

White Paper Series 2

Employee Well-being

PTSD, Mental Health, and Workplace Chaplaincy

"Resilience Over Resignation"

A Collaboration of Contributors



**Creative Constructs to Minimize
PTSD-Type Effects from Prolonged
Stress Exposure to Atypical Stimuli**



Employee Well-being

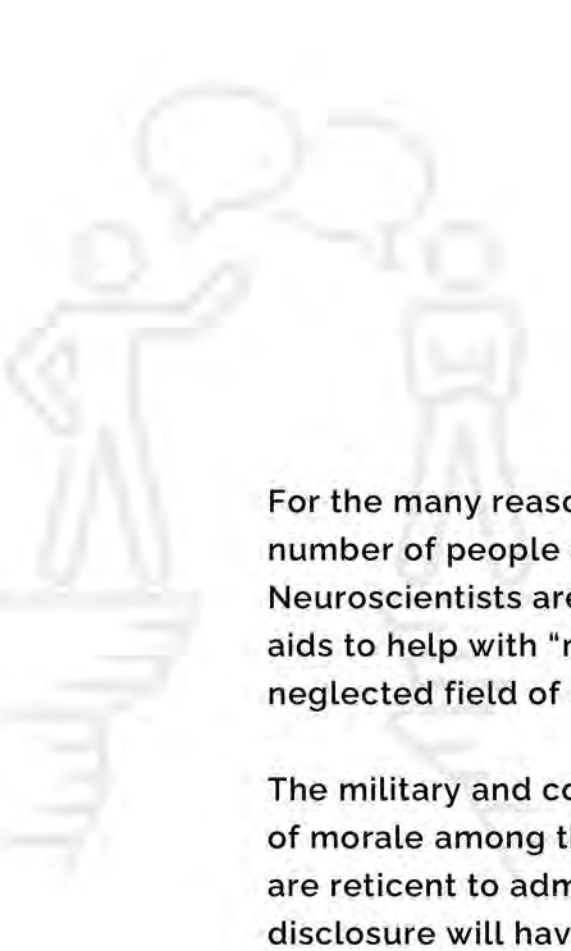
PTSD, Mental Health, and Workplace Chaplaincy

"Resilience over Resignation"

A Collaboration of Contributors

Series 2

**Creative Constructs to Minimize
PTSD-Type Effects from Prolonged
Stress Exposure to Atypical Stimuli**



For the many reasons covered in this paper, an unprecedented number of people are suffering from mental illness or disorders. Neuroscientists are uncovering physiological and psychological aids to help with "mental illness," which has been a perennial but neglected field of research.

The military and corporations are ill-equipped to deal with the loss of morale among their veterans and employees. The employees are reticent to admit that they are depressed, fearing that disclosure will have negative consequences.

Marketplace Chaplains bridges this void between advanced research and personal anxieties. Their invaluable work connects discouraged people with their responsibilities and livelihoods and guides them toward healing at work, home, and in valued relationships.



J. LANIER BURNS

Research Professor, Theology
Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology
Dallas Theological Seminary
Society for Neuroscience

Contents

2	Overview
3	Current Culture & Stress
8	Proactive Steps to Care for Yourself and Your Family
9	Post Traumatic Stress vs PTSD
13	Proactive Workforce Resilience
18	Managing Stress & Increasing Resilience through Chaplain Care
23	Stories of Chaplain Care
27	Executive Summary
28	Contributions
29	Citations





Overview

Due to uncertainty, risk, and mental and physical anguish, growing numbers of people have maintained an increased level of anxiety and are feeling the effects of long-term exposure to stress and trauma, or post-traumatic stress.

Post-traumatic stress is a normal response to experiencing a traumatic or stressful event. Most people will show at least a few signs or symptoms as their body responds, but when the symptoms begin to disrupt everyday life, thought patterns, actions, and reactions, it may become Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Having positive and proactive strategies in place, such as the support from a Chaplain Care Team, to combat stress, crises, and uncertainty will help create more resilient and thriving individuals, families, workplaces, and communities - right now and in the future.



Current Culture & Stress

Although COVID-19 has impacted people in different ways, it is a unique shared human experience of fear, concern for others, and social isolation that every person across the globe has been affected by to some degree.



Now more than ever, people are feeling the effects of stress and trauma derived from multiple sources:

- Isolation
- Financial distress/job loss
- Global pandemic
- Health anxiety
- Death of loved ones
- Cultural tensions
- Economic turmoil
- Violence
- Upheavals with work or school
- Natural disasters
- Negative news media overload
- Personal issues
- Relationship problems
- Social divisiveness

**We are all
compromised
by this
prolonged and
ongoing
traumatic
stress, even if
we haven't
experienced
PTSD.**

Jeff Ashby
Co-Director

Center for Stress, Trauma, and
Resilience,
Georgia State University



Who is experiencing complex levels of stress?

The pandemic has been disproportionately difficult on the mental and emotional well-being of individuals in vulnerable situations - people living in poverty, the elderly, those with disabilities, youth, young adults, women, people of color, and essential workers.

Experience of trauma may not come from a particular one-time event but from an ongoing, multiple-year experience of distress and suffering. Emotions are heightened and many have maintained a high level of anxiety and stress resulting in physical and mental anguish.

Even before the added stress and trauma of 2020, there were rising rates of suicide, depression, self-harm, and anxiety across all age ranges and members of society. Numbers have increased, leaving many unsure of how to cope with complex levels of stress.

"COVID-19 has already led to diverse mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other trauma- and stress-related disorders."

Psychiatric Times



Families

Some families may have experienced renewed closeness due to the pandemic, but many have faced disruption of routine, deteriorating connections, relationships, and social support, job loss/insecurity, fear of loved ones getting sick/dying, increased stress, financial struggles, loneliness, and compounded personal mental health issues.



Differing world views, opinions, uncertainty over vaccines or health, and discernment about making the right choices for the family have caused further division.



Holidays have been disrupted physically and emotionally and major milestones postponed or uncelebrated.

Children & Teens

The pandemic took a significant toll on the mental well-being of children and young people. During their most formative years, kids lost 2 years of socialization, 2 years of education, and 2 years of “their world.” They lived in an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety resulting in rising rates of suicide attempts, loneliness, loss of friends, loss of self, and delayed ability to see therapists.

Mental health hospitals built specifically for children are profitable and in high demand.

**"We, unfortunately, see a lot of kids
who have attempted suicide . . .
at least once a shift."**

Dr. Michelle Pickett, ER Physician,
Milwaukee Children's Hospital

94%

of school counselors said their
students were showing more
signs of anxiety and depression
than before the pandemic.

New York Times Survey





Seniors

Many senior adults have missed out on special time with loved ones to protect their own health. The rising cost of living while on a limited income has created added stress, and depression is the most prevalent mental health problem among older adults.

In addition, heartbreaking loneliness ensued in senior living communities during COVID. Families were limited or not able to be with their loved ones at end of life, and many residents were unable to understand why their family members could not be there.

Women

Women directly exposed to trauma as a victim, a witness, or during childhood are more susceptible to developing problematic levels of stress.

In addition, women with other mental health conditions like depression or anxiety, who drink a lot of alcohol, or lack a supportive community are more likely to face the ongoing effect of PTSD.

As many as half of the women who are raped develop PTSD.

2X

**WOMEN ARE TWICE AS LIKELY
TO DEVELOP PTSD THAN MEN**

(U.S. Department of Health & Human Services)

"Working women manage multiple roles domestically and professionally, leading to significantly higher stress and anxiety levels than men."

