Psychological Reactions to Trauma

- Traumatic events are often *re-experienced*

- Recurrent and intrusive *distressing recollections of the event*, including images, thoughts, or perceptions

- Recurrent distressing *dreams of the event*

- *Acting or feeling* as if the traumatic event were recurring

- *Intense psychological distress* at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event
Physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

Hyper-vigilance, jumpiness, an extreme sense of being "on guard" overreactions, including sudden unprovoked anger.

General anxiety.

Insomnia.

Obsessions with death.
Physical Reactions to Trauma

- Eating disturbances (more or less than usual)
- Sleep disturbances (more or less than usual)
- Sexual dysfunction
- Low energy
- Chronic, unexplained pain

Traumatic Brain Injury is a physical injury to the brain. TBI complicates post-traumatic stress recovery.

Poly-trauma refers to a combination of physical and brain injuries typically requiring extensive care.
Cognitive Reactions to Trauma

- Memory lapses, especially about the trauma
- Difficulty making decisions
- Decreased ability to concentrate
- Feeling distracted

**Remember:** The human brain is a social brain.

Psychosocial deprivation causes physical injury to the brain. A person with a brain injury living in social isolation has two brain injuries:

- the original brain injury and
- the injury of psychosocial deprivation.
- 78% of survivors receive 100% of their support from family members.
Emotional Reactions to Trauma

- Depression, spontaneous crying, despair and hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Fearfulness
- Compulsive and obsessive behaviors
- Feeling out of control
- Irritability, angry and resentment
- Withdrawal from normal routine and relationships
- Emotional numbness
Emotional Reactions (cont.)

- Avoidance of situations that resemble the initial event
- Detachment
- Amnesia
- Altered sense of time
- Depression
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Grief reactions
Behavioral Reactions to Trauma

- Substance abuse
- Self-destructive and impulsive behavior
- Uncontrollable reactive thoughts
- Inability to make healthy lifestyle choices
- Dissociative symptoms ("splitting off" parts of self)
- Discarding previously sustained beliefs
- Compulsive behavior patterns
Trauma’s Effect on Interpersonal Life

- Inability to maintain close relationships or choose appropriate friends and mates
- Sexual problems
- Hostility – Impatience with the “stupid stuff”
- Arguments with family members, employers or co-workers
- Social withdrawal
- Feeling constantly threatened by others
- Avoidance leads to closing of communication with others.
Spiritual Reactions to Trauma

- Confusion about God
- Altered sense of meaning in/of life
- Loss of previously sustained beliefs
- Confusion about core ethical beliefs
- Grief around loss of relationship with God
- Questions of Theodicy
- Feeling dirty and unworthy
- Feeling permanently damaged
- Feelings of guilt
- Loss of community / communication
Spiritual Consequence of War

Difficulty reconciling beliefs with traumatic warzone events

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

I abandoned my religious faith during the war.

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree