

Utilizing Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Aid Chaplains in Addressing Moral Injury



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MENTAL HEALTH AND CHAPLAINCY

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(in addition to co-authors)

2

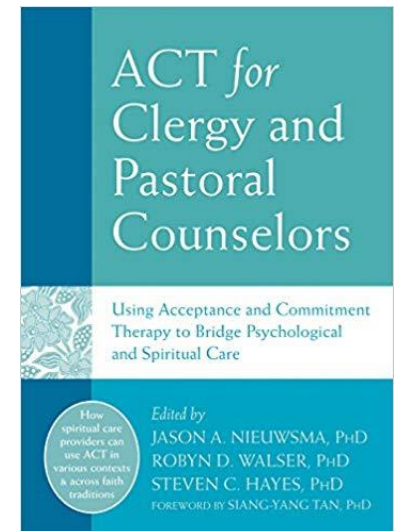
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- Robyn Walser, PhD
- Steve Hayes, PhD
- Kelly Wilson, PhD
- Kent Drescher, PhD, MDiv
- Jacob Farnsworth, PhD
- ***Many chaplains across VA, DoD, and elsewhere***



Disclosures

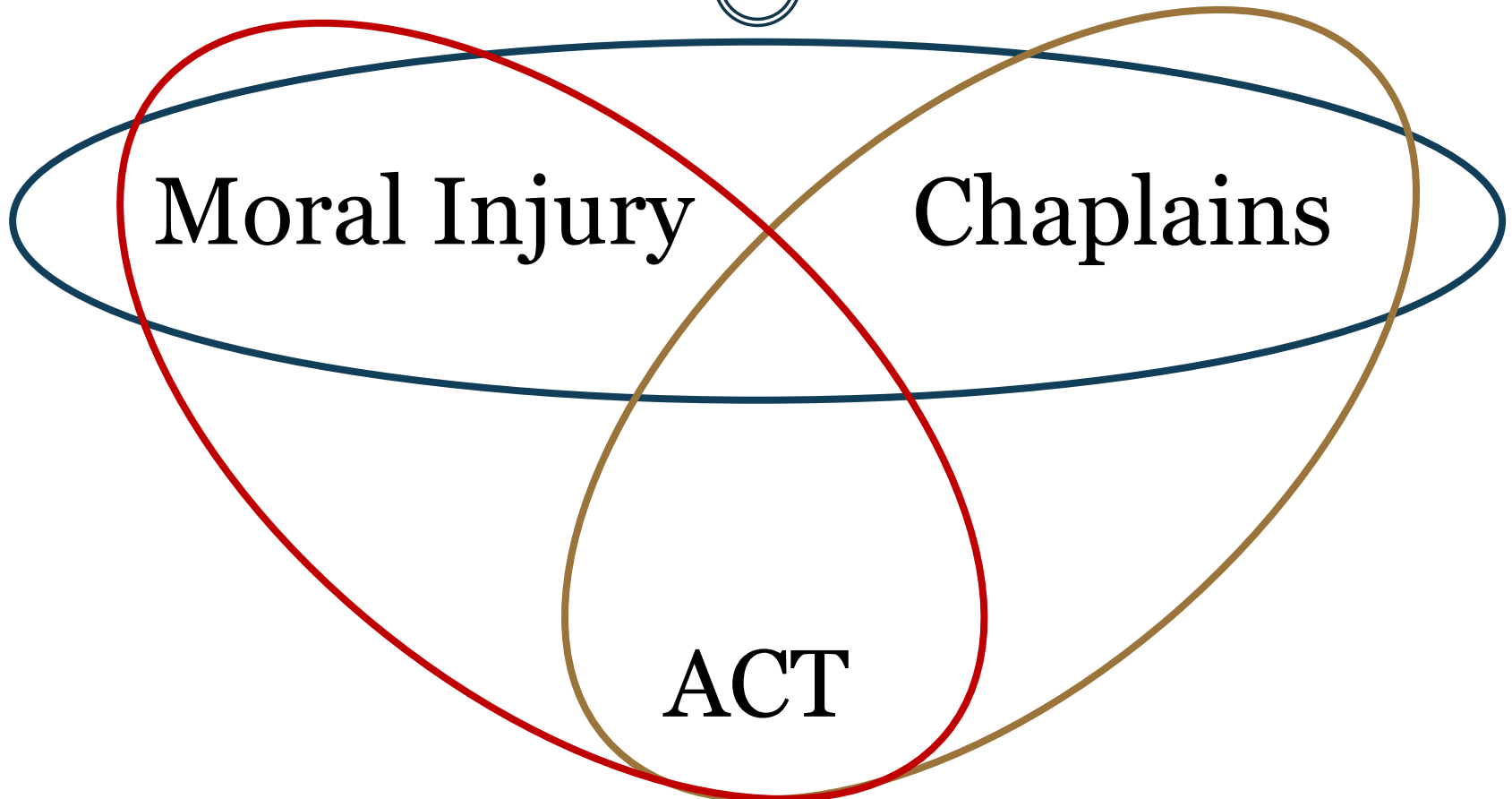
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- The views expressed in this presentation are those of the presenters and do not necessarily represent the views of the funding agencies.
- Jason Nieuwsma, Robyn Walser, & Steve Hayes receive royalties from New Harbinger publications for a book co-edited on a topic similar to the subject of this presentation.



