

Soul Injury: Unmourned Loss & Unforgiven Guilt

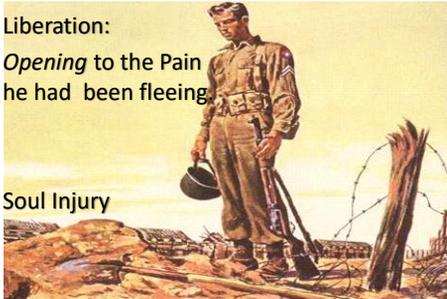


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www.OpusPeace.org
www.soulinjury.org

Hospice: A Laboratory of SOUL Truth

- Liberation:
- *Opening* to the Pain he had been fleeing.
- Soul Injury



What is "Soul"?

"The vital or essential part."

(Webster's Dictionary)

Source of our Vitality,
The essential part of our Being,
Vitalizing Force

"True North" that guides us:

Often experienced in our "gut"

Opus Peace has no agenda about "soul,"
just agenda for "soul injury®."

What is "Soul Injury"®?

Concept originated with a group of VA hospice nurses who learned lessons from the 10,000 dying vets they took care of.

A spectrum of wounds that range from traumatic to insidious that shrinks our sense of inner goodness and beauty or even creates a haunting sense of feeling defective or worthless.

Penetrates into the deepest parts of our being even though our ego keeps trying to pretend that it DOESN'T exist.



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Who is at Risk for Developing a Soul Injury?

- Victims of sexual assault, crime, accidents, natural disasters, bullying, abuse, neglect
- People who have experienced heartache, loss of personal health or a loved one's health, death of a loved one, or betrayal by a significant other
- Minorities and marginalized members of a society, culture, or group, including not being the "favorite" child
- Stoic cultures that hide or are ashamed of expressing pain
- Veterans, families of veterans, civilians who experienced a war zone, first responders & their families
- Personal and professional caregivers vulnerable to "burn-out" or "compassion fatigue"



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"Soul Injury"®

People who have a **traumatic** "soul injury," recognize the term WITHOUT definition.

Most people have unrecognizable soul injuries because the injury occurs insidiously (develops so gradually as to be well established before becoming apparent).

We separate our selves from our soul when we cover up, numb out, or run from our Truth.

The soul can be injured but not extinguished.



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Why We Should Be Addressing "Soul Injury"

- Professional literature speaks about "Moral Injury:" a violation of deepest-held beliefs that create moral conflict or confusion.

"Soul Injury" may or may *not* include "moral" beliefs (implies that what was done was wrong). "Moral" implies religion; soul implies humanness.

- American Psychological Association's Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory measures "growth" as: value of life, spiritual matters, compassion, faith, intimacy. These are soul issues that the DSM doesn't even address!

Why We Should Be Addressing "Soul Injury"

- At the heart of soul injuries is *deep* pain that needs to be grieved – something that does not come naturally with stoic cultures nor is it consistently valued and taught in PTSD programs.
- Interventions for soul injury are different and need to include grief, forgiveness (especially self-forgiveness), and self-compassion.
- True forgiveness is done in the soul...in the gut. Until we recognize that, forgiveness remains a psychological "letting go" process without depth and without long-lasting effect.
- Neglecting soul injuries has created a GAP in services that may be contributing to the increasing suicide rate.

Soul Injury in our Midst... (Not at the EOL)



Paul Tschudi

What are the Symptoms of Soul Injury®?

- Fractured Self-Image. Shrinks our sense of inner goodness and beauty or even creates a haunting sense of feeling defective or worthless.

Often includes:

- A sense of *betrayal* by parents, spouse, friend, colleague, themselves, an organization, God, their religion, etc.
- A vague *emptiness* or a profound *aching* and feeling of meaninglessness
- Feeling alone and unsupported at the time of the original injury



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Treatment for Soul Injury® vs. PTSD?

PTSD: Manage symptoms

Soul Injury: *Open up to* the symptom, connect with the part of self generating the symptom → opens healing.

PTSD: Manage triggers.

Soul Injury: *Disarm* the heart through self-compassion, love, grief, and forgiveness.



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Medications for Soul Injury?

- Medications CAN'T re-connect a person with their soul.
- Medications may be needed to control symptoms (anxiety/ depression) that prevent doing soul work while in "survival mode" of trusting fear.
- Use meds if it helps people connect with the part of self carrying pain; use caution if it numbs their pain.





Peace Begins in Me...

"If you would have known me,
 And if you would have known yourself...
 You would not have killed me."



-Rwandan Genocide Survivor
 Giving voice to her slaughtered family

Healing Starts with Acknowledging Soul Injury®



Trauma: "Forever Changed"

After trauma, people shift from trusting themselves to trusting their fear.



Healing requires cultivating the courage to love, forgive, and trust ourselves to navigate in the world again.

By disarming our heart while cultivating personal intimacy with scattered aspects of our own self. (Requires an enormous act of courage.)

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Can Lassie Cause a Soul Injury?



