

Treating Non-Adaptive Guilt and Shame (NAGS) Related to Trauma

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Conflict of Interest Statement

I am co-author of a recently published book that is about the therapy protocol that is the focus of this training. I will receive royalties from the book.

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Guilt & Shame

	
I DID SOMETHING BAD	I AM BAD

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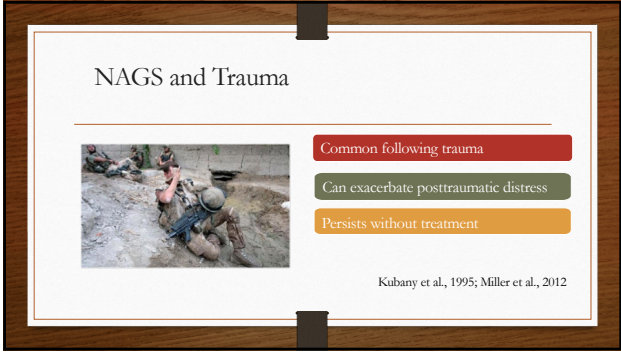
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# NAGS and Trauma




- Common following trauma
- Can exacerbate posttraumatic distress
- Persists without treatment

Kubany et al, 1995; Miller et al, 2012




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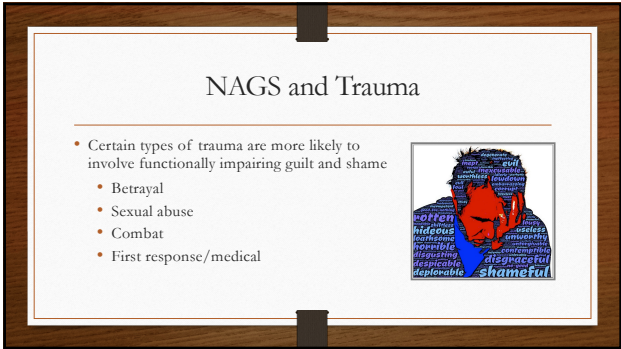
Kubany et al, 1995; Miller et al, 2012

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# NAGS and Trauma

- Certain types of trauma are more likely to involve functionally impairing guilt and shame
  - Betrayal
  - Sexual abuse
  - Combat
  - First response/medical

- [illegible]

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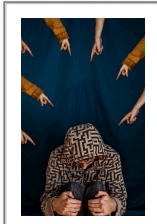
## NAGS and **Betrayal Trauma**

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- Betrayal trauma: dependence on perpetrator and/or institution (Freyd, 1996)
- Failing to act/report (before, during, or after) to maintain needed attachment to perpetrator or institution (e.g., unit cohesion)
- Freeze response

- ## NAGS and **Betrayal Trauma**
- 
- Betrayal trauma: dependence on perpetrator and/or institution (Freyd, 1996)
  - Failing to act/report (before, during, or after) to maintain needed attachment to perpetrator or institution (e.g., unit cohesion)
  - Freeze response

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### NAGS and Sexual Trauma

- Also typically betrayal trauma
- Society victim blaming
- Experience of arousal during trauma

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### NAGS and Combat Trauma

- Context increases likelihood of acting outside one's values
- Killing or harming others
- Making decisions that affect survival of others
- Failing to perform duty during trauma
- Feeling rush or enjoyment during trauma
- Failing to act or report
- Witnessing harmful act

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Making life and death decisions, not saving everyone.



For what they have put their family through.



Not being able to be with sick or dying loved ones.



Seeing others volunteer to do dangerous work and not being able to.



Surviving while others do not.



Feeling powerless to help, change others' behaviors, affect policies, ...



Exposing others.

