



International Innovations to Support the Workforce: *Addressing Moral Distress and Moral Injury in Healthcare Workers*

April 7, 2022

9:00am - 10:00am PT

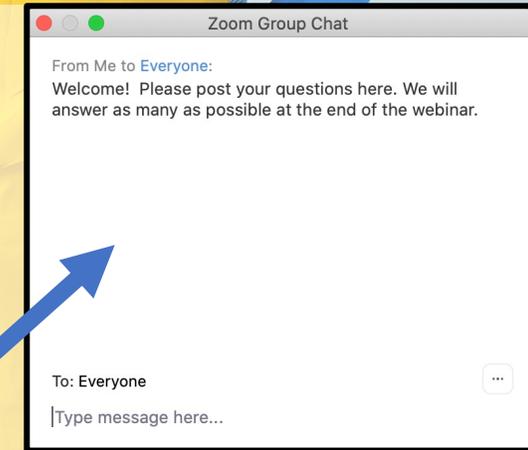
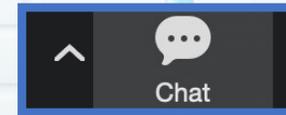
10:00am - 11:00am MT

11:00am - 12:00pm CT

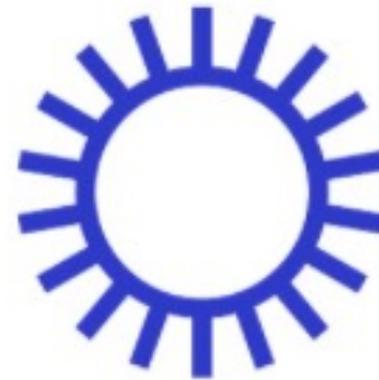
12:00pm - 1:00pm ET

Housekeeping

- We want to hear from you! Share your **questions, comments** and “**ah-ha’s**” via the **chat box**.
- A **recording and slides** will be available within 24 hours - We’ll email you.
- For **IIMHL and CBHL Members** - join our follow up dialogue on 4/14.



Welcome



IIMHL
International Initiative
for Mental Health
Leadership

Speaker

Fardous Hosseiny, MSc [He/Him/il]

*President and CEO | Président et chef
de la direction*

*Centre of Excellence on Post-Traumatic
Stress Disorder (PTSD) | Centre
d'excellence sur le trouble de stress
post traumatique (TSPT)*





Addressing Moral Injury in Healthcare Workers

Fardous Hosseiny, MSc, CHE
President and CEO
Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families

Acknowledgements

Ben's Story

Recent Headlines

British Columbia

B.C. health-care workers 'at the end of their ropes' as 1 in 4 consider quitting, union says



60% of respondents say working in health care throughout the pandemic has increased burnout

[Bailey Martens](#) · CBC News · Posted: Aug 24, 2021 7:34 PM PT | Last Updated: August 26

Hamilton

Local PSWs, exhausted from long hours and low pay, say they're burned out



Issues started well before the pandemic, but have been exacerbated by its demands

[Saira Peesker](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jul 23, 2021 2:29 PM ET | Last Updated: July 23

HEALTH

Alberta health-care workers desperate for COVID-19 help: 'We are treading water as furiously as we can'



By [Caley Ramsay](#) · Global News

Posted September 22, 2021 2:31 pm · Updated September 22, 2021 9:02 pm

'It's soul-draining': Health workers deployed to Covid hot zones are overwhelmed by deaths among the unvaccinated



By [Lev Facher](#) · Aug. 18, 2021 | [Reprints](#)

Video by [Alex Hogan](#)

OPINION

Canada's nursing home workers are nearing catastrophic levels of burnout

CAROLE ESTABROOKS AND YUTING SONG
CONTRIBUTED TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL
PUBLISHED JANUARY 28, 2021

Survey: 2/3 of Critical Care Nurses Consider Quitting Due to COVID-19

By [Lindsay Kalter](#)

Nova Scotia

N.S. groups sound alarm on staffing crisis in long-term care



Staffing shortages are 'code critical,' says union president



[Rose Murphy](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jul 26, 2021 6:00 AM AT | Last Updated: July 26

Presentation Overview

- Moral injury in healthcare
- Approaches to addressing moral injury
- Resources to support the implementation of recommendations to address moral injury

A woman wearing a face mask is sitting in a hospital room, looking out a window. The scene is dimly lit, with a teal overlay. The text is centered over the image.