Webster's Definitions of "Insidious"

- Developing so gradually as to be well established before becoming apparent
- Harmful but enticing
- Awaiting a chance to entrap



Whether Traumatic or Insidious,
If Unable to Develop "Intimacy"
within own Self

We will keep looking for it
outside ourselves!
We will keep looking for
short cuts!



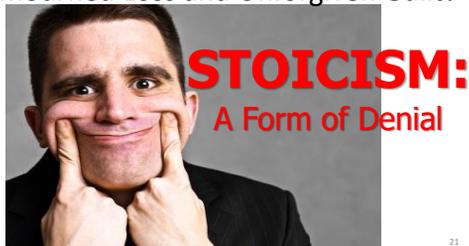
What Keeps Soul Injuries Alive?

- Unmourned Grief
- Unforgiven Guilt/Shame



"Why didn't I do this years ago?"

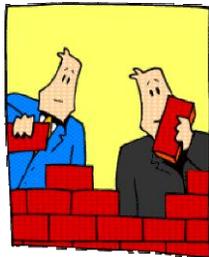
The Primary Mechanism for
Losing our Realness and
Staying Stuck in
Unmourned Loss and Unforgiven Guilt?



Stoicism:
Blocking our REALness

“Showing indifference
to joy, grief, pleasure,
pain.”

(Webster’s Dictionary)



What 10,000 Dying Veterans
Have Taught Me...

Lesson #1: Stoicism is necessary in some ways
and a hindrance in other ways.

It’s important to be able make the distinction!

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Unmourned Loss Sabotages
our Bodies, Minds, and Spirits!



Unmourned loss gets stored in
our bodies, minds, and spirits.

Box up your pain → your vitality, your personhood,
your passion get boxed up as well.

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Those Who Grieve Well, Heal Well



Why? Because the grief doesn't have to be stored.
 Grief is the natural, normal expression
 of emotional pain.
 Grieving is CREATIVE: Let go of what was
 and open up to what is.
 Grieving is NOT a destructive process.
 UNMOURNED Grief is a destructive process.



When we don't grieve,
 the part of self carrying the pain
 is left homeless.
 Don't be afraid of that part of yourself.
 Clinicians and Families: Don't be afraid.
 Cultivate peace with helplessness.

We need to learn how to
 develop a different relationship
 with the part of self carrying our pain.

Replace:
 "Go away. I don't like you,"
 with
 "Tell me how you are hurting.
 I will listen."

The purpose of connecting with our grief is to rescue the part of self that is carrying it! (our role with others too!)

Validating Suffering: Essential!

- Taking time to “lick your wounds” BEFORE you “get on with it.”
- Validation is an act of self-compassion to acknowledge the loss.
- It counters DENIAL. (Don’t Even kNow I Am Lying.)
- “Licking your wounds” allows you to feel the pain so the part of self feeling it doesn’t have to be exiled into unconsciousness → numbing and/or angry outbursts.
- Allows you to cultivate some support for the loss.

Learn to Mourn Losses: A Summary

Stop Dis-owning the pain, leaving the part of you carrying it homeless.

Re-own the Pain: Deliberately discover scattered parts of self that previously you had only wanted to avoid.

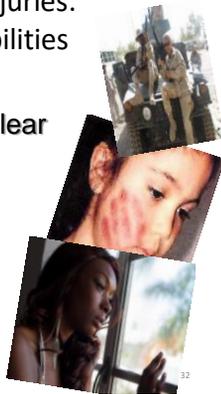
Re-home the Pain: Open a nurturing relationship with our disconnected part of self so it can feel safe enough to come

Lesson #2: Learning the process and work of forgiveness is redemption. Not learning it is a recipe for disconnection from the soul which can lead to bitterness.

Don't waste your suffering.

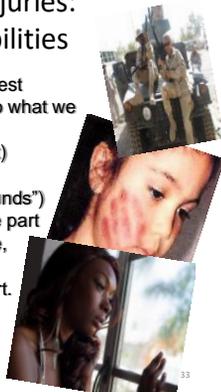
Healing Soul Injuries: Our Responsibilities

- 3 Different Trajectories
- PTSD Research: Very Clear



Healing Soul Injuries: Our Responsibilities

- Heal your own SOUL INJURY (the best teacher, unethical to ask others to do what we ourselves are unwilling to do)
- Acknowledge "soul injury." (Elephant)
- Bear Witness to their stories.
- Validate their suffering ("Licking Wounds")
- En-courage them to connect with the part of self carrying their pain (draw, write, exercise, letter)
- Support efforts that *disarm* their heart.
- Practice the hand-heart connection.
- En-courage them to participate in body/movement therapies (yoga, martial arts/massage)



Healing Soul Injuries: Our Responsibilities

- Sponsor a Soul Injury program.
- Start a Book Circle: The Hero Within, Peace at Last
- 9/11 Soul Injury world wide webinar
- Attend a Soul Injury Leadership Training (Oct.31-Nov.3: Tampa)
- Support non-profits who serve Veterans.
- Become an Opus Peace ambassador



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
-Margaret Mead
Anthropologist



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Leave your business card with me
(or write email address on paper)
www.OpusPeace.org or www.Soulinjury.org
(Tools, Blogs)
