

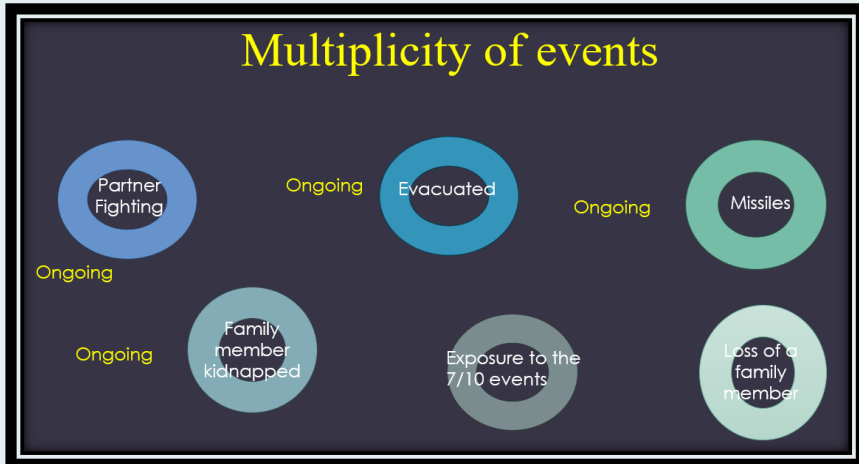
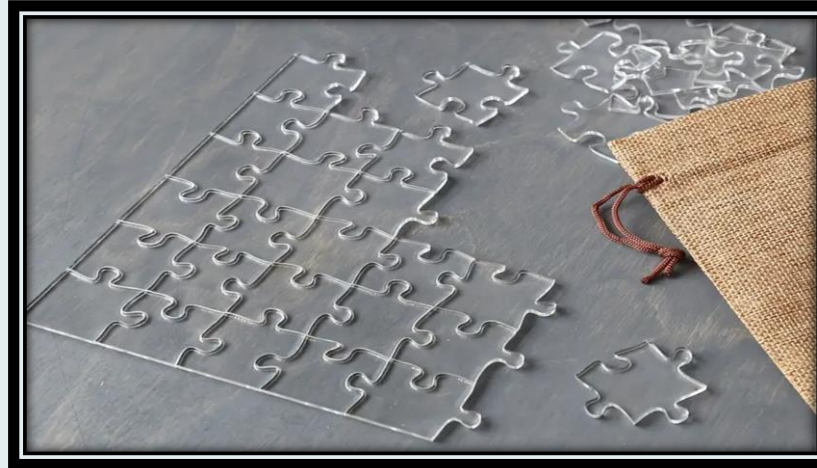
War matters: Between individual & collective trauma

Reflections on collective healing in the aftermath of “Iron Swords

Prof. Rivka Tuval-Mashiach
Natal & Bar Ilan University



How is the “Iron Swords” war different?



NATAL's Core Services & Growth Engines

Core Services



Scaling Mechanisms



The tolls of an ongoing war

- “Rolling trauma” (Shalgy, 2025)
- Burnout
- Erosion of collective resources
- The hidden costs of war
- Not enough opportunities for therapists’ self-care
- Individual and collective trauma