Background

4



1. Nieuwsma, J.A., Walser, R.D., Farnsworth, J.K., Drescher, K.D., Meador, K.G., & Nash, W. (2015). Possibilities within acceptance and commitment therapy for approaching moral injury. *Current Psychiatry Reviews*, 11, 193-206.
2. Meador, K.G. & Nieuwsma, J.A. (2018). Moral injury: Contextualized care. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 39, 93-99.
3. Nieuwsma, J.A., Walser, R.D., & Hayes, S.C. (Eds.). (2016). *ACT for clergy and pastoral counselors: Using acceptance and commitment therapy to bridge psychological and spiritual care*. Oakland, CA: Context Press / New Harbinger Publications.

Empirical Questions

5

Question	Data Source
How often do chaplains see moral injury?	VA/DoD Chaplain Survey (N = 2,163)
Do chaplains perceive their work as synergistic with ACT?	CPE Supervisors Survey (N = 36)
Do chaplains trained in ACT use it?	MHICS Trained Chaplains (N = 81)
Are chaplains using ACT to address moral injury?	VA Chaplain Moral Injury Survey (N = 361)
What can a chaplain/psychologist moral injury ACT group look like?	Intervention Overview from Portland VA Medical Center

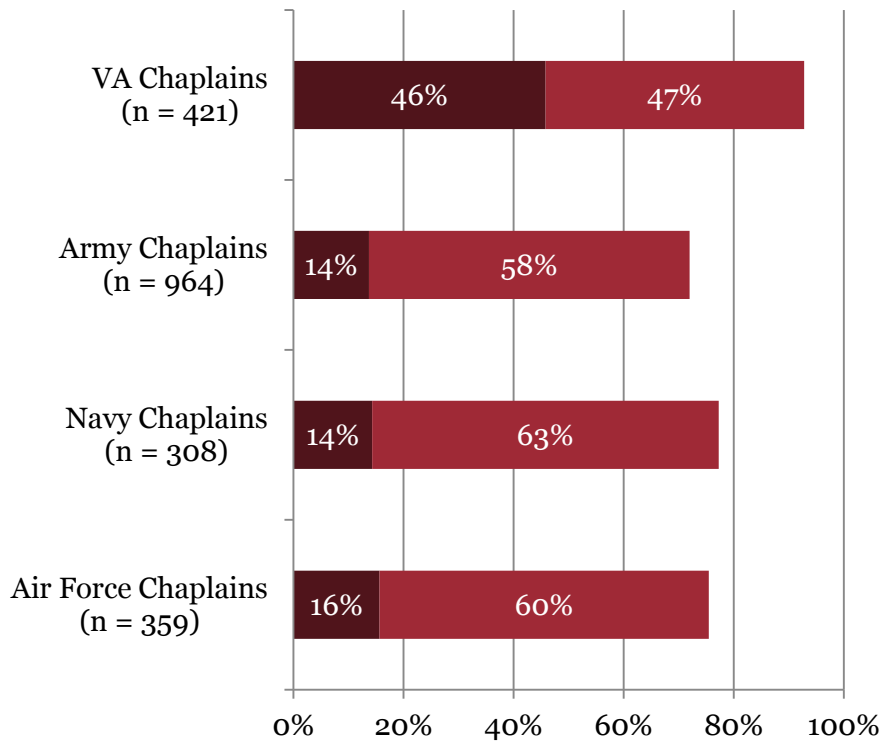
How Often do Chaplains See Moral Injury?^{1,2}

Moral Injury Chaplains

6

How often do you see Veterans with moral injury?

