

Trauma Roundtable Discussion

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Transcript

Caroline Hamilton-Arnold: Hi, everybody. Welcome to this roundtable conversation around trauma responses in this moment in which we find ourselves.

I'm Rev. Caroline Hamilton Arnold. I serve as associate director for Week of Compassion. And I'm delighted to welcome this esteemed table to join in conversation today. First, we have Rev. Terri Hord Owens, who serves as our general minister and president for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We have with us Rev. Kyle Fauntleroy, who is the current director of development at Brite Divinity School, having served a long career as a military chaplain, and who serves as an advisor for Brite Divinity School's Soul Repair Center. We have with us Joselyn Spence, who serves as director of National Benevolent Association's mental health and wellness initiative and Rev. Selena Reyes Martinez, who is a church planter, regional staff member in the region of Florida, and who serves as a hospice chaplain. And Rev. Susan Ward Diamond, senior minister of Florence Christian Church in Florence, Kentucky, who is currently working on a project through the Louisville Institute under a study grant looking at moral injury, *Moral Injury: A Catalyst for Reform*.

Thank you all for being here today and sharing in this conversation as we approach the 20th anniversary of 9/11. We're recording this on Wednesday, so we're anticipating that anniversary on Saturday against the backdrop of the current situation in Afghanistan, the evacuation of so many tens of thousands, as we also live through this global COVID 19 pandemic, through Delta surges in so many states across the United States, and places where we're having to renegotiate our church plans, and our school plans, and our life plans as we try to keep ourselves our families and our communities safe - all of this in a month where we see the anniversaries of multiple extremely destructive hurricanes and wildfires, while we also experience new destructive hurricanes, and earthquakes, and wildfires.

It's a lot for our communities and our souls to bear and so we wanted to name this moment and give some opportunity to talk about how we may be responding the range of emotional psychological physiological and spiritual responses that folks may be having right now, and give some resources for you, in your own selves and spirits as well as in your communities and congregations. So with that, I open it up to the table at large. How are you doing in the midst of all that I named? How are you experiencing this moment in time?

Kyle Fauntleroy: It's like the third time I've had to answer that question since, not only in relation to 9/11, but in relation to the withdrawal of American and coalition forces from Afghanistan. When I saw Afghan civilians clinging on to the C-17, when I saw the Chinook helicopter hovering over the embassy. And Terri, you mentioned the fall of

Saigon in our in our pre-game, so to speak -that's exactly when that Huey was hanging over the Hanoi embassy, it's exactly what I thought of. And I've had my guts, my chest, my - I just had a weird feeling located here. And I've been reminding myself when traumatic events have happened throughout my ministry within the military that goes back to 1987. We serve a God of abundant life and living abundance. We want to think of in good terms, but abundance is abundance. It's the sour fruit with the fresh fruit. So we search. I search for the grace of God, even in horrific events, and count on and depend upon the breath of God to grant me the stamina to reproduce, represent the love of God in that event.

So I have been doing. I have to remind myself to take a deep breath. I have to remind myself to go work out. I have to remind myself to pay attention to my diet. I have to remind myself to trust my wife, my spouse, when she says, "you need to go for a walk; you need to do 20 push-ups; you need you need to do something differently than what you're doing now because it's not working for us." And it's all about us. That's me.

Susan Ward Diamond: Kyle, as you were sharing that I was thinking about how what a what a moment of grace in my life it has been in these times to be on sabbatical so that I have time to think. And I have time to process and I have time to breathe. I know that when we started having COVID as a reality 18 months ago, I felt like there was no time for anything. I, you know, just felt this crunch of "what are we going to do? Is the church going to cease to exist?" You know, I can't do what I do well, to reach out with pastoral care to people I love. Can't go to the hospital. Can't hold somebody's hand. Can't hug anybody. And so, just your words of being self-aware and listening to your body and taking time to slow down, I think has been very helpful for me.

