

# Trauma and Faith

Integration and Intervention



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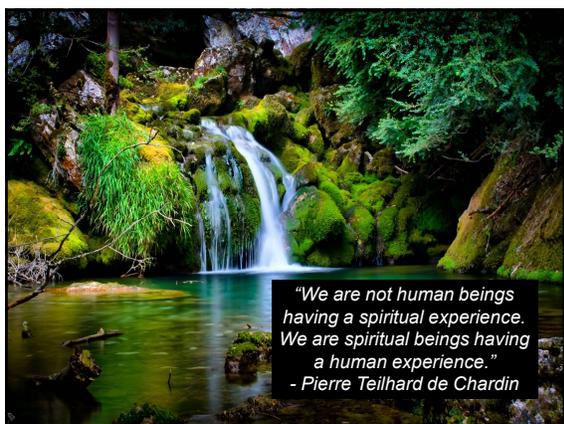
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## Etymology



- What does the word *trauma* even mean?
- Trauma comes from the Greek word meaning wound
- What do we know about physical wounds and how they heal?
- Appreciating the wound metaphor is the heart of understanding emotional and psychological trauma and how to treat to care for those experiencing it.

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### Reactions to Traumatic Events

Psychological	Physical
Cognitive	Emotional
Behavioral	Interpersonal
Spiritual	

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### Spirituality: A Way of Seeing



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### What You Are Reflecting



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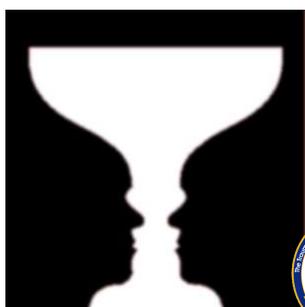
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### Your Worldview



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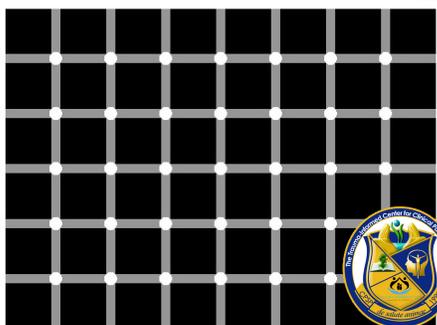
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### Too Much Interference



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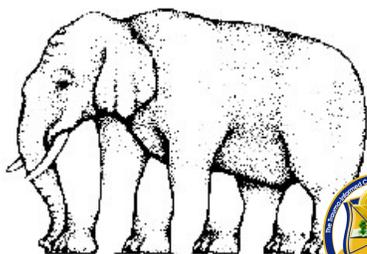
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### The Forefront or the Background



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### Finding Beauty



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### Existential Angst



- *"I was ready to tell the story of my life, but the ripple of tears, and the agony of my heart, wouldn't let me." -- Rumi(13th C. Sufi Poet)*

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### A More Compassionate Model of Care

Focus on The Whole Person

- Physical
- Emotional
- Social
- Spiritual



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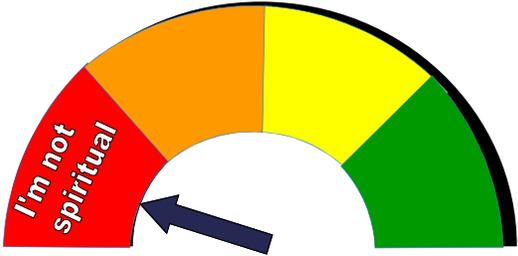
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### The Spirituality Spectrum



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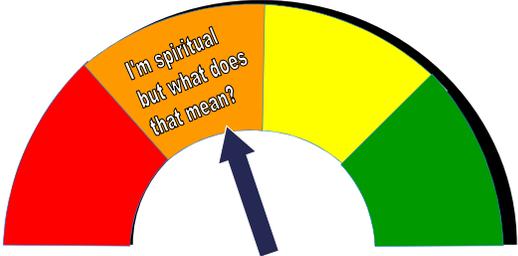
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### The Spirituality Spectrum



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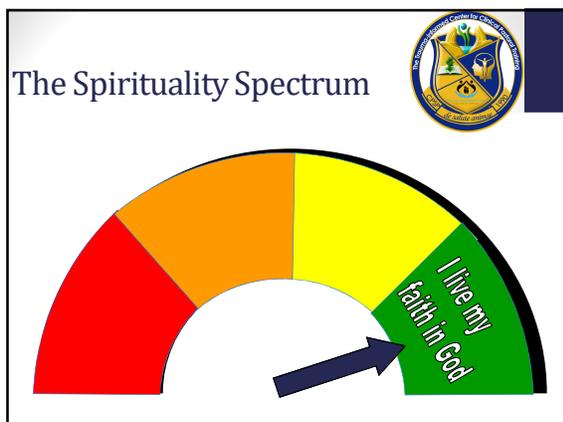
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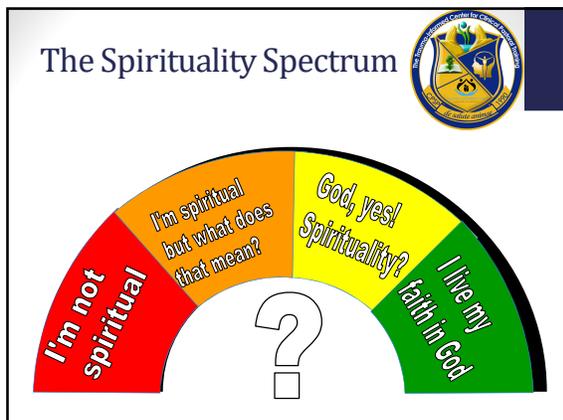
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**GODISNOWHERE**  
God is no where  
God is now here

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**What Is Spirituality?**

- Spirituality is a personal experience with many definitions. Spirituality might be defined as "an inner belief system providing an individual with meaning and purpose in life, a sense of the sacredness of life, and a vision for the betterment of the world." Other definitions emphasize "a connection to that which transcends the self." The connection might be to God, a higher power, a universal energy, the sacred, or to nature.

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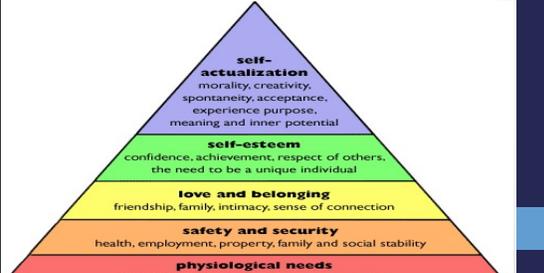
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**Maslow's Hierarchy**



The diagram is a pyramid divided into five horizontal layers, each with a different color and text. From top to bottom: 1. Purple: **self-actualization** (morality, creativity, spontaneity, acceptance, experience purpose, meaning and inner potential). 2. Green: **self-esteem** (confidence, achievement, respect of others, the need to be a unique individual). 3. Yellow: **love and belonging** (friendship, family, intimacy, sense of connection). 4. Orange: **safety and security** (health, employment, property, family and social stability). 5. Red: **physiological needs** (breathing, food, water, shelter, clothing, sleep).

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## Experiential

- Pick a trauma to work with for the two days
- Can be your own, a client, or completely made up
- All exercises are completely voluntary



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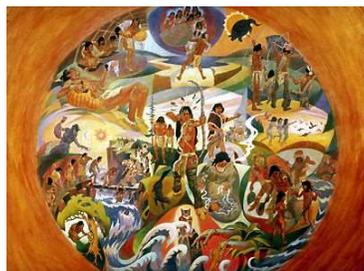
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## Sacred Stories



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## Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins

- David M. Carr, 2014
- Human trauma gave birth to the Bible, suggests eminent religious scholar David Carr. The Bible's ability to speak to suffering is a major reason why the sacred texts of Judaism and Christianity have retained their relevance for thousands of years. The author tells the story of how the Jewish people and Christian community had to adapt to survive multiple catastrophes and how their holy scriptures both reflected and reinforced each religion's resilient nature.



