

Moral Injury and Soul Repair

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For recovery from moral injury

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1. Part I: Moral Injury--Definition & causes
2. Part II: Work of Soul Repair

Rev. Rita Nakashima Brock, Ph.D.

Daughter of a Korea vet and stepdaughter of a World War II and Vietnam vet, Dr. Brock was raised in a military family. She is the first Asian American woman ever to earn a doctorate in theology (Claremont Graduate University, 1988) and is a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She was a professor for 18 years before becoming Director of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, a think tank for scholars in science, social science, humanities, law, and the arts. An internationally distinguished lecturer and award-winning author, her most recent book is *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury After War*, co-authored with Gabriella Lettini.

Chaplain (Col.) Herman Keizer, Jr. (US Army, ret.),
Founding Co-Director, The Soul Repair Center

Chaplain Keizer served six years as a soldier and returned to military service as a chaplain for 34 years. As a chaplain in Vietnam, he was injured twice and counts a Purple Heart among his 45 career military medals. After Vietnam, he was determined to provide better protection for the moral consciences of soldiers, a commitment he retains to this day. In his 34 years of chaplaincy service, Rev. Keizer worked for the Department of Defense and the State Department. After retiring with 40 years of service, he worked as the Chaplain Endorser for the Reformed Church of North America for nine years.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5uaMwZVhwQ>

Part I: Moral Injury

"War is the foyer to hell; coming home is hell."

--Capt. Tyler Boudreau (former US Marine), author of
Packing Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine

**Once the symptoms of PTSD are relieved,
the moral questions emerge.**

--Dr. Judith Herman, psychiatrist, Harvard Medical School,
author of *Trauma and Recovery*

MORAL FORMATION PROCESS

- Mimicry forms neural pathways
- Dumbfounding
- Linguistic Patterns and Narrative (religion)
- Moral Reasoning
- Reconditioning Adds New Moral Systems
- Conflicts in Moral Systems When Transitioning from One to the Other

SOUL/SPIRIT

- Conscience and Empathy
- Existential Self-Awareness
- Deep Connection to All that is Good, True, and Beautiful in Ourselves, in Others, and in Creation
- Capacity for Trust, Love, Gratitude, Play, Compassion, Peace

Moral Injury is an ancient wound of war that can emerge at any point,



. . . even many years later.