At least in the last couple of months as I have been doing really, really, really heavy duty work - I've been interviewing people all over the country and talking with veterans, and with first frontline workers, nurses, and doctors, and teachers - all who are dealing with the chaos that's been going on. And it's heavy duty, and I, you know, someone, my coach asked me before I left, "Please, Susan, realize that, you know, you got to take care of you during this time, too." And so, that has been something I've been very intentional about as well, but, you know, it, your word about abundance really resonated with me because abundance isn't just a good feeling. It is being in the moment with God in the midst of all that is, so thank you for, thank you for sharing that.

Joselyn Spence: I'll jump in here as we pick up on what the last people said. I think that piece about the breath of God really sat with me because I, too, have been having to do my breathing exercises and make sure that I am, you know - in my times of meditation, even earlier today I had a midday moment of worship, of just laying flat on the floor and letting the music just wash over me, letting the Spirit wash over me to recenter myself, because this time is a time of a lot of grief that I will say that I have been experiencing - to have the reminder of what happened at 9/11, as well as almost 700,000 people who have died in this country because of COVID 19, seeing the images, as you mentioned, of the people in Afghanistan clinging on to planes, falling to

their death in search of survival, is very challenging. The people in the Gulf who are remembering Katrina and on the run, of trying to keep themselves and their family safe, and not sure when they will be able to return home. Hearing the stories, seeing the images - it has brought on for me a lot of grief, and I allow myself to feel that because it is a part of our process of being humans. We feel that grief. We grieve with others. And so feeling all of those feelings, feeling it within my body, making sure I'm doing my yoga practice, making sure I'm eating well, making sure that I'm drinking enough water, and taking my walks as well has been very important for me. And reaching out to other people to share, you know, what we all are experiencing during this time.

CHA: Thank you, Joselyn.

Selena Reyes Martinez: The word "grief" resonates to me during this time. Working in chaplaincy in hospice, I have to handle that basically on a weekly basis, so I have also begun to do some work with the hospital. And, in this time, it's so hard when I see every single week statistics of 100 patients coming to the hospital - just the one that we work in - 100 patients infected with the virus and 90 are unvaccinated. And that almost that 90 percent have to be intubated, and most of them will die. So a lot of grief, just in the moment, thinking about what happened 20 years ago, what has been happening in many years - hurricanes like Maria that hit my own island from Puerto Rico while my mother was dealing with cancer - and so that word really resonates to me in terms of how can we be hope in the midst of all this grief, and all these moments of difficulty. How can we be the presence of God to others and be present for them in the midst of all these traumatic events?

So, in myself, in terms of myself, I share with all of you, like, all the same experiences in terms of taking care of ourselves. I do take long weekends for myself. I just came out of the long weekend on Labor Day - went to the beach, my peaceful space, because I need to breathe. I just need to have space so I can continue doing the work.

Terri Hord Owens: Yeah, that question, "how are you," right, is one that those of us in ministry very seldom ask. We ask people that question. We don't almost, don't know how to respond when people ask us how we are doing. And, you know, from - for memories of, you know - I was still in the corporate world, still in divinity school as a second career student when 9/11 hit, and the pandemic as general minister and president. I had - March of 2020, I was two and not quite two and a half years in, and I remember coming back from a 14-day, 17-day trip to Southern Asia with Global Ministries, and we were in that part of the world where people were starting to talk about the virus. And we saw lots of East Asian and South Asian people in airports with masks. And my staff's texting me desperately, saying, "are you okay? What's happening over there?" We came back and had a general board meeting, and I started using this language of imagining a new world, and had been talking with my staff, and we kind of had a thought retreat with some of people that I trust and respect to bounce some ideas off of them. And I'm like, is this idea of imagination and the idea of a new world - is that too lofty? Is that too visionary? Because the church is really going to have to think about

itself a lot differently. That State of the Church (message) to the board was given on February 23, 2020.

