

Moral injury

Understanding a Moral Conflict Without Forcing Forgiveness

Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Moral injury describes distress that can follow experiences conflicting with deeply held values; it is not itself a diagnosis. It can involve what someone did, witnessed, could not prevent, or experienced as betrayal. You can explore current meaning without recounting details or deciding on forgiveness.

Choose a recent, manageable example. Write, draw, or discuss your answers. Skip anything that does not fit; this page is not a diagnostic assessment.

Separate values and responsibility

Name the value that feels affected and what was within or outside your control. Responsibility may be personal, shared, institutional, or uncertain. Understanding constraints does not require denying harm or accepting blame that is not yours.

Choose a value-consistent response

A next step could be support, advocacy, acknowledgment, a boundary, or a carefully considered repair. No one is required to confess publicly, reconcile, forgive, or contact a person who harmed them.

1. What value feels affected, using only the detail you choose to share?**2. What responsibility or constraint needs careful examination rather than a quick judgment?****3. What support could help you hold grief, anger, guilt, or betrayal without isolation?****4. What chosen action could honor the value while respecting safety, limits, and others' rights?****Clinical use and adaptation**

Distinguish moral distress from a diagnosis and assess PTSD, depression, and suicidality as indicated. Avoid imposing moral, religious, military, or cultural interpretations. Do not pressure forgiveness, confession, reconciliation, or premature repair; clarify actual responsibility collaboratively.

Original educational resource. Adapt with a clinician; not a validated assessment or complete treatment protocol.

Conceptual references: E18, S05. Full sources are in the online preview and collection appendix.

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