



Care for the Caregivers Program

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Overview

- Purpose
 - To introduce an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to care for our Chaplains post-deployment





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The Task

- Support Chaplains following deployment
- Assist chaplains to understand OSI's
- Help develop therapeutic skill
- Build mental health network





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Historical Context

Mid-1990's

- Increased Operational Tempo
 - First Gulf War
 - Bosnia – Croatia
 - Rwanda
 - Somalia

Doing More ...





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Historical Context

Mid-1990's

- **Reduction of Military resources**
 - Also in Medical & Mental Health resources
 - Increase in OSI's & demand for services
 - Little research relating to caregivers

... With Less





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The Bottom Line ...

- Development of trauma care for chaplains at Canadian Forces HSC Ottawa
- Week-long retreat program





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Why Chaplains ?

- Chaplains are in a unique position as they are at risk for both:
 - *direct* exposure to traumatic events while on deployment (operational stress injuries such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and
 - *indirect* exposure to traumatic material (compassion fatigue/secondary traumatic stress) in light of their care giving role.





Spirituality and Care

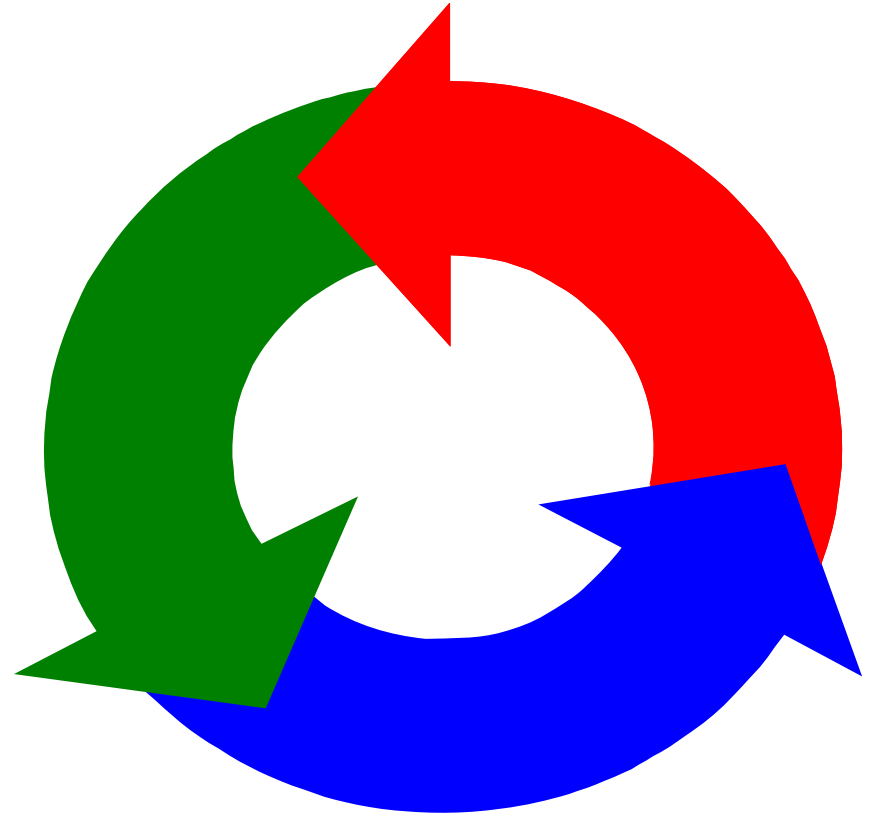




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Spiritual Model

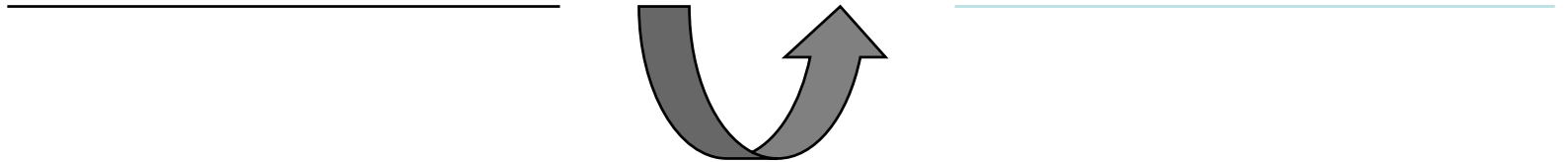
- Body
- Mind
- Spirit





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The Dark Night of the Soul





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A Way Forward ...