Three weeks later, all of the general ministries are working virtually and the pandemic is real. I think, for me, during this time of pandemic and increased hurricanes, and wildfires, and floods, the real need to be pastorally present has changed. I spent a lot of time preparing videos, trying to keep my pulse on the moment, being in touch with, you know, Week of Compassion staff, who are always so good to help me know who needs, who just needs a phone call right now, who just needs a text, or an email. And I don't think it was until - I just came back from two weeks - I won't call it vacation because I'm dealing with the very serious illness of my mother - and so this time of rest did not turn out to be a time of rest for me - and so all of the, you know, processing what was happening; more wildfires, another hurricane, watching the images of children, hearing this morning about women being beaten and attacked in Afghanistan, street violence still happening in Chicago, babies, you know, little babies being shot in the head - all of this, and I've really had to learn, first of all, to ask myself that question, "how are you?" You need to step back and look in the mirror and say, "how are you."

And as you've all described, making space for, not only exercise, getting away from these screens, but also - you know, I'm a firm believer in centering prayer and deep breathing. I did a lot of theater as a young person, so deep breathing exercises are something I just naturally do to just calm nerves, you know, before stage. And I, you know, do a lot of that, as have done a lot of that as a director. But I am coming back in a really big way to understanding that it's not that the weight of the church is on my shoulders, but the weight of the church is on my shoulders and so I have to be good in order to not only model for people what it looks like, but also just be recognizing and being sensitive the fact we have so many clergy right now who are leaving ministry because it's just so much. It's too much. And if you don't have a congregation who's attuned to the impacts of what clergy, you're facing, of what it takes out of you - you know I'm thinking about Louisiana, and Mississippi, Texas and California wildfires and you know my first - right after I became GMP, I toured the coastal areas that were impacted by Hurricane Harvey with Caroline and just the visceral images of what people experience in many cases over and over again, and so I think that question - I thank you for that question.

And I'm realizing in this moment, I need to, say, ask myself that question more often - "Terri, how are you? What are you doing to ensure" - It's the classic, you know, making sure your own face mask is on before you reach to help others. And I'm very cognizant of the fact that I need to lead in a way that both models that for my staff, for other pastors, for regional ministers, for people like Kyle, and Selena, and Joselyn, and Susan, and Caroline, and all of you that we, that what we experience is trauma and we need to understand the impacts of that and give ourselves space to take care of ourselves. That's just really, really, important. But thank you for that question, because I need to ask myself that more often. We all do - for clergy, and lay folk, for all of us who are in relationship with other people. If we're going to show up in this world

as people who embody the love of God, we have to embody it in ourselves first. And so many of you named the ways that you are holding this trauma and your experience of this moment in your bodies; that it sits right here, and that you have to remind yourself to breathe, and that you need to take moments for rest.

CHA: And we know from research that our bodies carry the past traumas we have experienced. And so, I wonder, especially those of you with some clinical experience, if you could speak about what is happening psychologically, physiologically, and spiritually when we encounter new traumas or reminders of our past traumas. What is that doing in our bodies and why might we experience a moment of trauma in a different way because of our past experiences?

Perhaps Joselyn or Selena, you could take a first response there.

SRM: One of the things that happened particularly, for example, for hospice patients and families is that the trauma gets larger because they begin to see this new event happening and they have not worked past stuff, so they may be so tired and so drained dealing with the new situation, but they haven't worked with the old situation, so it's important for them to work that out.

One of the things that we recommend is the communication in the family, particularly if you're gonna lose a patient in some time the next six months, because sometimes this patient is handling all these traumatic events and grief in their own person, that they forget to say, "Oh, thank you, my daughter, because you're taking care of me." And they're just screaming, "I'm in pain, I need medication," so then the daughter is feeling all these deep feelings of regret, tiredness or whatever. It is so, the communication, is so important.