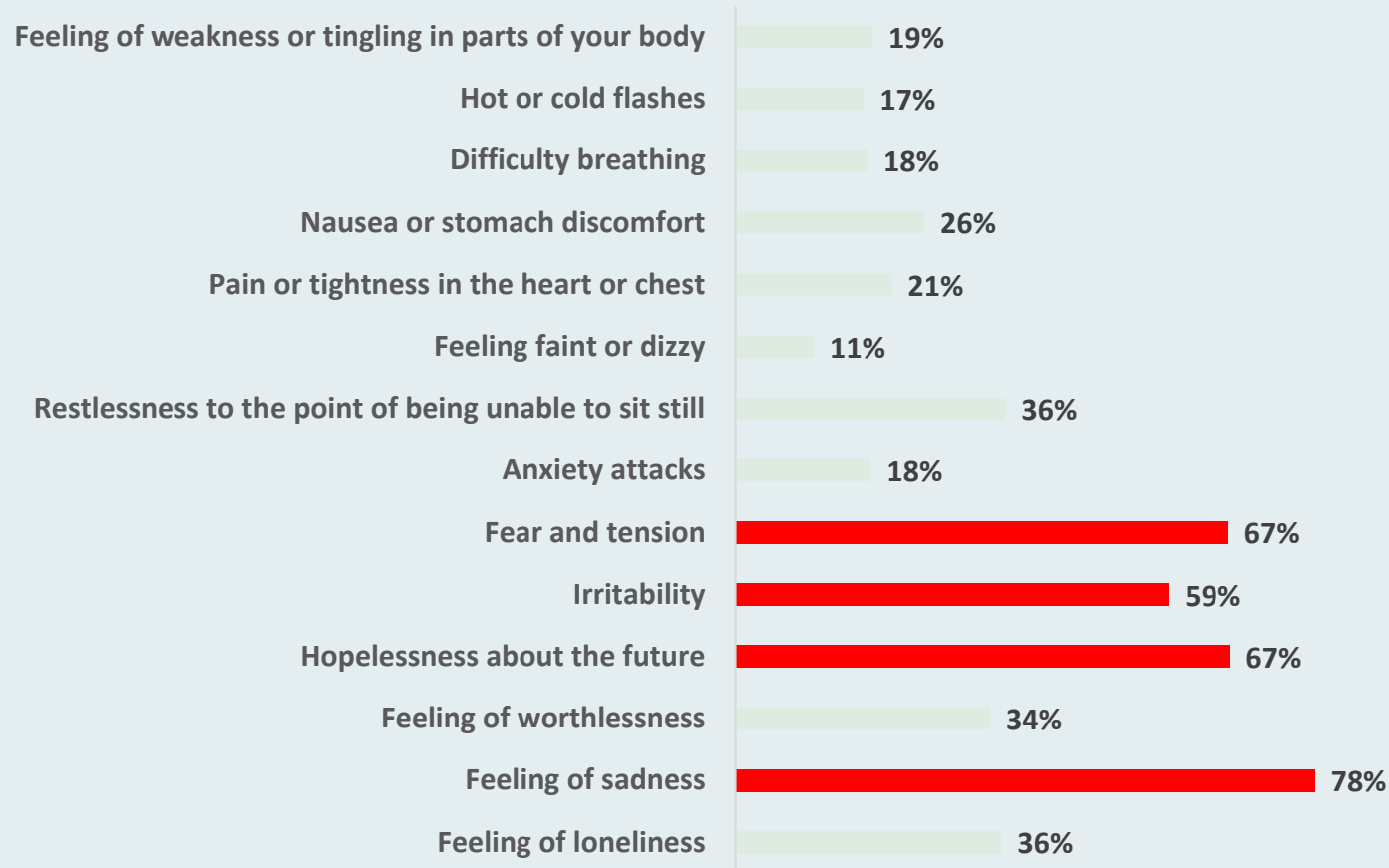


The day after

Distress Levels

(Natal study, 2024)

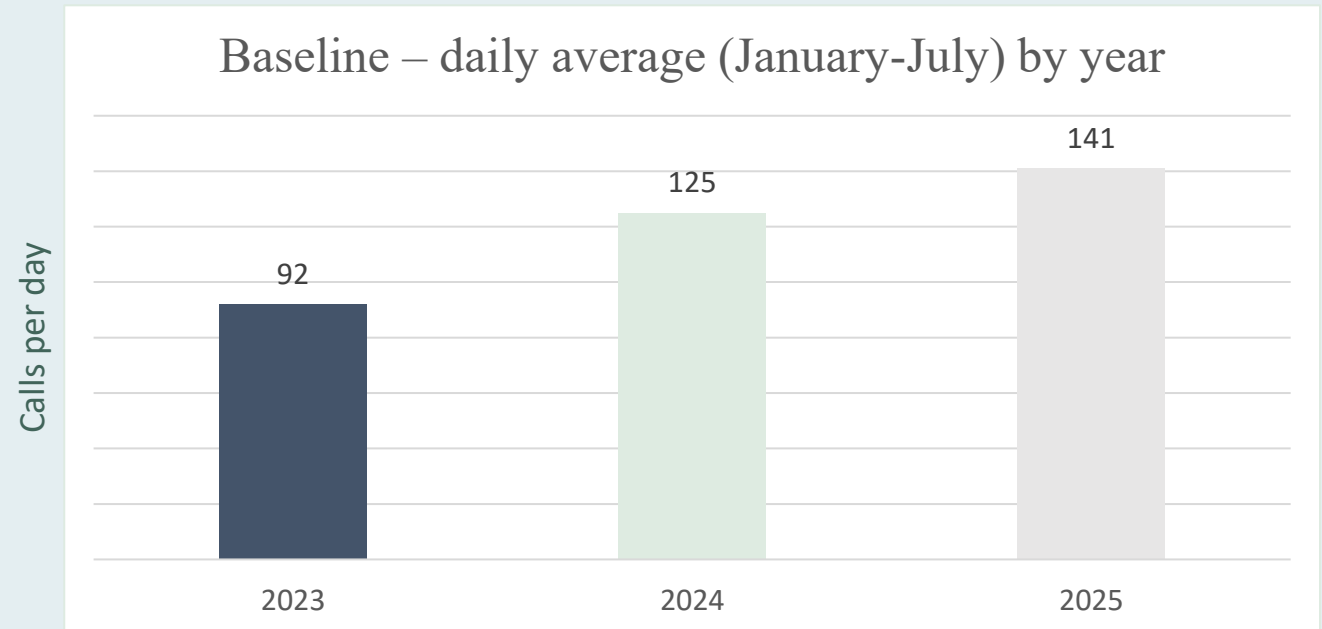
Percentage of People reporting moderate-severe Symptoms



