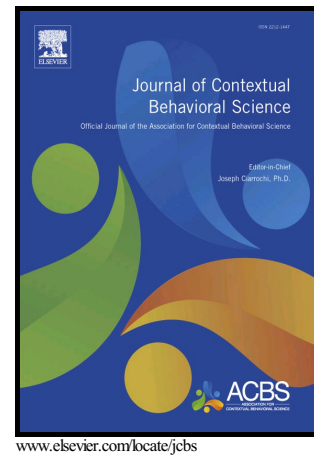


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## A Functional Approach to Understanding and Treating Military-Related Moral Injury

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Running Head: Conceptualization and treatment of moral injury

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## A Functional Approach to Understanding and Treating Military-Related Moral Injury<sup>☆</sup>

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### Abstract

The term moral injury has been coined to describe the suffering that may develop following a violation of deeply held moral beliefs and values and subsequent difficulties in functioning. Yet despite an increase in research and intervention approaches for this topic, the relationship between moral injury and mental health diagnoses such as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) remains unclear and concern exists that, in some cases, moral injury might be used to unnecessarily pathologize moral processes. With the goal of further refining the construct, we argue that moral injury is a condition distinct from PTSD and other disorders and, using a functional approach, propose enhanced definitions for the terms, *morally injurious event*, *moral pain*, *moral injury*, and *moral healing*. Consistent with these new definitions, we then argue for Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) as a feasible and promising treatment for moral injury and present initial qualitative data supporting the intervention.

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