A GUIDE TO MORAL INJURY

Download the Guide and other
resources at moralinjuryguide.ca

Addressing the “Moral” in Moral Injury



Source: Haidt, 2012

WHAT IS MORAL INJURY?



Defining Moral Injury

*“A **betrayal** of what is right, by someone who holds **legitimate authority**, in a **high stakes** situation”*

– Dr. Jonathan Shay (emphases added)

- First identified and studied in the Military and Veteran context
- No consensus definition, but measures to assess and treat MI are in development

Evolving Definitions of Moral Injury

“A **betrayal** of what’s right, by someone who holds legitimate **authority**,
in a **high stakes situation**”

(Shay, 2002)

“The lasting **psychological, biological, spiritual, behavioural, and social impact** of **perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations**”

(Litz et al., 2009)

Evolving Definitions of Moral Injury

“A wound in the soul, an inner conflict based on moral evaluations of having **inflicted or witnessed harm**....moral injury can result not only from **active behaviour**...but also from **passive behaviour**...it can (also) involve feeling betrayed by persons in authority”
(Brock & Lettini, 2012)

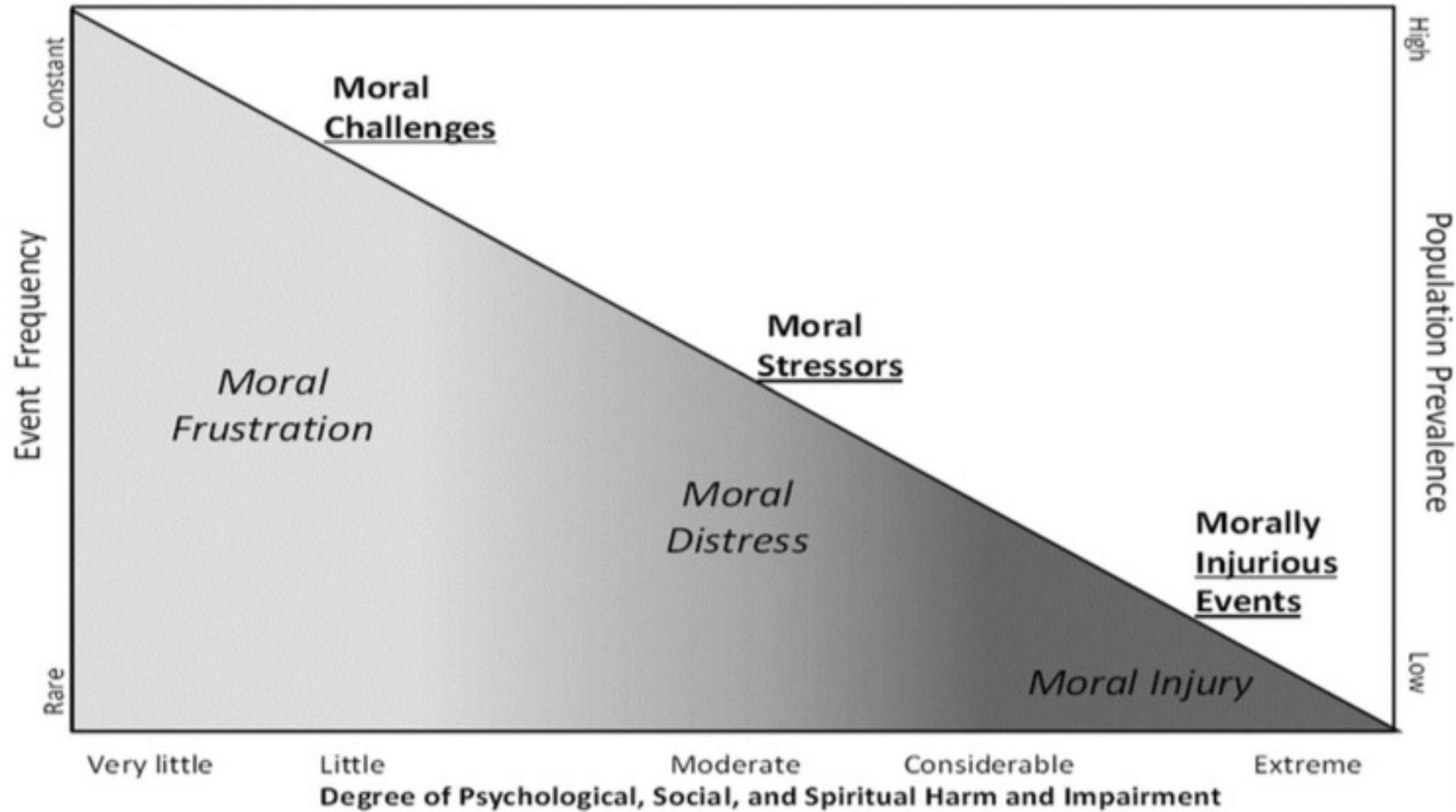
A “**syndrome** including psychological, existential, behavioural, and interpersonal issues that emerge following perceived violations of deep moral beliefs by oneself or trusted individuals (i.e., morally injurious experiences). These experiences cause significant moral dissonance, which **if unresolved, leads to the development of its core symptoms.**”
(Jinkerson, 2016)

