

Taking care with our ethical framing: Why the variations of "moral" matters

Creating ethical frameworks within organizations is a foundational step to reducing the risk of moral injury.

Knowing the perils inherent in that process is essential to an effective outcome.

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Learning Objectives

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Through this talk,

- Participants will learn the importance of recognizing and integrating different layers of morality (individual, organizational, and cultural) into organizational ethics to prevent ethical conflicts.
- Participants will understand how creating clear and inclusive ethical frameworks can reduce the risk of moral injury within organizations.
- Participants will be able to articulate the potential risks of vague or misaligned ethical frameworks, including how these contribute to moral injury.



Why Variations in Meaning Matter:

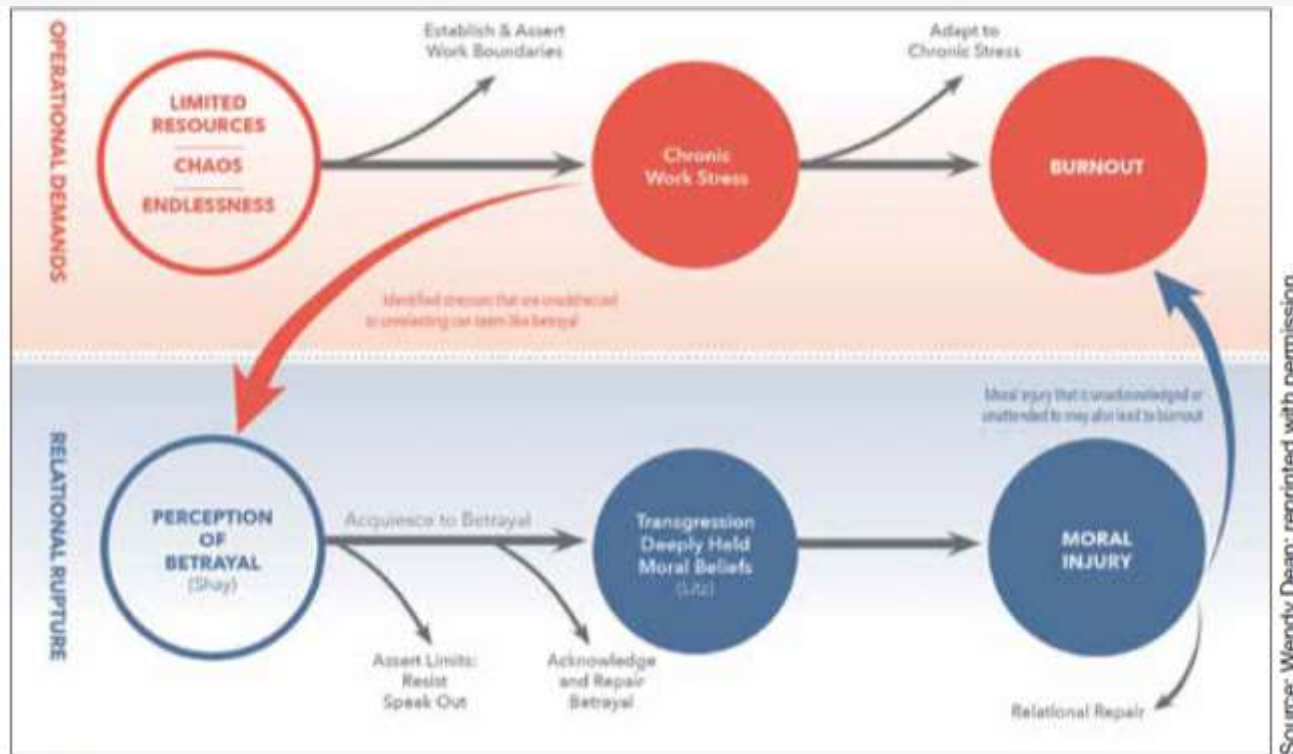
Ethical Variations to Consider:

- **Individual Morality** - Personal integrity and moral beliefs.
- **Professional Morality** - The expectations and commitments of the profession.
- **Organizational Morality** - The moral commitments of the institution.
- **Societal Morality** - How societal norms influence organizational/personal ethics.

Alasdair
MacIntyre

*Whose
Justice?*

*Which
Rationality?*



Moral Injury: Defining Our Terms:

- symptoms: frustration, anger, and helplessness

Causes:

- relational ruptures and the existential threats to a clinician's professional identity

Context:

- business interests of hospitals/health systems erode clinician's ability to put their patients' needs ahead of corporate and health care system obligations.

Moral Injury: “Perception of Betrayal”

In instances of betrayal and other moral transgressions, a person acts in ways that conflict with their deeply held moral beliefs. However, betrayal is unlike other moral transgressions:

- Betrayal involves a violation of trust; it is not simply a case of acting “incorrectly” in an ethical dilemma or situations beyond the individual’s control.



Perception of Betrayal ~ Perception of Ulterior Motives or Attacks on Integrity

- This could be by other or by self...
- There is a disconnect between values, yet there is an assumption of congruity
- The values conflict need not be a “valid” conflict
 - ❖ The “vicious” or the “incorrect” can also experience moral injury...



Moral Injury: The Need for Morals

Moral Injury entails a belief in moral meanings, it is the moral identity of a person (and not simply the ethicality of their actions) that distinguish those who experience moral pain from those who simply judge their actions and are motivated to change them (at best, and, at worst, are indifferent).

MORALITY



Values Conflicts and/or Identity Conflicts

Corporate Values	Professional Values
Efficiency/Productivity: Maximize patient turnover and reduce wait times.	Patient-Centered Care: Prioritize individualized care for each patient.
Profitability/Financial Stability: Focus on revenue, cost control, and maintaining a competitive edge.	Compassion: Ensure care with a focus on beneficence and non-maleficence.
Risk Management/Compliance: Focus on minimizing legal risks, managing costs, and following regulations.	Patient Autonomy/Informed Consent: Respect patient choices and promote shared decision-making.
Patient Satisfaction Metrics: Prioritize measurable satisfaction and consumer feedback.	Trust/Confidentiality: Build strong relationships grounded in trust, respecting patient privacy.
Innovation/Technology: Invest in advanced technology and procedures for competitive advantage.	Professional Competence: Continually improve skills and knowledge to provide the best care possible.

Key Elements of an Ethical (Moral) Framework:

1. **Clarity of Values**
2. Transparency in Decision-Making
3. Accountability Structures
4. Inclusive Processes
5. Adaptability for Change

ADVANCED ETHICS IN **LEADERSHIP** PROGRAM



Values entail choices...

Values = Things that I care about = commitments not constraints...

The view allows people to take control over their decisions of how to act rather than seeing value-based norms as being imposed upon them.

“I am not the type of person who breaks confidentiality; therefore, I will not disclose this information.”

vs.

“I can’t break confidentiality.”



Agreed.

For clarity, **Values** must be operationalized...

How to “operationalize” values

Respect. Build an inclusive community based on mutual respect.

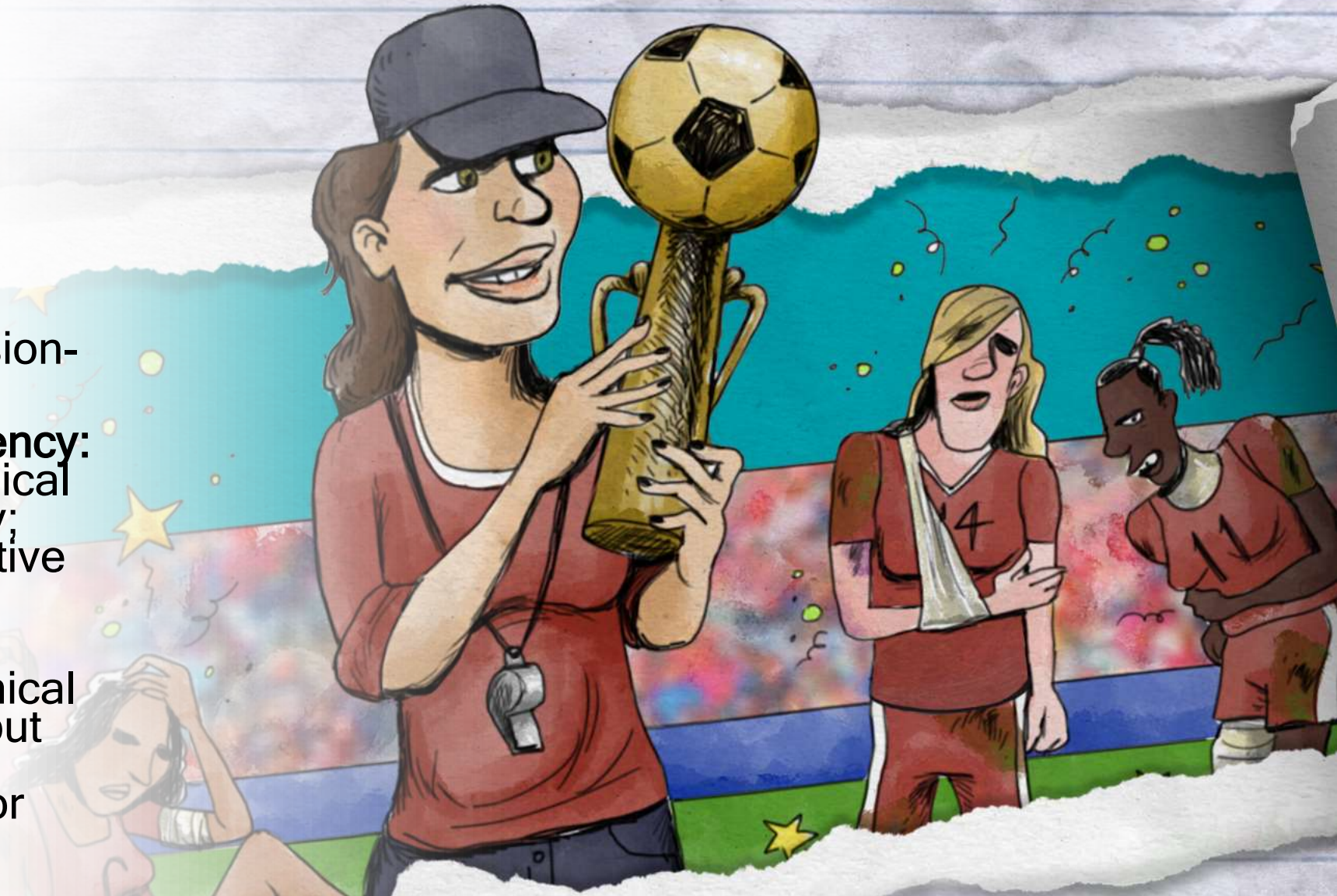
Belief: We believe that even when people are unique and diverse, difference does not necessitate division, and we seek to promote care, respect, and inclusion of ourselves and others.

Behaviors: We solve problems together and have fun doing it. We support each other through tough times. We assume the best intent. We build on our differences.

Essential question: Who might feel disrespected or excluded (by this decision)?

The Perils of Poor Ethical Framing

- **Vagueness:** Leads to ambiguity in moral decision-making.
- **Overemphasis on Efficiency:** Sacrifices moral and ethical concerns for productivity; quantitative over qualitative focus.
- **Top-Down (Seemingly Arbitrary) Mandates:** Ethical frameworks that lack input from all levels risk being perceived as detached or manipulative.



Moral Injury in Health Care: A Unified Definition and its Relationship to Burnout

Wendy Dean, MD^a; Deborah Morris, DClInPsych^{b,c}; Mustfa K. Manzur, MD, MPH, MS^{d,e,f}; Simon Talbot, MD^{g,h}

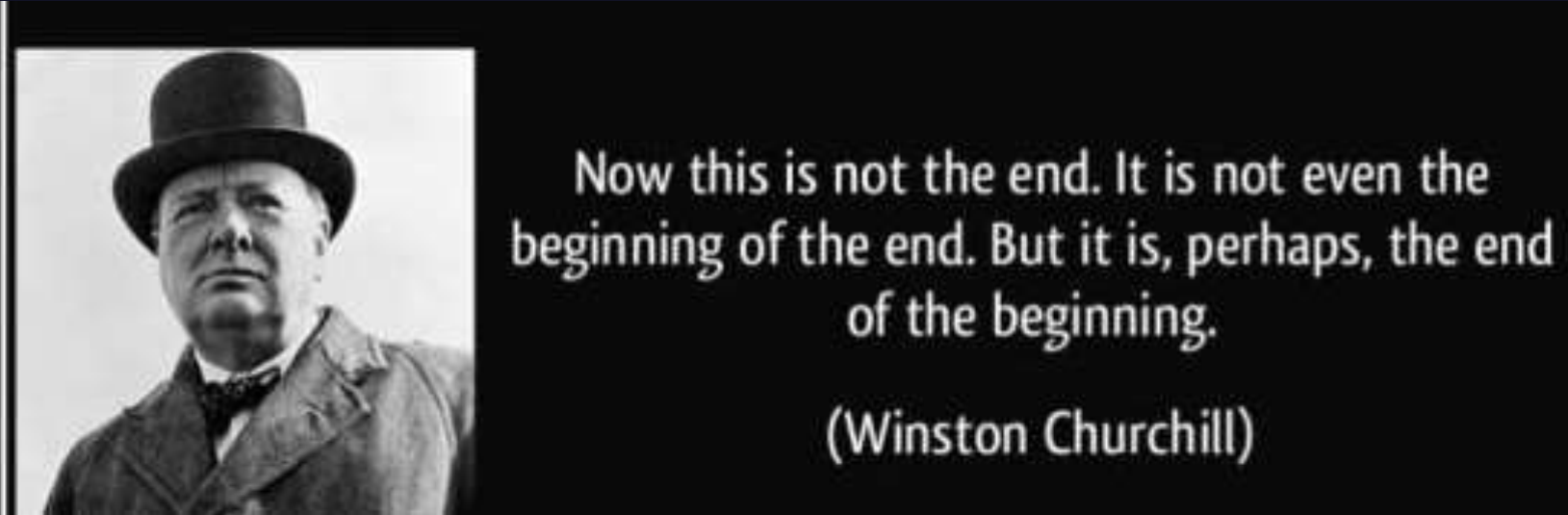
... “the presence of moral injury in health care settings are warning signs of a dysfunctional environment.”

“The moral injury risk in this instance demands a collective conversation among stakeholders regarding the structural determinants of health - how we choose to distribute limited resources.”

- **The solution is the right one** - there is a values conflict and there are values ambiguity.
- **The challenge is the hard part** - there is a sense of betrayal, which leads to loss of trust.



Conclusion



Takeaways:

- Recognizing moral variations—individual, organizational, and cultural—is crucial to recognize how the problem of moral injury arises.
- Creating ethical frameworks is essential for respond and/or mitigate the problems of moral and identity conflicts between stakeholders.

**Will we be able to
stop moral injury?**

**Will we be able to
change healthcare for
the better?**



Any Questions? 