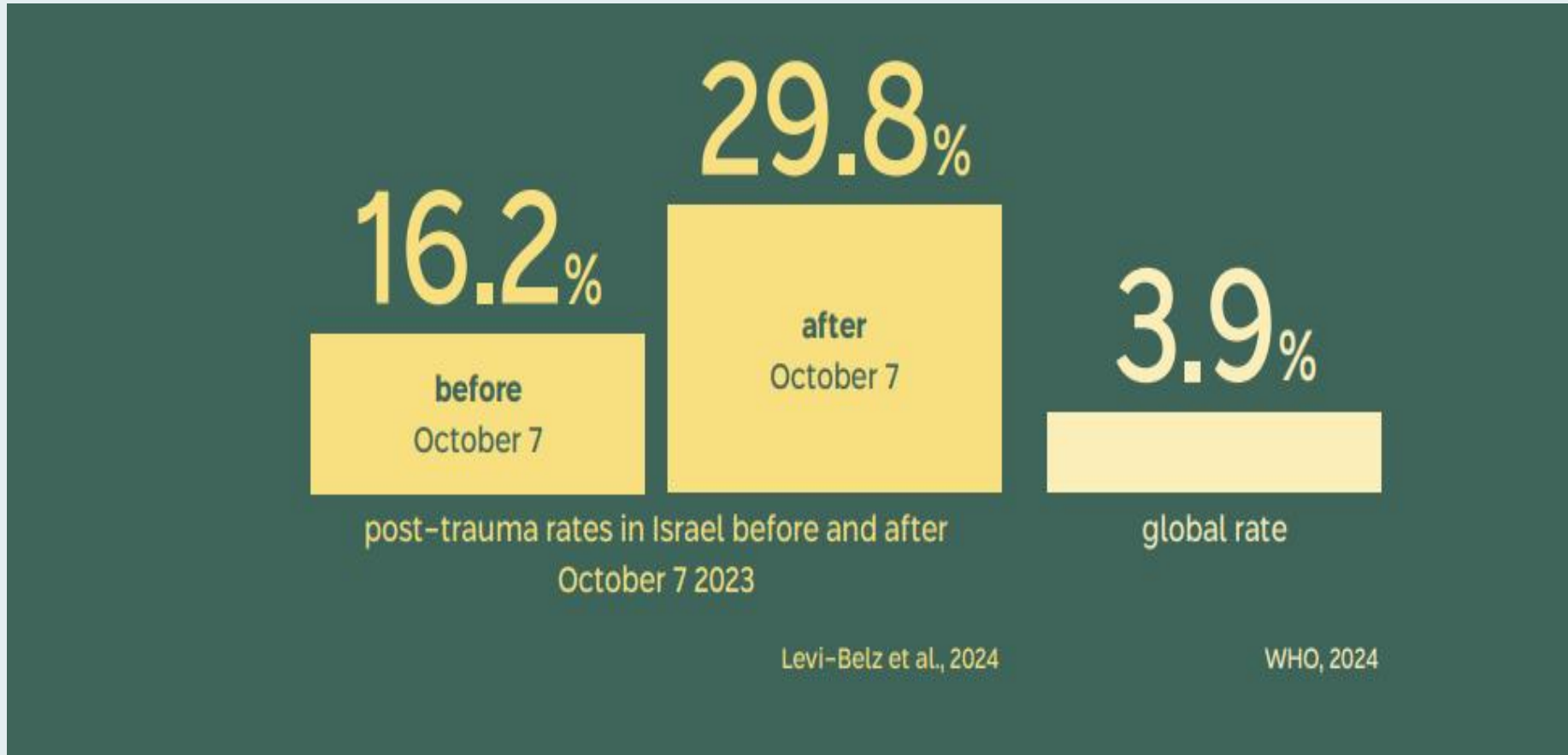
- 18% of respondents report somatic symptoms
- Younger respondents report higher depression and anxiety symptoms levels
- Women report higher levels of symptoms vs. men
- Those exposed to prior trauma (34%) show higher symptoms levels

New Painful Routine - Coping with Long-Term National Trauma

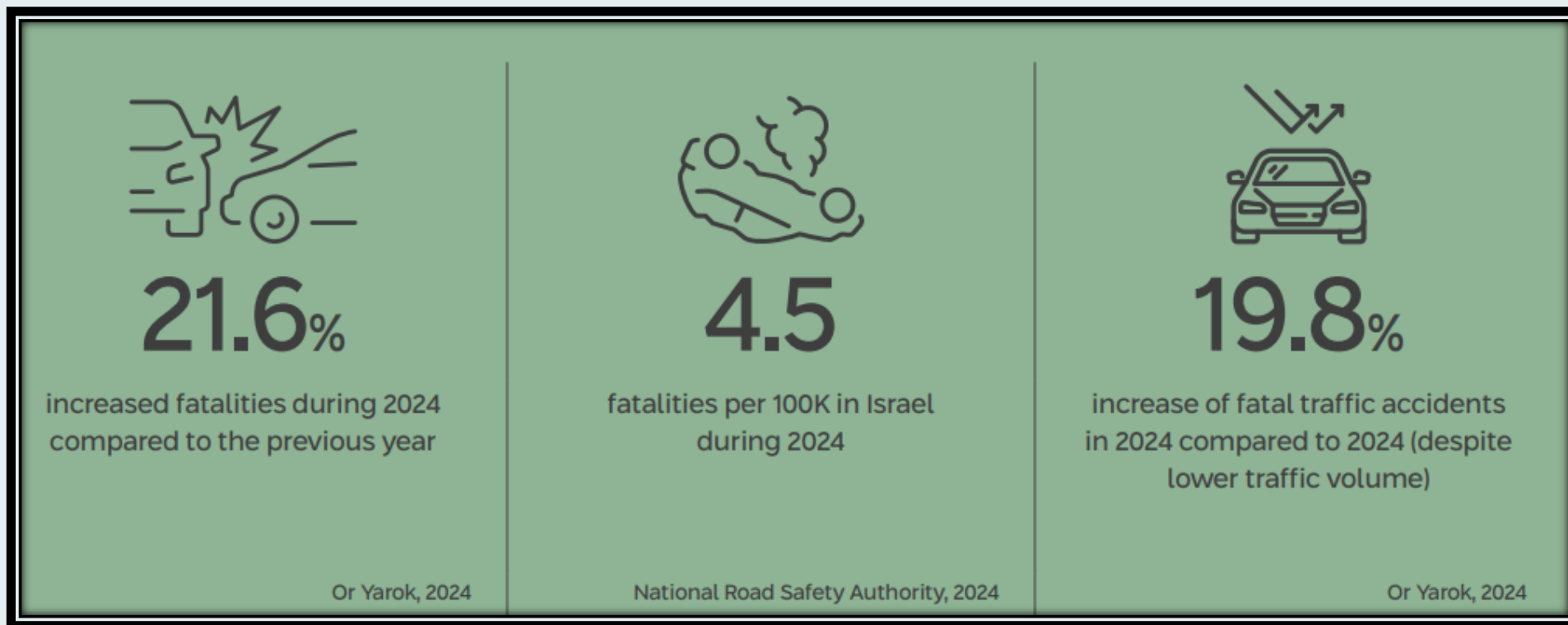
- The data shows that **October 7th did not only create an acute and passing psychological crisis**, but rather a “new painful routine” of ongoing mental distress.
- NATAL’s Helpline has become a **barometer of the state of national mental health**, showing that levels of anxiety and need for support among Israelis have stabilized at **2–3 times higher** than pre-war levels. This has continued consistently for over a year and a half.
- This is not a “return to routine” but rather **coping with long-term national trauma**.