Two broad types of PMIEs

1. Those that involve people acting against their own moral beliefs, or failing to act in a way that supports them;
2. Being exposed directly or indirectly to others' transgressions.

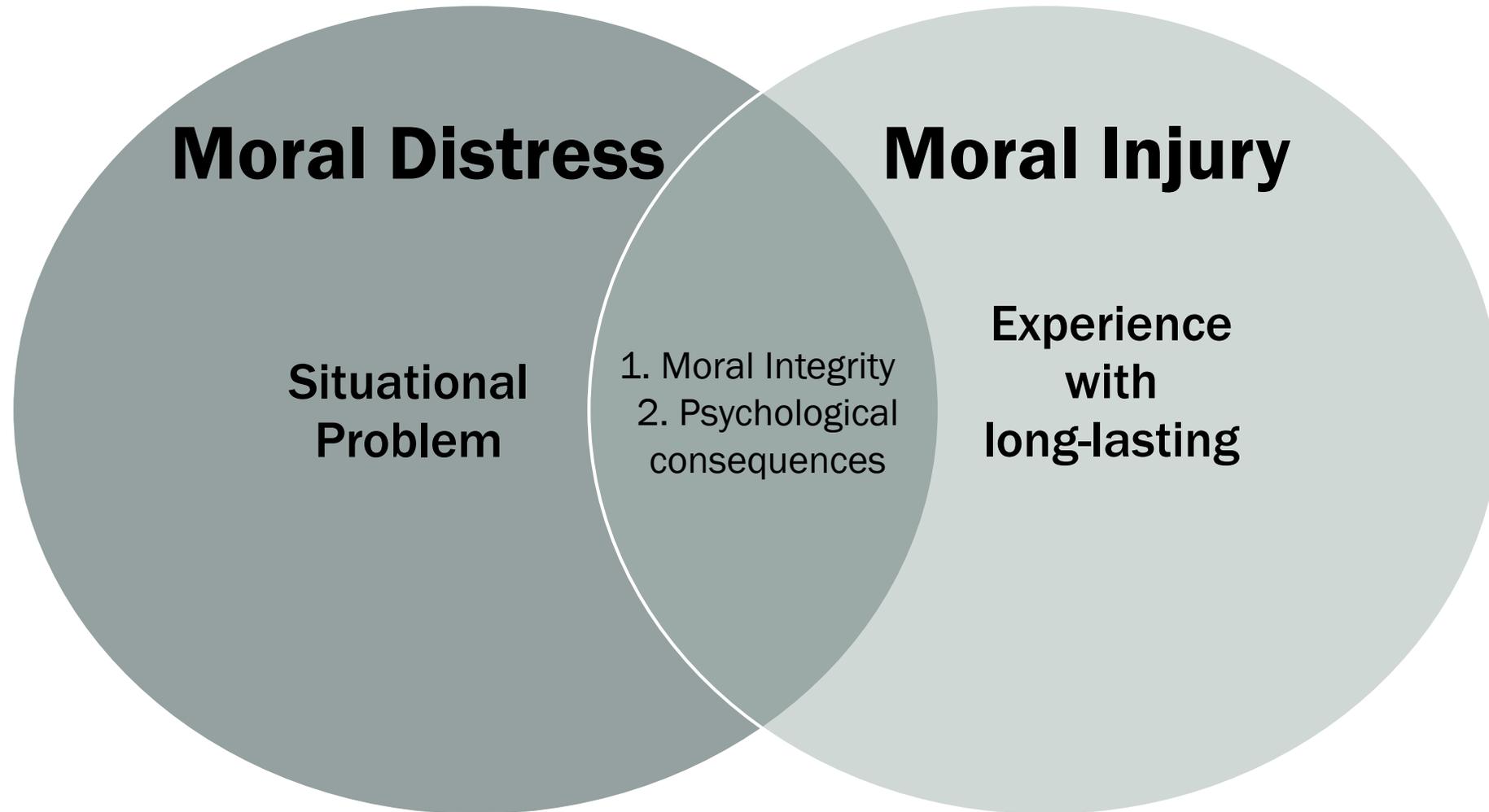


Moral Stressors and Outcomes



Source: Litz, B. T., & Kerig, P. K. (2019).

Moral Distress vs. Moral Injury



Source: Adapted from Čartolovni et al., 2021



Moral Injury and other problems with mental health

- Compassion fatigue
- PTSD
- Burnout
- Depression
- Anxiety

How is Moral Injury Similar to PTSD?

1. Involves an extremely stressful event that produces psychological distress
2. Re-experiencing (nightmares, intrusive memories, thoughts and images)
3. Negative thoughts about yourself, others, world
4. Negative emotions, feeling detached from others

PTSD vs. Moral Injury

PTSD

Experiencing or witnessing actual or threatened death or serious injury

Feeling fear, horror, helplessness

Experiencing unwanted memories

Psychological arousal

Loss of safety

Moral Injury

Experiencing or witnessing something that violates deeply held morals or values

Feeling guilt, shame, anger

No psychological arousal

Erosion of trust

WHY DOES MORAL INJURY MATTER FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS?



Moral Injury & Healthcare

Assumption: the role of healthcare workers is to heal and cause no harm

In professional situations that question this assumption, healthcare workers may experience moral/ethical dissonance.

Moral Stressors and PMIEs for Healthcare Workers

- Witnessing inadequate provision of care
- Restrictions on visitation rights of patients
- Having to choose between safe working conditions and quality of patient care
- Working with colleagues who are acting unsafely
- Staff shortages leading to compromised quality of patient care
- Medication errors and preventable patient deaths
- Non-supportive work environments (e.g. lack of empathy, being treated as replaceable resource)

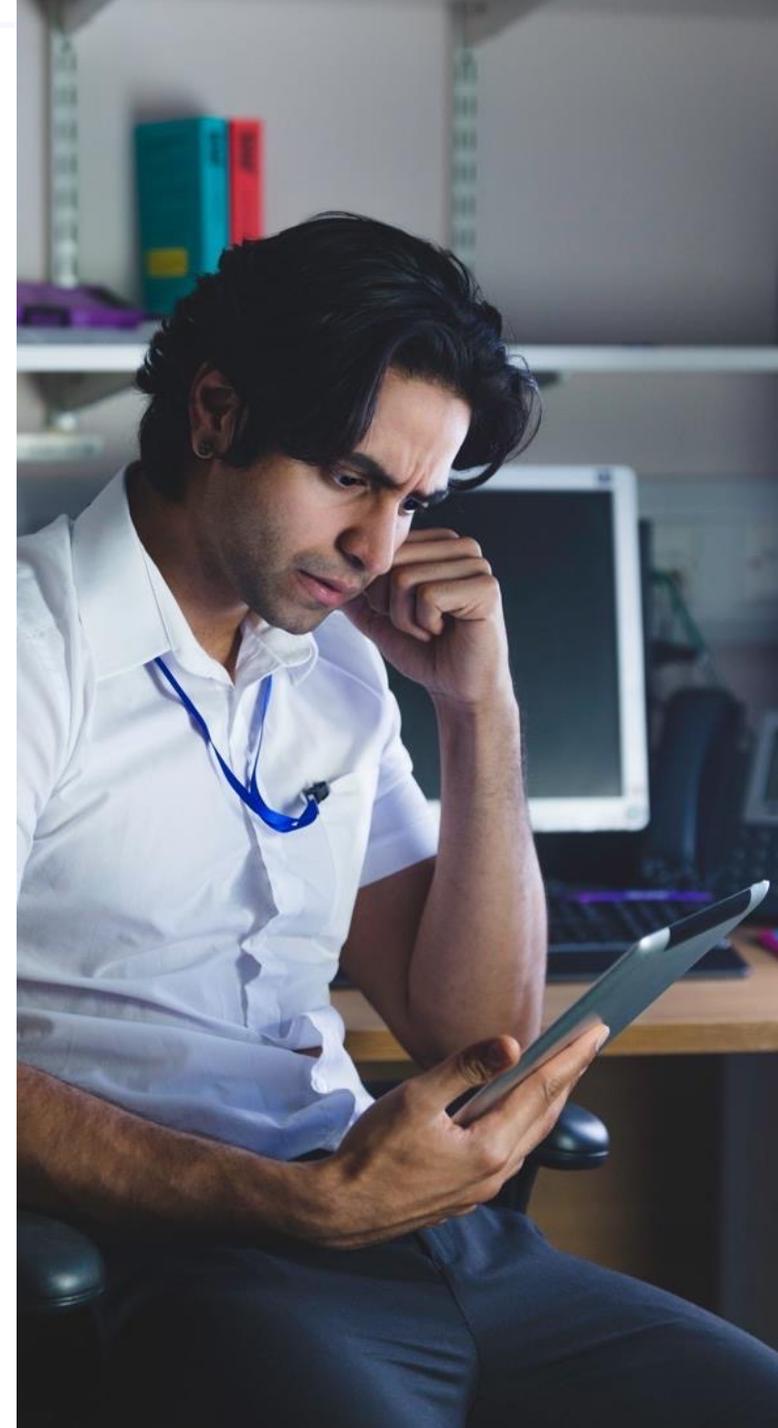
Source: Kok et al. 2020, Stovall et al. 2020, Rowland 2021, Riedel et al. 2022

Challenges Faced in LTC Setting

- Parallels between general healthcare-related PMIEs and LTC setting challenges
- Anecdotal PMIEs:
 - Leaving residents to die alone
 - Unable to comfort residents through hug or touch

Population at Risk for Moral Injury

- Military members
- Veterans
- Professionals in high-risk and helping occupations:
 - Police officers
 - Firefighters
 - Paramedics
 - **Healthcare workers**
 - Journalists



THE IMPACTS OF MORAL INJURY ON WELL-BEING

Core Domains of Moral Injury



Source: Nash, 2017



The Flip Side: Positive moral emotions during COVID-19

Some people may experience posttraumatic growth, in response to moral stressors

- Psychological resilience
- Self-esteem
- Compassion
- Engagement

RACIAL INEQUITIES AND MORAL DISTRESS

Fatima's Story

Racial Inequity During COVID-19

COVID-19 EXPOSURE

Racialized people are at a **HIGHER RISK OF EXPOSURE** to COVID-19 because they are **MORE LIKELY** to:



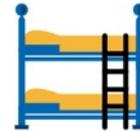
Experience income inequality and poverty.



Live in high-density neighbourhoods.



Live in congregate housing settings.



Experience housing inequality.

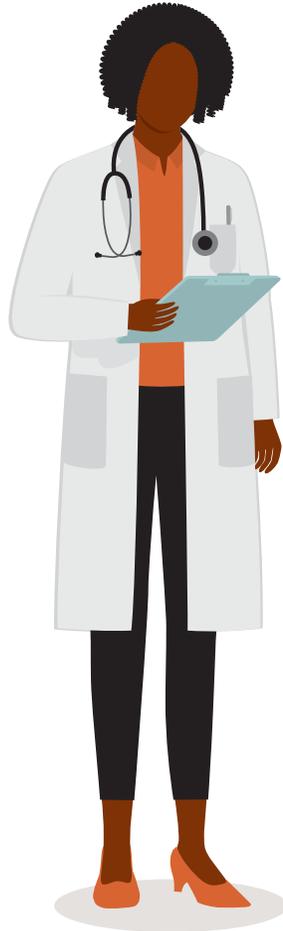


Use public transportation.



Work 'essential service' jobs with greater workplace exposure.

Racialized healthcare workers and COVID-19



Moral Injury

As a result of dealing with the stressors of systemic racism and care provision during COVID-19, racialized healthcare workers may be at **INCREASED RISK OF EXPERIENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MORAL DISTRESS AND INJURY.**

