’s fear of emotional pain perpetuates SOUL INJURIES



Numbing Out Your PAIN Means...

You are NOT a safe place
for the part of yourself carrying your pain!

What's your favorite numbing agent?



Stop working or job hop

Talk about the pain without feeling it

Put on a Painted Smile

Watch TV

Yell

Stay Busy

Pornography

“Positive Thinking”

“I’m Fine!”

Go Numb

Over eat

Get angry

DENIAL

Stoic

Isolate

Blame Others for the pain

Sports Addiction

Surf the Internet

Shopping

Over-Plan

“Let it Go”

Get anxious

Do Too Much for Others

Video Games

Drink

Work-Work-Work

How Would the World Be Different if We Weren't Afraid of our Pain?



How would my world be different if I wasn't afraid of MY emotional pain?
How would our CHILDREN'S world be different if we taught them to not be afraid of their emotional pain?

If We Were Not Afraid...



We would have less of a relationship with our numbing agents, and more of a relationship with our soul!

When You're Living Life Passionately...

- You stop NUMBING the pain and instead let yourself feel it.
- You stop being afraid of your pain.
- You tell your ego to stop covering your pain up with anger, fear, and shame.
- You talk to the part of yourself carrying the pain.
- You comfort that part of yourself (not with numbing agents!)
- You tell a TRUSTED other about your pain.



What 10,000 Dying Veterans Have Taught Us...

Lesson #2: Stoicism is necessary in some ways and a hindrance in other ways.

(It's important to be able
to make the distinction!)

SOUL INJURY Propagation: Barriers that Interfere with Healing



STOICISM:

A Form of Denial
Heritage

Military Necessity

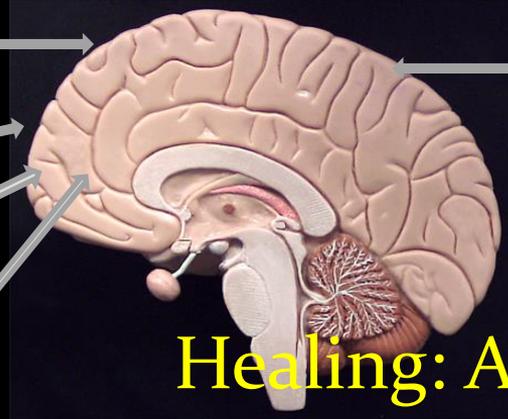
Important for Healing: Parts of the Brain that Give Us a Sense of Self (ME)

Anterior Cingulate

Medial Prefrontal Cortex

Orbital Prefrontal
Cortex

Insula



Posterior Cingulate

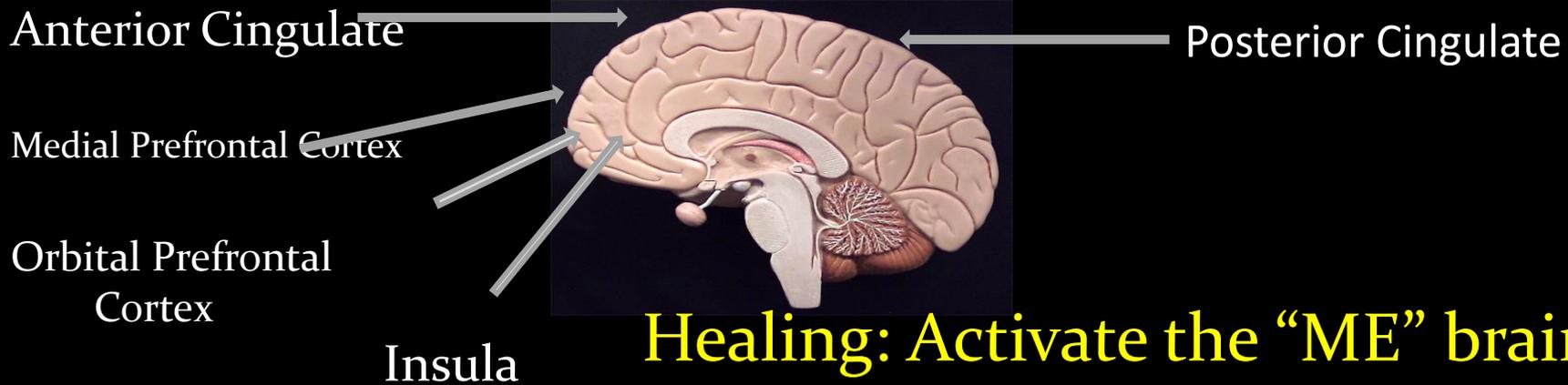
Healing: Activate the “ME” brain

Center corridor of the Brain: SENSE OF SELF

After trauma: scans show markedly lower activity →

Can't feel or evaluate internal sensations

Important for Healing: Parts of the Brain that Give Us a Sense of Self (ME)