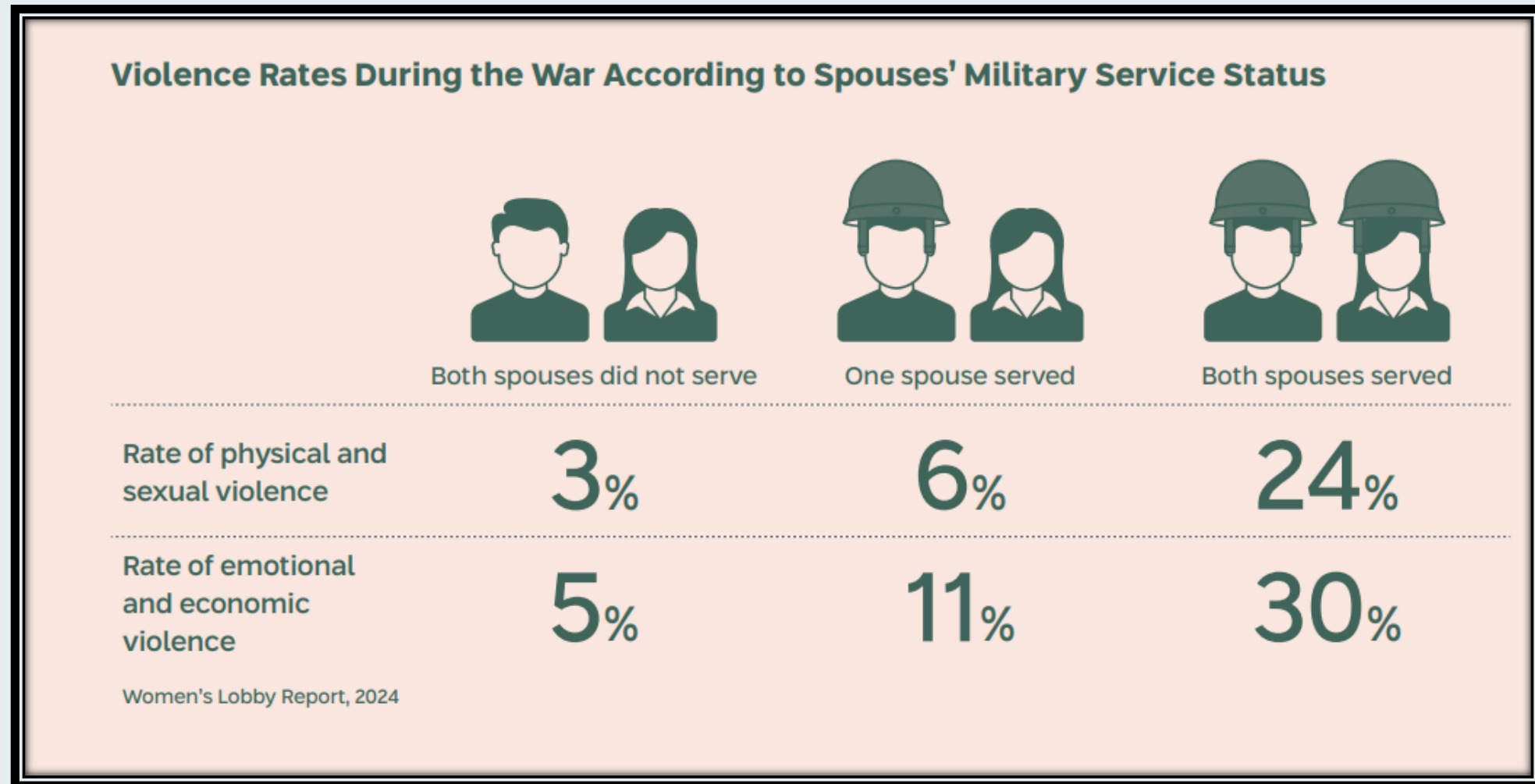
PTSD rates



The broader impact of the war: Traffic Accidents Following “Iron Swords” war



Violence Rates During the War According to Spouses' Military Service Status



Chronic Diseases Following Iron Swords war



Almost **100%**

increase in "Broken Heart" syndrome during the first months following October 7

Yas'ur Beit-Or, 2024



35%

increase of severe heart attacks during between October and December 2023, compared to 2022

Yas'ur Beit-Or, 2024



8-fold

increase of cardiac events among civilians living in the south of Israel close to combat areas

Yas'ur Beit-Or, 2024



20%

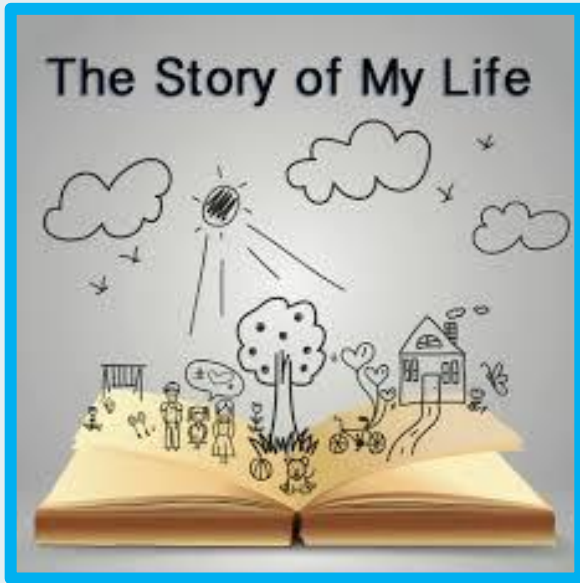
increase of strokes due to psychological stress stemming from the war

Rambam Health Care Campus, 2024

Moving from the individual to the collective level...