And remind, remind them, be thankful, you know, just a little word of thank you; just acknowledge as the patient and as the caregiver that you guys are going through a traumatic event; that you guys are gonna have a great loss; that this this is a temporary thing but it's gonna have an end; that it's gonna have all the traumatic event, well, it's the preparation, the anticipatory grief; then is the event per se and then the time afterwards. So, communication is such an important part. If they need professional help, you could be a therapist. It could be a social worker, clinical social worker; could be the pastor, talking to the pastor, so they can take away these emotions that they are feeling, and so need to deal with the physiology, because also sometimes there's no sleep. There is deprivation of food; they are - the psychology of the stuff, too - and then also the spirituality - why God why this is happening to me. So it's a bunch of emotions. There maybe, Joselyn, can continue...

JS: Yeah, when you brought up the way that the trauma will get bigger because they had things that they hadn't previously dealt with - that is so big for a lot of people, because if you've had previous trauma that's unresolved, you're going to be more likely to have trauma responses to later incidents in your life, because your nervous system has not returned to its normal balance. So you have the traumas piling up on each

other, and they're just kind of there, and your nervous system is just out of whack. So, you know, Caroline when you brought up thinking about what is happening inside of our bodies when we experience trauma, we're in a moment where we have this overwhelming distressing, terrifying event that our system cannot adequately cope with because it's just too much. A lot of times what happens for people is their system doesn't go back to that normal functioning.

Our sympathetic nervous system is going to kick in to protect us, and, as a therapist, I have often told my clients, "Hey, listen. Your body and your brain are trying to protect you." We want to say thank-you to ourselves. It's trying to protect you. The problem is when we don't get it back to normal because we haven't resolved what has happened, so that's where we want to engage in treatment. That's going to help us to get to that space where we're back in that balance. And so then we'll see people who develop PTSD because their system is still stuck in that stress response, and it just keeps responding like that, even in times when you're safe. And then times where you might be triggered - there's something that comes up that reminds you of even the smallest thing. I will say, you know, in response to - you think about the hurricanes.

I was talking to someone about this recently. People who witnessed what happened during Katrina and the response to that by the government, some sort of stress response to the way that the government has handled the COVID pandemic, they might not feel any sort of specific attachment that they can recognize but, because they are noticing there's some neglect here, it might trigger neglect that they experienced in childhood, right? They may have had that childhood trauma of neglect, and so witnessing the way that some of the natural disasters have been handled, or any other situation has been handled, causes that to come up for them, but they don't - they're not aware of that's what's happening - "that's why I'm feeling the way I am now." And for me, you know, Caroline, you mentioned earlier, I think it was in our pregame time, it's a normal response to something that is abnormal, so we don't want to feel the guilt and the shame about it, but we want to give ourselves grace. And now we have the awareness of what is actually happening inside of my body, and response to what's going on around me. Let me get some help. Let me utilize some tools, some strategies, are gonna get me back balanced.

CHA: Kyle, I wonder if you want to jump in. On any of that from your - on all of it.

KF: It's all great stuff. It's all great stuff, I think, for a specific traumatic event, as Joselyn said, that there's a, that there is, indeed, a very real physical reaction, you know. It's our fight-or-flight stuff, and the adrenaline, the dopamine, and on all the - all the chemicals that flood our system in order to keep us alive, that changes us. That changes us, where we may come to a point where we understand it cognitively, or intellect - have some intellectual resolution with it. We still have the physical effects with it. I would say from, correct me if I'm wrong, Joselyn, I see this a lot especially in military members who can't get the adrenaline high again because it saved their lives, and they got to have it again. So they're buying motorcycles. They're jumping out of airplanes with parachutes. They're doing a lot of high-risk stuff just to get that feeling

again, because it becomes addictive. And that's why we say, right, "Shipmate, you're not going to buy a motorcycle. We're going to go for a run; we're going to, we're going to do this, we're gonna do something that's controllable in response to an out-of-control moment." And then, Joselyn also jogged the distinction between, you know, a moral injury and a physical injury, like that trauma provokes trauma can provoke both, to be sure, but the moral injury is when we've done something we shouldn't have done - we failed to act when we should have acted. We've been betrayed by the highest levels of benevolent authority. Our heart is broken, the world is not - I can feel myself getting amped up just now, just talking about it. The world has not responded in this moment, in these series of days and these series of months as I understand the world to work. I have been betrayed my heart is broken. How do I recover that? I mean, we see evidence in Scripture. Throughout Scripture - and it's not just Lamentations; it's not just the Psalms; it's throughout scripture - and we have examples of survival.

