



The Potential Role of Stress and Stress Injuries in Misconduct

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Overview

- **Misconduct among Marines or veterans with stress injuries such as PTSD is rare**
- **PTSD is almost never grounds for a successful insanity defense**
- **However, stress and stress injuries such as PTSD may contribute to misconduct in Service members and veterans**
- **Therefore, Service members or veterans who commit uncharacteristic misconduct should be screened for stress injuries**



Less-Than-Honorable Discharges Among Marine OIF/OEF Veterans

- **Between March 2003 and July 2006:**
 - 1.2% of Marines who had deployed to OIF or OEF for at least 90 days received less-than-honorable (LTH) discharges
 - 3.9% of never-deployed Marines received LTH discharges
- **Of those OIF/OEF veteran Marines who received LTH discharges between March 2003 and July 2006:**
 - 32% received mental health treatment prior to discharge
 - 24% were diagnosed with alcohol abuse or dependence
 - 7% were diagnosed with PTSD
- **For comparison, only about 7% of all Marines receive any mental health treatment each year (2-3% for PTSD)**



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National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study

- **Congressionally mandated survey conducted 1983**
 - 1600 Vietnam Theater veterans
 - 730 Vietnam Era veterans
 - 650 civilian controls of similar age
- **Within the Vietnam Theater group, veterans categorized according to degree of combat exposure**
- **Assessed for “Antisocial Personality Disorder”**
- **Veterans who had experienced high combat exposure were significantly more likely to have engaged in aggressive and criminal behavior post-deployment**



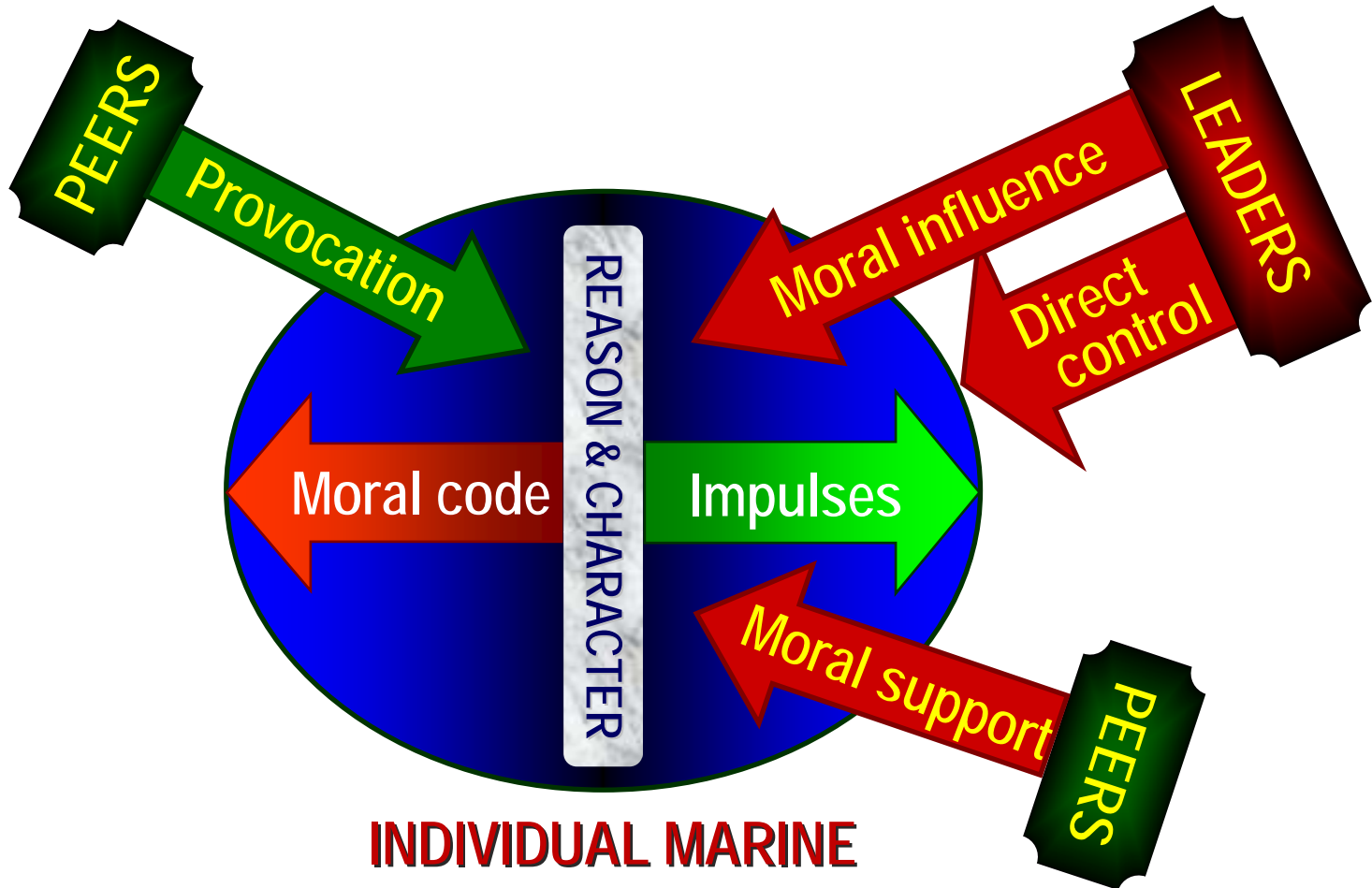
Bureau of Justice Report on Veterans in Prisons

- **Veterans were under-represented among prison populations relative to non-veterans in 1998**
 - 25% of male US population in 1998 were veterans
 - 12% of male prison inmates in 1998 were veterans
- **However, veterans in prison in 1998 were:**
 - More likely to have committed a violent crime
 - More likely to have assaulted a family member or friend
 - More likely to have had only one conviction
 - More likely to have been treated for a mental illness
 - Less likely to have been convicted of a drug offense