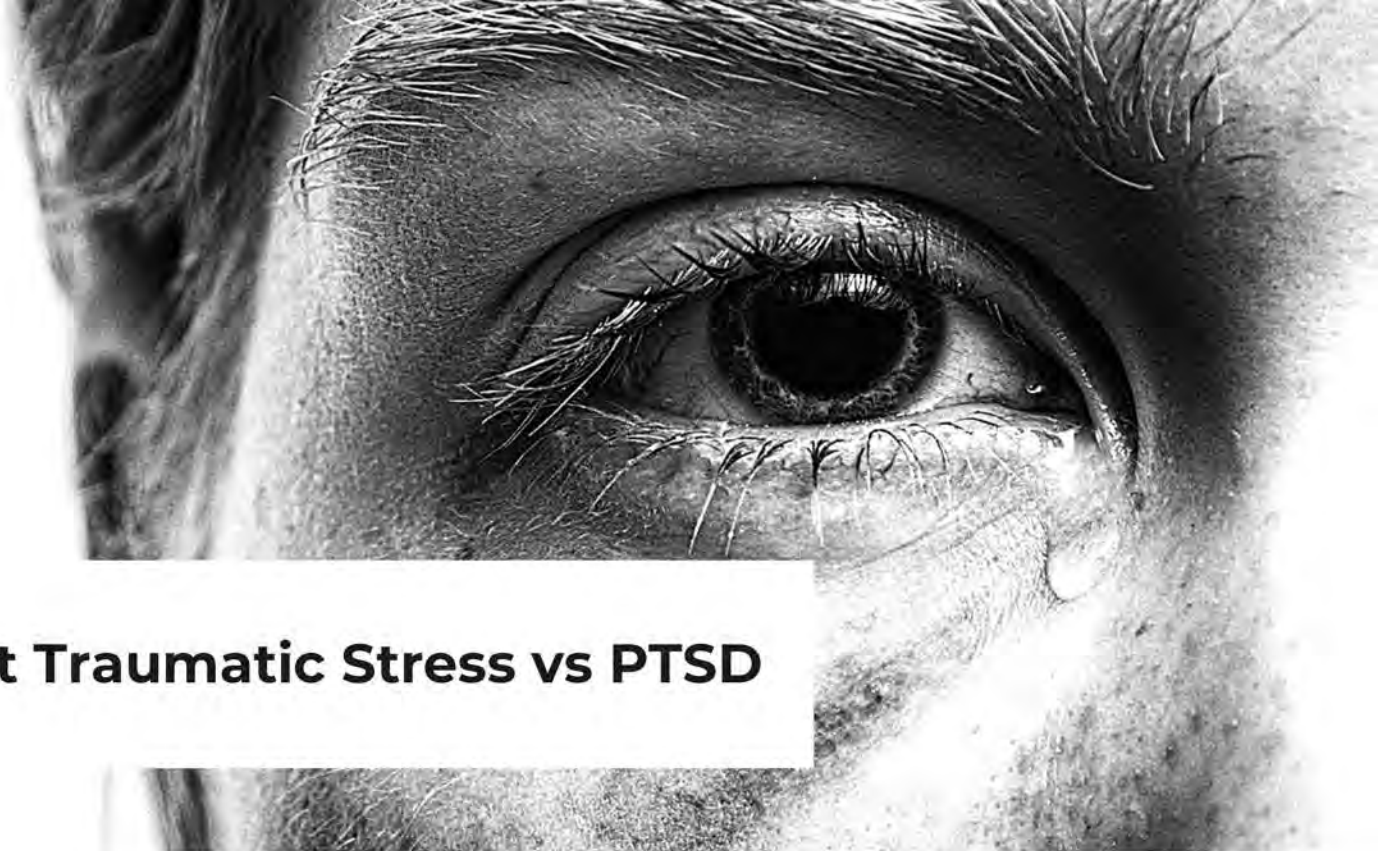
Health and Safety Executive (HSE)



The **988** Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the United States.

Proactive Steps to Care for Yourself and Your Family

- **Check-in with your kids**
- **Come up with a safety plan for your family**
- **Acknowledge that adults get overwhelmed too**
- **Be open and honest**
- **Use fidget toys for kids while talking about serious subjects**
- **Reassure kids that they can't say anything wrong**
- **Get outside**
- **Turn off the news**
- **Monitor social media consumption; less is better**
- **Provide safe place to talk to a neutral person**
- **Maintain connections with others**
- **Share your own thoughts often to diffuse pent-up feelings**
- **Reach out to a counselor, therapist, chaplain**
- **Recognize we're all in this together and we can help each other**
- **Journal about your thoughts and feelings**
- **Reach out to friends and family and participate in social events**
- **Volunteer to help in your community**



Post Traumatic Stress vs PTSD

Post-Traumatic Stress means you've had trauma in your past that affects you in some way. What is it from the past that affects you in some way or another today? No matter how insignificant, it can make you feel sad. Post-Traumatic Stress is a part of everybody's life. The extent that it affects you determines how strong it is. If something from the past—trauma—affects you to the point that it is disruptive to you, that causes reactions, at that point it becomes Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (if it is diagnosed.)

Dr Steve West,
Colonel USAF Command Chaplain
Author of "The Bronze Scar"



It's easy to confuse post-traumatic stress (PTS) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In addition to sharing similar names, there's considerable overlap in symptoms between the two conditions. Both PTS and PTSD are associated with feeling fearful and/or nervous, avoiding the activity or place associated with the traumatic event, and nightmares. However, there are significant differences in symptom intensity, duration, and treatment.