That is not easy. I mean it's the roll shall be called up yonder, not here necessarily. We've got to persevere. God equips us to persevere, but that doesn't mean it's going to be easy.

CHA: I wonder if this is a different question, actually, but I wonder if you have encountered good tools or strategies or practices for helping people find that moment of control in out-of-control situations? Or to find some way to reckon with our sense of the world getting turned upside down? I think Selena alluded to it a minute ago when she talked about different disciplines coming to bear to help one human being when it comes to trauma or moral injury.

KF: It's a fellowship of healing. The pastor can't do it all. The pastor is not called to do it all. We need the clinician. My first encounter with moral injury was a young Marine during Desert Storm. I'm gonna go back that far, Terri since you brought it up earlier. He was on a gun truck. He was doing his job and he had taken out an enemy machine gun nest, for want of a better term. I'm trying to use language terms that everybody will understand.

And when that happened, the Marines have to go into that event (area) where all the dead bodies are and find intelligence. That means they go through people's pockets to find maps, to find orders, to find - . And this young Marine found a wallet and in the wallet was a photograph of this Iraqi soldier's family - he and his family - it could have been an Olin Mills photograph of the family that we have in every congregational yearbook that we're accustomed to - and it rocked his world. It wasn't that he had done anything wrong. He was taking fire from, and he returned fire. That's what warriors do.

But the impact of what we, as a nation, call our military to do -. We send them. We are culpable in this. We send them. And he couldn't sleep. And I met him two years after the fact, and he still couldn't sleep. That Iraqi soldier had just as many kids as the Marine did. It took a team to bring that soldier to a night's sleep. It took the cha-, he wasn't even my faith group. He wasn't a Disciple. He was a non-practicing Roman Catholic. But it took the chaplain; it took a psychologist; it took a psychiatrist. It took, you

know, it took a team of people, and it took his fellow Marines, to a point where he could lay his head down at night and sleep for six or eight hours. It's a team, just as Selena said earlier. It's a team of people and those with a shared experience. I'll be quiet for a while. Sorry.

SWD: I just wanted to kind of piggyback on that because one of the things that I am exploring with my study grant on moral injury is the fact that this has been happening. Kyle and I both have been involved with healing for moral injury among our, you know, our veteran community, and in the midst of this convergence of so many different factors - you know, the pandemic, the racial reckoning, the political division, the climate change - we just named some of those things just a few minutes ago.

And with the convergence of that, we're just seeing an eruption, I believe of moral injury that is happening on a much broader scale. And so, what can we - how can we continue to do that good work that Kyle's talking about with our veterans but also finding ways within our congregations and communities to provide pathways for people to be able to embrace healing?

I was very, very blessed to visit a group of veterans just about a week ago in northern Ohio, and it's with an organization called Warriors Journey Home. They've been meeting together with small groups for almost 15 years now, and I had the opportunity to be with a group of about 12 veterans in the midst of the Afghan withdrawal. And that just brought up so much, but this group of veterans - Vietnam, you know, the Gulf War, the wars that we've been involved in - all coming together and having rituals that help them to name their stories, to talk about what they were experiencing - was an avenue for them to survive. There were several Vietnam veterans that they said they would not be alive today if it wasn't for the community that they have experienced through that.