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### Caring for the Traumatized

Narrative

Relaxation/  
Self-Regulation

Building & Maintaining  
**THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP**

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### Components of Care

- 75% of Providers Influence on Treatment Outcomes Lies in Relational Factors

75%

25%  
Model/  
Techniques

Therapeutic Relationship  
+  
Hope

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### Spiritual Interventions

- Ministry of Presence
- Spiritual Reframing
- Focus on Spiritual Gratitude & Blessing
- Grief Work
- Clinical Use of Prayer
- Healing Rituals
- Confession – Guilt – Forgiveness Work (Ventilative Confession)
- Percentage of Guilt Discussion
- Life Review
- Scripture Paralleling / Education
- Reframing God Assumptions, Examining Harmful Spiritual Attributions
- Encouraging Connection with a Spiritual Community
- Spiritual Mantram Repetition

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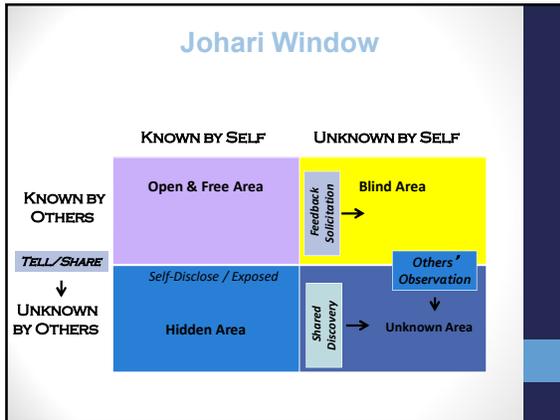
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### Ministry of Presence



*"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and rescues those who are crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18*



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When you were young, when you were in business, when you were in the service industry you were taught...

- Don't just stand there, do something!
- Don't just stand there, say something!



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How should we describe the Presence?



OR



**Art**                      **Science**



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How should we describe the Presence?



OR



**Spiritual**                      **Social**



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**Guided Imagery**



- The purpose of guided imagery as a stabilization coping exercise is to provide the client with a safe, healthy mental escape that he/she can access when needed
- If you do not feel comfortable to develop your own guided imageries, there are many free scripts available online, use with caution to context
- Avoid "place" guided imageries until you see how a client is going to respond

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## Spiritually Informed Interventions



- Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT)
- Trauma Incident Reduction (TIR)
- Spiritually Integrated Therapy (SIT)

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## Stress Continuum

READY (Green)	REACTING (Yellow)	INJURED (Orange)	ILL (Red)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good to go</li> <li>• Well trained</li> <li>• Prepared</li> <li>• Fit and focused</li> <li>• Cohesive units &amp; ready families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distress or impairment</li> <li>• Mild and transient</li> <li>• Anxious, irritable, or sad</li> <li>• Behavior change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More severe or persistent distress or impairment</li> <li>• Leaves lasting memories, reactions, and expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress injuries that don't heal without help</li> <li>• Symptoms and impairment persist over many weeks or get worse over time</li> </ul>
Unit Leader Responsibility	Individual, Peer, Family Responsibility		Caregiver Responsibility

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## SPIRITUAL FITNESS GUIDE

This is a self-assessment tool to help persons consider their spiritual condition.  
(This is a modified version of a model developed by the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps)

Spiritually FIT	Spiritually DISTRESSED	Spiritually DRAINED	Spiritually DEPLETED
<p><b>POTENTIAL INDICATORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaged in life's meaning/purpose</li> <li>• Hopeful about life/future</li> <li>• Makes good moral decisions</li> <li>• Able to forgive self and/or others</li> <li>• Routinely practices faith disciplines</li> <li>• Respectful to people of other faiths</li> <li>• Engaged in core values/beliefs</li> <li>• Appropriately makes worldview adjustments</li> </ul>	<p><b>POTENTIAL INDICATORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neglecting life's meaning/purpose</li> <li>• Less hopeful about life/future</li> <li>• Makes some poor moral decisions</li> <li>• Difficulty forgiving self and/or others</li> <li>• Infrequently practices faith disciplines</li> <li>• Less respectful to people of other faiths</li> <li>• Neglects core values/beliefs</li> <li>• Adequately makes worldview adjustments</li> </ul>	<p><b>POTENTIAL INDICATORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss sense of life's meaning/purpose</li> <li>• Holds very little hope about life/future</li> <li>• Makes poor moral decisions routinely</li> <li>• Unable to forgive self and/or others</li> <li>• Discounts practices of faith disciplines</li> <li>• Strong disrespect to people of other faiths</li> <li>• Disregards core values/beliefs</li> <li>• Inadequately makes worldview adjustments</li> </ul>	<p><b>POTENTIAL INDICATORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claims life has no meaning/purpose</li> <li>• Holds no hope about life/future</li> <li>• Extreme immoral behavior</li> <li>• Forgiveness is not an option</li> <li>• Abandons practices of faith disciplines</li> <li>• Complete disrespect to people of all faiths</li> <li>• Abandons core values/beliefs</li> <li>• Inappropriately makes worldview adjustments</li> </ul>

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### Five Basic Spiritual Needs

- A meaningful philosophy of life (values, and moral sense).
- A sense of the transcendent (outside of self, view of God and something beyond the immediate life, having hope.)
- A trusting relationship with God (faith).
- A relatedness to nature and people (friendship). Experiencing love and forgiveness.
- A sense of life meaning.