- If trauma happens to individuals, affecting their soul, their psychological and physical well-being, how can we “translate” its impact when we talk about communities and societies?
- **Can a culture be traumatized? A family? A community?**
- What does it mean that a community is traumatized? How are symptoms expressed?

From individual to collective conceptualizations



Collective Trauma



- Clinicians and researchers define trauma as an individual experience. can it be translated to the collective level?
 - Is it possible to talk about a societal, collective or a national trauma?
 - How does a collective express traumatic symptoms?
 - National (or collective) trauma is an event in which critical meanings related to a person's social (national) identity are undermined
 - In extreme situations, it threatens the existence of the society or community
 - Not every traumatic event which happens to a community or country becomes a national trauma (for example, the corona virus in Israel)
- ## • Vicarious national trauma

Rupture of Basic assumptions regarding the social-national context

Can I trust the state and its institutions to protect me from harm?

When harmed- can I trust state institutions to respond quickly, efficiently and in the best way?

If I can't trust authorities, what does it say about the mutual contract between me and my country?

Who else can I trust?

Is this place safe enough for me and my family?

Will we be ever able to live safely?

Can we overcome the social and cultural ruptures and disagreements?

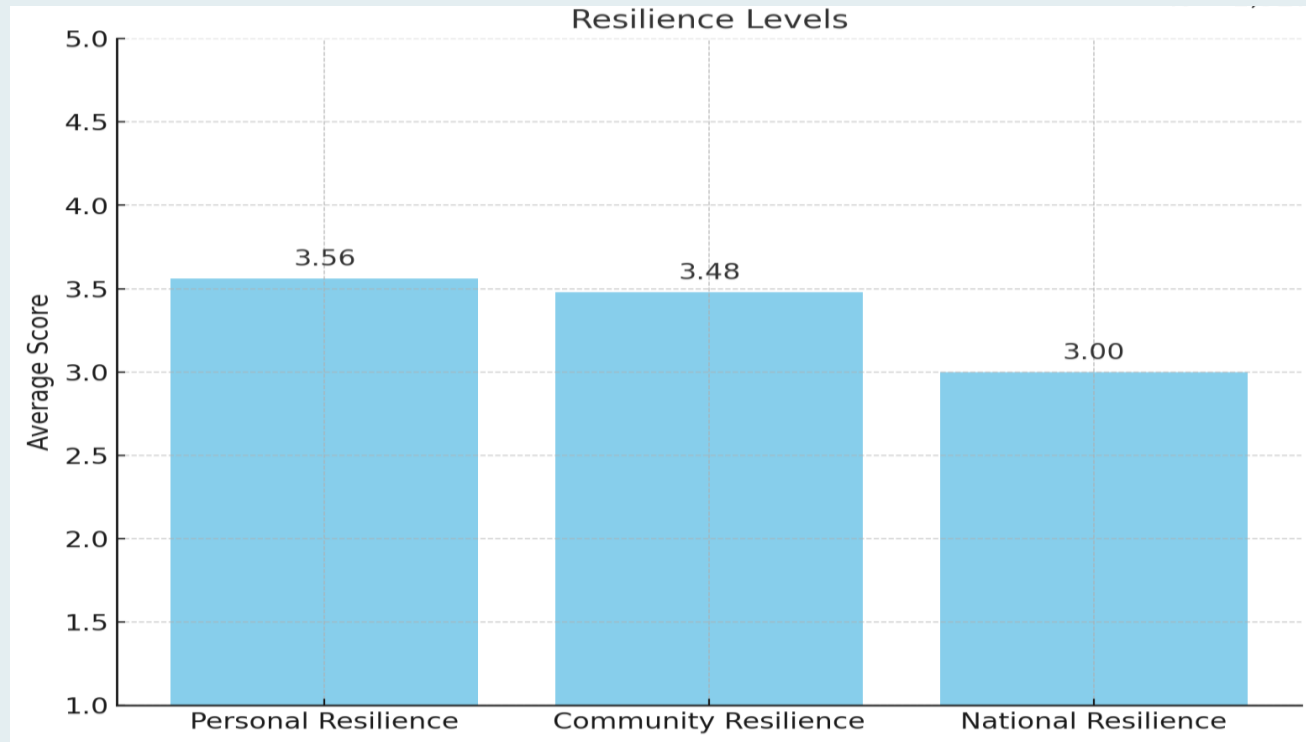
How can we live knowing there is so much evil and antisemitism?

Key Concepts

- Resilience
- Moral Injury
- Post-Traumatic growth
- Constructing memory and narrative
- Therapists' unique role



Resilience Scores





Moral Injury

- “Potentially morally injurious events, such as perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.” (Litz et al., 2009)
- “Because moral injuries have social and communal contexts, they are likely to reflect damages that are also evident in the broader community or society.” (Davis Acampora, 2024)
- **Collective moral injury involves how a community grapples with events that violate its shared values**

Moral injury within the social-national context

Those who were responsible to protect me failed

Feelings of betrayal by authorities

Sense of guilt regarding the hostages

Sense of guilt around parenting (where do I raise my children?)

Sense of guilt and shame around what the situation in Gaza

Can we do more to overcome the social and cultural ruptures and disagreements?



Post-Traumatic Growth

“Positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances”

(Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Collective PTG

“Communities can also grow from trauma by reconstructing shared meanings, rituals, and mutual support systems.”

Shamai (2015)



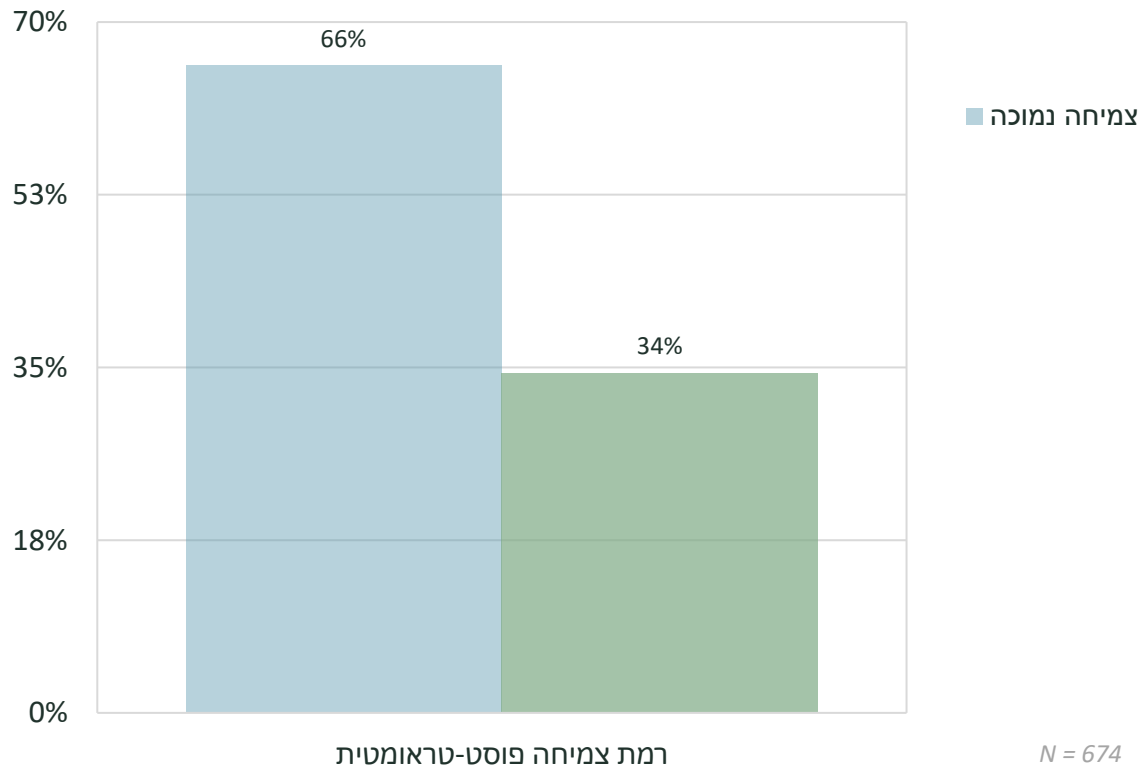
Collective Post-Traumatic Growth



- The community succeeds in prioritizing healing processes wisely
 - It acknowledges and makes room for diverse voices and narratives
 - New strengths, creativity, and communal initiatives emerge
 - Ability to avoid repeating past mistakes or conflicts.
- The power and meaning of the community itself are internalized.

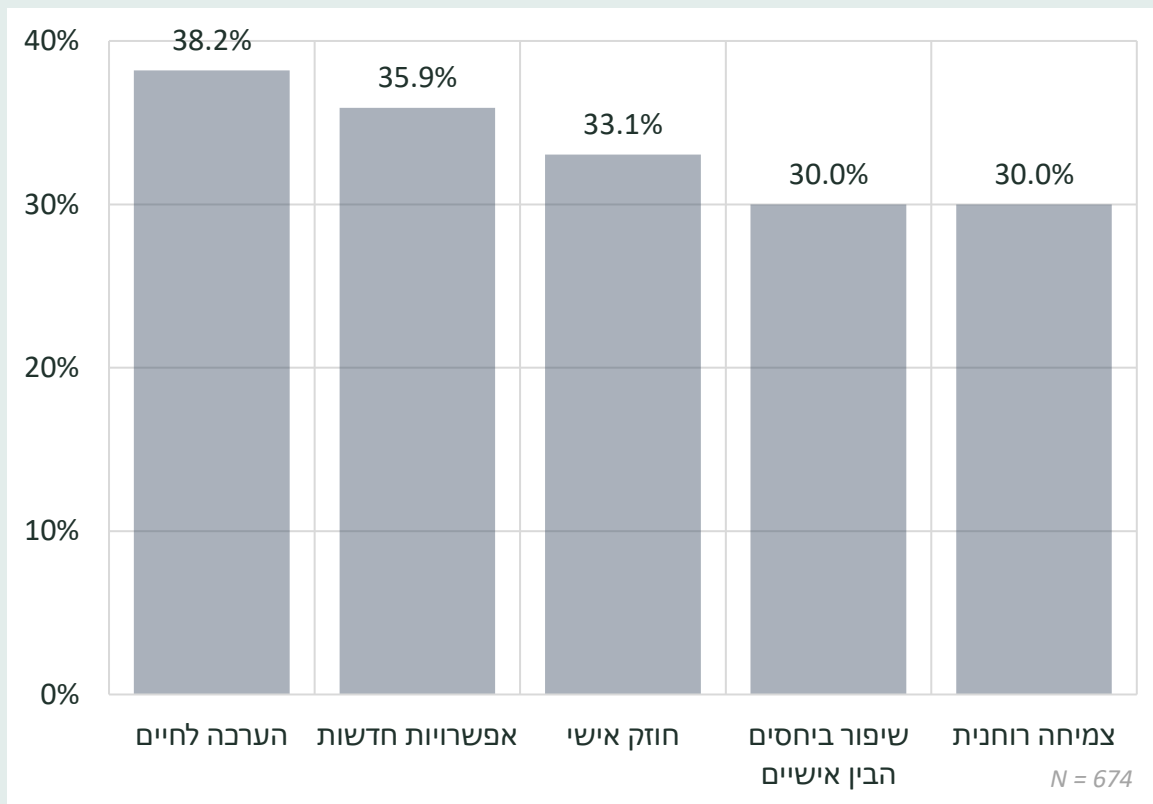
Post Traumatic Growth

Post Traumatic Growth



- **Mean level of posttraumatic growth: 34.84**
34% of respondents were classified in the *high-growth* group.
- **Predictors of PTG:**
- Younger participants reported higher levels of growth.
- Women reported greater growth than men.
- Those who took an active part in combat reported higher growth.
- Participants who had undergone psychotherapy reported higher growth.
- The more traumatic events reported, the higher the level of posttraumatic growth.
- Income, education, religiosity, and parenthood were **not** significant predictors.

PTG- Subscales

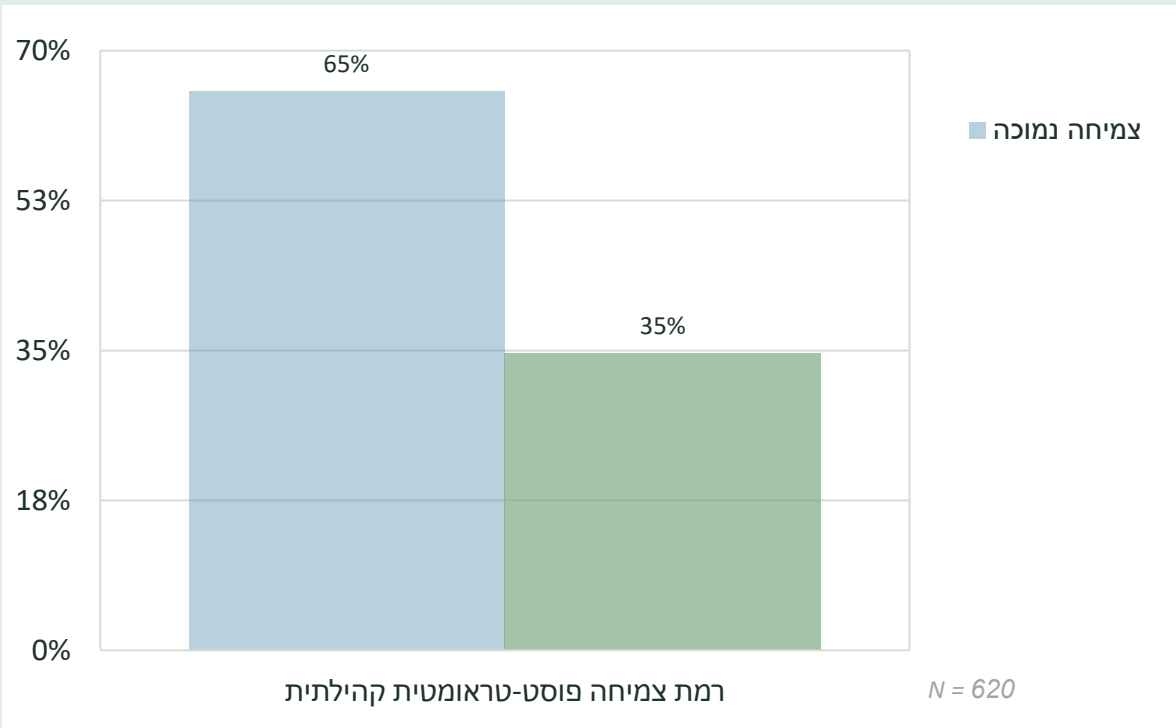


PTG-Domains

- **Domains of posttraumatic growth:**
- Participants reported the highest levels of change in:
- **Appreciation of life (38.2%)**
- **New possibilities (35.9%)**
- Lowest levels of change in:
- **Spiritual growth (30%)**
- **Improved interpersonal relationships (30%)**

Community Post Traumatic Growth

Community Post Traumatic Growth



Mean level of *community posttraumatic growth* was **34.45**. Approximately **35%** of participants were classified in the *high-growth* group.

- **Correlates of community-level PTG (CPTG)**
- Active involvement in combat- higher levels of CPTG
- Participants identifying as religious reported significantly greater CPTG
- Exposure to a higher number of traumatic events
- Sociodemographic variables — including age, gender, education, income, parenthood, and engagement in psychotherapy — were not significant predictors of community PTG.



National trauma as a rupture of the social narrative

- Why did it happen?
- Where and how do we continue from here as a society? As a nation?
- How and what should we remember?
- What values will guide us?
- What will our leadership look like?
- What future can be imagined?

Collective narrative

- Cultures provide the moral and ideological interpretation of events.
- Cultures define what must be remembered, what may be forgotten, what should be acknowledged - and what should remain unspoken.



Who is responsible for remembering?



The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Growing Oct. 7 ‘truther’ groups say Hamas massacre was a false flag

In city council hearings, protests and online, a growing movement with ties to Holocaust denial is effacing history in real-time

January 21, 2024 More than **1 year ago**

More Competing Memory reconstructions



The challenge in collective Narrative reconstruction

- The individual requires a **witness** in order to heal; witnessing is a vital stage in trauma processing.
- When the entire society is traumatized, there are **no free witnesses** everyone is part of the story.
- **Echo chambers of pain** — many voices of suffering, but little mutual listening.
- A **struggle over narrative**: who suffered more, who is right, who may speak for all.
- The result is **pain without containment**, as the collective container — the community itself — has been fractured.

Conditions for a positive process

- Recognition of diverse responses
- Spaces of listening: creating *new witnesses* within communities
- A shared yet flexible narrative
- Rituals, art, and education
- Examples: communities organizing memorial rituals or dialogue circles between different groups



Collective Trauma

Disempowering mental models

Resilience and open models

Silence, slow change in
social norms leading to a
decline in traditional
social relations

Empowering stories of
hope and survival, strong
social fabric,
empowering coping
mechanisms

Becomes a
crucial identity
marker

Integration of
Experience

The unique role of therapists in the collective healing

- Witnessing

(Eshel, 2023)

- Validating

- Containers



Therapists: Between the personal and the communal

- Therapists are themselves embedded within the same traumatic context as their clients — a *shared traumatic reality* (Halpern & Trautmann, 2019).
- They are required to serve as witnesses while simultaneously being affected by the same collective trauma.
- The act of listening, despite one's own pain, constitutes an expression of **communal hope** and resilience.
- Therapists' role extends **beyond the clinical sphere** to a **social–cultural function**:
 - Restoring the community's capacity for **containment**,
 - Reviving **attunement and empathy**,
 - And reestablishing a **shared language** through which pain can be expressed and integrated.

A Shared Traumatic Reality

- “ Refers to situations in which helper and helpee, psychotherapist and client, are exposed to the same communal disaster.

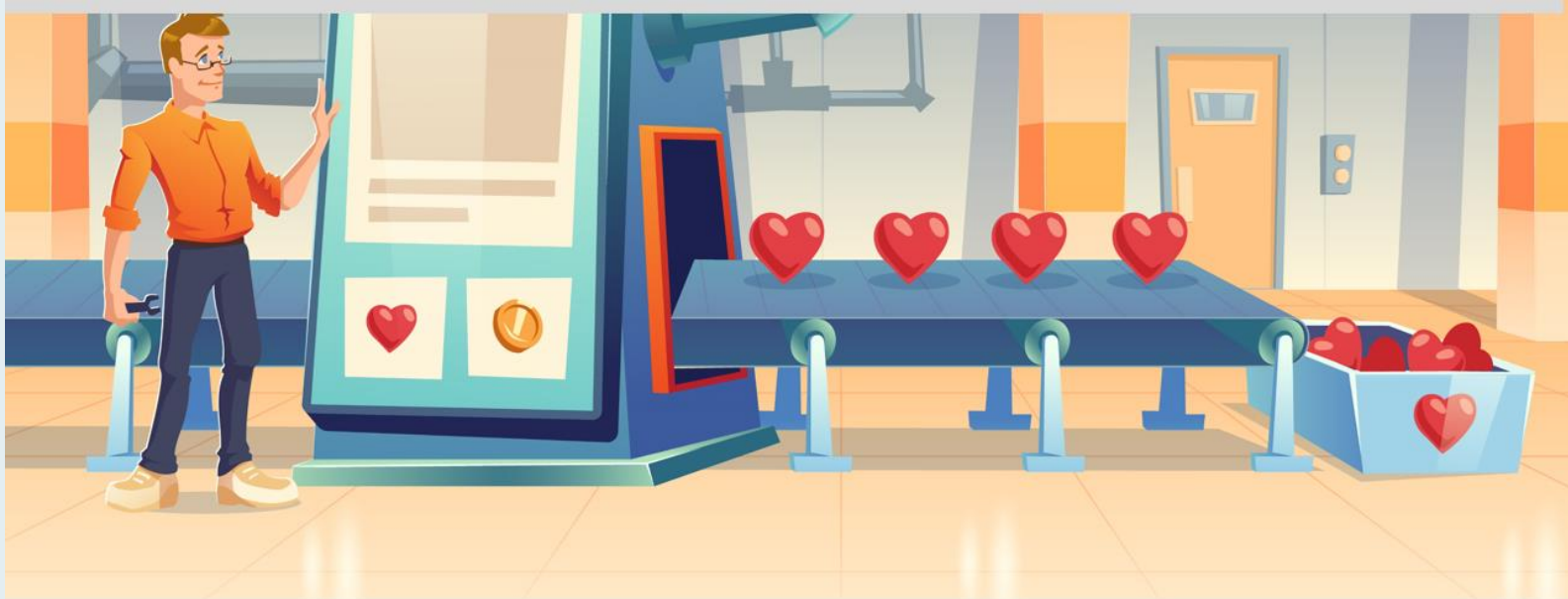
Baum (2010)



Shared Traumatic Reality- Challenges

- Processing trauma simultaneously at a personal and professional level;
- Creating a safe, secure environment while experiencing personal loss of security
- Exploring existential dilemmas that shake the foundations of personal belief, while at the same time carrying on leadership roles





CULTIVATING HOPE

Towards Narrative Futuring in Psychology: Becoming Resilient by Imagining the Future

Anneke Sools & Jan Hein Mooren

In this article we develop a narrative psychological approach to futuring (imagining the future). We explore how this approach addresses the question of how people can become resilient in order to anticipate (social) crisis and change. Firstly, we bring to the fore how futuring takes shape in psychological theories. We argue that the linear-causal temporal perspective underlying the classical theories developed by Alfred Adler and Albert Bandura is insufficient to deal with the increasing speed and complexity of social change. The more complex temporal approaches of Frederick Towne Melges and Thomas Lombardo seem better suited for the purpose at hand. Secondly, we complement our search for a psychological theory of futuring by exploring the role a narrative approach can play in understanding and enhancing resilience. We illustrate the potential of a narrative approach to futuring with an example of on-going research into the relationship between narrative futuring and well-being at the life-story lab at Twente University, the Netherlands. We conclude with a reflection on methodological and epistemological issues of the proposed narrative psychological approach.

Keywords: Narrative psychology, future imagination, resilience, non-linear time, letters

Imagining a Future



Summary

- Collective and individual trauma are interlinked
- Collective traumatic aspects are affecting not only the individual's emotional condition, but the treatment he/she gets.
- Therefore, especially in continuous collective trauma, it is crucial to integrate community and collective resources in the healing process of individuals
- Collective stressors are becoming more common around the world
- The crucial role of therapists, as well as the challenges brought by the “shared reality”



~~History~~
~~Herstory~~
Ourstory

Thank You!