So how can, you know, my mind is going, and my heart is trying to think about how can we in the church provide those kinds of pathways for people? How can the church be reformed to truly, you know, say, "Right now God is calling us to be communities of healing." That's what Jesus did. That's what we are called to do in the midst of this. And so, I mean, I think, "thank God for all of you" who are bringing great gifts to that. But I think us learn- us not just bearing that burden, you know, when we're morally distressed, or we've suffered trauma, or we're embraced in moral injury - not to bear that by ourselves, to find a way to share what's going on inside, not just to do the self-care and bear this alone, but say, you know, "I need you. We need each other."

THO: I think that's so important, what you're saying, and Kyle, you just popped, "what's in my head" in the chat. That moral injury is - it's not just limited to combat survivors. It's anybody who experiences any form of injustice or violation, you know, of who they are. And, you know, our church does a lot of work with the Poor People's Campaign. Poverty is trauma. Poverty is social violence. Not having enough to eat; seeing kids on the street, being shot in front of you; family members being shot.

My husband serves a large church on the south side of Chicago. It's about, oh, 15, 000 members, and he has been very active in the past 15 years being very hands-on with the children's choir. And somebody asked him, "Why are you? You know, it's a large, you know, arts organization. Why are you, who's the leader of this, paying attention to the children's choir? Can't you just find somebody to deal with the children's choir?" And it's, like, well, no. I think they need to know and have relationship with, you know, with the leaders in the church.

And so they had a group of parents doing prayer time with these kids. And their prayer requests were about getting home safely from church. Lord, let me get home safely from church. And, wisely among this group - the parent was a professional licensed psychologist, clinical psychologist - he then began to arrange for there to be resources there for the kids, as part of choir rehearsal, so that they would have people that they could talk to either before or after the choir rehearsal. Parents were invited to come and, you know, those are some of the ways -

I think part of what the church can do is - I think we're all learning a lot, because, you know, during a pandemic, you know, people are suffering. I can't go here. I can't do this. This isn't fair. I'm losing my job. I don't have money. This is, you know, I come from a community where there's a whole lot of trauma that's happened - racial bigotry - those of us who are women understand what that is, and so stuff historically keeps piling on, and keeps piling on, and generation after generation experience it. And then you have - and that's why we have to do work to not only help people recognize all of these forms of injury and trauma but to empower them to understand how the church can address that - that's why our work of, you know, creating, NBA creating communities of healing and care, right, that's why there's Joselyn. That's why that that ministry - is so, so important. That's why the work that Week of Compassion does is so pastoral in nature. And that's why people like Caroline and Vy - I can't imagine what their lives are like with the increase of natural disasters that they're constantly responding to that - but we have to educate people.

And the church has to be a place where the education can happen, and, hopefully, where we can introduce people to the kinds of resources that are both legitimate, because we still have generations and communities of people who think that that professional assistance is - there's something wrong with me, or I don't need that, or there's a taboo, there's shame in addressing because it falls under this banner of mental health. And I really feel like the church has a role to play in that kind of education, and in supporting the use of those resources, not just for clergy, but for our communities and even our justice ministries to say that this is the way we respond to the world because there is this trauma and hurt that's there. And so we're called to, you know, Luke 4:18, "Bind up the brokenhearted. Set at liberty those who are captive." Jesus is referring to all kinds of trauma there, and I just hope that we can - that our church in particular - can open people's eyes to that and understand that this is why I need to make sure that people have food to eat, and health care, and a roof over their head, because to not have those things is a form of trauma that society is perpetuating.

We have to do something about that if we are the followers of Jesus Christ. That's part of God's reign on earth, making sure that those things happen.

