

Transcript of Neil Greenberg

I spent a lot of time in the Armed Forces and I thought I'd share with you some of my thoughts on that and about the concept of moral injury as well so we know that troops who deploy to strange locations doing difficult duties are obviously at risk of suffering of mental health problems and that situation is somewhat similar to the current one in relation to Covid 19 and healthcare workers.

The military spends a long time preparing troops before they go away to try and make them feel confident and to give them the skills not just to do their job but also properly to interact with others and that translates very well to the current situation with Covid 19 in that the better that we can prepare teams to support each other the more likely they are to do well whilst they're doing really difficult jobs.

We know that again within the military the evidence is really strong that supervisors, so that's immediate line managers, have a really big role to play in terms of supporting their team's mental health. So having a manager who can have a psychologically savvy supportive conversation with you is really helpful in terms of protecting your mental health and it also means that if you do develop mental health problems having the supportive supervisor means that you're more likely to go on and actually ask for professional help if you need it.

So once again making sure that that supervisor can have that psychologically savvy conversation is really important and all the evidence is that they're probably going to need some sort of active listening or skills training in order to make them feel confident to have those conversations.

Another strategy we put in place in the Armed Forces is peer support so we established formal peer support systems particularly one called TRIM which stands for trauma risk management and this involved training up frontline chefs, soldiers, sailors, airmen in the skills to be able to have a conversation with a colleague to actively monitor them to see how their mental health is over the period of time and to be able to help the organisation take some really simple but proactive approaches to improving their mental health. And we know that all the evidence is that if you can temporarily reduce someone's exposure to pressure whilst improving the support they get that's likely to have really big benefits in terms of their mental health.

Also in the military we know that when people begin to come back from deployment we don't just bring them home and on Thursday and send them back to work on the Monday. Bringing them home is a structured process often called post operational stress management that translates the current situation in that healthcare staff who are currently on the frontline fighting Covid 19 are gonna need some time to be able to reset before they go back to work and that will include probably spending time with family and friends, physically or remotely, depending on what we can do because over the last few weeks or months they haven't had opportunities to do that. So it's really important that people are given the ability to have a graded return to work and that they're properly supported by their supervisors when they come to work in a compassionate way and that their health is also actively monitored over time.

Now one of the particularly big challenges we have at the moment is that of what's called moral injury and a moral injury is an experience of intense psychological distress often associated with shame and guilt in relation to events that really clash with your moral code. So not being able to provide the care that you wanted to because there aren't enough resources or because you were too inexperienced, or there were too many patients may be an example of a moral injury event.

Whilst moral injuries are not illnesses in themselves they are situations in which someone is becomes vulnerable to illness and so we really want to prevent moral injuries where we can. It's also important that clinicians and managers are aware of morale injuries.

Because of the shame and guilt associated with them it's quite common that people don't speak about those emotions because they feel that others will view them as a monster or, say, think there's something wrong with them so they tend to hide those emotions and that they basically cause deterioration in their mental state and can lead on to mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder or depression.