

Six Healing Principles for Social Trauma

A Path to Reconciliation

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Walter - your book as I understand it, in part, is about addressing social justice issues. I believe there is a huge barrier to achieving social justice: traumatization at societal levels (see [Societal Trauma and Societal Trauma Response](#) and [Measures of Societal Trauma: Indicators and Markers](#) by this author) that remains recorded in the unhealed wounds of the people. There are terms (below) that give us a language to talk about these wounds and suggestions of what to do to heal them. To me healing these wounds and achieving social justice are inextricably linked.

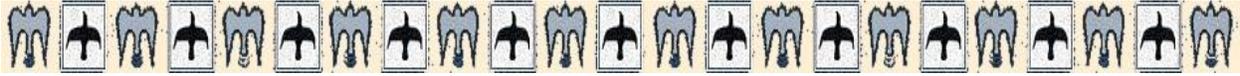
I have looked at what various ones (references below) say about how people heal from social trauma and organized them into a model for my own uses. There are six healing principles I've adopted to give structure to the model: *Truth Telling*, *Listening*, *Change (through grief work)*, *Internal Integration (through restructuring)*, *Forgiveness*, and *Unity (solidarity through peaceful relationships)*. These principles in various forms and combinations are repeatedly touched on by those writing to the issues of healing social groups from traumatization:

Truth: Telling the truth freely, openly, fully. South Africa used truth commissions to sort out the atrocities of apartheid. Rwanda did, too, following the genocide in their country. Healing starts with telling the truth however painful it is. Lies, denials, cover-ups, secrets, and the like sabotage healing before it even begins and breeds resentment and animosity. Telling the whole truth for the sake of healing includes but goes beyond punitive justice. Punitive justice is important but is incomplete without restorative and [transformative justice](#). Together the whole picture of justice is complete and gives us the context for healing.

Listening: Telling the truth implies (requires) that the truth be heard. Probably as hard, if not harder than telling the truth, is hearing the truth. Being heard is as crucial as it is rare. In our country white guilt and a national narrative in denial of the darker chapters of our past are a huge barriers to dialogue and without dialogue there can be no listening. Debilitating guilt and inflammatory raging shuts down the process of listening and healing. But there is no way around the need to tell the truth and have it heard if healing is to proceed along a path to solidarity.

Change through Active Grieving: Grief is the natural response to hearing the truth when the truth is grievous. Grief is also a guide along a natural pathway to change. Grief in American society is often not done well. Grief work gets aborted before it has finished its purpose, or people get stuck in a dysfunctional sort of grief that exacerbates the problem. Ungrieved grief results in unresolved trauma and forms a barrier to healing. Functional grief, as hard as it is to do, guides us along a crooked, winding path to authenticity that otherwise can be missed.

Personal Integration (through Internal Restructuring): Healthy grieving is indeed a difficult and painful



prospect. The natural desire is to avoid it. It can feel like it's going to take you apart. In fact, that is what it does, but with a purpose. Grief causes us to examine how we were put together and as healing happens, we find a new way to restructure ourselves. We emerge from a functional grieving process put together as a more authentic and congruent self. This is the work that sets up the basis for a deeply meaningful forgiveness. It's how we find a new vision for our lives with others. Healthy grieving ends in hope that opens doors for forgiveness and reconciliation.

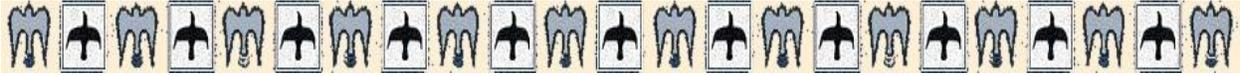
Dignity: Forgiveness is central to dignity and to every model for healing I've seen. What is not clear in some of the write-ups, in my opinion, is that forgiveness is a process and there are no shortcuts. The common mistake is to jump to forgiveness without doing the work forgiveness requires: telling the truth, hearing the truth, grieving the truth, and coming to see a new truth. It seems to me that social justice built on a shallow forgiveness is no justice at all. The dignity we seek is at risk if placed on the foundation of a shallow forgiveness. In my view it is only more injustice. Deep forgiveness is imperative for the injured one's healing; it frees the victim from the perpetrator, but it can't be forced or demanded. The depth of forgiveness sets the depth of healing. Forgiveness when authentic empowers the wounded party and is a gift for the offender if the offender is wise enough to receive it. Forgiving and being forgiven is what makes solidarity a safe option.

Unity: Unity is living in the solution, my definition of reconciliation. This is the ongoing work of a sustainable reconciliation. It is where social justice takes form and has substance. There is no way to jump from offense to unity no matter how sharp the guilt or how deep the need. As with forgiveness there are no shortcuts. Healing is a process. When you break a bone there is no way to recover without first going through the healing process. Once the broken bones of society are healed (by hearing the truth, embracing a new future, and forgiving the wrongs done to and by others) then the true work of building stable, durable, peaceful relationships can begin in full force -- which brings us to a functional, living reconciliation.

Solutions: How do we make use of these factors to work towards a solution? In every solution respectful, honest dialogue is required. Below is a program by this counselor that incorporates these 6 healing principles and structures a forum meant to support the necessary conversation.

Reconciliation Process Groups (RPG): a healing program based on these 6 healing factors:

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/rpg_overview_flow_chart.pdf



General Reference Material

My premise is that nations need time to heal their own trauma or they are at risk of perpetrating further trauma on other less powerful nations around them in the name of national survival. The European hegemony that emerged out of the Dark Ages resulting in world-wide colonial aggression is a case in point.

Disaster on a massive scale: Europe in the 14th century
http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/euro_death.pdf

Aspects of historical trauma are being studied and better understood.
http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/Opening_lines_Fogelman.pdf
http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/htr_quotes.pdf

So are the trauma effects on the brain.
http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/The_Craving_Brain_and_Native_American_Indians.pdf
http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/Quotes_from_Mind_So_Rare.pdf

The characteristics of HT effects on descending generations, and the course of healing.
<http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/htr.pdf>
http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/htr_transmission.pdf

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/notes_social_relational_reconciliation_healing.pdf (compilation of related writings and notes)

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/The_Healing_Process.pdf (testimony, dialogue, grief, forgiveness)

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/TRUTH_COMMISSIONS_AND_NATIONAL_RECONCILIATION.pdf (acknowledgment, contrition, forgiveness)

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/Color_Blindness.pdf (racial interaction, opposition of systemic racism, repentance of white privilege, forgiveness)

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/Forgiveness_The_Journal_of_Humanitarian_Assistance.pdf (an expanded understanding of forgiveness that encompasses: Examination of psychological defenses, release of the anger, healing of shame, introspective emotional awareness, justice, a willingness to explore forgiveness, empathy, compassion, acceptance (of the pain), internal empowering release)

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/Preparatory_Document_N2.pdf (key elements of reconciliation: forgiveness, reparation, accountability and responsibility, interreligious dimension)

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/Social_Healing_and_Ethnic_Identity_Development1.pdf (racial/cultural identity, awareness of racism and social injustice, emotional healing through active forgiveness, actively addressing social injustice)

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/applied_theology_of_reconciliation.pdf (truthtelling, truth and reconciliation commissions, pursuit of comprehensive punitive, restorative, structural justice, healing memories and forgiveness)

http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/path_to_reconciliation.html