JS: I do want to say I agree wholeheartedly - I think it was Susan who mentioned - we can't just have self-care. It has to be bigger than that. And I am constantly talking about communal care, where it is this community thing where we all come together and we're supporting each other. I saw something earlier today online about a woman - I can't remember exactly where it is - but she is doing a ceremony for her entire neighborhood to honor everyone who has passed away. And she put out this call letting people know, "Hey, drop your photos off," because she wants to create this huge altar in the garden. And I saw that, and thought, yes. This is, you know, this is one of the things I'm exactly talking about when we come together and we commune together because we have to have communal lament. It is all of the Bible. You know, Kyle mentioned earlier about these stories that are all throughout the Bible of loss and trauma. And that communal lament is there, too. I think that people desperately need to be together, and grieve together; to share their stories; to support one another in the next phase of rebuilding beyond the trauma, and, honestly, within the trauma, because it's this - is just an ongoing process. But, as has been mentioned, about people listening to your stories; having a witness; and having your narrative heard is key to healing trauma.

And I feel like we have to - we don't lament together. We're not able to imagine what is beyond now together, which makes that so important. So I think having groups of people together, whether it's your neighborhood, whether it's your church group - any sort of group of people that you can bring together - and that is also the challenge of being in the pandemic - a lot of people not being able to be present with one another even to think about the 9/11 anniversary. For the past 20 years, or 19 years, people were used to gathering in very large groups at memorial sites, and last year and this year it certainly won't be the same.

And so, still being able to do that sort of thing online - I know we're all zoomed fatigued and burned out from having to do everything online -but being able to come together in those groups, to be with one another, because you know our Bible tells us that God is close to the brokenhearted. So we know that people are brokenhearted, and we want to be close to them, too.

SRM: You brought that aspect of the communal and then sharing their narratives. That's something that we use a lot in our care because as people share their narratives and they share what the traumatic experience they had, it's a process of healing, also. And I have done a lot of leading support groups for grief, and particularly having lost my mom of cancer three years ago - is going to be her anniversary in the 24th of this month - I noticed myself how healing and how powerful it was for me, talking about the anniversary and the dramatic event and the loss for me, to share with clients, with people from church, about that experience and what I had to live and what I experienced. It was very healing.

In addition, to also let yourself feel. It's so, so important, because the grief doesn't go away. It, you know - you learn to live with the grief. I read one time a sign in in my work that said, "grief is love that doesn't have a place to go." So, you're still loving that person. You still, you know, remembering, you still re-living that traumatic event, re-living the loss. Every time, every day, as you smell something that reminds you; the experience as you go to a restaurant and see what that person used to order; or go to a store and have a smell or have a taste of something that that person or that experience is re-living in you. So, you have to learn to live with the trauma, and the loss, and begin to heal in the process.

And that's why it's so important to use all the tools that we have mentioned; that a team of people will also read about it; and also tell the narrative because it's healing. If you come into contact with someone who is not understanding, does not meet your narrative, you know they're not validating of your experience. Do not let that shut you down from sharing with other people, you know, but just remembering, "hey, it's not my fault." It's not about my narrative; it's just this person is not at a place to be able to handle that; and then moving forward to talking with someone else. But I think it's always important to say that, for people to know that some people might not be able to hear your story, because it may trigger something within them, or they just don't have the capacity for that. And that is not your fault, you know. You want to keep moving forward to someone else who may listen to you.

It makes me think you said there's preachers down here but it makes me think about something I was talking about yesterday, about the woman with the issue of blood and how many people did she go to; How many people talked about her? How many people did not want to hear her story, did not want to help her? She kept going until she saw Jesus and, you know, received what she needed to. And so some people are not going to be able to support in the journey. And, you know, we pray for them to get what they need to be able to have the empathy while you continue forward to accessing the resources and the spaces that are available to you in your process. Absolutely. I'll have that keep going until we see Jesus.

CHA: Selena and Joselyn, you both kind of named the way anniversaries can - if we're already exhausted emotionally and psychologically because of the other stuff that we're carrying - those anniversaries can become more raw for us, so just wanted to name that and say it's okay that if this anniversary is harder than last anniversary; it's okay.