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A Model of Determinants of Behavior

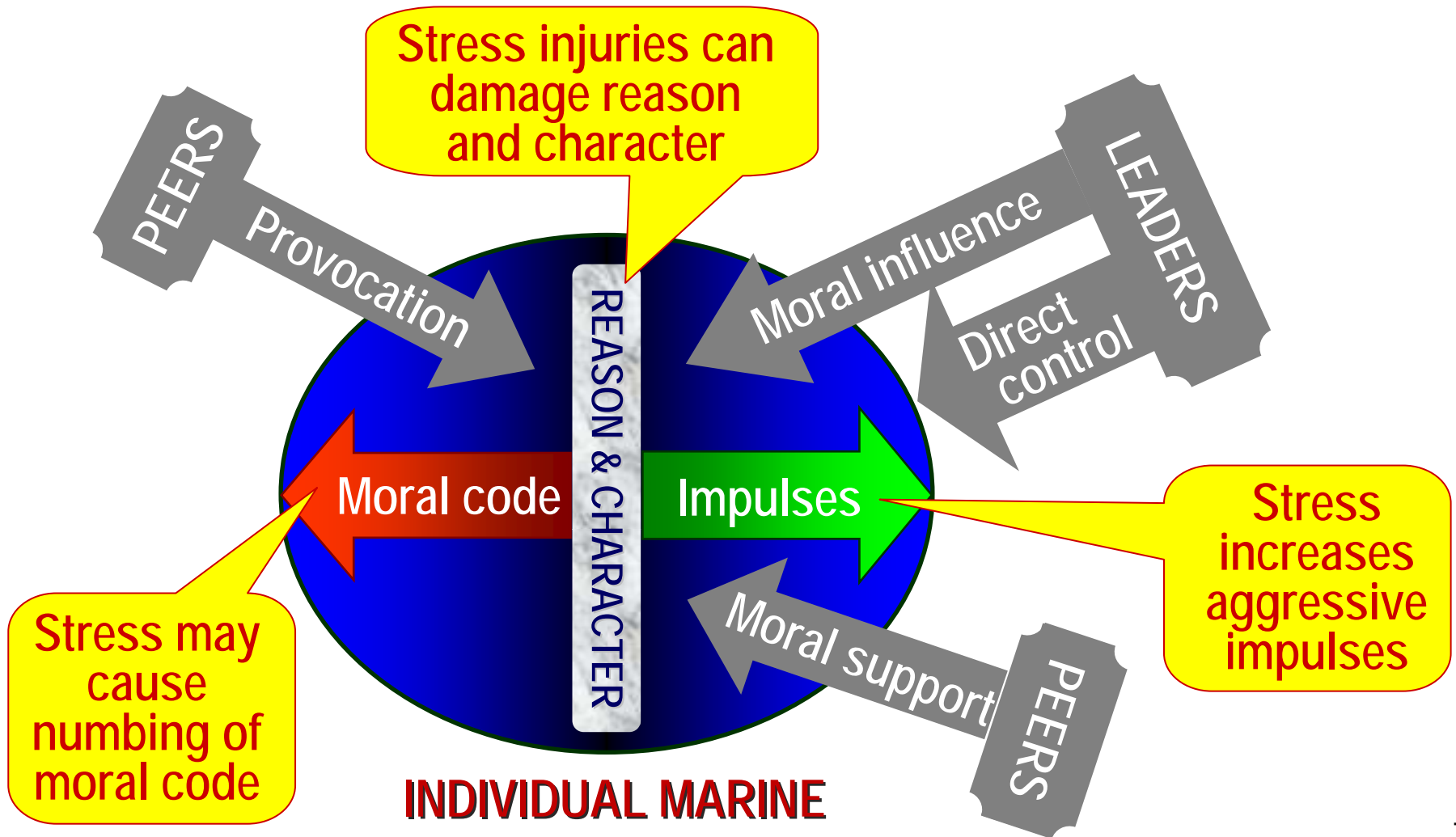


INDIVIDUAL MARINE



Areas of Impact: Stress and Stress Injuries

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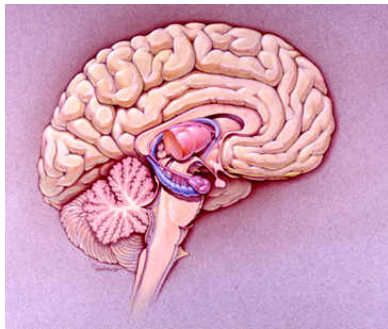
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How Can Stress Injuries Damage Reason and Character?



In the Mind:

- Beliefs about right-and-wrong can be damaged
- Self-concept and identity can be damaged
- Moral code can be damaged



In the Brain:

- Brain centers that control emotions can be damaged
- Rational thought circuits may become impaired
- Ability to stop and think before acting can be damaged



In the Spirit and Relationships:

- Belief in God and goodness may be damaged
- Trust and connection to others may be damaged



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Three Types of Aggression Due to Stress Injuries

Combat / Operational Stress Injury

TRAUMA

- Dissociative rage attacks ("fight or flight")
- Fractured moral compass ("Complex PTSD")

FATIGUE

- Irritability
- Short fuse
- Difficulty with problem solving

GRIEF

- Persistent intense anger
- Desire for revenge



Conclusions and Recommendations

- **Marines are responsible for their behavior**
- **Stress injuries are very rarely valid excuses for misconduct**
- **Marines who are stressed or stress-injured are at increased risk for misconduct during and after deployment**
- **Marines who commit misconduct during or after deployment should be screened for mental health problems**