



# BTAC BULLETIN

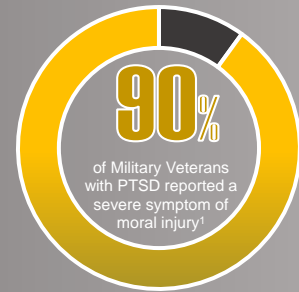
BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE | LAW ENFORCEMENT & COUNTERINTELLIGENCE | CYBERSECURITY | EMPLOYEE LABOR RELATIONS | THREAT ASSESSMENT

## MORAL OUTRAGE

### FROM CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE TO INSIDER THREAT



**Moral Injury** and **Crisis of Conscience** are stressors experienced by individuals struggling with a mismatch between their internal moral compass and actions taken by themselves or others<sup>1</sup>. In one study, 90% of veterans with PTSD endorsed symptoms of **Moral Injury**, highlighting the impact on service members in the DoD. **Moral Outrage** is an emotion that can develop in response to these stressors when there is a perception that an individual, a group, or organization has crossed the line of one's moral boundaries, and the person feels justified in their anger<sup>2</sup>. In response to triggers such as acute work stressors, political conflict, war, or media reports, etc., one's **Moral Outrage** could manifest in some form of expressive **Action**. While some individuals may engage in prosocial behavior to resolve the internal conflict, other individuals may proceed down a path to express their **Moral Outrage** by engaging in concerning behavior, violence, or other criminal behavior such as sabotage, unauthorized disclosures (UD), or espionage creating a nexus between **Moral Outrage** and **Insider Threat** activities.



### INDICATORS OF MORAL OUTRAGE

- Expressing ill-will towards USG or employing organization.
- Absolutist views, or inflexible black or white perspectives on complex topics.
- Repeated comments about or intense focus with topics of perceived moral concern, including recurrent discussions in the workplace, if unrelated to work duties.
- Indiscriminate anger expressed in the workplace; "having a short fuse," or being "explosive in meetings."
- Recurrent posting, sharing, or commenting on work forums about topics of conflict unrelated to work.

**REFERENCES:** 1. Koenig, H.G., Youssef, N.A., & Pearce, M. (2019). Assessment of Moral Injury in Veterans and Active-Duty Military Personnel with PTSD: A Review. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 10, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2019.004431>. 2. Crockett, M.J. (2017) Moral outrage in the digital age. *Nature Human Behavior*, 1, 769–771. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-017-0213-3>

#### CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE

A crisis that develops within a person when they perceive a conflict between their morals/values and their employers' policies, mission goals, or job requirements.

#### MORAL INJURY

The social, psychological, and spiritual harm that one perceives from a betrayal of core values, such as justice, fairness, or loyalty<sup>1</sup>.

#### MORAL OUTRAGE

**Moral Injury** or **Crisis of Conscience** can be normal reactions to many types of difficult situations, however, when not adequately addressed by the individual or their peers or supervisors, it can escalate to **Moral Outrage**, and when exposed to triggers can lead to concerning behaviors.

TRIGGER TO ACTION

#### ACTION

When exposed to situational triggers, an individual with **Moral Outrage** may be motivated to support their group more strongly, or spur action to "right" a perceived moral wrong which may involve civil disobedience or criminal behavior.

### ADAPTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES

1. Organizations can adapt lessons learned from programs in the DoD and implement ways to assist those dealing with a **Crisis of Conscience** to be able to find different roles to serve the mission or to assist in finding alternate employment.
2. Supervisors can engage in conversations using active listening to assist individuals that need help off the critical pathway to insider threat. Responses could include referral to EAP or other prevention programs or encourage reporting through proper channels while affording whistleblower protections.
3. Engage early and frequently with individuals expressing concerns. Support freedom of expression and accessing appropriate outlets while setting firm boundaries and expectations around appropriate communication in the workplace and protection of sensitive or classified information.



**DITMAC**

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