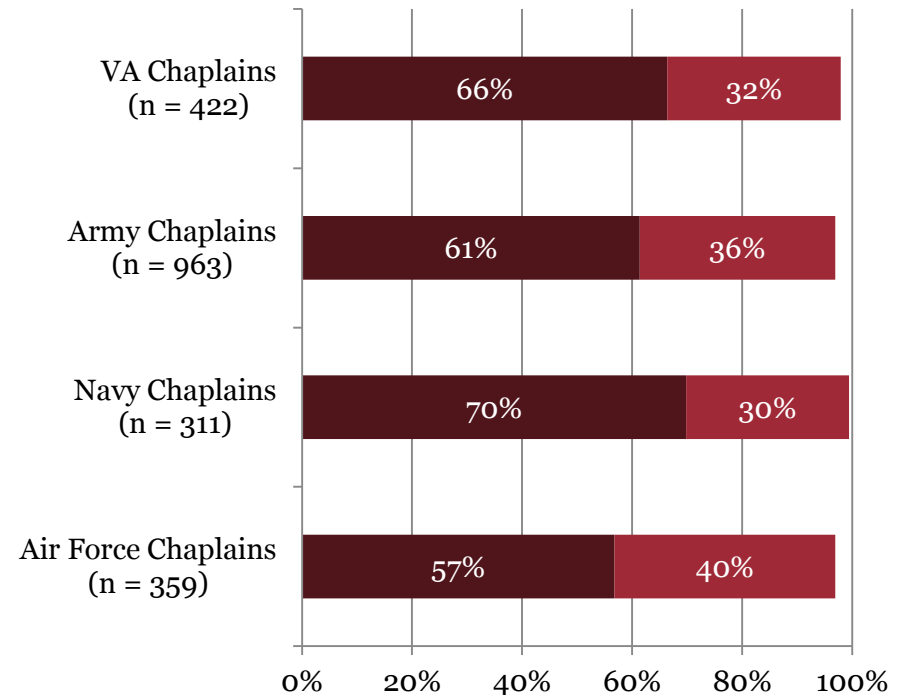
■ Frequently ■ Sometimes



Scale = Frequently; Sometimes; Rarely

How well has your training prepared you to care for Veterans with moral injury?

■ Very prepared ■ Somewhat prepared

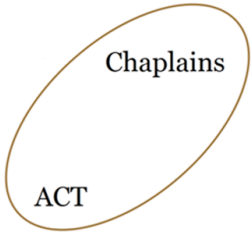


Scale = Very prepared; Somewhat prepared; Not prepared

1. Nieuwsma, J. A., Rhodes, J. E., Cantrell, W. C., Jackson, G. L., Lane, M. B., DeKraai, M. B., Bulling, D. J., Fitchett, G., Milstein, G., Bray, R. M., Ethridge, K., Drescher, K. D., Bates, M. J., & Meador, K. G. (2013). The intersection of chaplaincy and mental health care in VA and DoD: Expanded report on VA / DoD Integrated Mental Health Strategy, Strategic Action #23. Washington, DC: Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense.

2. Nieuwsma, J.A., Buck, P.J., King, H.A., Jackson, G.L., Cantrell, W.C., & Meador, K.G. (November 2015). On the front line addressing moral injury: A survey of VA/DoD chaplains and implications for mental health collaboration. In J. Currier (Chair) and J.A. Nieuwsma (Discussant), *Moral injury, spirituality, and military trauma: Probing into the clinical implications of treating morally injured patients*. Symposium conducted at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.

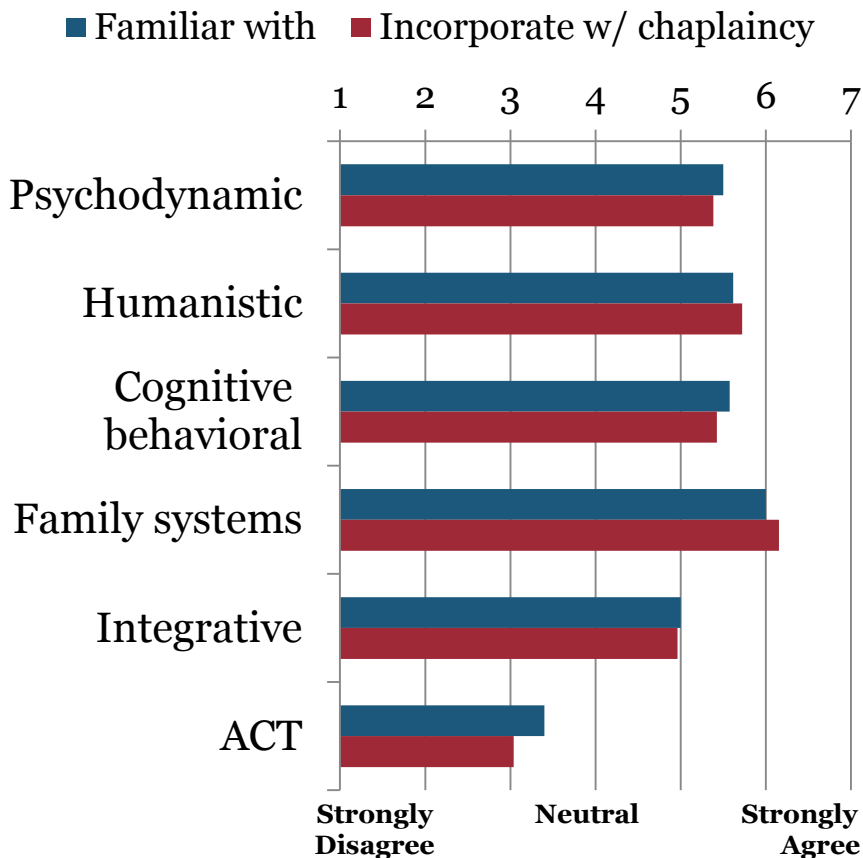
Do Chaplains Perceive Their Work as Synergistic with ACT?¹



7

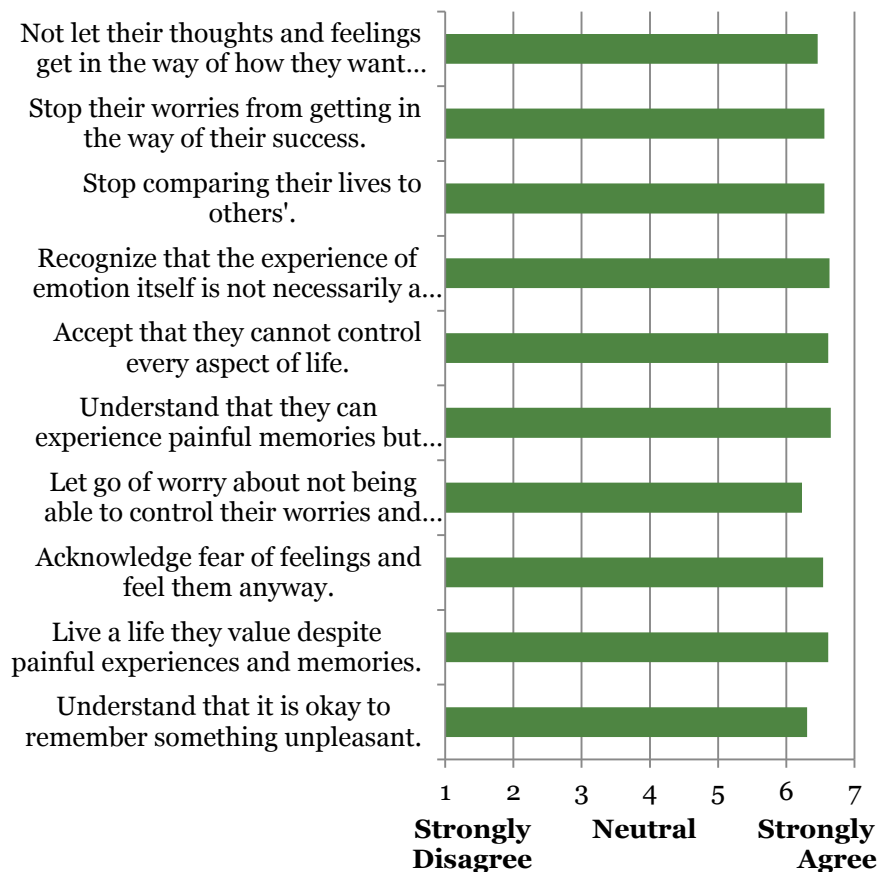
Overt Familiarity

(N = 36 CPE Supervisors)



Covert Familiarity*

(N = 36 CPE Supervisors)



* Items adapted from the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire II (AAQ-II).