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### Guilt/Shame and Post-traumatic Reactions

- Mediates relationship between trauma exposure and PTSD, Depression (Bannister et al., 2018; Browne et al., 2015; Marx et al., 2010)
- Associated with alcohol and drug use, suicidal ideation, and functioning
  - Even when controlling for PTSD and/or depressive symptoms (Bryan et al., 2013; Norman et al., 2018; Wilkins et al., 2013)

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### Treatment Outcomes for Trauma Related Guilt

- Mixed results
- Trauma focused treatments can reduce guilt (e.g., Allard et al., 2018; Capone, et al., accepted; Clifton, Feeny, & Zoellner, 2017; Diehle et al., 2014; Stapleton, Taylor, & Asmundson, 2006; Trachick et al., 2018; Resick et al., 2002)
- Guilt may not change with PTSD treatment (e.g., Larsen et al., 2019; Owen, Chard, Cox, 2008)

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### Treatment Outcomes for Trauma-Related Guilt

- Greater guilt severity associated with less PTSD change (Oktealden, 2015)
- May be mechanism of change: shifts in guilt cognitions predict PTSD symptom change (Allard et al., 2018; Cooper, Clifton, & Feeny, 2017; Kumpula, et al 2017; Kleim et al., 2013; Zalta, 2015; Zalta et al., 2014)
- Outcome may depend on extent of focus on guilt and shame

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## Assessing Guilt and Shame

- Trauma-Related Guilt Inventory (TRGI)  
(Kubany et al., 1997)
- Trauma-Related Shame Inventory (TRSI)  
(Oktealden et al., 2014)
- Moral Injury Events Scale (MIES)  
(Nash et al., 2013)
  - Constellation of shame and guilt experienced by some combat veterans after wartime acts of commission (e.g., killing) or omission (e.g., failing to prevent atrocities) (Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016)

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## Addressing Traumatic Guilt in PTSD Treatment

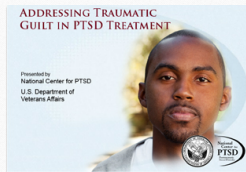


In Prolonged  
Exposure Therapy (PE)

and



In Cognitive Processing  
Therapy (CPT)



[www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/continuing\\_ed/guilt\\_ptsdTX.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/continuing_ed/guilt_ptsdTX.asp)

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## Addressing Guilt Outside of PTSD Treatments

- Comorbidity is the rule, not the exception
- Need to target mechanisms associated with multiple forms of mental health problems
- Clinicians asking for interventions to address treatment interfering guilt

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**Killing in War: Research and Treatment**

Shira Maguen, Ph.D. and Kristine Burkman, Ph.D.  
San Francisco VA Medical Center  
University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine

### Impact Of Killing Treatment Program (IOK)

[www.ptsd.va.gov/training.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/training.asp)

<https://avanl.org/conference/pubs/2014/20Conference/20Presentations/4/20-%20Maguen-Burkman%20-%20Moral%20Injury%20and%20Impact%20of%20Killing.pdf>

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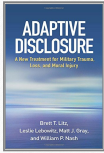
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### Moral Injury (MI) Interventions

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for MI  
(Borges, 2019; Farnsworth et al., 2017)  
[https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for\\_researchers/cyber\\_seminars/archives/video\\_archive.cfm?SessionID=3592&Seriesid=78](https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/archives/video_archive.cfm?SessionID=3592&Seriesid=78)
- Adaptive Disclosure  
(Gray et al., 2012; Litz et al., 2015)



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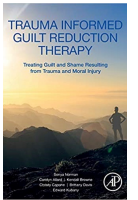
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**TRAUMA INFORMED GUILT REDUCTION THERAPY**

Treating Guilt and Shame Resulting from Trauma and Moral Injury

### TIGR

- Transdiagnostic: for post-traumatic distress involving guilt, self-blame, shame, moral injury (NAGS) related to any kind of trauma
- 3 Modules, 4-6 Sessions
- Administered individually or in groups
- Stand alone or adjunct concurrent, before or after PTSD treatment

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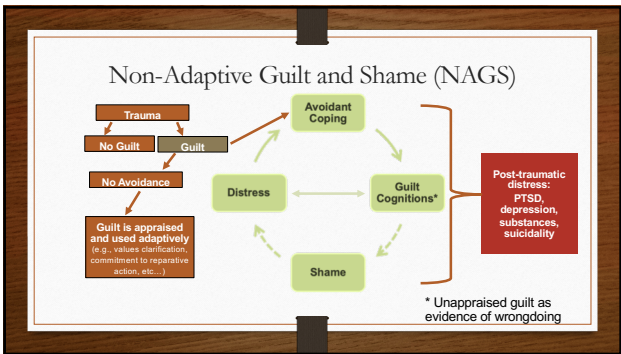
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- TrIGR**
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
    - Inaccurate, unhelpful beliefs and behaviors
  - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
    - Experiential avoidance
    - Loss of touch with values

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**Empirical Support for TrIGR**

- ✓ Kubany et al.'s 2 domestic violence studies and case study with combat Veteran (2000, 2003, 2004)
- ✓ 2 pilot studies

**TBD** Ongoing 2-site RCT of TrIGR vs. Supportive Care Therapy with Veterans

Scientific logo

Cognitive and Behavioral Practice logo

**Trauma Informed Guilt Reduction Therapy With Combat Veterans**

Journal of Traumatic Stress, 2014, 27(4), 400-408. doi:10.1891/1524-6011.27.4.400

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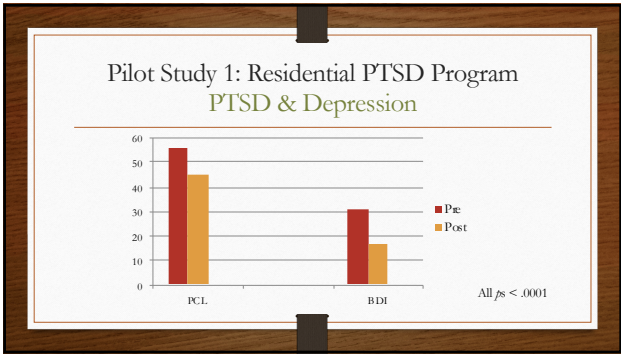
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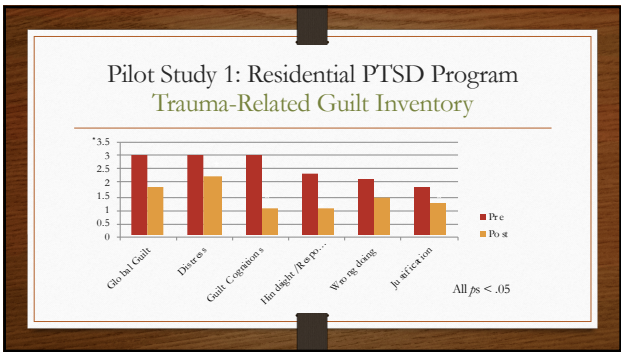
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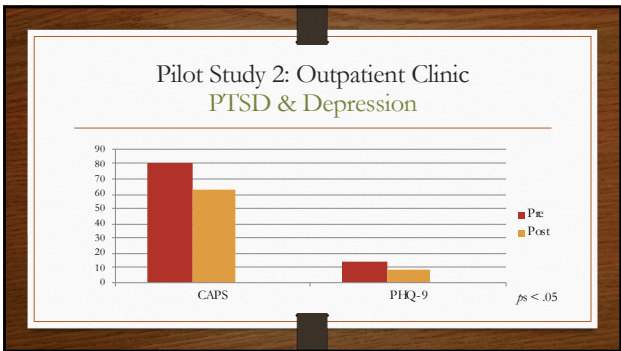
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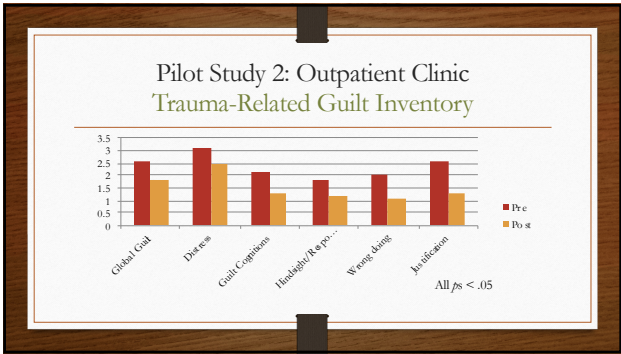
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- TrIGR Modules
- Module 1. Overview and Psychoeducation
  - Module 2. Guilt and Shame Appraisal
  - Module 3. Living a Value-Driven Life

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TrIGR

Module 1

(Sessions 1 & 2)

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## Module 1. Overview and Psychoeducation

### Session 1. Overview of TrIGR

- Structure, length and content
- Record each session
- Daily homework
- Psychoeducation about trauma and shame and post-traumatic distress

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## Module 1. Overview and Psychoeducation

### Session 2.

- Common post-traumatic reactions
- Different types of non-adaptive, trauma-related guilt
- Understanding the client's guilt and shame
- Guilt Cognitions Log

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### Session 2. Different Types of Non-Adaptive Trauma-Related Guilt

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Surviving, leaving                    | • Negligence, abandonment                          |
| • Killing for pleasure, feeling nothing | • Self-Blame to Maintain an Important Relationship |
| • Incompetence, not being a superhero   | • Atrocity   |
|   | • Not reporting                                    |

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## Session 2. Understanding the Client's Guilt and Shame

- In learning about client's perceptions about the trauma, the clinician also explores
  - Function of guilt
  - Underlying value system

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## TrIGR

### Module 2 (Sessions 3 & 4)

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## Module 2. Guilt Appraisal

- Primary ways we reach a guilty verdict
  1. Foreseeability & Preventability
  2. Insufficient Justification
  3. Causal Responsibility
  4. Violation of Values (Wrongdoing)

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## 1. Foreseeability & Preventability

- If something was foreseeable...
  - ↳ It was preventable
  - ↳ And, if it was preventable and we didn't prevent it
    - ↳ **We allowed it to happen**

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## 1. Foreseeability & Preventability Analysis

- Hindsight Bias
  - Monday Morning Quarterbacking
- Red flags
- Million dollar question...

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## 1. Foreseeability & Preventability Analysis

- Hindsight Bias
  - Monday Morning Quarterbacking
- Red flags
- **Million dollar question:** "If you knew with certainty what was going to happen when you did what you did, would you have done what you did?"

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## 1. Foreseeability & Preventability Analysis

- If answer is YES, ...  
E.g., because I'm a chicken, I'm evil, I must have wanted to happen, ...
- We address this in next analyses

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## 2. Insufficient Justification

- No good reasons for actions taken or not taken
- Should have done something not thought of or possible at the time
- Assuming more positive outcomes from different actions not taken

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## 2. Justification Analysis

- Most justified choice is the best of *available and considered* choices at the time
- Like multiple choice
- Which is the best option out of all bad options?
  - Pros and cons of each option considered in trauma context

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## 2. Justification Analysis: Reviewing Options

### Scenario 1:

Facing a situation of kill or be killed in combat

- 'I shouldn't have enlisted' **was not an option at this time**
- What Rambo or a superhero would do **is not realistic option**

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## 2. Justification Analysis: Reviewing Options

### Scenario 2:

I'm deciding on a move between North or South Carolina. You help me weigh the pros and cons of both places and we both come to an agreement that North Carolina is the best of the 2 options.  
So, I move there and a week later I call you up and chew you out: "You were so wrong! I should have moved to Georgia!"

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## 2. Justification Analysis: Reviewing Options

### Scenario 3:

A Private was in her barracks when her Drill Sergeant knocked on her door and informed her he needed to speak to her immediately about a serious matter. He let himself in and closed the door behind him, and Private stood aside to let him in. The Drill Sergeant sexually assaulted the Private.

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2. Justification Analysis				
	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
Pros				
Cons				

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2. Justification Analysis				
	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
	Let him in	Meet with him outside	Tell him no/not meet with him	Not answer the door
Pros				
Cons				

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2. Justification Analysis				
	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
	Let him in	Meet with him outside	Tell him no/not meet with him	Not answer the door
Pros				
Cons				

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## 2. Justification Analysis

	Option A Let him in	Option B Meet outside	Option C Tell him no
Pros	- Obey superior - Efficiently address issue	- Allowed - Efficiently address issue	- No risk of assault
Cons	- Against rules - Awkward - Risk of assault	- Disobey - Backlash - Disrupt grp cohesion	- Issue not addressed - Disobey, etc...

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## 2. Justification Analysis

	Option A Let him in	Option B Meet outside	Option C Tell him no
Pros	- Obey superior - Efficiently address issue	- Allowed/more approp - Efficiently address issue	<del>- No risk of assault</del>
Cons	- Against rules - Awkward <del>- Risk of assault</del>	- Disobey - Backlash - Disrupt grp cohesion	- Issue not addressed - Disobey, etc...

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## 2. Justification Analysis

- Which is the best option out of all bad options?
- Challenge any idealized options

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## 2. Justification Analysis

- Which is the best option out of all bad options?
  - Challenge any idealized options
- E.g., "Ok, but once he started assaulting me, I should have just fought back."
- How do you know that would have stopped it?
  - Is it possible something worse would have happened?

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## 3. Responsibility

- Not taking into account all of the contributing factors
- Confusing role with cause, accountability with fault

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## 3. Responsibility Analysis

- Accountability for vs. control over outcomes
  - Hindsight bias
  - Emotions reasoning

Examples:

1. Supervisor held accountable for employees
2. Platoon leader held accountable for deaths of troops

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### 3. Responsibility Analysis

- Multiple contributors

Examples:

- Dominoes
- Switching light on

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### 3. Responsibility Analysis: Calculating Actual Contribution

Me

Other

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### Calculating Actual Contribution

	Responsibility	%
1	Me	90
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
Total		

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Calculating Actual Contribution		
	Responsibility	%
1	Me	90
2	At war	90
3	Staff sergeant's orders	90
4	Consequences of insubordination	100
5	Not wanting to embarrass my family	80
6	Sleep deprivation	70
7	Felt numb, didn't feel real	80
8	Didn't want to stand out	90
9	Survivor instinct	90
10	Enemy attacking	100
	Total	790

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Calculating Actual Contribution		
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1	Me	90
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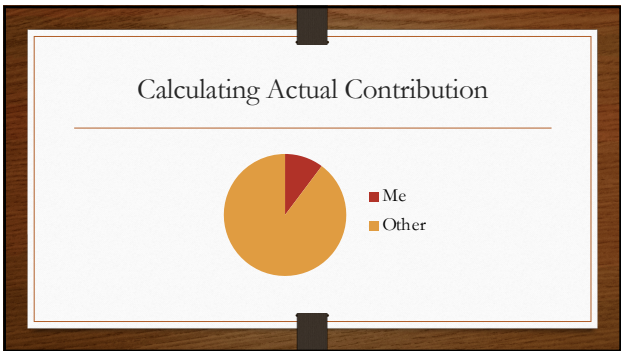
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### 3. Responsibility Analysis: Calculating Actual Contribution

- Closter to 10% responsibility
- And that's just playing some role
- Not necessarily intentional, causal
- If other dominoes ahead in line were not knocked over, behavior would not have been prompted



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### 4. Wrongdoing

- Violation of values
- Often concluded on basis of tragic outcome
- Assuming deliberateness and choice

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### 4. Wrongdoing Analysis

- Intention
  - Murder vs. manslaughter vs. accident
  - Would you blame a child for accidentally spilling milk?

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#### 4. Wrongdoing Analysis

- Possible role of survival response
  - 3 options: fight, flight, freeze
  - Best option: most likely to result in survival (not feeling good about it)
- Recall other contributors (incl. from Responsibility Analysis)

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#### 4. Wrongdoing Analysis

- Psychoeducation about values
  - Multiple
  - Dynamic and contextual
  - Sometimes conflictual

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TrIGR

Module 3  
(Sessions 5 & 6)

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## Module 3. Living a Value-Driven Life

### Session 5.

- Psychoed on values and how they are affected by trauma
- Identify client's values in different life domains
- Monitor activities and engagement in values

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### Session 5. What are Values?

- Compass – our foundation and guiding principles
- Values are a direction not a destination
- Living our values gives meaning to our lives

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### Session 5. What are Values?

- > 1, in multiple domains (e.g., work, relationships, community, spirituality)
- Dynamic – change in different life stages and contexts
- Sometimes even at odds with each other

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### Session 5. Identifying Values

- Follow the guilt and shame
- Need to reduce avoidance

The fact that you experience guilt means that you have values. You wouldn't feel guilty if you didn't think you acted against an important value.

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### Identifying Values

- Review activity monitoring sheet
  - Notice how much time is spent in value-driven activities
- Identify new desired values
  - Retirement party exercise
  - Client completes Values Worksheet

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### Module 3. Living a Value-Driven Life

#### Session 6.

- Develop value-based goals
- Commit to living value-driven life
- Plan for working around obstacles

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### Session 6. Activities and Values Tracking

- Monitor and schedule engagement in value-based activities

Daily Activity Log

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6-7 AM							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							
12-1 PM							
1-2							
2-3							

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### Session 6. Developing Goals to Live a Valued Life

- Identify specific ambitions within one or more domains
- Identify goals that will support that ambition
- Start with smaller steps

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### Session 6. Committing to Living a Valued Life

- Identify and address future obstacles
- Continued non avoidance and realistic evaluations of guilt
- Options for corrective or reparative action if needed and appropriate

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### Guilt Appraisal Wrap-Up

1. Continue using guilt appraisal strategies with any remaining sources of guilt, shame, and moral injury
2. Address function of holding onto guilt, shame and/or moral injury

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### Take Home Messages about Guilt and Values

1. Feeling bad or guilty does not mean you are bad or guilty
2. Instead of avoiding, examine guilt you might be experiencing
3. Living your values is a lifelong process – it's not a destination

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### Take Home Messages about Guilt and Values

1. Feeling bad or guilty does not mean you are bad or guilty
2. Instead of avoiding, examine guilt you might be experiencing to:
  - Appraise the situation and your actions accurately
  - Identify your values
  - Live more closely in line with your values going forward
3. Living your values is a lifelong process – it's not a destination

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### Provider Considerations

- Patience!
- Openness to understanding moral injury, guilt, shame
- Accepting, non-judgmental, empathic stance
- Aware of own presumptions about perpetration, morals, and values

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### (Optional) Taking Reparative Action

- Explore the intent and function - can't undo the past
- Can choose now to act in line with values - options to act according to values is impossible/limited in times of trauma
- Only once accurate appraisal has been completed - should be equivalent to actual level of responsibility
- Important to consider needs of and potential impact on intended recipients
- Value is in the action not outcome

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### Sample Menu of Reparative Actions

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Apology/Confession                       | 5. Rescue/aid work                   |
| 2. Making amends                            | 6. Helping others coping with trauma |
| 3. Sharing information about lost loved one | 7. Engaging in social action         |
| 4. Memorial (e.g. plant a tree)             | 8. Pursuing justice, accountability  |

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Questions?

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