Brainline.org

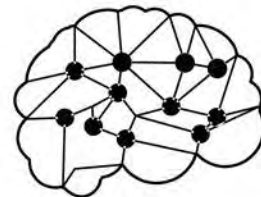
For a person to receive a diagnosis of PTSD, they must meet criteria that are set out in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5) by the American Psychiatric Association (APA).

Our brains are hard-wired to tell our bodies to tense our muscles, breathe faster, and pump more blood when we're under intense stress.

This "fight-or-flight" response is a normal reflex that prepares your body to deal with a threat or challenge in the environment and shuts down non-critical functions, like digestion.

Bottom Line

The difference between PTS and PTSD simply stated is: As symptoms of PTS will naturally ease, those of PTSD will be persistent and disruptive to your everyday life.



"Symptoms of PTS will naturally ease, those of PTSD will be persistent and disruptive to your everyday life."

Chaplain George Youstra
Deputy Chief of Chaplains
Marketplace Chaplains
CH (Col), USAF, Ret.





DEFINITIONS

Trauma is an emotional response to an event that challenges a person's ability to cope.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a clinically diagnosed condition that can result when someone is exposed to a traumatic or stressful experience.

Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD) can be a result of a series of severe, chronic, traumatic events over time or one prolonged experience including severe, chronic, or extremely threatening trauma.

(Psychological Times - Next Generation)

PTSD does not only come from the battlefield

Historically, PTSD was more commonly associated with soldiers who have experienced stressful combat. However, prolonged battle — internal or external — involving intense fear, a sense of helplessness, or horror can arise in other settings too.

Prolonged increases in stress hormones (cortisol and adrenaline), can leave us in a constant state of fight-or-flight, triggering psychological and physical problems even after our surroundings are normalizing. Because of this permanent stress state (or survival mode), those with PTSD experience a shut-down in parts of the brain impacting creativity, social engagement, joy, relaxation, and critical and logical thinking.

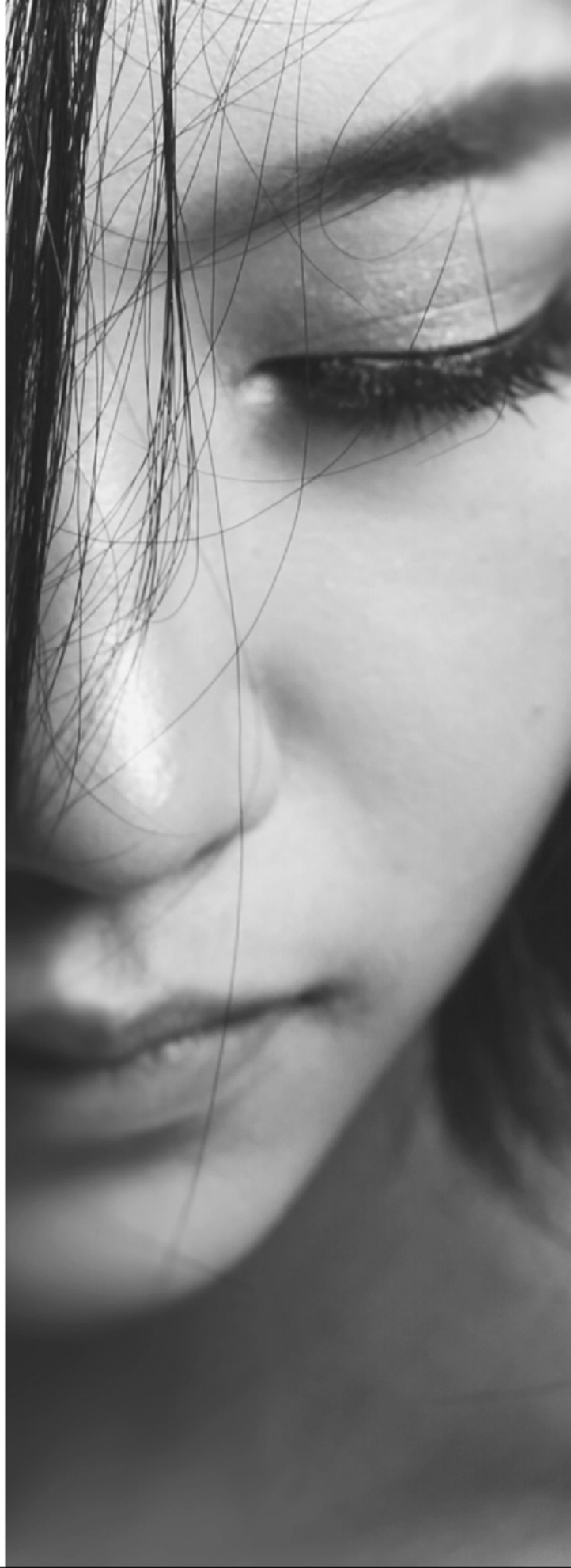
Symptoms

- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Fearful thoughts
- Refusing to discuss the event
- Avoiding situations that remind the person of the event
- Difficulty sleeping
- Irritability and angry outbursts
- Hypersensitivity to possible dangers
- Feeling tense and anxious
- Inability to remember some aspects of the event
- Feelings of guilt and blame
- Feeling detached and estranged from others, emotionally and mentally numbed
- Having a reduced interest in life
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mental health problems, such as depression, phobias and anxiety

In addition, children may also experience:

- Bedwetting
- Inability to speak
- Acting out the event in play
- Clinginess

Medical News Today





Proactive Workforce Resilience

When stress affects an employee's health and well-being, it can negatively impact their work. Their ability to focus decreases and they are more likely to make mistakes, which can also be costly or lead to injuries.

Employers

Employers face the challenge of managing their personal stress while promoting a safe environment for those they employ.

Many are experiencing "The Big Regret" and asking themselves what they could/should have done in response to certain situations – often finding themselves engulfed in feelings of guilt about how they handled something. They may be asking questions such as:

- *How do we keep our company alive?*
- *How do we keep good employees when many are shifting their priorities?*
- *How do we keep our products moving when there are supply chain issues?*
- *And gas prices? Costs are skyrocketing. How can we manage?*



The ongoing effects of the pandemic and increased levels of stress on employers and employees remain evident in the workplace.

Employees

Employees are adjusting to different working conditions while navigating rising consumer costs, increased gas prices, concern for their children's education, health and safety, social and political unrest, and questions of whether they can afford to retire.

The stress, worry, anxiety, and negative emotions experienced in other areas of their lives impact their mental and physical efforts at work. Many are plagued with lost sleep, medical issues, strained relationships, complex mental health conditions, and burnout.

As a result, workplace conflict, absenteeism, and turnover have increased.





The Great Resignation

Personal health is one of the main reasons people have been leaving their jobs in pursuit of more mindful opportunities over the past 12 months.

Employers' support is coming up short.

"A third of workers whose companies offer an EAP or insurance coverage for mental health care think their employer isn't doing enough to support their mental health. That number is double for workers whose employers don't offer either benefit."

Employees are leaving their jobs to pursue new opportunities in record numbers, making hiring and retaining talent a significant challenge for employers across the country.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SCP, SHRM's
President and Chief Executive Officer

As an Employer/Company Owner, how do I help my employees?

Remember 2 things:

Employees don't fake a mental illness, they fake being okay.

Someone in your company needs to talk to a chaplain today.

Warning Signs that an Employee is Struggling:

- The eyes are the window to the soul (study their eyes)
- Any changes in behavior lately? Coming in late, leaving early?
- Are they participating in meetings as per normal?
- Are their projects late?
- Are they more angry? More sensitive?
- Do they isolate more? Not part of the team?
- Has their appearance changed? Is there a downturn in their personal hygiene?



Employee Resilience

Employees often identify work as the number one stressor in their lives, but today's leaders and employees need to thrive under demanding conditions and bounce back from disruptions like COVID-19.

Rather than focusing solely on individual-level factors, care-centered employers recognize how important it is to provide a proactive supportive work environment that enhances employee resilience and mental well-being.

Resilience exists when a person can bounce back and thrive from major challenges. It is often tested when stress factors arise in everyday life or tragedy strikes. Stress is not the only factor that can test a person's resilience; however, how a person handles stress is a strong indicator of their ability to bounce back.



Practical Ways to Promote Resiliency as an Employer:

- Understand Your Employees
- Engage Leadership
- Consider Resilience Training
- Create a Resilient Culture
- Look for Ways to Improve Your Work Environment
- Allow Autonomy
- Reward Good Work
- Provide Access to Services and Supports
- Allow Flexible Schedules
- Be Reasonable About Work Expectations



Managing Stress & Increasing Resilience through Chaplain Care

Workplace chaplains help facilitate a resilient workforce.

Chaplains offer a level of employee care that company leaders want to express but are limited in doing. Interactions with chaplains can help individuals re-engage the parts of their brain that have shut down due to prolonged stress by creating a safe environment where employees can verbally process their trauma. Chaplains provide tools and resources to help individuals focus on what matters most, find joy, and express gratitude at work and at home.



Consistent connections and care-centered relationships with a workplace chaplain can help employees navigate stressful circumstances, adapt to change, uphold a positive attitude, and in many cases proactively prevent major crises from occurring.

Verbally processing trauma with a Chaplain can help individuals find joy, gratitude, and tools to help them focus where they are needed at home or work.

Positive Impacts of Workplace Chaplaincy

- Deepen culture of trust between HR and employees
- Provide support during difficult times
- Aid anxiety and panic attacks
- Connect people with specialists if they notice symptoms of clinical anxiety or depression (including PTSD, Panic Disorder, suicidal thoughts, and more)
- Provide prayer support during times of overwhelming stress
- Formulate game plans to help individuals avoid destructive behavior
- Exhibit care and compassion during tragic events involving employees and families
- Provide stability during unstable times through consistent worksite visits/presence
- Assist individuals dealing with guilt and regret



“Nothing in the world reads as good news to the brain and a reason to leave the stress response and come back into rest and relaxation as compared to an emotional connection with another human being.”

Dr. Tori Olds, Psychologist,
“Surviving versus Thriving: How to Move the Brain toward Wholeness”



David H. Rosmarin is an associate professor at Harvard Medical School and director of the McLean Hospital Spirituality & Mental Health Program

*"In the past year, American mental health sank to the lowest point in history: Incidence of mental disorders increased by 50 percent, compared with before the pandemic, alcohol and other substance abuse surged, and young adults were more than twice as likely to seriously consider suicide than they were in 2018. Yet the only group to see improvements in mental health during the past year were those who attended religious services at least weekly (virtually or in-person): 46 percent report 'excellent' mental health today versus 42 percent one year ago. As former congressional representative Patrick J. Kennedy and journalist Stephen Fried wrote in their book *A Common Struggle*, the two most underappreciated treatments for mental disorders are love and faith."*

By David H. Rosmarin on June 15, 2021
"Psychiatry Needs to Get Right with God"
Scientific American

"The two most underappreciated treatments for mental disorders are love and faith."

Patrick J. Kennedy & Stephen Fried
A Common Struggle



"For a chaplain to support someone in trauma, they need to have great listening skills. Most people who experience trauma tell their way through trauma. For a workplace chaplain to be a good listener, he empowers the person who is traumatized with the ability to listen to their trauma story over and over as they work out the details of that trauma or that crisis."

"Confidentiality is always key for a chaplain to help an employee navigate through their feelings and the different layers of the trauma that they experience."

"Every chaplain in the workforce should be skilled in crisis intervention and how to recognize the signs of trauma. They understand the steps to help someone navigate through the storytelling of their event so that they can regain some type of control of their life back. Because trauma is so confusing and chaotic, the chaplain can be key to helping that employee navigate back to some normal way of life."

Kathy Burden, C-CISM
International Fellowship of Chaplains
Chief Operations Officer

