Spiritual Impact Of War

26 September 2012

CH (COL) Mike Strohm
Command Chaplain
1st Sustainment Command (Theater)

Fort Bragg, NC - Camp Arifjan, Kuwait - Kabul, Afghanistan

Battlemind to Home III Symposium
www.mfri.purdue.edu
• What do you hope to get out of this session?
Consider applying this statement to your own life experience:

“We have all deployed sometime in our life regardless of being in the military or not.”

John Van Epp, PhD
researcher, author and founder Love Thinks
http://www.lovethinks.com/vanepp/
Outcome

Support the discussion of a collaborative and integrative care partnership between civilian clergy, community leaders, as well as private and governmental care providers.
Spiritual Impact Of War

Force Protection

• Effects of prolonged exposure to suffering and on-going demands may create:
  – Symptoms of post traumatic stress and fatigue
  – Secondary traumatic stress
  – Vicarious trauma
  – Burnout
• Understanding and protecting against this risk factor may:
  • Increase retention
  • Reduce recidivism
  • Mitigate decreased performance
**Spiritual Impact Of War**

**Army Spectrum of Counseling**

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**IMCOM/SR**

- Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers
- Military OneSource
- Community Support Coordinators
- Victim Advocacy
- New Parent Support Home Visitation

**IMCOM/ACS**

- Family Readiness Groups
- Virtual Family Readiness Groups
- ACSIM
- Housing

**IMCOM/CYSS**

- Operation READY
- Spouse Employment
- Parent Support and Education
- Volunteer Coordination
- Army Education Center
- Mob/Deployment Program
- New Parent Support Home Visitation

**IMCOM-HR**

- Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention Training (ADAPT)
- Operation: Military Kids/Operation: Proud Partners/Operation: Child Care

**OCCH**

- Chaplains
- Chaplain Youth Groups
- Chapel Religious Education
- Strong Bonds

**HRC**

- ACAP
- Character Counts!

**OTSG**

- Clinical Army Substance Abuse Program
- Adolescent Substance Abuse Counselors
- Marriage and Family Therapists
- Behavioral Health
- Psychiatry
- Social Work/FAP
- Psychology
- Psychiatric Nursing

**TRICARE**

- Veteran Affairs

**IMCOM/SR**

- Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers
- Military Family Life Consultants
- Community Support Coordinators
- Victim Advocacy
- New Parent Support Home Visitation
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An Army Chaplain Model
Spiritual Impact Of War

Army Chaplain Corps Model

- “Ministry Of Presence”
  - establish the therapeutic pastoral alliance

- “Provide” or “Perform”
  - meet the religious support requirement,
    “the free exercise of religion”

- “Bring God to Soldiers and Soldiers to God”
  - respond to Soldiers and Families who accept spiritual support

- Distributed Force Structure
  - Battalions and Brigades
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Spiritual Trauma

mTBI – “my Theology’s Been Injured”,
CH (COL) Ron Thomas, 1st Corps Command Chaplain

- Questions various sacred and spiritual beliefs
  - Where was God?
  - Does He exist?
- Questions the meaning of life
- Pervasive hopelessness – lows are too low
- Pervasive aggressiveness – highs are too high
- More Topics:
  - “Guilt” contrasted with “Shame and Blame”
  - “Forgiveness”
  - “Redemption,” “Cleansing,” “Renewal”
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Spiritual Trauma

PTSD – “Passing Through the Shadow Of Death”,
Marshele Waddell, spouse of combat veteran

• Shattered deeply held assumptions:
  - “Life has meaning”
  - “World is a safe place” or at least “benevolent”
  - “Worldview,” “perspective”
  - “Bad things happen only to other people”
  - “Power to change things”
  - “Future is limitless”
“Relationships are the laboratory of life”
“Relationships are the laboratory of spiritual life”
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Relationship Injuries

- Conflict within close relationships
- Isolation, withdrawal
- Mistrust
- Sexual dysfunction
- Loss of boundaries
- Ethical violations
Performance Injuries

- Low morale
- Late for work
- Errors in judgment
- Lack of promotion
- Low motivation
- Feelings of Inadequacy
- Poor communication
- Staff conflicts

- Apathy
- Negativity
- Detached
- Absenteeism
- Withdrawal
- Silencing response
- Stigma - fear of perception, weak
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Family Operational Picture
(Office of The Surgeon General, Epidemiological Consultation Report)

- Families are resilient
- Stressed by cumulative effects of war and repeated deployments
- Families support the mission and want Soldiers to be victorious
- Parent and child conflict varies depending on developmental stages
- Increase in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder cases and Traumatic Brain Injury
- Indicators of Family stress:
  - Divorce
  - Domestic Violence
  - Child Neglect
  - Child/Youth Behavioral Issues
  - Increased relationship / marital discord during reintegration ➔ 70%

(Office of The Surgeon General, EPICON Report)
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(Office of The Surgeon General, EPICON Report)
FY11 Divorce Rates: There was little change in Army divorce rates from FY10 to FY11. Enlisted females continue to have the highest divorce rate (9.6%), and this held true for both those who had deployed (10.3%) and those who had never deployed (8.2%). The most significant increase in divorce rate was noted for non-deployed female Officers (3.7% in FY10 to 5.3% in FY11). A comparison of 3rd quarter data shows declines in divorce rates for virtually all categories of Soldiers, both deployed and non-deployed.
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Army Family Covenant

- Signed affirmation of the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army of their commitment to provide quality programs and services for Soldiers and Families

- Approved in Sep 2007

- Active Duty Installations completed signing ceremonies 2008

- A Senior Review Group, chaired by SA and CSA meets monthly to address Family Readiness issues
Why Should the Army / Community Care about Soldier Marriages?