1. Nieuwsma, J.A. & McMahan, J. (2016). Using ACT in the context of healthcare chaplaincy. In J.A. Nieuwsma, R.D. Walser, & S.C. Hayes (Eds.), *ACT for clergy and pastoral counselors: Using acceptance and commitment therapy to bridge psychological and spiritual care*. Oakland, CA: Context Press / New Harbinger Publications.

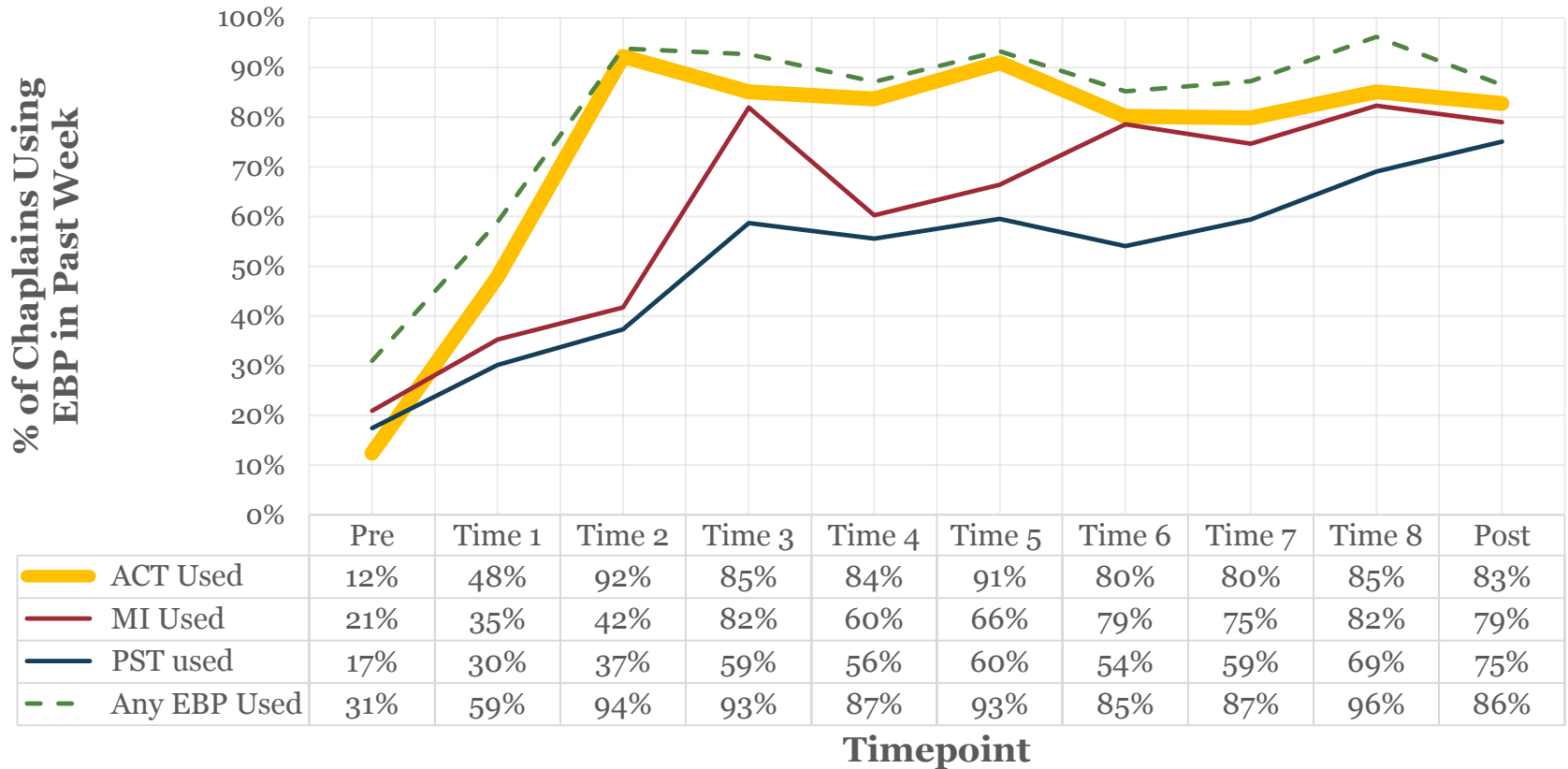
Do Chaplains Trained in ACT use it?