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### Man's Search for Meaning Victor Frankl

- Sometimes external circumstances in our life situation are beyond our control.
- Frankl maintains that the attitude we choose to take toward our life situation is within our control.
- The spiritual journey relates to our inner struggle to shape our attitude toward illness and even death itself.
- A relationship with God gives meaning to life.



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### Where Do We Find Hope?

- Ultimately from our faith or understanding of our relationship to a higher power.
- The belief that a higher eternal power is in control provides meaning and purpose to any situation.



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## The Need for Love and Relationships



- We were created with this need. Humans are social beings.
- The emotional need for love and relationship is met in the context of significant human relationships.
- The spiritual need for love and fellowship is met only through a personal relationship with God.

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## Need for Forgiveness



- Guilt is one of the biggest burdens in our lives. It results from the failure to live up to expectations, either our own or those of others.
- True guilt may come as a result of rebelling against the belief in God, and the consequences of that rebellion.
- A sense of forgiveness within the context of one's faith, often brings a sense of inner peace for that person in their relationship with God, self, and others.

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## Forgiveness Results In



- Less anxiety and depression
- Better health outcomes
- Increased coping with stress
- Closeness to God and others
- Resolves guilt
- Restored healthy relationships

*"Beware lest anyone resist the grace of God and a root of bitterness spring up in you and many be defiled"* Hebrews 12:15

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## Approach to Spiritual Assessment

- Suspect spiritual pain
- Establish a conducive atmosphere
- Express interest, ask specific questions
- Listen for broader meanings
- Be aware of your own beliefs and biases



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## The HOPE Assessment

- **H** – Sources of hope, meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love, and compassion: What is there in your life that gives you internal support?
- **O** – **Organized** religion: Do you consider yourself as part of an organized religion? How important is that for you?
- **P** – **Personal spirituality/practices**: Do you have personal spiritual beliefs that are independent of organized religion? What are they? Where is God / the sacred in this for you?
- **E** – Effects on trauma care: Are there any spiritual or religious beliefs that may interfere with my ability to provide care to you?



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## Let Go

- Listening to the client's story
- Encouraging the search for meaning
- Telling of your concern and acknowledging their pain
- Generating hope whenever possible
- Owning your limitations



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## Relationship of Trauma and Faith

- Depression and loneliness can lead to feelings of abandonment and loss of faith in God.
- Some individuals experience increased appreciation of life, greater perceived closeness to God, increased sense of purpose in life, and enhanced spiritual well-being even following trauma.
- Can be associated with loss of faith, diminished participation in religious or spiritual activities, changes in belief, feelings of being abandoned or punished by God, and loss of meaning and purpose for living.
- Research indicates that healthy spirituality is often associated with lower levels of symptoms and clinical problems in some trauma populations.



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## Possible Outcomes

- Faith reaffirmed
- Faith rejected
- Faith transformed



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## Can Trauma Really Improve Your Faith?

- 34 studies
  - 14: significant disruption of faith
  - 12: mixed evidence
  - 8: positive impact
- Clues? Age, context, culture, education



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## David Brooks, Theologian?



Suffering calls us to :

- Accept personal limits
- Acknowledge self-deception
- Answer the call to the greater good
- Submit to the moral drama of life



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## Issues

- Making meaning of the trauma experience
- Guilt and moral injury
- Grief and bereavement



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## The Truth

- Trauma can shatter our faith



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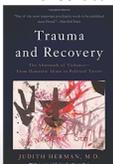
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## When All is Lost



- In her amazing book, Trauma and Recovery, Judith Herman, M.D. addresses the issue of faith. She states "(Traumatic events)...violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis."
- In other words, we begin to question everything we have come to know.
- To feel abandoned by the Divine is a trauma in itself



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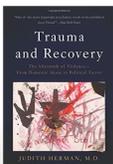
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## Stages



Stages from Trauma and Recovery by Judith Herman, M.D. addresses the stages of trauma care. They are:

- Safety
- Remembrance and Mourning
- Reconnection



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## Faith and Belief



- Beliefs are products of our minds. They are decisions we have made, constructs we have formed to make sense of our world. We believe in God, in certain people, in certain relationships.
- Faith is a product of the spirit. Faith is the abstract knowing that the Divine is constant. When there is a crack in that knowing, what can heal it? When there is a tear in the fabric of faith, what will mend it?

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## How to Heal From Trauma



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## Recognize the Possibilities



- Your story doesn't end with the trauma you've suffered. A better future is possible for you. You're much more than just a person who suffered traumatic events. You are a survivor! You can recover with God's help. And God can even turn your trauma into a redemptive source of blessing in your life and the lives of other people.

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## Deal with Your Anger



- Admit the anger you feel as a result of the trauma you experienced. Ask God to help you stop expressing it in destructive ways and start expressing it in healthy ways. Use the energy in your anger to accomplish something constructive, like working to help solve the problem that caused your trauma (for example, if you were abused, reach out to others who have gone through the same type of abuse, or if a drunk driver killed someone you loved, support organizations that fight drunk driving). Release your anger by writing about it in a journal, or in a letter to the person or people who traumatized you (but don't mail the letter). Be honest with God about the anger you feel; doing so releases its power over you, giving you the freedom to pursue healing.

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## Deal with Your Guilt



- Evaluate your guilt and ask God to help you discern whether or not it's legitimate. Legitimate guilt has a purpose, showing you where you've gone wrong and what you need to change. If the guilt you're suffering from is legitimate, you can do something about it. Admit what you've done, confess it, make restitution if possible, and embrace God's forgiveness. If you're suffering from guilt that doesn't have a redemptive purpose, recognize that it doesn't come from God and ask God to free you from that guilt and move on with your life. Remember that what's past is past. Don't blame yourself for not being able to react or respond in the best way when you were traumatized; trauma impacts your judgment. If you did the best you could at the time, that's enough.

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## Deal with Your Fear



- Confront your fears, identify them, and notice how often they occur. Remember what you used to fear, and how you overcame it. Put your fears in perspective by studying and memorizing Bible passages that describe God's power to handle all that scares you, as well as those that mention His promises. Ask God to give you His peace.

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## Deal with Your Depression



- Realize that no one is immune to depression, and that it's not a sin for a person of faith to be depressed. Evaluate your thoughts by: recognizing and identifying what you express to yourself, understanding that many of your thoughts are involuntary and automatic, distinguishing between ideas and facts (keeping in mind that just because you think something doesn't mean those thoughts are true), and whenever you discover that a particular thought is not true, state exactly why it is inaccurate or invalid. Admit your feelings to another person who can help you. Cling to God's promises and choose to be faithful to Him, even when you don't feel like it. Trust that He will reveal His strength through your weakness.

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## Deal with Your Grief



- You need to express the grief you feel rather than expecting it to go away or trying to fix it or get over it without work. Working through grief is a slow but necessary process. Keep in mind that everyone grieves and heals differently, so don't compare yourself to others or compare your loss with theirs. Remember that grief isn't logical or predictable, so expect to be surprised by how it wells up in your life sometimes. Don't try to rush through your grief. Pray for the comfort Jesus wants to give you, remembering that He grieves with you. Don't try to get your life back to the way it was before your trauma; accept the fact that life won't get back to normal. However, you can create a new normal for your life as you recover. Hold onto your memories, but let go of whatever you need to let go of in order to move on – like regrets, unfulfilled expectations, anger, a routine, or the lifestyle you used to have.

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## Tell Your Story



- Get the story of what you've gone through out, instead of denying it, repressing it, trying to walk through it alone, or hoping it will just go away if given enough time. Face the story of your trauma and share it with God and at least one person you trust. Acknowledge that you're carrying pain from past events; become completely honest with God about your sin, brokenness, rage, sadness, and hurt; and find safe people who will listen to your story (such as a friend, small group, therapy group, or Christian counselor). But be sure to share your story on your own terms, without giving into any pressure from others. Remember that you can choose what to tell and how and when to tell it. After you tell your story, invite God to come into your story.