- Begin to develop supportive healing environments
- Acquire coping skills
 - learn to deal with guilt & shame





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Potential Growth Through Hope

- A sense of self
 - Self reliance
 - Humour
 - (Re)develop empathy and compassion
 - Wisdom of lived experience
 - Changed relationships with others, self and God
 - Forgiveness





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Spiritual Care

- Use of ritual
- Use of symbols
- Use of storytelling
- Visit to monuments and military cemetery
- Tour of war museum





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Keys to Success

- Retreat in a setting with a spiritual tradition
- Community
- Listening





Psychoeducation





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Where We Begin

“We are peers as well as teachers, and colleagues as well as facilitators”





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Four Modules and a Movie

- Goals/Ground Rules/Introductions
- The Impact of Caregiving
- The Wounded Soldier
- Working with Intense Emotions
- Video: “When Helping Hurts: Sustaining Trauma Workers”





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Goals / Ground Rules / Introductions





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Goals / Ground Rules / Introductions

- Our role:
 - Give information
 - Facilitate the process
 - Be solution-focused
- Confidentiality
- Timings
- Introduction-Go-Round





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The Impact of Caregiving on Ourselves and Our Relationships





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The Impact of Caregiving

- Defining and discussing a number of therapeutic concepts:
 - Caregiving, identity, ego-strengths, transference and countertransference, therapeutic boundaries, compassion fatigue
- Negative impact on self and relationships
- Strategies to prevent and resolve
- (Tremendously) positive impact of caregiving





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Compassion Fatigue

- Refers to the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.
 - It has also been referred to as vicarious traumatization and secondary traumatic stress.
- Symptoms mirror that of PTSD and include:
 - Re-experiencing the traumatic events as though it actually happened to them,
 - Avoidance/numbing of reminders, and
 - Persistent arousal (e.g. anxiety).





The Wounded Soldier:

From Acute Stress Response
to Operational Stress Injuries





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Traumatic Stress Reactions

- Very common to have psychological symptoms following exposure to war
- Exposure to firefights, physical injury,
 - increases risk of stress reaction and OSI's (Hoge, NEJM 2004)
- For most, these symptoms decrease over time, without treatment
- These symptoms are distressing
 - Soldiers fear they are going crazy, or are weak





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Operational Stress Injury

- **Persistent** psychological difficulty resulting from operational duties performed by a Canadian Forces member.
- Term created by our peer support program (OSISS) to focus on “injury” rather than illness, in attempt to destigmatize condition





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Operational Stress Injury

- Not a diagnostic term, but a useful one
- OSI now commonly used by clinicians
 - as a way to encompass all operationally-related psychiatric problems, not just PTSD.
- Includes:
 - PTSD
 - Major Depression
 - Substance Abuse
 - Anxiety Disorder NOS
 - Generalized Anxiety Disorder
 - Panic Disorder
 - Somatization Disorder.





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The Wounded Soldier

- Risk factors and causes of OSI's
- Signs and symptoms
- Pathways to recovery
- How can a chaplain help?





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How Can You Help?

By educating and reassuring:

- Avoid pathologizing
- Give info about normal traumatic stress response
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Their reactions ***make sense***, and will probably return to normal with time
- Lingering problems can be treated with support and professional help





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The Wounded Soldier: Conclusion

- Many soldiers will experience traumatic stress responses
- Some will go on to develop OSI's
- Stigma and other factors often prevent people from seeking help
- But treatment can make a significant difference for members and their families
- Chaplains can make a contribution by helping those who are suffering
- Be observant, understanding, offer support and guidance to get professional help, when needed





Working With Intense Emotions





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Working With Intense Emotions

- Emotions signal that the client is dealing with something of therapeutic interest, and are therefore markers of opportunity
- Emotions can also be overwhelming obstacles to therapeutic work





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Working With Intense Emotions

“What are your experiences with strong emotions in your work with those you counsel?”





**Operational Trauma &
Stress Support Centres**

When Helping Hurts: Sustaining Trauma Workers

A video about Compassion Fatigue
featuring Charles Figley and others





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Conclusions on Psychoeducation

“We heal, not from our points of weakness,
but from our areas of strength”





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Conclusion

- A change in CF operational tempo led to development of Care for the Caregivers
- Chaplains can suffer stress rxns from direct and indirect exposure
- Care for the Caregivers aims to reduce the risk by....





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Conclusion

- Coming together as community
- Education
- Experiential sharing
- Spiritual healing and growth





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Thank-you

Questions?

*Anonymous soldier
Rwanda 1994*

Photo courtesy of:
LCOL Stephane Grenier, OSISS