Chaplains

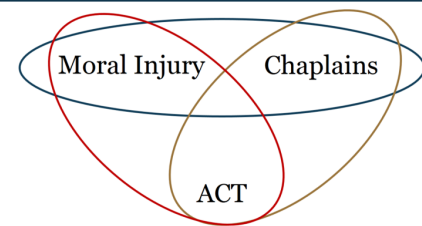
ACT

8

N = 81 MHICS Trained Chaplains



Are Chaplains using ACT to Address Moral Injury?



9

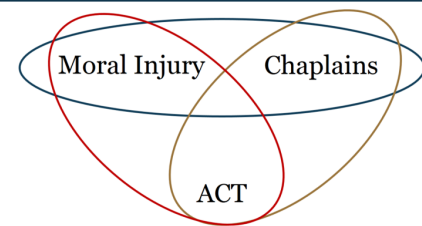
Elements Rated as Most Essential for Moral Injury Care*

(N = 361 VA Chaplains)

1. Forgiving self (56.2%)
2. Developing compassion for self (51.8%)
3. Emotional processing (48.2%)
4. Developing trusting relationships (47.4%)
5. Willingness to live life even with painful memories (46.0%)
6. Reconnecting with values (44.0%)

** Scale included 23 items. Items endorsed as “Essential in all cases” by at least 40% of respondents are displayed in rank order.*

What can a Chaplain/Psychologist Moral Injury ACT Group Look Like?¹



10

Part 1

You are not your moral injury

- Class 1: Present moment awareness
- Class 2: Defusing from the “moral injury monster”
- Class 3: Defusing

Part 2

Moving forward with compassion

- Class 4: Acceptance and compassion
- Class 5: To forgive or not to forgive
- Class 6: Shame exposure

Part 3

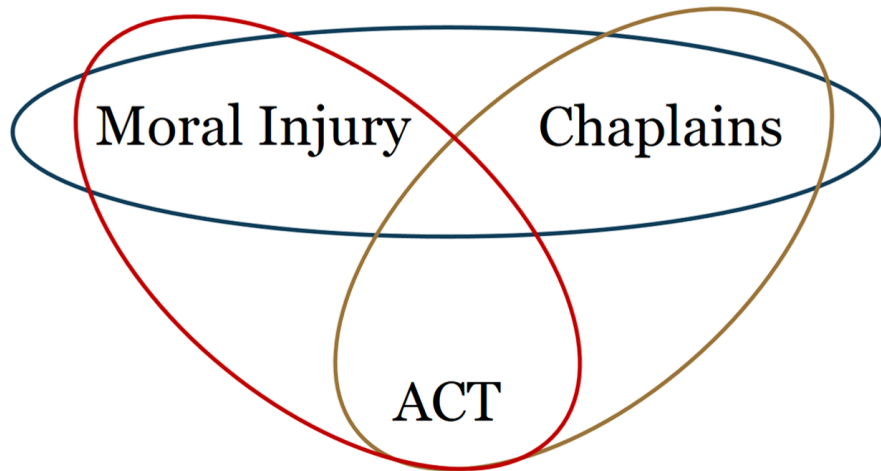
Your wound becomes your gift

- Class 7: Values (revisiting our values exercise)
- Class 8: Wounded soldier reassigned to a new mission: Roles & creating ritual
- Class 9: Launching: Performing ritual

Discussion



Summary



Future Directions

- Mapping moral injury
- Clinical evaluation
- Collaborative care
 - Mental health & chaplaincy
 - Community engagement
 - Interdisciplinary discussions

Contact Information



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