Moral Injury

New VA 2009 Term

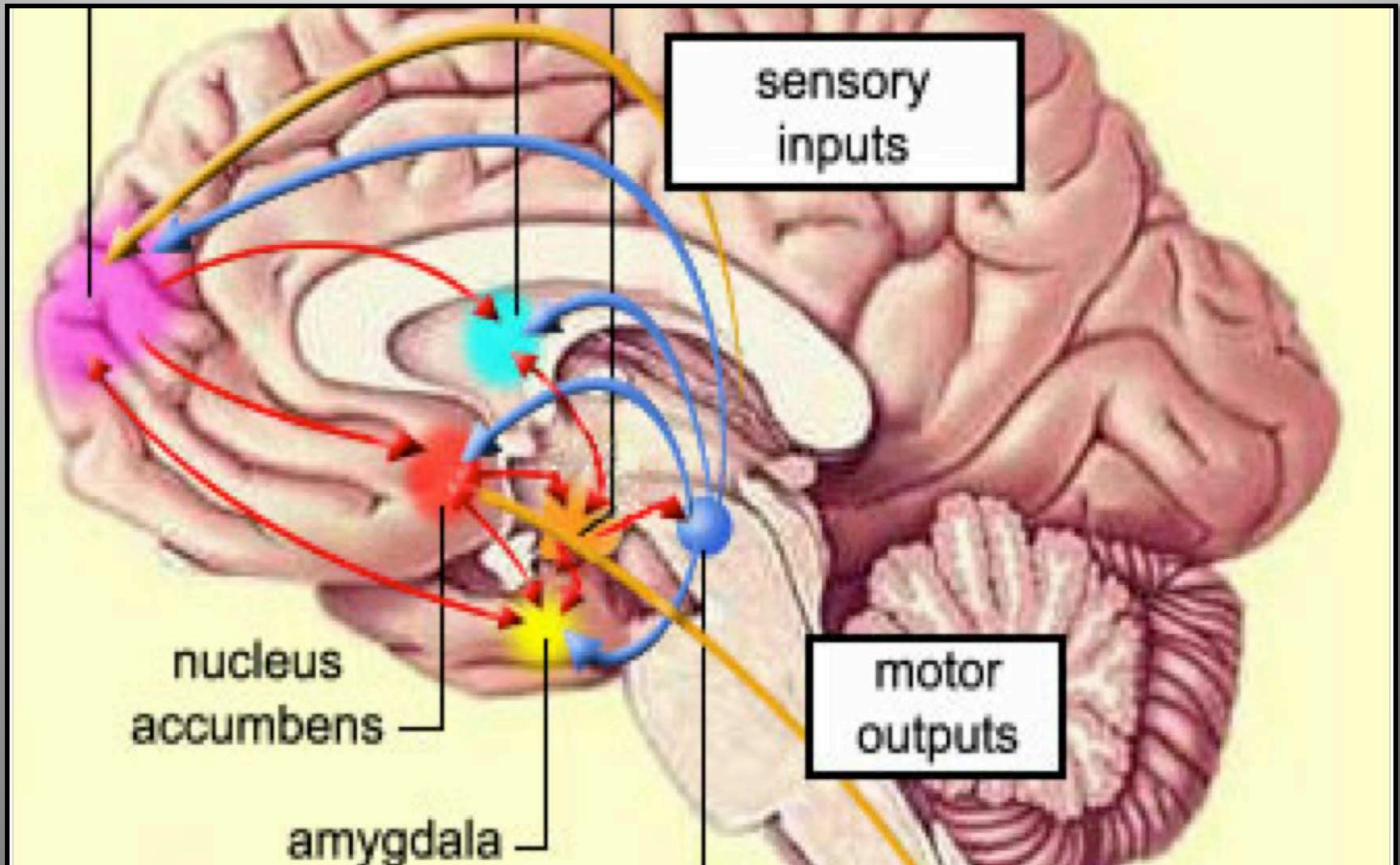
Moral Injury is disruption in an individual's confidence and expectations about his or her own moral behavior or others' capacity to behave in a just and ethical manner....

The lasting impact of [moral injury] in war remains chiefly unaddressed.

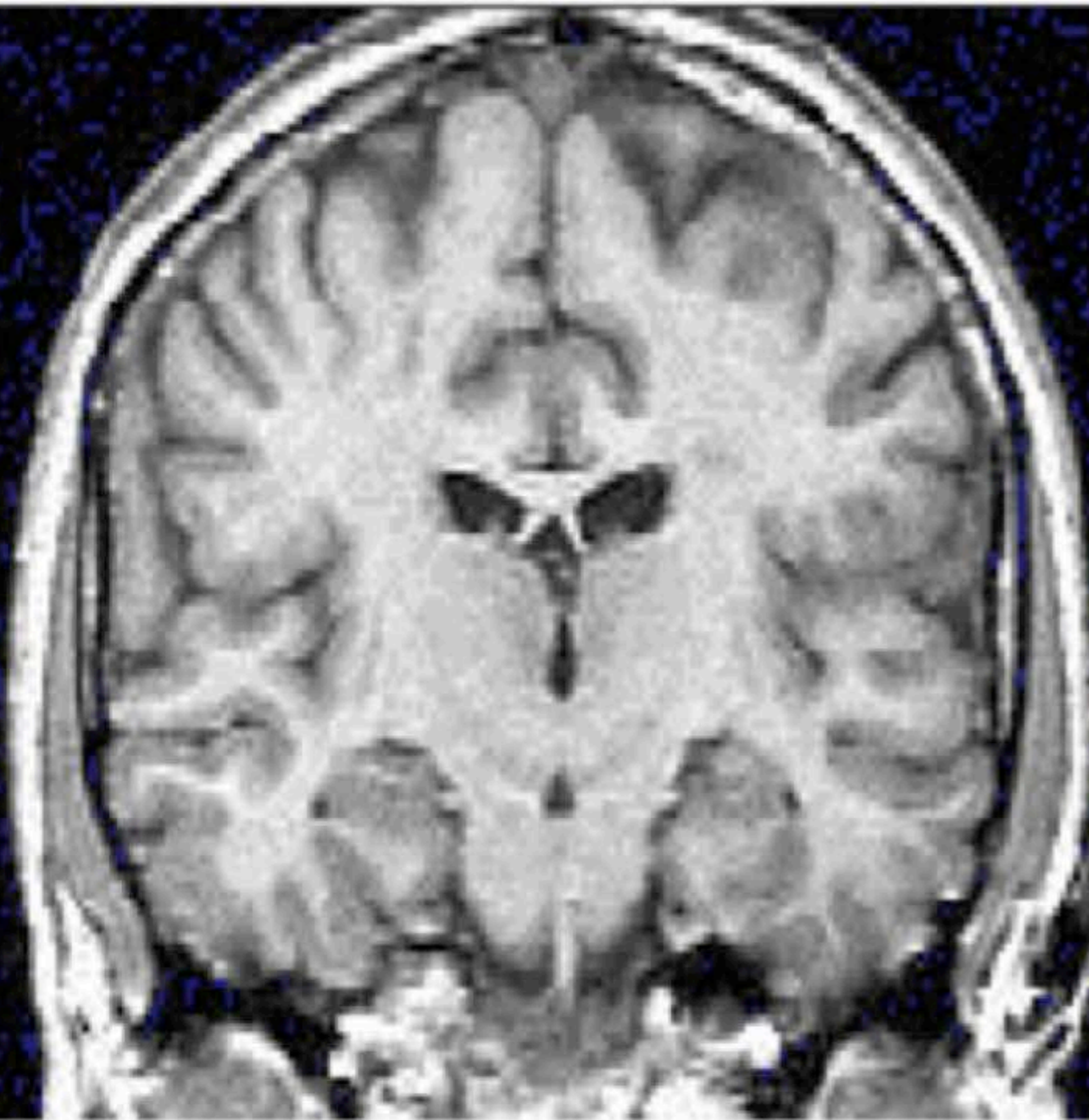
“Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy,” B. T. Litz, N. Stein, E. Delaney, L. Lebowitz, W. P. Nash, C. Silva, and S. Maguen, (Dec. 2009) *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29, 695-706.

PTSD and Limbic Brain Function

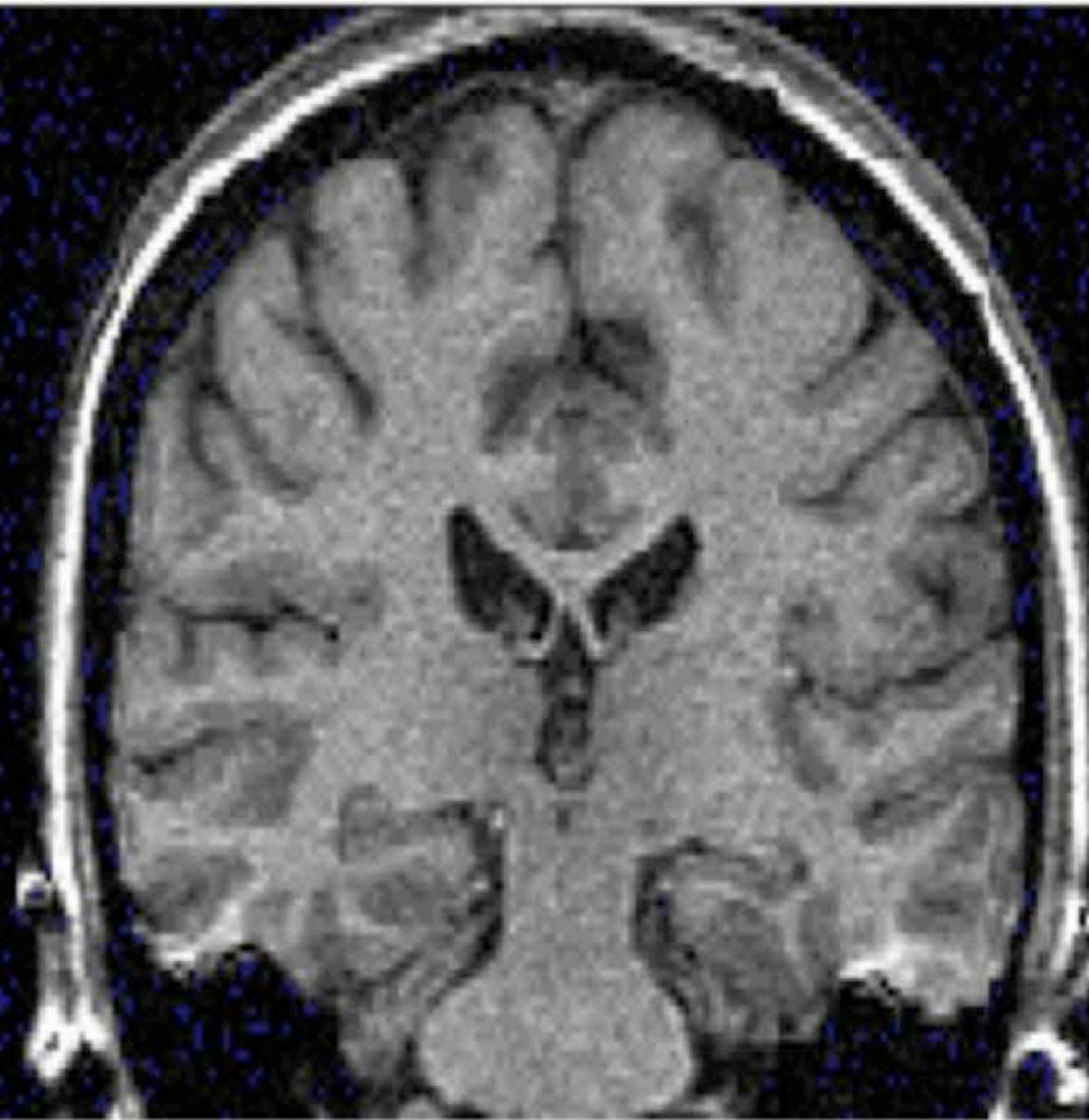
PTSD is a fear-victim reaction to extreme conditions *that injures amygdala and hippocampus* (limbic brain)




PTSD IN THE BRAIN



REGULAR



PTSD



Hypervigilance
Mistrust
Memory/concentration problems
Anger/violence
Jumpiness
Insomnia
Palpitations
Shortness of breath
Sweating
Panic attacks
Recurring memories
Nightmares
Flashbacks

Moral Injury and Executive Brain Function

Response of conscience and agency; *requires a healthy prefrontal cortex* where empathy and moral thinking occur.



Military training creates a tightly closed system, so actions considered immoral in other contexts are sanctioned and even celebrated (e.g. killing) within rules of engagement



Participation in or witnessing events under extreme conditions of war can challenge core beliefs, esp. if they have no clear moral choices or if they involve unresolved grief or horror.



Moral injury emerges with reflection on memories of traumatizing experiences. Comes with coherent cause-effect narrative, process of thinking over extended period.



Women face particular challenges:

Integrated into men's units,
Isolation in hypermasculine culture,
Extra stress to avoid harassment and assault,
Sexual assaults are like incest, not just rape,
Lack of gender-specific services.