• Broken Relationships are Expensive

• Healthy Relationships yield Long Term Benefits

• General Refs:
  – Stanley, Case for Premarriage Educ. (2001)
  – Waynick, et al. (2005)
Costs of Marriage Distress:

• Saps Community and Leader Resources (Whisman, et al, 2006; Gallagher, 2002)
  – Leader-time
  – MP/Social Work Services
  – School Counselor

• Decreased Work Availability (Forthofer, 1996)

• Reduced Focus and Effectiveness (Mueller, 2005)

• Primary Predictor of Negative Events (Henderson, 2006)
  – Combat Stress
  – Suicide
  – Domestic Violence
Benefits of Marriage Success:

- Increased Retention
  - (Curtis, 2006)
- Increased Effectiveness => Promotion
  - (Waite and Gallagher, 2000)
- Increased Work Availability (Lavy, 2002)
- Early Access to/Compliance with Preventive and Restorative Health Care
  - PTSD/MTBI/Depression
  - Cardiovascular/
- Military Child Success: Tomorrow’s Military
The Resilient Soldier Family

What “right” looks like:
The Resilient Soldier Family

What “right” looks like:

- **Resourced:**
  - Finances/Medical/Legal/Home/Schools
  - Unit, Community Connections
  - Help/Rest when Needed
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  - Marriage
    - Stable attachment: Intimate: Turn to each other for help
    - Team Orientation: Can talk about problems
    - Long Term View
  - Friends and Extended Family
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  - Accepts Partial Connections
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• **Mindset:**
  – Confidence
  – Sees positives as well as negatives
  – Faith in Self, God, Others
  – Hope for the Future
  – Willing to Serve as well as be served
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- **Healthy:**
  - Adverse Childhood Events in perspective
  - Addictions/Secrets managed
  - Illnesses Managed: Gets Help when Needed
“Relationships are the laboratory of life”
“Relationships are the laboratory of spiritual life”
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Some People turn to Faith in Tragedy:
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Traditional View

Coping/Resilience

Faith

Ministry Professional
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Another View
Chaplains and Resilience

Chaplain Role

Soldiers ➔ Pastoral Care/ Counsel ➔ Worship Sacraments ➔ Resilience
Role of Worship/Sacraments
creating connections

God ⇔ Person

Army Chaplain Corps:
“Bringing God to Soldiers and Soldiers to God”
Soldiers, Faith, and Resilience

How Does Faith = or yield Resilience?

ABCs of a Crisis Response
Attachment and Resilience
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Ruben Hill: ABC=X

(A) x (B) x (C) = X

Stressor:
- Tragedy
- Loss
- Deployment
- Tasks

Resources:
- Community
- Skills
- Family
- Assistance

Thoughts:
- Faith
- Hope
- Meaning

Coping:
Increasing

Chaplain Supportive Activities:
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ABC-X Model of Crisis Response

A

EVENT

B

C

X
ABC-X Model of Crisis Response

Resources

Stress pile-up

A

B

C

Interpretation and Beliefs

Activating EVENT

X

UNCLASSIFIED
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ABC-X Model of Crisis Response

Resources

Adapt and Overcome

Stress pile-up

Activating EVENT

Overwhelmed by Crisis

Interpretation and Beliefs
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ABC-X Model of Crisis Response

ADD + Resources

REDUCE - Stress pile-up

CHANGE Interpretation and Beliefs

Activating EVENT

Overwhelmed by Crisis

Adapt and Overcome
Conclusions from ABC=X:

Soldiers and Families do better when:

- **A**: Reduce Stresses
  - Not always possible

- **B**: Provide Resources
  - Knowledge/Skills
  - Tools/Equipment
  - People

- **C**: Support Healthy Thinking about Challenges
  - *Hope and Trust and Courage*
  - *Knowledge* of situation and options; increase contingency planning
  - *Meaning* in the struggle, absence of struggle is not the goal
“Resilience” Assumptions:

• There is NO *brief* program that truly protects against risk factors – risk factors are part of the life journey

• Major improvement takes cultural change, life cycle training, and significant resources

• Lasting change occurs in these significant spiritual events and in healthy human connections (not by passive learning).
Other Topics

• Individual, Family, Community
• Greater reliance on God is not equivalent to greater powerlessness (Pargament & Park, 1995)
• Increased sense of control by God yields increased sense of personal control (Kahoe, 1974; DeVellis, DeVellis, & Spilsbury, 1988; Jackson & Coursey, 1988)
• Partnership with God (“God empowers me”) or deference to God (“I can trust God”)
• Clergy should not be viewed as low-end behavioral health providers
Attachment and Resilience

J. Bowlby: Attachment Theory

Secure Attachments

“Safe Haven”

Lead to:

Stress Coping
Behavior Regulation
Increased Function
Recovery

More choices

More resilience
Conclusions From Attachment Theory

People do Better:

When they are immersed in solid/rich/supportive relationships

• Families
• Community
• Units ("Band of Brothers / of Sisters!")