We had a couple of resources named in the chat so I'll read this out - the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School does have some upcoming webinars. When we post this online, we'll put the link in the comments below. Wonderful resources coming out of the Soul Repair Center. There is a book called Souls Cry which is about the Warriors Journey Home ministry that Susan spoke about earlier, and it also has a manual for training with books of rituals and liturgies and other resources. NBA also has some really wonderful webinars around mental health and trauma responses. Joselyn posted a wonderful blog post specifically on our topic that we're discussing today, so that's available at nbacares.org. And there you can also learn more about the SoulCare

conversations that NBA hosts to provide some safe space for the sharing and honoring of our narratives and our experiences.

We have just a few minutes left in our allotted time, and so I just want to open up. Any final thoughts or comments that any of you want to share? Or other resources you want to make sure people know about?

KF: I want to try to chime in on that a resource that I didn't know I had until I got back to Brite. A couple of years ago, classmates - when we talk about shared experiences whether it's a traumatic time or an exploratory time like in divinity school - I talked to folks that I hadn't talked to in 35 years - longer than that - but I'm not going to admit it, right, Susan? We're a really good resource, and we share the faith and we can encourage one another in the faith. Thanks.

CHA: One final resource I want to lift up is for our active clergy that comes to us from the Pension Fund and that is the Learn to Live platform, which is a self-directed behavioral health/mental health app with strategies for learning to live more fully and addressing some of the most common challenges for mental health for clergy. And you can find out more about that on the Pension Fund website. And we'll link that below as well.

I just want to give people permission to turn the TV off. Turn the documentaries off. Log out of social media because we are having these larger trauma responses now because we have access to so much information - images, videos, sounds - that will stay with you. And so some people feel like they need to stay up to date with what's happening. Please utilize your sabbath practice and just step away, even if it's 10 hours, 5 hours, but try to take that practice in especially now because there's so many documentaries and things that are going to be on TV and available to you and you don't have to take everything. And you can just trust God that whatever you need to know is happening, you will know, and allow yourself to rest.

CHA: Thank you all for your wisdom, for your time, for your vulnerability, and having this conversation, which is one that's so important for the church. I am grateful to know you all and to be in ministry with all of you, and I hope that the rest of our church takes advantage of the great gifts that God has brought into the movement we call the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the faces that are across the screen. With that, Pastor Terri, would you close us with prayer?

THO: Absolutely. And before I do, thank you Caroline for facilitating this time together and bringing us together to lift up this most important issue, and for the leadership that you're providing in a trauma response roundtable of the general ministries that came out of a COVID 19 task force that we convened at the beginning of the pandemic from our general ministry. So thank you for your leadership there, and all that you do. As well, we're grateful for you and Vy and all those who serve and Week of Compassion. So friends, thank you, each one. Shall we pray?

Gracious and loving God, how we thank you for the gifts that you have given across our church within each person who has participated in this conversation today. God we thank you for the reminders that we've had of how important it is to create communities and fellowships in which healing and care can take place. We thank you for the education on different points about what is really involved in moral injury, how is that connected to our faith, and the way we walk and live out our witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank you for so many who care so much about so many. God we pray that perhaps something that has been said or shared in this conversation will be a blessing to many who will watch it later, that you will continue to prosper and provide resources for our church. We begin with who we are and where we are to be supportive of so many in ministry and so many professionals who are here to help facilitate the creation and use of so many resources, not only for clergy, but for all of us. For the communities in which we live and serve, thank you, O God. For reminding us each and every day of how much you love us. Help us to be places of safety and space for healing for one another. Help us never be afraid to reach out to one another for support and for care. We thank you again for this time together, and we thank you, again, for how you always provide and meet our needs. Help us never be afraid to reach out and avail ourselves of those resources, that love and that support which you have so richly provided in so many different ways. Be with us all as this anniversary approaches. Help us, oh God. Keep us and we'll be kept, as the old song says. We thank you. We bless your name. We pray that you would just continue to keep us focused on the work that you've given us to do, to truly be a movement for wholeness in this so very fragmented world. Help us to be the church that we say we are. It's in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen