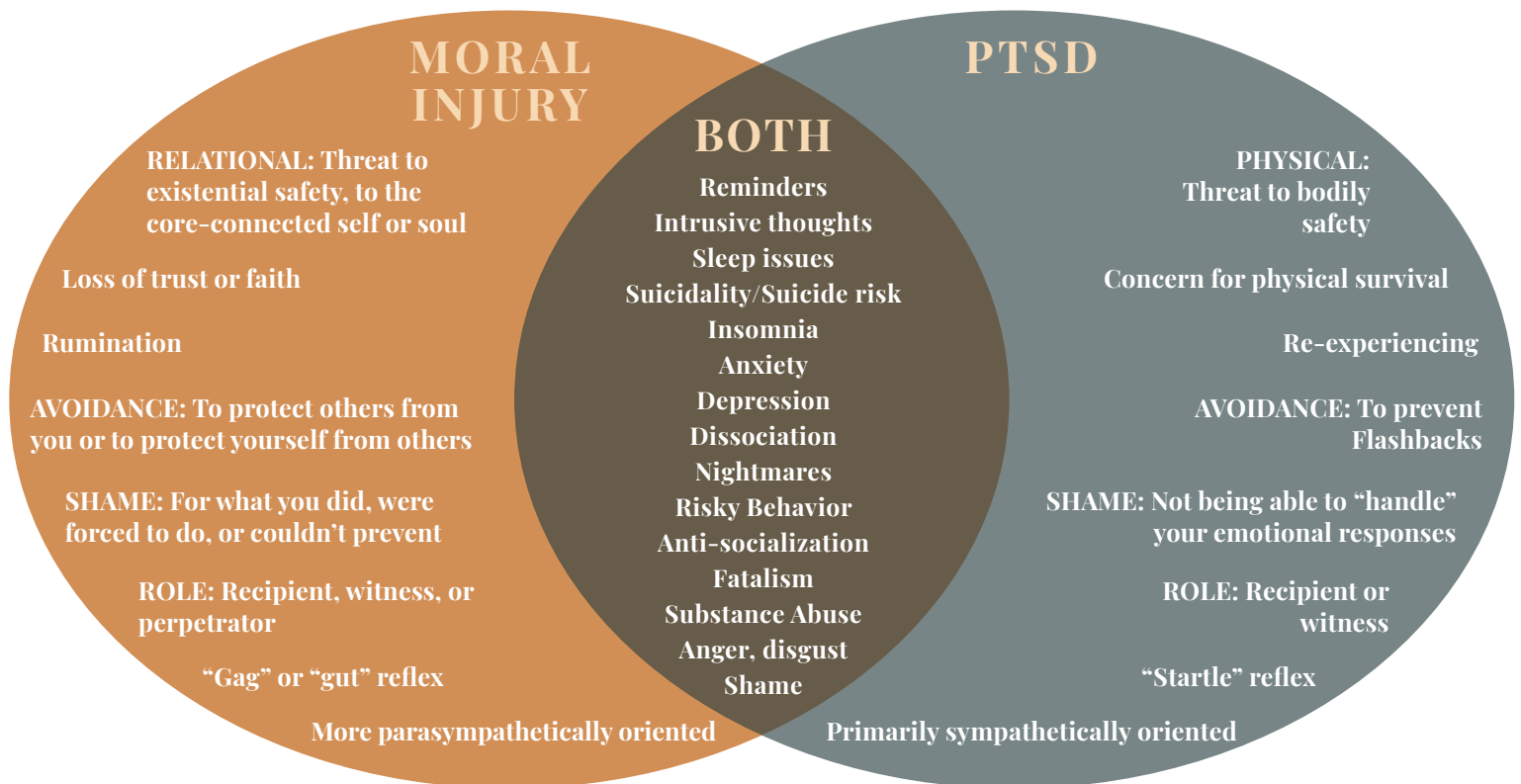# Moral Injury

HOW IT DIFFERS FROM PTSD

CARRYING THE INVISIBLE SCARS OF MORAL INJURY MAY FEEL UNBEARABLE AT TIMES. BUT THIS PAIN IS ACTUALLY A MARK OF ABIDING GOODNESS – *AND* THE STARTING POINT FOR HEALING.

What is Moral Injury?

Moral injury happens when a person's core moral foundations are violated in high stakes situations. This violation recasts the way people see themselves, others, and the world and causes changes in behavior that signal a loss of trust, connection, self-worth, and meaning.

What is PTSD?

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), once called "shell shock" or "battle fatigue syndrome," is a condition that can develop after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event in which there was serious physical harm or threat. It's a lasting consequence of trauma that causes intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

MORAL INJURY

RELATIONAL: Threat to existential safety, to the core-connected self or soul

Loss of trust or faith

Rumination

AVOIDANCE: To protect others from you or to protect yourself from others

SHAME: For what you did, were forced to do, or couldn't prevent

ROLE: Recipient, witness, or perpetrator

"Gag" or "gut" reflex

More parasympathetically oriented

BOTH

Reminders
Intrusive thoughts
Sleep issues
Suicidality/Suicide risk
Insomnia
Anxiety
Depression
Dissociation
Nightmares
Risky Behavior
Anti-socialization
Fatalism
Substance Abuse
Anger, disgust
Shame

PTSD

PHYSICAL: Threat to bodily safety

Concern for physical survival

Re-experiencing

AVOIDANCE: To prevent Flashbacks

SHAME: Not being able to "handle" your emotional responses

ROLE: Recipient or witness

"Startle" reflex

Primarily sympathetically oriented

Michele is a therapist, clinical ethicist, writer, and researcher who's spent the last two decades on a "souljourn," studying trauma generally, moral injury and lost innocence specifically, and resilience.

Michele DeMarco, PhD, Rev.

micheledemarco.com

Moral injury can happen to anyone.

Don't go it alone.