Moral injury can result in agony from inner judgment against oneself, anger, survivor guilt, isolation, despair and/or loss of will to live.



Morally Disrupting Aspects of War

- Reflexive Fire Training
- Dehumanization of Enemy
- Encountering and Handling human remains-
-major factor
- Betrayal by Authorities
- Doubt (uncertainty about goals or mission)
(disrupts inner confidence)

JUDGMENT: Use of personal agency that violates core moral beliefs or sense of failure.

CONSEQUENCE: Shame, depression, collapse of moral identity and meaning system that supports it. Wish to die.





Part II:

Work of Soul Repair

A whole person goes to war—body, mind, psyche, and spirit—and the person who left for war will never be the same or forget what happened.

1. Public Education about Moral Injury
2. Research on moral injury

1. Public Education about Moral Injury

- Religious Communities
- Religious Leaders and Seminarians
- Employers and Educators
- General Public

To bring the troops all the way home.



Multiple, Overlapping Losses

- Loss of closest friends; isolation
- Loss of innocence or sense of goodness
- Loss of unit discipline and system
- Loss of weapon
- Loss of role / purpose for others
- Loss of family or capacity for intimacy—
conflict / divorce
- Loss of faith and meaning community
- Loss of self

Profound losses need to be grieved in returning home (often presents as anger)





Individual/Social Dimensions of Long-term Recovery

- Writing personal narratives; externalizing inner struggle and telling story
- Talking to benevolent moral authority
- Integrating memory/story into larger picture
- Reconnection with estranged others;
- Veteran support systems; finding community
- Rehumanization of Enemies
- Long-term support and accountability community

Training Communities





Spiritual Recovery: Community Process for new Moral Pathways

From lamentation ... to reconstruction
of core values and self-worth in moral
meaning system

Rituals and Support for Lamentation

Liturgies for lamentation—hold complex feelings:

- Anger against God
- Struggle with God and self
- Touch depth of grief, isolation, fear
- Remembrance of divine love and faithfulness



Offering Ways to Make Amends and Reconnect

- Amends
 - Ex. Disaster Relief, Refugee Work
 - Ex. Peace Missions
 - Ex. Neighborhood Service Projects
- Forgiveness and Vocation
- Absolution (letting go and looking to future)



Transformation and Renewal: Importance of Religious and Other Communities

- Rhythms of the liturgical year bring renewal (new neural pathways)
- Transformation via constant repetition of renewal
- Power of art to touch the heart
- Sacramental structure of life (ancient penance)
- Dramatic reenactment of sacred stories of redemption here and now—power of imagination



Elements of Communities

Taking Responsibility for Bringing Veterans Home

- Engage in deep listening, openness to truth-telling without prescribing outcomes or offering pat answers
- Support healthy lifestyles to reduce behavioral risks
- Offer rituals and programs to process moral injury
- Attend to ways to create safe space for PTSD injuries
- Provide long term recovery support via friendship over life course and opportunities for service to others.
- Conduct reflections on moral responsibility of entire community



Soul Repair Goals for Communities:

- Develop regular programs of deep listening and lamentation
- Support veteran recovery and transitioning to civilian life
- Support families of soldiers while members are away and
- Prepare families for homecoming
- Educate employers of veterans in your community
- Be attuned to secondary trauma and support other professions that experience moral injury (medical, law enforcement, social work)
- Attend to care for caregivers

2. Research on Moral Injury

- Pastoral Theology
- Neuroscience/Clinical Studies
- Moral Formation, Theology, Liturgy
- Decompression Retreats
- Care for Caregivers

Resources

Visit the resource page at
www.brite.edu/soulrepair

Short summary of moral injury:

<http://www.odysseynetworks.org/video/why-veterans-need-soul-repair>

Truth Commission Video Testimonies:

<http://www.conscienceinwar.org> (link to videos)

References in book *Soul Repair*

Responsive Practice, Symposium on Moral Injury, vol. 33,
2013