A Place to Recover
Safe Haven from the Storms

Someone who’s
“Got your back”
Conclusions From Attachment Theory

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When they are immersed in solid/rich/supportive relationships

- Families
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*Attachment Space, Safe Haven = “A Person”*

A Place to Recover Safe Haven from the Storms

Someone who’s “Got your back”
The Importance of Attachment

“... It has become clear that to be resilient in the face of trauma, people need not just friends and a sense of community, but close attachment bonds.”

- Sue Johnson
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Faith, Neurobiology, Resilience

**Chronic Limbic Arousal**
- Fight, Flight, Freeze
- Emotional Cutoff
- Poor Future Planning
- Reduced Immune Resistance
- Health Breaks

**Limbic Soothing**
- Neo-cortical Logic controls
- Connection with others
- Decision Making
  - Plans for future
  - Delayed Gratification
- Immune Resistance

*Attachment Space, Safe Haven = “A Person”*

A Place to Recover
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A Place to Recover
Safe Haven from the Storms

Connection to God
Connections to Others
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Spiritual Resilience Factors

- **Connected**
  - Comrades
  - Spouse and family
  - Faith community

- **Skilled**
  - Skills Training – self-soothing, moderating
  - Pastoral Care / Counseling

- **Meaningful/Spiritually Rich Lifestyle**
  - Self-aware and self-regulated
  - Theologically integrated
  - Spiritual disciplines
Spiritual Resilience Factors

(What Promotes Chaplain/Provider Resilience)

- Connected
  - Comrades
  - Spouse and family
  - Faith community

- Skilled
  - Sacraments
  - Pastoral Care/Counseling

- Meaningful/Spiritually Rich Lifestyle
  - Self-aware and self-regulated
  - Theologically integrated
  - Spiritual disciplines

"We have to eat our own dog food."

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Another Picture:
The Chaplain / Provider at Risk

“The provider is a consumable – a human delivery system,”
CH (COL) Dave Moran, Command Chaplain, US Army Europe
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Another Picture: The Chaplain / Provider at Risk

“The provider is a consumable – a human delivery system,”
CH (COL) Dave Moran, Command Chaplain, US Army Europe

- Isolated/Disconnected
- Marginal Pastoral Care / Counseling Skills
- Minimal Theological Integration of pain, loss, fear
- Spiritually Dry or Wounded
- Conflicted or Distant Marriage Relationship
- Unsure of Legitimacy of Call/Mission
- Unresolved Issues:
  - Secrets
  - Shame
  - Hurts
- Addictions? Destructive Self-soothing
- Unrealistic Expectations
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Picture: The Resilient Caregiver

- Skilled in Care-giving Competencies
- Realistic Expectations
  - Pre-Trauma Inoculation
- Connected to “Band of Brothers / Sisters”
- Connected to Spouse and Primary others
- Meaning: Sense of Call to this Work / Task
- Connected to God: Faith in Practice
- Confident:
  - At Peace with Present, Future, and Past
- Personal Health
  - No Destructive Self-Medication / Activities
  - Healthy Habits / Good Physical Conditioning
Conclusion

“Pastoral resilience, like health, is not an accident. It is the reliable result of a conscious process. Perhaps the place to take Soldier & Family resilience is to model the process of building resilience in our own Chaplains.

If we take the development of resilience seriously, it will show in the health of our Corps. And a healthy, resilient Chaplain Corps will foster a more healthy, resilient Army.”

CH (COL) Glen Bloomstrom, Director of Ministry Initiatives, 2004 - 2007 Office of the Chief Of Chaplains, Washington, DC
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Resources

• Defense Centers Of Excellence (DCoE),
  “Self-guided Spiritual Assessment, Workshop, Library” -
  http://www.afterdeployment.org/topics-spirituality

• US Army Chief Of Chaplains,
  “Ministering To Families Affected By Deployment” -

• Military OneSource - http://www.militaryonesource.mil

• Virtual Family Readiness Group (vFRG) - www.armyfrg.org
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Military OneSource

Army OneSource

Working together, Military OneSource and the United States Army Family Covenant provide support to Soldiers and their families throughout the world. Visit the new ArmyOneSource site to see the Army support programs.

When Stormy Weather Hits Home

Hazardous weather, like recent ice storms in the northeast, can leave home-owners scrambling to make insurance claims. Be prepared. Print this article to keep with your insurance papers.

January 6 and 13, 2009 Webinar for Service Providers

Join psychologist Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky for “A Scientific Approach to Happiness and Resilience,” a 2-part webinar describing her groundbreaking approach to increasing happiness and resilience. Especially for service providers working with the military community. Learn more and register.

Taking Charge of Your Money CD
REFERENCES