

# Moral Injury

Niki Stepanian

## What is Moral Injury? (slide 1)

- Moral Injury is the damage done to one's conscience or moral compass when that person witnesses, or feels that they may have perpetrated or failed to prevent acts that transgress one's own moral beliefs, values, or ethical codes of conduct
- Feeling powerless/helpless is typically at the heart of moral distress

## Why is it Important to Discuss Moral Injury? (slide 2)

- Moral Injury is a form of trauma
- It is relevant to Fire/EMS because it impacts the mental and spiritual health of firefighters, which then can impact that FF's relationships and overall functioning
- It can negatively change our view of ourselves, others and/or the world as it creates unresolved internal conflict

## Examples of Moral Injury (slide 3)

- A firefighter is forced to work overtime and forego vacation days due to staffing shortages. He is already having marital problems and now must tell his wife they have to cancel their

vacation plans yet again. He is burned out and resents management

- A firefighter/paramedic suffers her sixth pediatric death this year. She begins to feel helpless and questions whether her training has been a waste of time
- A firefighter must treat a patient who just committed a heinous crime
- Examples for the wildfires

## Signs and Symptoms of a Moral Injury (slide 4)

- Feelings of shame and guilt
- Self-doubt
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Increased irritability and aggression
- Change in ethical, spiritual or religious beliefs

## Steps to Building Moral Resilience (slide 5)

- Focus on what we can control
- Acknowledge the internal conflict and feelings- do not avoid
- Practice Self-compassion and self-care
- Forgiveness