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## Renew Your Faith



- Trauma may have uprooted some of your basic assumptions about life that you had taken for granted before the trauma: like that life is fair, that the world is a safe place, or that people are trustworthy. Trauma might also change the way you see God, shattering any assumptions you may have made about Him that don't reflect reality. Remember that everyone in our fallen world must confront trauma, but God suffers for us and with us in the midst of it. Although, one day, the world will be healed once and for all, at this time in history you need to search for God at work in this fallen world – starting in your own life.

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## Embrace Your Identity



- Trauma may scramble some of your basic assumptions about who you are. It can bring you face-to-face with your inadequacy and incompetence; assault your view of the world so you move through life with less confidence and security; and cause you to feel strange and damaged, which could lead you to cut yourself off from the relationships you need with other people. Instead of taking on the identity of a victim, however, find your true identity in God as someone who is deeply loved by God. Bring your shame and guilt to God, trusting Him to handle it, and resting assured that, in Him, you will never be condemned. Face your brokenness and let it make you aware of how much you need God's mercy and help. Ask God to pour out His strength into your life through your areas of weakness. Expect God to reverse the negative power of your trauma and change it into positive power that will be a conduit for His love and healing to flow through. Remember that God will complete the good work He has started in your life. Ask Him to eventually even use you to bring healing to other traumatized people as well.

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## Write for Healing



- Use writing as a tool to help you explore and work through issues related to your trauma. Describe what your life was like before the traumatic event, what specifically is different now, what ideas you have to make your life more the way you want it to be, and what dreams you have for the future. Reconstruct the traumatic event in a factual way, as if you're watching a movie. Include details about what you're feeling and thinking as you watch the movie in your mind. Evaluate how the trauma has changed your life and challenged you. Then write a future report on yourself in three years, describing what you'd like to be like and how you can rely on God to make the necessary changes in your life between now and then. Remember that, no matter how much trauma has affected you, the last chapter of your life hasn't been written yet – and with God's help, there is much good coming.

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## Spiritual Reactions to Trauma

- Confusion about God
- Altered sense of meaning in/of life
- Loss of previously sustained beliefs
- Confusion about core ethical beliefs.
- Grief around loss of relationship with God
- Questions of Theodicy
- Feeling dirty and unworthy
- Feeling permanently damaged
- Feeling guilty

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## Spiritual Tools



- Meaning and purpose are critical to stress resistance.
- Faith and religion are a source of emotional support
- Faith and religion can be a starting point to regain purpose and begin problem solving.
- Measures of participation in a faith based community are strong predictors of quality of life.

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## Power of Prayer in Trauma



- A source of safety and security, ventilation, validation, prediction, and preparation.
- A source of comfort and stress moderation.
- A source of connection to a broader faith community.
- Reaffirms a belief in order, meaning in the world.
- A source of communication
- A source of spiritual processing

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### Power of Ritual in Trauma



- A source of social integration and support
- Helps to retain communication with loved ones
- May integrate tragedy into belief systems
- May become traditions for later generations.
- Reminds people of their faith and belief systems.
- Comfort, Connection, Soothing, Deepening, Joining

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### Power of Scripture in Trauma



- **Psalm 91:4-6.** "He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday."
- **Proverbs 1:33.** "But whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."
- **Isaiah 41:10.** "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."
- **Isaiah 53:5.** "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."
- **Lamentations 3:21-23.** "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."
- **2 Corinthians 5:21.** "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
- **1 Peter 5:7.** "Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."

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### Ethical Guidelines



- Beware of the vulnerability of survivors
- Understand and respect the trust placed in you
- Be respectful of rituals or spiritual practices
- You have an affirmative ethical responsibility to meet the spiritual needs of survivors by finding appropriate spiritual support for them.

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### Helpful Guidelines



- Do not explain
- Do not take away my reality
- Stay close
- Remember me... for a long time
- Do not be frightened by my anger
- Listen to my doubt
- Be patient

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### Walk the Walk



- Awareness
- Balance
- Connection
- Increase your self-capacities
- Foster RICH relationships
- Make meaning in your life
- Foster faith for yourself

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### Faith Partnerships



- Focus on People
- Emphasize relationships
- Educate
- Inspire
- Imagine the Possibilities
- Change Lives

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## Clinical Pastoral Education



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## Contact Us



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