Stoicism & Martyrdom:
DEACTIVATES the “Me” brain

Stoicism: Deactivates the “Me” Brain

The more out of touch with your feelings,
the more you cannot sense your body,
the more you will exile parts of your self holding
these feelings into unconsciousness.
But they still register in the body!



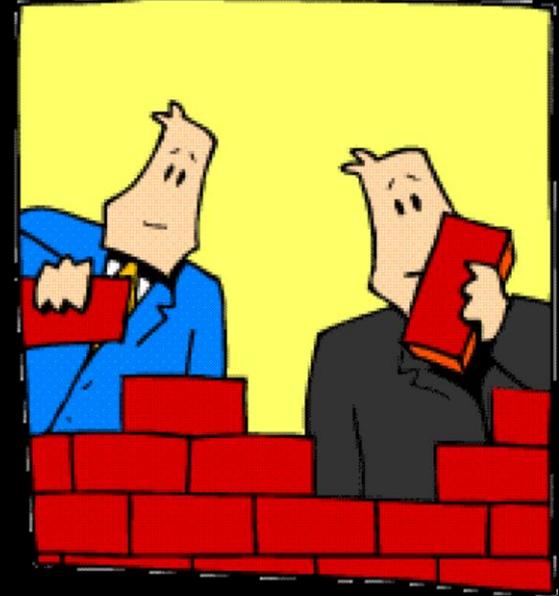
Soul Injury Propagation: Stoicism

“Showing indifference
to joy, grief,
pleasure”

(Weary)

Disconnected occur!

Grit AND Grace



SOUL INJURY: Traumatic Origins & Propagation



Paul Tschudi

Self-Denying Healthcare Culture

- Nurse's Bladder (other professions too?)
- “I never take my break.”
- “I don't take lunch. I just snack on my break.”
- “I stay over until everything gets done, which is almost every day.”

These are not things to be **PROUD** of!



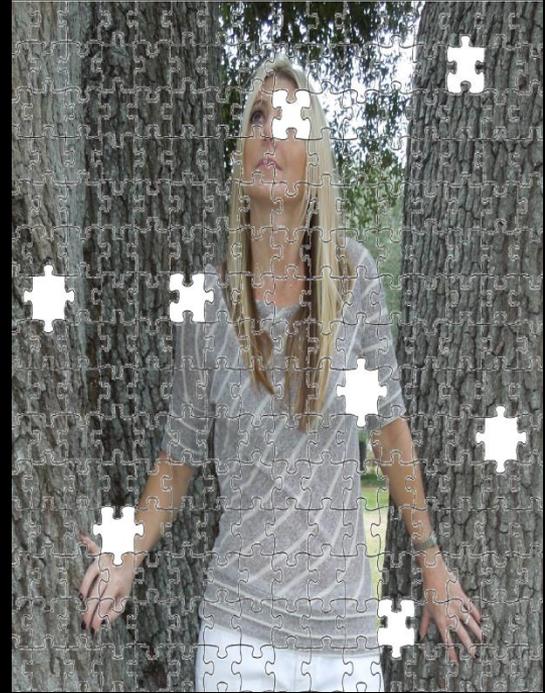
Martyrs and Enablers are NOT Heroes!

It takes honesty, courage, and humility to:

- let yourself be vulnerable,
- be human with needs of your own
- ask for help.

Soul Restoration

Soul restoration includes learning how to RE-OWN, RE-HOME, and RE-VITALIZE scattered pieces of self by cultivating *personal* intimacy with the part of self carrying our emotional pain.



“Intimacy” within own Self

We will keep looking for it
outside ourselves!
We will keep looking for
short cuts!



“Intimacy” within own Self

Connecting with the part of self
generating the pain, paradoxically,
“restoreths the soul”
not numbing & disconnection.

The Hero’s Journey...Within



Poet: Derek Walcott

The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door,
in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome.



This is PERSONAL intimacy..