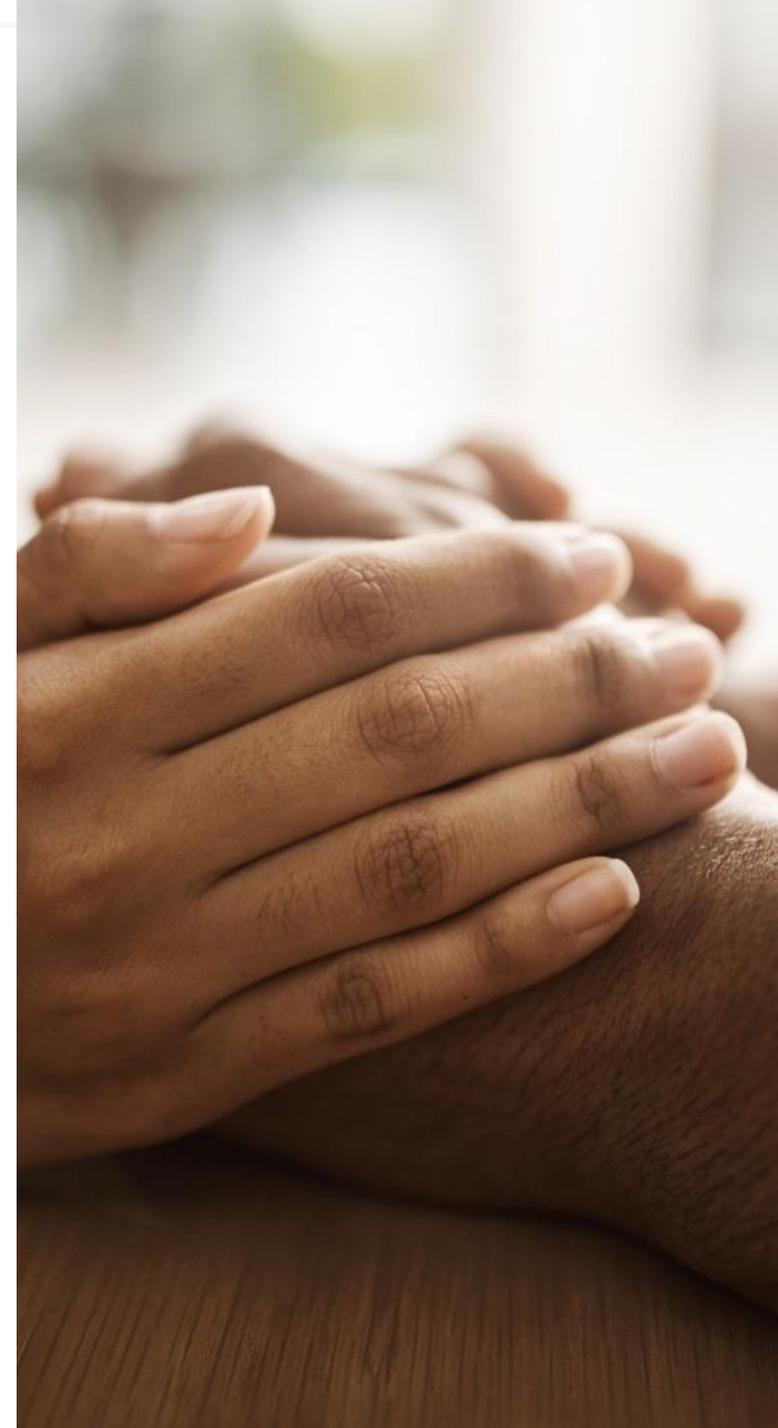
RECOGNIZING MORAL INJURY, PROMOTING MORAL REPAIR

Recognizing Moral Injury

- Not all PMIEs result in moral injury
- Be attentive to behavioural signs/changes:
 - Isolation or withdrawal
 - Lack of purposeful behaviour
 - Anger or aggression
- Create a safe space to discuss PMIEs or moral injury
 - Acknowledge the moral stresses or difficulties inherent in the work
 - Show patience and compassion
- Promote self-care, personal meaning-making, social connection, non-judgment

Promoting Moral Repair

- Accepting reality of past moral wrongs and moral pain
- Forgiving self and others
- Meaning-making
 - Prioritizing one's own values over strict or prescribed moral rules set by society.
 - Actively living values, including those violated, in the present



Promoting Moral Repair

- Practicing self-compassion:
 - Being open to moral pain and associated judgments as one element of human experience
 - Being aware of sense of self that is distinct from moral pain
- Identify therapeutic social relationships
 - Creating an atmosphere of acceptance
 - (Re)building strong social attachments
- Considering professional support

