



Understanding Combat Trauma: The Influence and Impact of Survivor Guilt





Welcome

Moderator

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Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors



Learning Objectives

- Understand the concept of survivor guilt.
- Discuss specific issues surrounding survivor guilt.
- Offer suggestions for assessment and intervention in working with those who suffer with survivor guilt.



Continuing Education Credits

- Certificates of Attendance will be provided for those who attend the entire program and complete the evaluation.
- Please check with your state licensing board for your professional discipline requirements for continuing education.



Approved CE Providers

- **Chaplains:** The Association for Professional Chaplains will accept certificates of attendance for use in reporting continuing education hours.
- **Social Workers:** This program is approved by the National Association of Social Workers, Provider # 886505639, for 1.0 continuing education contact hours.
- **LPC:** Provider approved Licensed Practical Counselor (LPC) Credits for 1.0 continuing education contact hours through the ***Grief, Loss and Life Transitions Graduate Certificate Program, Counseling Department, The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.***



Evaluation

- ALL participants seeking continuing education credits MUST fill out the online evaluation within 30 days of the program.
- You MUST provide your state and license number, as well as your email address, on your evaluation in order to receive credit. CE certificates will be sent to you via email within 3-7 weeks of completion of the program. If you do not receive your certificate, please contact Jessica Duane at education@taps.org or jessica@taps.org.
- The evaluation will appear instantly after today's program. The form can also be found on www.taps.org/professionaleducation under the program title.



Discussion

If you have any questions during the webinar, please submit them through the webinar toolbar located at the bottom left of your screen. Time at the end of the program will be dedicated toward questions and answers.

To **download** a copy of today's PowerPoint presentation, click on the toolbar to the left of your screen to **PRINT DOCUMENTS** and **VIEW LINKS**.



TAPS MISSION

- The mission of TAPS is to honor our men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to America by ***caring for all those who they loved and left behind.***
- TAPS is connected to the leading grief and trauma resources and care across America AND connected to the military community.
- TAPS carries on and expands upon the immediate support provided by the Casualty Officer in the first few days by giving survivors a comprehensive array of support services, available 24/7.



TAPS SERVICES

Four core services:

Peer-based **emotional support** providing comfort and care for all who are grieving the death of a soldier.

Case work assistance, including pro bono legal assistance, emergency financial resources, benefits.

Community based grief support, including connection to unlimited free clinical counseling; grief and trauma resources; local area support groups.

Help and Resource Line, 24/7/365 with comfort and care from peer professionals; case work follow up; and community based response.

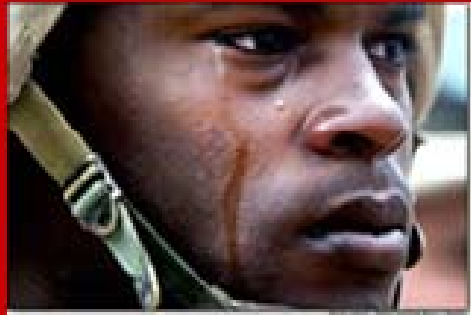


Guest Speaker

M. David Rudd, PhD, ABPP

University of Utah
Dean, College of Social &
Behavioral Science





Combat Trauma

The Influence and Impact of Guilt in Suicidality

M. David Rudd, Ph.D., ABPP
University of Utah

TOGETHER WE REACH



guilt  *noun* \ˈɡɪlt\

Definition of GUILT

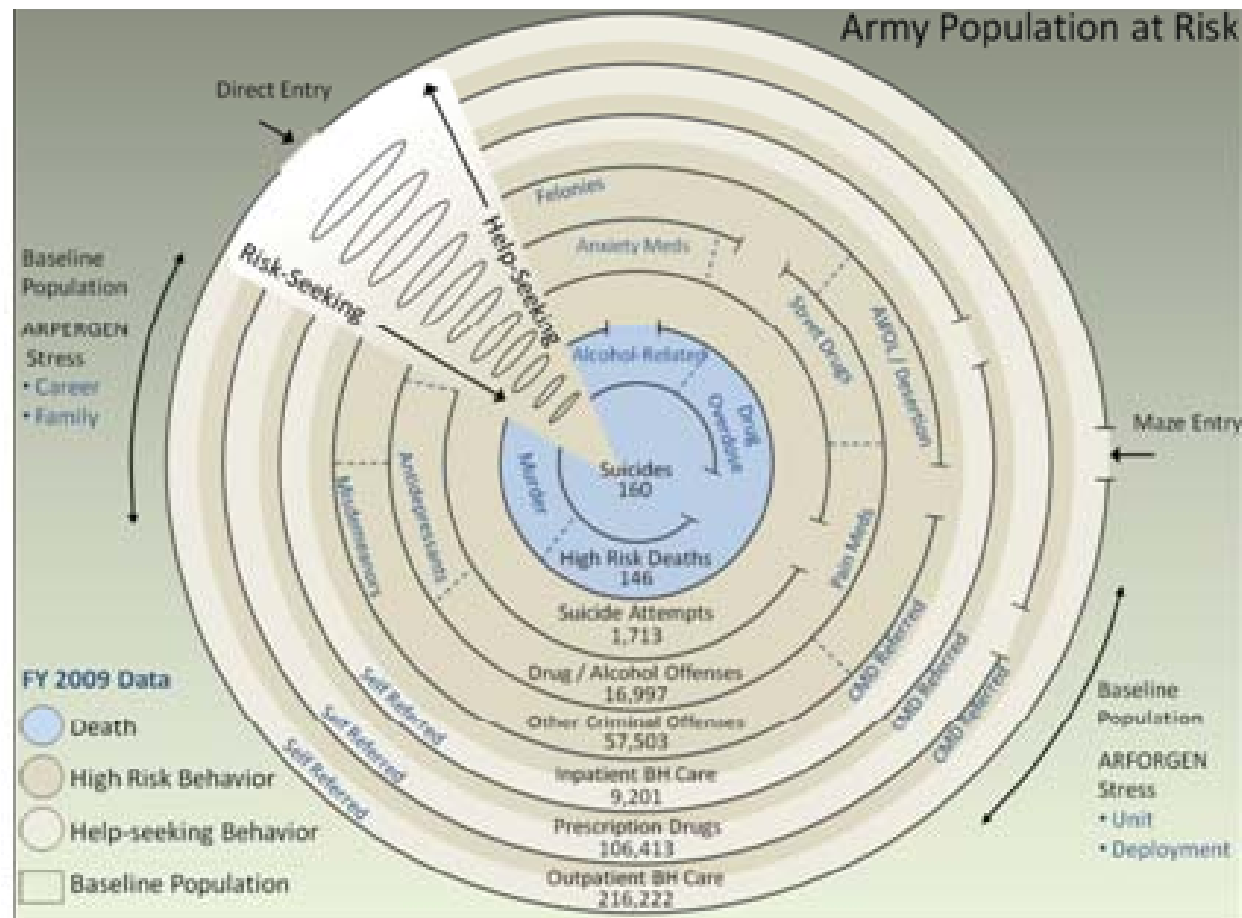
- 1** : the fact of having committed a breach of conduct especially violating law and involving a penalty; *broadly* : [guilty](#) conduct
- 2** **a** : the state of one who has committed an offense especially consciously
b : feelings of culpability especially for imagined offenses or from a sense of inadequacy : [SELF-REPROACH](#)
- 3** : a feeling of culpability for offenses
[🔗](#) See [guilt](#) defined for English-language learners »
See [guilt](#) defined for kids »

Why are Soldiers Vulnerable?

- Repeated deployments, combat exposure
 - PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance abuse
- Increased high risk behaviors (e.g. substance abuse, criminal activity)
 - Access to methods
- Issue of acquired capability
 - Habituation to risk and violence
 - Commander hesitation to respond
- Impact of warrior identity
 - *Beliefs about mental illness*



The Military Culture



Guilt

- Perception of wrongdoing
- Others have differentiated between “real” and “imagined” guilt, “passive” versus “active”

Understanding Guilt

- Common response to trauma and loss
- Loss takes multiple forms
 - Relationships (loved ones, friends)
 - Identity (seeing oneself differently)
 - Self-loathing, condemnation
 - Expectations (hopefulness)
 - Hopelessness
 - Depression
 - Suicidality

What is Hope

- According to Oxford ED
 - *Noun: a feeling or expectation for something to happen*
 - *Verb: expecting something to happen, intend to do something*
- A critical player: Trust
 - *Reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something*

Hopelessness Takes Different Forms

- Cognitive (Hopelessness) Themes
 - Identity-based suicide specific beliefs
 - Guilt (*I've done some bad things*) Remember the notion of “earned” and “learned” guilt (integration of history)
 - Shame (*There's something wrong with me*)
 - *I'm a Failure*
 - *I'm Damaged*
 - *I'm Weak*
 - *I'm Lost*

- Burdensomeness (*My family would be better off if I were dead*)
 - Related to disruption created by behavior, financial concerns
- Helplessness (*I can't change it*)
- Distress Tolerance (*I can't stand the way I feel*)

What are the Commonalities Across Treatments that Facilitate Hope?

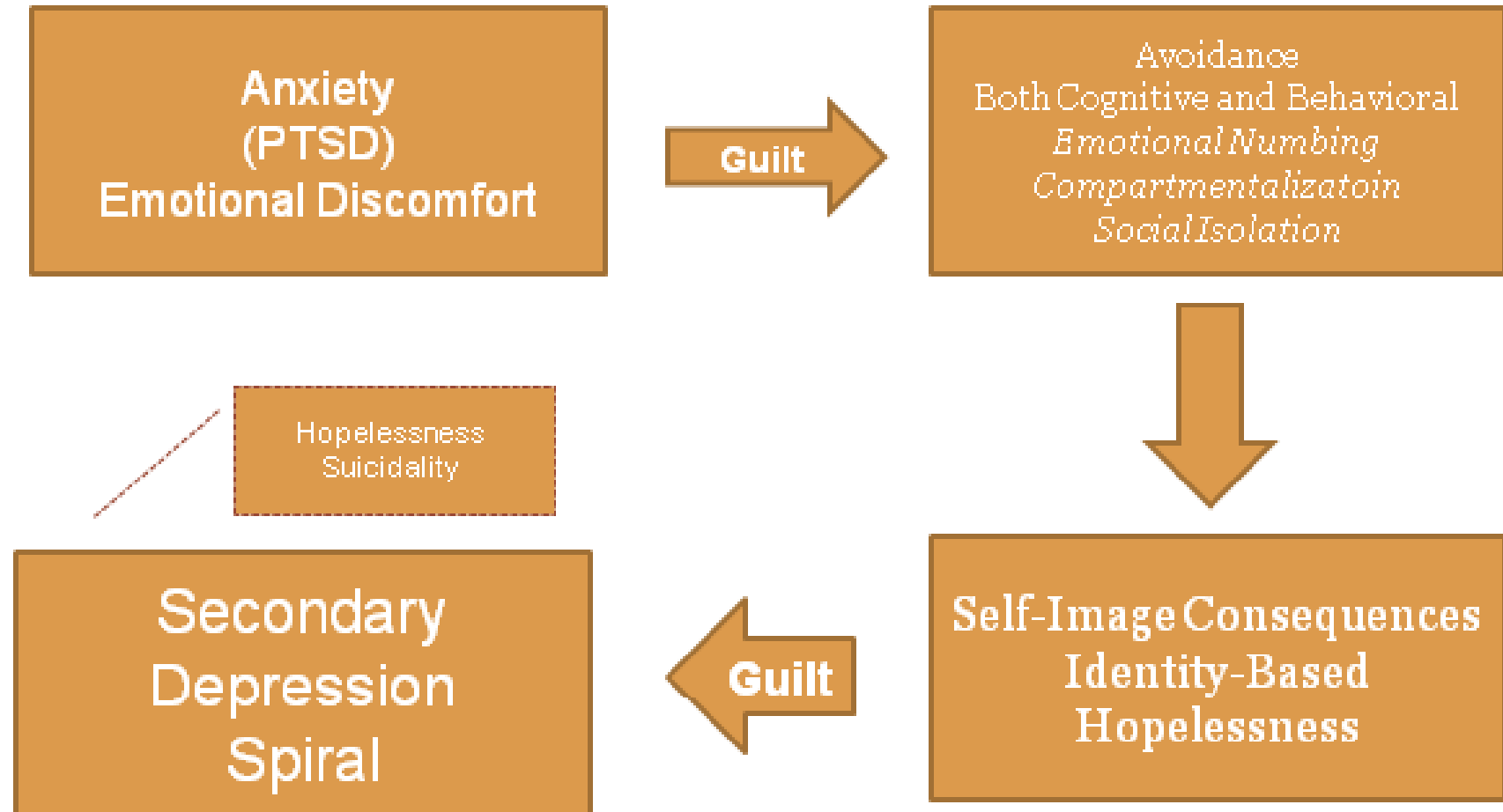
- Remember:
 - Expectations are facilitated by
 - making the implicit explicit,
 - the complex simple,
 - the confusing understandable
 - the inaccessible available

Consequences of Guilt (with PTSD)

- Symptom clusters in PTSD
 - Intrusion
 - Thoughts, images, nightmares
 - Arousal
 - Avoidance
 - Cognitive and behavioral

Relationships and Guilt

- Social avoidance
 - Avoidance of relationships that trigger guilt feelings
 - Decreased social contact
 - Reduced opportunity for emotional processing, self-awareness, insight
 - Reduced opportunity for social support, intimacy



Simple Models of Understanding

- **Predispositions to guilt**
 - Guilt as normal, healthy emotional response
 - Individual vulnerability
 - “old” issues resurface and complicate process
 - Learned vs. earned guilt
- **Confusing of grief and guilt**
 - Issues of warrior identity
 - Beliefs about strength and weakness
 - Beliefs about interpersonal intimacy

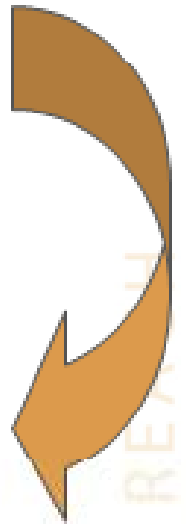
- **Fantasies about behavior during trauma**
 - Random nature of events
 - Limited choices
 - Vulnerability and helplessness
 - Gaining control through assessment of ability to control and prevent tragedy
- **Re-examination and re-evaluation of facts**
 - Evolving “facts” over time, re-evaluation results in changes to identified “facts”, with emotion the driving force

History Can Compound the Problem if there is prior abuse, etc....

Predisposing Vulnerabilities

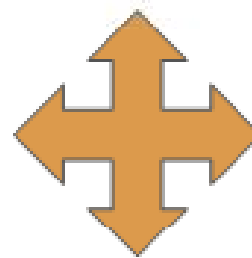


Triggers
(Internal AND External)



Behavioral
(Reduce upset/ arousal)

Cognitive
(Why I should die)



Physiological
(Arousal)

Affective
(Emotional Upset)

Stages of Grief (Kubler-Ross)

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Resolving Guilt (and Grief)

- Understand it (a simple model to explain)
 - Why? Include predisposing vulnerabilities
 - Non-blaming model for understanding
- Express it (emotion regulation)
 - Accurate labels
 - Accepting the inherent unfairness of life
 - Acknowledging the importance of the relationship
 - How to grieve in productive way
 - Honoring a life
 - The role of forgiveness

- **Integrate it (lessons learned)**
 - Identification of how one is different, how one has grown from the experience
 - Finding the good in living
- **Reconnect with living (interpersonal intimacy)**
 - Peers and family
 - Reduced avoidance



***TAPS is the organization caring for
America's surviving military families.***

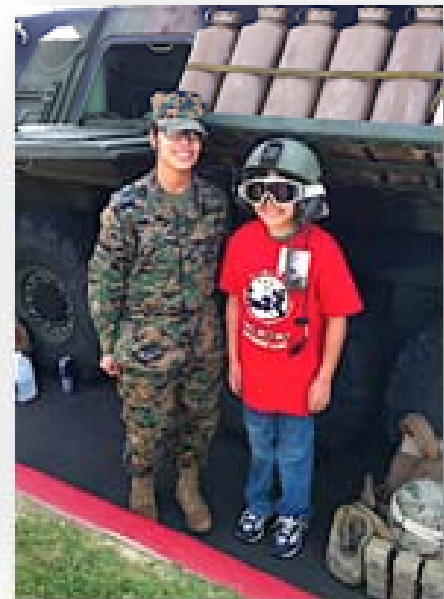
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Caring for the Families of our Fallen Heroes



800-959-TAPS



Thank You for Joining Us

Please join us for our next webinar on Thursday,
June 16, 2011, 12 PM- 1PM EST featuring:

**Craig J. Bryan, PsyD, Assistant Professor
Research Director of Education, STRONG STAR Trauma Fellowship,
Department of Psychiatry, University of Texas Health Science
Center at San Antonio**

“Cognitive-Behavioral Models for Suicide Prevention”

For more information and to register:

www.taps.org/professionaleducation