Especially when you can greet the part of self carrying your emotional pain.

So why aren't we using grieving and forgiveness to restore our wounded souls?
Fear gets in the way...

What 10,000 Dying Veterans Have Taught Us...

Lesson #3: Learning the process and work of forgiveness is redemption.

(Not learning it is a recipe for disconnection from the soul which can lead to bitterness.)

Unmourned Loss Sabotages our Bodies, Minds, and Spirits!



Unmourned loss gets stored in
our bodies, minds, and spirits.

Unmourned Loss Sabotages our Bodies, Minds, and Spirits!



Box up your pain → your vitality, your personhood,
your passion get boxed up as well.
Recipe for Losing Self (SOUL INJURY)

Those Who Grieve Well, Heal Well



Because the grief doesn't have to be stored.
Grief is the natural, normal expression
of loss, disappointment, failure.
Grieving releases emotional pain.

Those Who Grieve Well, Heal Well



Grieving is CREATIVE: Let go of what was
and open up to what is.

Grieving is NOT a destructive process.
UNMOURNED Grief is a destructive process.



Failure to grieve leaves
the part of self carrying the pain of loss/failure
HOMELESS.

Don't be afraid of that part of yourself.
Clinicians and Families: Stop being afraid.

Soul Injuries are Fatal...



if they deaden your sense of Being.

What 10,000 Dying Veterans Have Taught Us about Compassion for Self & Others

Lesson #4: Cultivate Qualities that Redeem
your Personhood:
Honesty, Courage, and Humility.

Validating Emotional Pain: An Act of Compassion

- Validation is an act of self-compassion to acknowledge the loss, feel the emotions and sensations
- It counters DENIAL. (Don't Even kNow I Am Lying.)
- Denial is a numbing agent.
- “Licking your wounds” allows you to feel the pain so the part of self feeling it doesn't have to be exiled into unconsciousness → numbing and/or angry outbursts.

We need to learn how to
develop a different relationship
with the part of self carrying our pain.

Replace:
“Go away. I don’t like you. I’m afraid of you.”
with
“Tell me how you are hurting.
I will listen.”

Why Honesty, Courage, Humility?

Honesty: “Unvarnished” Truth

(“Now, while I’m dying, is no time for me to be lying to myself.”)

Courage: No one can die for you. Even with loving, supportive family all around you, you have to take the leap yourself.

Humility: Because people haven’t died before, they don’t know how to do it, they:

Ask for help, receive help, & listen.

What Responsibility Do Friends, Family, Caregivers, and Public Have in Healing the SOUL INJURY in our Midst?



Learning from our Veterans...



You already have
everything you need
in order to be whole.

It is a matter of
removing the barriers.

Soul Restoration



Paul Tschudi

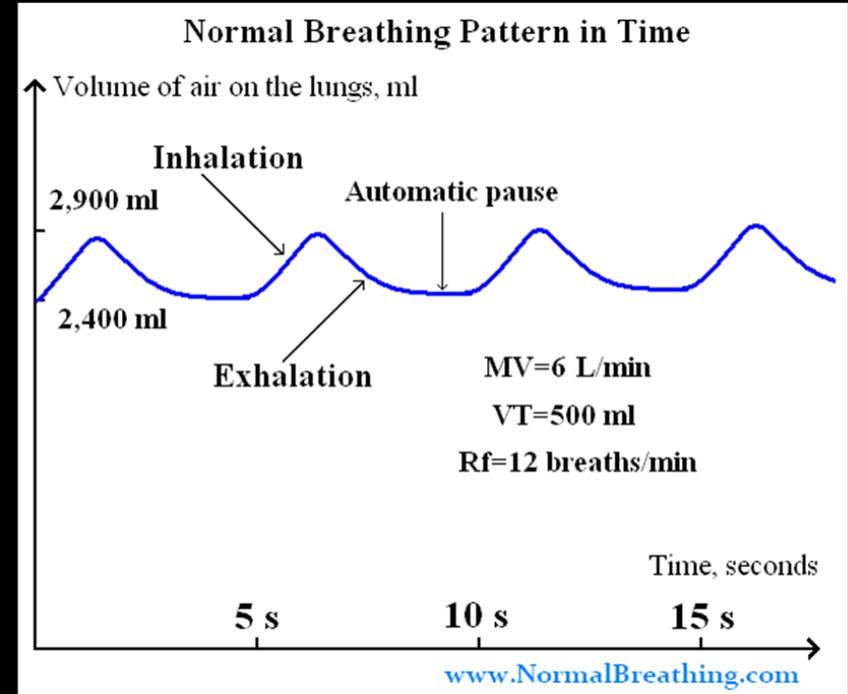
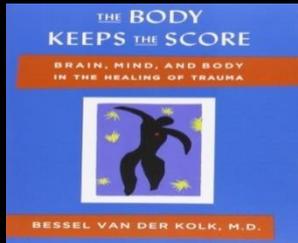
Paul let the Light in...

