

Annotated Bibliography of Books and Web Resources About Moral Injury

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Books About Moral Injury and Resilience After Moral Injury

Boudreau, Tyler E. [*Packing Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine*](#). An autobiographical account of an Iraq veteran's growing awareness of his own moral injury and what he did about it. Boudreau's superb prose will give you a visceral taste of combat and its moral ambiguities.

Burke-Harris, Nadine. [*The Deepest Well*](#). This book is about the long term health damage caused by ACES, adverse childhood experiences. I include it in this bibliography for two reasons: 1) because some researchers suspect that the veterans who have the most difficulty adjusting with resilience to PTS were already severely traumatized as children. (In the brain and body, injury inflicted by trauma is cumulative.) 2) In a late chapter the author makes six recommendations for resiliency which may prove useful for returning veterans.

Chivers, C.J. [*The Fighters*](#). Stories about six U.S. veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are: an F-14 pilot, a Green Beret sergeant, a Navy corpsman, a helicopter pilot, an Army infantryman and a Marine lieutenant. Their stories cover the 18 year history of these wars.

Davis, Thomas C. [*Double Exposure: A Veteran Returns to Vietnam*](#). In this Kindle ebook the author recalls his own moral injury which wasn't apparent to him until after the end of the war. Religious faith was important in his recovery.

Dean, Chuck. [*Nam Vet: Making Peace With Your Past*](#). This is a self-help guide from one vet to another, written in simple language.

Grossman, Dave. [*On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*](#), by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman. The author spends considerable ink proving that in past wars many riflemen refused to shoot at the enemy, because they couldn't bear taking another's life. This is a challenge to military trainers, but good news about human nature! Grossman examines how training can desensitize soldiers to killing, and how the act of killing can plague them afterwards.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. [*Veterans of War. Veterans of Peace*](#), a collection of excellent short stories authored by veteran writers, mostly from the Vietnam and Korean wars. The stories are largely hopeful and inspirational.

Marlantes, Karl. [*What It's Like to Go to War*](#). Marlantes was a Marine captain in Vietnam. He wrote a fictional best seller called [*Matterhorn*](#) which was informed by his combat experience. This book gives the factual details of that experience.

Meagher, Emmet and Jonathan Shay. [*Killing from the Inside Out*](#). This author digs deeply into western history to dispute the moral validity of just war theory.

Moon, Zachary. [*Coming Home: Ministry That Matters With Veterans and Military Families*](#). Guidance for Christian churches who want to help veterans and their families.

Nakashima Brock, Rita. [*Soul Repair: Recovering From Moral Injury After War*](#). Professor Nakashima Brock has established a Center for Soul Repair at the Brite Theological Seminary, dedicated to research and public education about recovery from moral injury.

Sackett, John G., Major USAF. [*Guilt Free War: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and An Ethical Framework for Battlefield Decisions*](#). Moral injury is a challenge to military trainers, he writes. If human beings have an inborn reticence to kill, how can they be trained to perform the job of killing without morally injuring themselves? Major Sackett proposes guidelines for preparing soldiers ahead of time to not hold themselves morally culpable for battlefield decisions they may be forced to make. His book is based on just war theory, which other authors in this bibliography reject.

Sheehan, Dan. [*Continuing Actions: A Warrior's Guide to Coming Home*](#). A former combatant who experienced moral injury describes his own road to recovery in a style that will appeal to other warriors.

Sherman, Nancy. *Afterwar: [Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers](#)*.

Sites, Keven. [*The Things They Cannot Say*](#). Stories about moral injury told by grunts.

Tick, Edward. [*Warrior's Return: Restoring the Soul After War*](#). An early author in the field of moral injury, Tick's book is based on clinical work with many combatants.

Van der Kolk, Bessel. [*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body Healing of Trauma*](#). Not just about moral injury, but trauma in general, and not just trauma experienced in combat. Van der Kolk explains that all trauma injures the body and the brain, so treatments must address both. He also explains that trauma is cumulative. It is stored in the body, and each new trauma is added to the sum of previous ones. Soldiers who experienced traumas as children have injuries to their bodies and brains which may make it more difficult to recover from more recent traumas. This is a seminal book in the field of PTSD research.

Wood, David. [What Have We Done: The Moral Injury of Our Longest Wars](#), by war correspondent, David Wood. Chronicles his considerations of “moral costs” of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yocum, Cecilia. [Help for Moral Injury: Strategies and Interventions](#). A fairly short book with concise descriptions of evidence based treatments helpful for treating veterans with moral injury. It is written for professional psychiatric and medical practitioners, and it involves mainly one-on-one techniques.