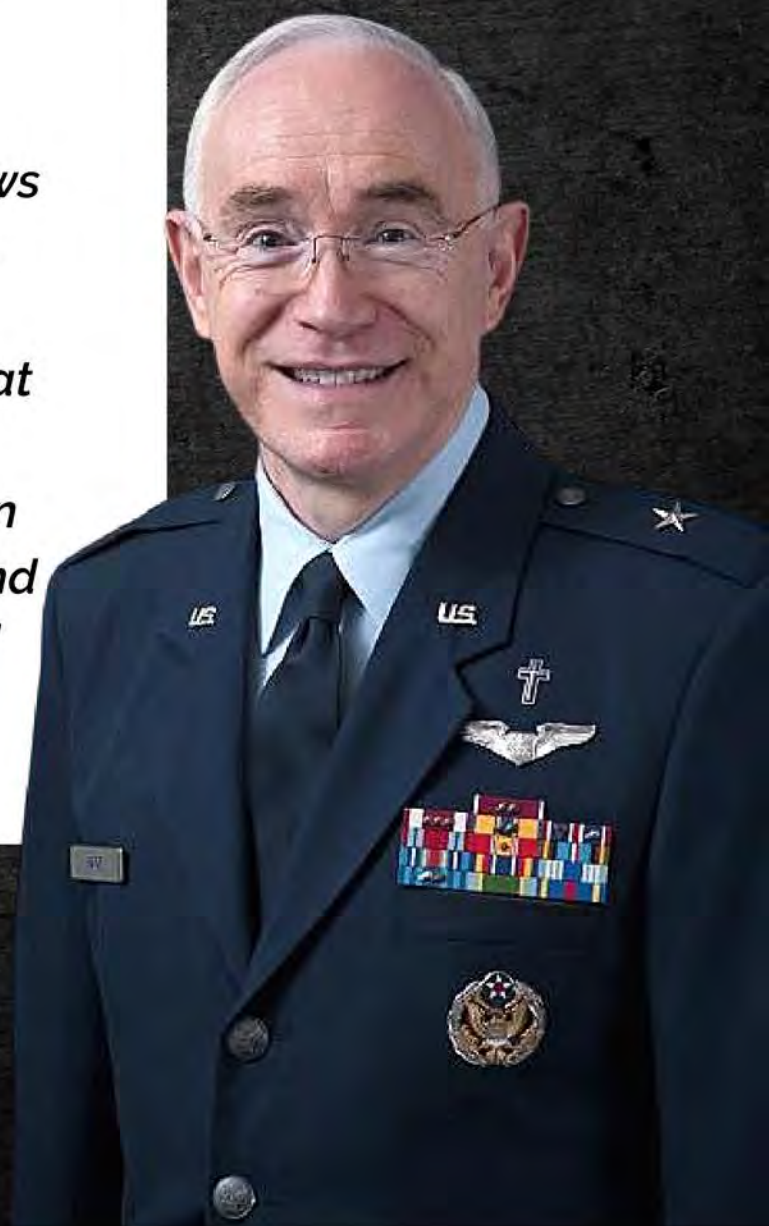
"Because trauma is so confusing and chaotic, the chaplain can be key to helping that employee navigate back to some normal way of life."



There is hope. . .

“Symptoms of post-traumatic stress can show up a month or years after a traumatic experience. While the effects of untreated PTSD can be devastating, the good news is that there is hope. With advanced therapeutic approaches like EMDR that are available now along with support, a person can manage the symptoms and regain the life they knew.”

Chaplain Bob Page
Chief of Chaplains
Marketplace Chaplains
CH (Brig Gen), USAF, Ret.





Stories of Chaplain Care

Care and connection are the lifeline Chaplains offer to those under stress, anxiety, loneliness, depression, and thoughts of suicide.



Serving Employees by Caring for their family

"An employee shared with me about her adult child's mental health struggles. I reminded her that we also care for immediate family members. She began to tear up, and said, 'You care for me so much by caring for my family members!' Her child texted me to meet that night."

Chaplain Meredith





Providing Hope and Support

"An employee called me one evening to talk through their disappointment, grief, and anger. The employee expressed how beneficial it was to speak with someone "outside of work" for help with everything going on.

"We came up with a game plan to manage his issues and the employee realized he had options rather than being stuck, as he originally thought. I have continued to provide a listening ear, support, and resources as the employee's situation unfolds."

Chaplain David





Trusted to Care for Employees

"An employee was really struggling with anxiety and panic attacks. She had just spent an hour in the HR office trying to cope. I had helped her with anxiety before, so the HR leader asked if I could offer further support."

"I let the employee know I was there for her and we discussed tangible ways I could support her, including navigating her insurance website to find a counselor."

"I'm glad that HR trusts us chaplains and is doing its best to create a culture of trust between HR and the employees. It's the perfect picture of what our jobs could look like every day with the right support, communication, and relationship!"

Chaplain Rosa



Encouraging the Downhearted

"A supervisor confided in me about how discouraging it is for them to hire so many people every day and have people begging for a job, yet they don't stay very long. It is difficult, stressful, and discouraging. She is so grateful to have chaplains to talk to. I prayed for her and encouraged her."

"I am thankful that God uses chaplains to encourage the down-hearted."

Chaplain Candice



“People often need a safe and confidential space and person to express their concerns, gain insights and receive coping skills and resources. This is what makes workplace chaplaincy one of the most effective frontline tools for our employees’ mental health and why organizations utilize Chaplain Care Teams.”

Nurturing Mental and Emotional Health
C12 Group

Companies Proactively Utilizing Chaplain Care Teams:



... and many more!



Chaplains offer a level of employee care company leaders want to express themselves but are limited in doing so.

Our chaplains are trained and experienced and foster ongoing relationships and communication for personalized and proactive care. Conversations are always confidential.

Chaplains make regularly scheduled worksite visits and are available to employees and family members nationwide, 24/7, via the MyChap App with options for text, email, phone call, or video chat.

**Want to learn more about building resiliency
for your employees' mental health?**

**Contact us today:
www.mchapusa.com
800-775-7657**



Scan to read Series 1 White Paper:
Employee Wellness: Mental Health and Workplace Chaplaincy,
"Building Employee Resilience"

Contributors:



Jason Brown
CEO/President & CMO
Marketplace Chaplains



Bob Page
Chief of Chaplains
Marketplace Chaplains



George Youstra
Deputy Chief of Chaplains
Marketplace Chaplains



Kathy Burden, C-CISM
CEO | International Fellowship
of Chaplains



David H. Rosmarin, PhD, ABPP
Associate Psychologist, Director
McLean Hospital Spirituality &
Mental Health Program | Associate
Professor of Psychology | Harvard



J. Lanier Burns, PhD
Research Professor, Theology
| Professor of Systematic
Theology | Dallas Theological
Seminary | Society for
Neuroscience



Terry Bunke
Executive Administrator
of Marketing | Marketplace
Chaplains



Danica Raye Dedmon
Executive Director of
Expansion | Marketplace
Chaplains



Kayla Ferman
Content Designer
Marketplace Chaplains

Citations

Tucker, Phebe, MD, Czapla, Christopher S., MD, "Post-COVID Stress Disorder: Another Emerging Consequence of the Global Pandemic", **Psychiatric Times**, 8 January 2021, retrieved 10 May 2022

Ashby, Jeff, "New Research Reveals COVID-19 Traumatic Stress May Predict PTSD, Particularly for People with a History of Trauma", **Georgia State News Hub**, 21 January 2022, retrieved 06 June 2022

Schra, Gail R., MSW, LCSW, "Understanding and Coping with Trauma", **FocusOnTheFamily.com**, 2009, retrieved 10 June 2022

Alfonsi, Sharyn, "'I felt so alone': Rising rates of suicide, depression accelerated by pandemic among U.S. kids", **CBS News, 60 Minutes**, updated 9 May 2022, retrieved 9 May 2022

Miller, Claire Cain, Pallaro, Bianca, "362 School Counselors on the Pandemic's Effect on Children: 'Anxiety is Filling Our Kids'", **The New York Times**, 29 May 2022, retrieved 1 October 2022

OASH Office on Women's Health, "Post-traumatic stress disorder", **U.S. Department of Health & Human Services**, last updated 3 June 2021, retrieved 7 October 2022

West, Steve, Colonel USAF Command Chaplain (retired), "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder", **Christian Chaplains & Coaching YouTube channel**, 30 July 2022, retrieved 14 September 2022

Bender, Dr. James, "What Are the Differences Between PTS and PTSD?", **BrainLine Military**, 9 December 2013, retrieved 14 September 2022

SHRM Press Release, "SHRM Research Highlights Lasting Impact of the 'Great Resignation' on Workers Who Choose to Stay", **SHRM.org**, 20 October 2021, retrieved 4 September 2022

Olds, Tori, "[Surviving versus Thriving: How to Move the Brain toward Wholeness](#)", **YouTube**, 19 July 2019, retrieved 8 November 2022

Rosmarin, David H., "Psychiatry Needs to Get Right with God", **Scientific American**, 15 June 2021, retrieved 12 September 2022

Citations

MedicalNewsToday, "PTSD: What you need to know", 5 September 2022
medically reviewed, retrieved 12 September 2022

Priory, "Why are stress levels among women 50% higher than men?", Health
and Safety Executive statistics, retrieved 12 October 2022

C12, "Nurturing Mental and Emotional Health", April 2022



www.mchapusa.com