Changing our Relationship with pain

- Learning how to allow peace and pain sit together
- Experiencing pain WITHOUT amygdala (no need for numbing agents)
- Fear causes us to lose self. Revisit loss, not relive it. Re-visit means COMPASSION.

BREATHE

- Gasp vs. Sigh of Relief
- Stillness after exhalation
- We come in on an in-breath
- We go out on an out-breath
- Heart Rate Variability Marker (reflects functioning of emotional brain)



Anchoring Heart Technique

If you are feeling stressed, or having an anxious moment, it's time to practice some self compassion with the Anchoring Heart Technique.

- Step 1. Cross your hands and place them firmly, but tenderly, over your heart.
- Step 2. Inhale slowly and deeply focusing on the strength of your heart beat.
- Step 3. Hold your breath momentarily, sitting with your feelings, realizing you are strong enough for this moment and slowly exhale. Repeat as necessary, feeling your inner strength, knowing you CAN handle this moment.

Caregivers Poem

- Give me the **grace**...
- to care without neglecting my needs...
- The **humility**...
- to assist without rescuing...
- The kindness...
- to be clear without being cold...
- The **mercy**...
- to be angry without rejecting...
- The **prudence**...
- to disclose without disrespecting my privacy...
- The **humor**...
- to admit human failings without experiencing shame...
- And the **compassion**...
- to give freely without giving myself away.



OPUS PEACE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Soul Injury Training

October 15 - 18, 2018

In sunny Tampa, FL



"The training was amazing. I am becoming the leader I've always wanted to be by learning about Soul Injuries - they are everywhere and now I have the tools to respond."

-Stephanie Turner, Kansas City Hospice

- ⇒ Learn about *Soul Injury* and how you can respond personally and professionally
- ⇒ Strengthen your knowledge about acute and chronic trauma, loss, and shame
- ⇒ Discover the scientific evidence for how Unmourned Loss and Unforgiven Guilt impact the body while subtly and not-so-subtly sabotaging lives
- ⇒ Learn how to facilitate hope and healing within yourself, your organization, your community, or your agency

Opus Peace Prayer

Cultivate in me the willingness to RE-OWN,
RE-HOME, and RE-VITALIZE scattered pieces of
myself so wholeness can be restored.

Grow in me the honesty, courage, and humility to
release my fear of who I am and who I am not.

Fuel me with your grace.

Amen



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world.

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

-Margaret Mead

Anthropologist

Opus  Peace
...begins in me



Opus Peace Vision:
to start a movement that responds to SOUL INJURY

We Need Your Help!

- Start a Healing Community using “The Hero Within” or with veterans “Peace at Last” books
- Take the “Soul Injury Leadership Training” at our Institute
- Become an Opus Peace ambassador
- Utilize websites: www.OpusPeace.org or www.soulinjury.org

Music Credits

Karen Taylor-Good:

- *I Need a Witness*
- *Let the Light In*

www.karentaylorgood.com www.stowegood.com

Laura Pole:

- *Dear Brother*

Soul Injury Film

Event Format with DVD:

- Locally-assembled panel to provide commentary and answer audience questions
- 2 CEs for Nurses, Social Workers, Clergy, Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors, Addiction Professionals, Marriage & Family Therapy, Mental Health Counseling, Death Education and Counseling, Nursing Home Administrators, Psychologists, ADEC, and Academy of Funeral Home Professionals.

Use as a PLATFORM for YOUR cause, contextualizing it to your population **Cost:** \$25 for the on-demand webcast and \$50 (plus \$9 for shipping and handling) for the DVD.

To register:

- Go to <https://hospicefoundation.org/HFA-Products/Soul-Injury>

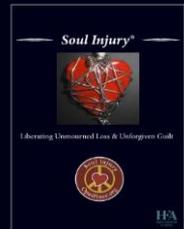


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