Yunger, Sabastian. [War](#). A war correspondent’s deeply honest account of the harrowing experiences of the 2nd Platoon, Battle Company of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Afghanistan. Yunger organizes his book in three long chapters: Fear, Killing, and Love.

Web Resources On Moral Injury and Resilience After Moral Injury

The very best of these web resources are the last listed, the three articles by war correspondent, David Wood. You might do best to start there.

Arrow, Holly; and Schumacher, William M. “[What is moral injury in veterans?](#)” published in The Conversation. A good, brief introduction to moral injury.

Barno, David; and Bensahel, Nora. “[How to Talk to a Veteran](#),” Published by the University of Texas. “Thank you for your service!” may not be a helpful greeting for a veteran troubled by moral injury, because he/she is not proud of what he/she did, and therefore shouldn’t be thanked for it. This article provides guide for what is most helpful in talking with a veteran.

Clear, James “[Make More Art: The Health Benefits of Creativity](#).” Moral injury arises in the top and front of the human brain, the pre-frontal cortex. The non-conscious part of the brain, at the bottom and back, is where trauma hypes-up the fight-or-flight mode of consciousness for self-protection, and the nervous system gets stuck in high gear. That non-conscious part of the brain can be calmed by deep breathing meditation, but also, it seems to this veteran, by making art. Making art is a partly reflective process, but it’s also a not totally conscious one, an intuitive one, we say. So, like deep breathing, making art can be a bridge between the reflective part of the brain and the non-conscious part. This integration brings a peace which neurologically is not yet fully understood.

Cramer, Tom. "[Can Spiritual Therapy Heal Your PTSD Symptoms?](#)" Published through the Veterans' Administration in Virginia. Mentions Dr. Nagy Youssef who is researching how faith communities can help veterans with moral injury.

Dickerson, Caitlin. "[On Family Separation, Federal Workers Often Agonized Over Enforcement](#)", Published in the New York Times. Often moral injury occurs when one feels personally responsible for the death of another human being, or more than one. This author writes that when some I.C.E. employees were ordered to separate migrant children from their parents they suffered moral injury. This is an instance where there was no evident loss of life involved, yet the responsible officials felt morally trapped between a call to follow orders and their own consciences.

Gessler, Paul. "[PTSD and Moral Injury Are the Hidden Wounds of Veterans](#)," a letter to veterans on the campus of Rocky Mountain College. Published under the auspice of Veterans for Peace and the Adult Learning and Veteran Services Office of the college.

Jones, Diana Nelson. "['Veterans' Breakfast Club' offers help to heal from moral injuries.](#)" Published by the Pittsburgh Post Gazette. In her six recommendations for promoting resilience after trauma, author Dr. Nadine Burke-Harris notes (#6) that getting connected to a supportive community is essential. This article illustrates her point.

Kniggendorf, Anne. "[Kansas City Veteran and Physician Treats the 'Moral Injury' of War Through Poetry.](#)" From an interview at WCUR 89.3 FM.

Mighty Visual (a blogger at Vimeo), video entitled "[Hunter in the Blackness: Veterans, Hope and Recovery.](#)" Vietnam vets and younger veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars talk about their post traumatic stress and moral injury and what's been helpful to them in recovery.

Press, Eyal. "[Wounds of the Drone Warrior](#)," published in the New York Times Magazine. In his book on the psychological effects of killing David Grossman observes that distance from the enemy tends to decrease a combatant's moral sensitivity to killing. However, the visual preciseness of recently developed aerial cameras has made it possible for attack drone pilots to see what's happening to their human targets quite clearly. Some are suffering extreme stress and moral injury in this line of duty.

Talbot, Simon G. and Dean, Wendy. "[Physicians Aren't 'Burning Out'. They're Suffering From Moral Injury.](#)" Many physicians enter that profession because they have high

ideals and want to save lives. But the complicated demands of modern medicine frustrate that desire, and leave some feeling deep moral failure.

Turner, Jon Michael. YouTube video of him testifying at [Iraq Veterans Against the War's Winter Soldier gathering](#).

Woolston, Chris. "[Writing for Therapy Helps Erase Effects of Trauma](#)." Perhaps the title of this article exaggerates. While writing for most veterans will not erase the effects of trauma, it does help to remove much of the emotional power of troubling memories.

Wood, David. Moral Injury: "[The Grunts: Damned If They Kill, Damned If They Don't](#)." This is the first of a 3-part series published in the Huffington Post. War correspondent Wood has authored some of most poignant short articles on moral injury available on the web. The second in this series is entitled, "[The Recruits: When Right and Wrong Are Hard To Tell Apart](#)." The final article is "[Healing, Can We Treat Moral Wounds?](#)"