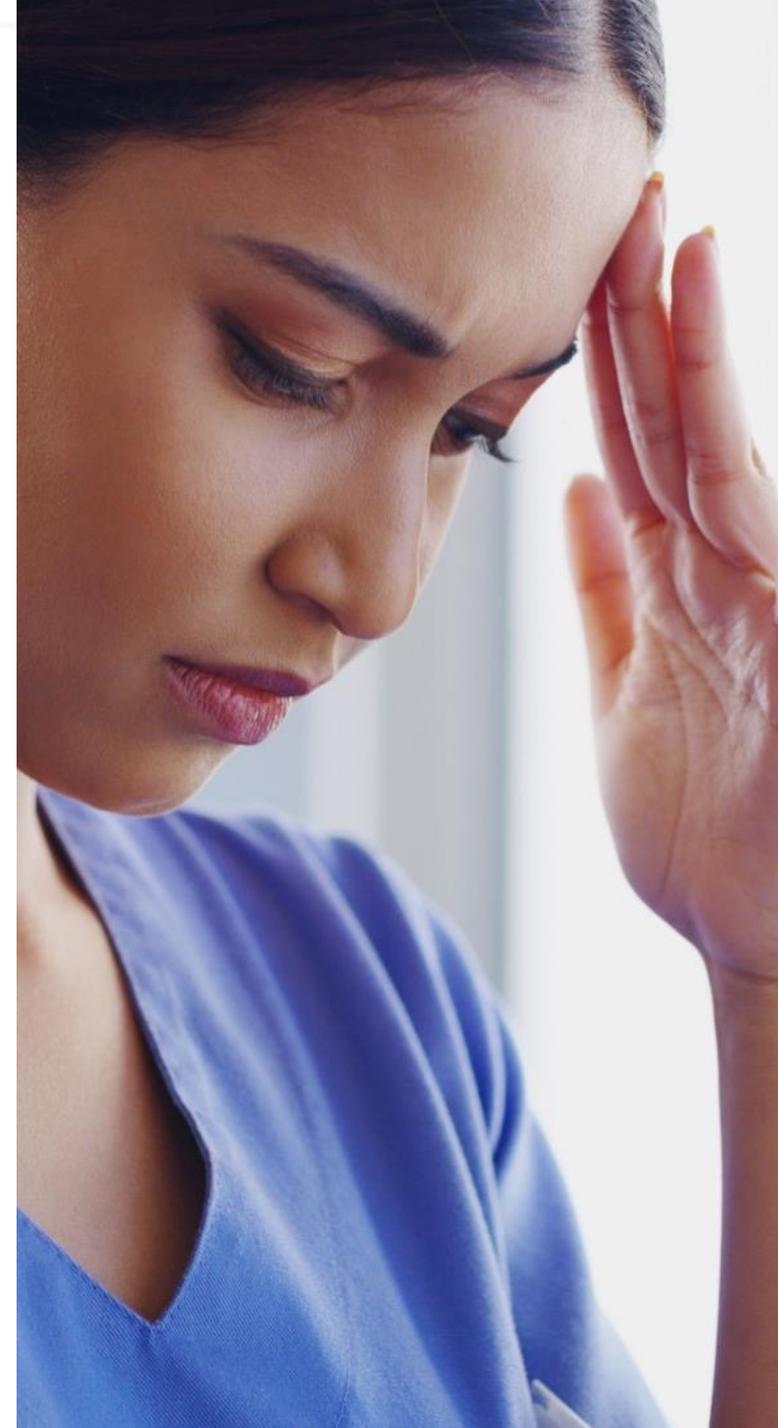


Framework for managing PMIEs in the workplace

- An organization-wide approach
 - Requires responses at the organization, team, and individual levels.
- Social support
 - Has been shown to be a protective factor towards PTSD and related mental health conditions.
- Peer Support
 - Effective protective factor following trauma.

What can organizations do?

- Provide strong leadership and establish cohesive teams with high morale.
- Be prepared to discuss moral and ethical challenges.
- Help team members make meaning of moral stressors.
- Model positive coping and encourage self-care and help-seeking as required.
- Celebrate successes – however small they may be.
- Arrange regular check-ins with staff to monitor well-being.
- Facilitate referral for further support or counselling if required.



What can team leaders do?

- Promote cohesive teams with high morale.
- Cultivate a culture of safety, non-judgment and care.
- Discuss moral and ethical challenges.
- Discuss PMIEs and potential social, emotional, and behavioural responses to exposures.
- Check-in with personnel regularly.
- Encourage debriefing.
- Acknowledge and affirm experiences shared by staff.
- Model positive coping skills and encourage self-care and help-seeking.



How can we self-care outside of the workplace?

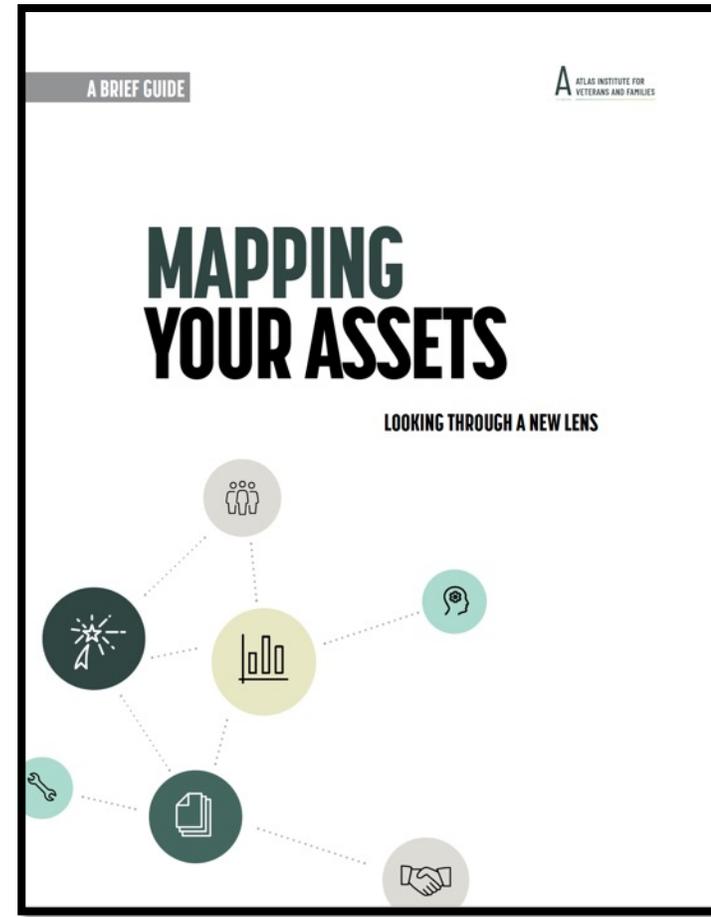
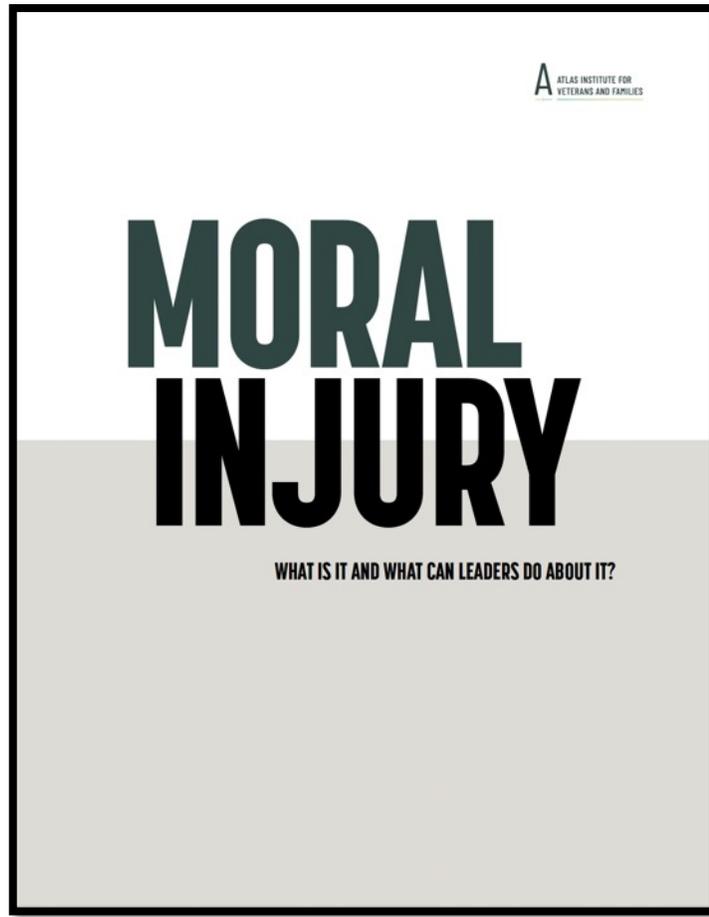
- Learn more about moral stressors and moral injury.
- Eat and rest well, exercise, and maintain social connections.
- Engage in stress reduction activities (relaxation therapy, mindfulness or other meditation).
- Engage in self-reflection and expression activities.
- Connect with peers and support colleagues with shared experiences.
- Seek professional support if they are feeling distressed or troubled by their experiences.

Role of the community and government

The community and government must not overlook our responsibilities for:

- The quality treatment of healthcare workers, and
- The development of accurate and respectful narratives regarding the difficult professional choices they may be forced to make.

Moral Injury Toolkit for Leaders



Thank you!

For further information, please
contact me at:

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 [@Fhosseiny](https://twitter.com/Fhosseiny)



Questions?



Contact Us!

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