

A New Peace Paradigm Our Human Needs and The Tangles of Trauma by Paul K. Chappell

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As someone working full-time for peace, I have an unusual background. I graduated from West Point in 2002, was deployed to Iraq in 2006, and left the army in 2009 as a captain. Many years before I joined the military, however, my yearning to understand peace in a realistic rather than naive way originated from my traumatic upbringing. My father fought in the Korean and Vietnam wars and suffered from war trauma. As a result, I grew up in a violent household and developed a lot of behavioral problems as a child. I was kicked out of elementary school for fighting, almost kicked out of middle school, and suspended in high school for fighting.

I also grew up with very strong feelings of alienation, because my mother is Korean, my father was half black and half white, and I grew up in Alabama. During high school, the alienation and rage that resulted from my childhood trauma caused me to develop a mass shooter personality. Every day I fantasized about shooting the kids in my classes, and my initial interest in peace resulted from my hunger to heal the rage, alienation, and trauma that were causing me so much pain.

Because of extreme childhood trauma, I developed an obsession with understanding inner and outer peace. One reason I developed this obsession with understanding peace is because I wanted to discover how to protect human societies from people like me, who have suffered from severe agony and whose preferred method of expression became rage and violence.

To heal the root causes of rage and violence, and to show how I transformed my rage into radical empathy and journeyed from violence to peace, we must answer one of the most important—yet overlooked and misunderstood—questions of our era. What do human beings need?

When I give lectures I often ask audiences, “What do human beings need? All of us in this room are human, right? So isn’t it important for us to understand what our human needs are?”

I have asked audiences this question many times, and they always start by listing our physical needs. Someone in the audience will always yell out “food.” People will also list physical needs such as “water,” “shelter,” “oxygen,” and “safety.” Occasionally, someone in the audience will say “love” or “community.”

But after asking this question to audiences hundreds of times, I continue to notice several human needs that they almost never mention. The first is our need for *purpose and meaning*.

Purpose and Meaning

What is more important for humans: food or purpose and meaning? When I taught a Peace Leadership course in northern Uganda, where people had lived through a civil war, I asked the group of about twenty-five participants, “What is more important for humans: food or purpose and meaning?” They all said, “Purpose and meaning.” One of the participants raised her hand and explained, “Purpose and meaning is more important than food, because if you have food but don’t have any purpose and meaning, you won’t want to eat. You won’t want to live.”

If we have a lot of food, but don’t have any purpose and meaning, we will lose the will to live. On the other hand, if we have a lot of purpose and meaning, but don’t have any food, we will work very hard to find some food. Someone might say, “Food is more important than purpose and meaning, because if every single human being were completely deprived of food, our species would go extinct.” However, isn’t this also true for purpose and meaning? If every single human being were completely deprived of purpose and meaning, wouldn’t our species also go extinct?

We are the only species on the planet that can commit suicide even when we have food, water, safety, shelter, freedom, and good health. This human vulnerability reminds me of the saying from Jesus: “Man does not live by bread alone.”¹ This human vulnerability also reminds me of a quote from philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who said, “He who has a Why to live for can bear almost any How.”² In other words, a person who has a Why to live for, a purpose in life, can bear almost any How, almost any hardship.

To understand the importance of purpose in life, we can do a simple thought experiment. Imagine two different people, and consider which person would have a better chance of surviving. The first person has no food and no purpose in life. The second person has no food, but has a lot of purpose in life—a *higher* purpose in life. Which person will have a better chance of surviving? Obviously, the second person.

Abraham Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs” lists physical needs such as food, water, and safety as our most basic needs, but this hierarchy is flawed because it does not recognize how purpose and meaning serve as a *foundational need* that helps us more reliably fulfill these physical needs. In the military I learned that when people are dealing with physical and psychological adversity that must be overcome to meet their physical needs, a strong sense of purpose and meaning greatly increases their power to overcome adversity. In this way, our physical needs are like a destination, and purpose and meaning provide us with metaphorical fuel that helps us arrive at that destination, especially when it seems so far away that people are at risk of losing hope.

Throughout history, effective peace leaders and military leaders have realized that our need for purpose and meaning is so powerful that many people, if you give them enough purpose and meaning in life, will willingly give up food and safety. They can even willingly die for a cause that gives them purpose and meaning. If a civil rights leader convinces activists that they are struggling for freedom and justice, they will willingly get beaten up and go to jail. They can even willingly die for their cause. If a military leader convinces soldiers that they are fighting for their family, country, or freedom, they will

willingly give up safety and subject themselves to physical hardships such as sleep deprivation, lack of shelter, and hunger. They can even willingly die for their cause.

Psychiatrist and Nazi concentration camp survivor Viktor Frankl also understood the power of purpose and meaning. He realized that when people are in a Nazi concentration camp and lack safety and food, their sense of purpose and meaning becomes even more important because it helps them compensate for physical and psychological hardship. In a similar way, the U.S. military teaches that to survive as a prisoner of war, the most important thing is to maintain a strong sense of your purpose in life, because again, purpose helps us overcome physical and psychological adversity. Like the U.S. military, civil rights leader Bernard Lafayette said the civil rights movement taught people that “in order to remain strong during a kidnap situation, you must maintain a clear sense of purpose in life, and have a motto that states what your life means or some particular value that you have chosen.”³

As a child I always benefitted when adults helped increase my sense of purpose, such as helping me understand why it was important for me to learn something or perform a task in a particular way, rather than just saying, “Because I said so.” To heal my childhood trauma and strive toward my full potential as a human being, I needed to find healthy forms of *higher purpose* and *deep meaning* in life. But first I needed to understand our other human needs.

Belonging

When I ask audiences what our human needs are, another need they almost never mention is our need for *belonging*. I then ask them, “Is belonging a basic human need? What is more important for humans: food or belonging?”

After giving the audience a few moments to ponder this, I ask, “What is more important for a wolf-pack: food or belonging? Keep in mind that belonging is the precondition that allows wolves to obtain food, because they are social animals that hunt as a pack, as a community. In a similar way, belonging is the precondition that allows humans to obtain food, water, safety, shelter, and all of our physical needs, because we rely upon a community for our survival. If you put a two-year-old child in the wilderness alone, that child will starve to death.”⁴

The following diagram depicting Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs shows how he got it backward. Although he lists physical needs such as food and safety as coming before belonging, the opposite is true. Since the time of our earliest ancestors until today, belonging to a community has been the foundation that has allowed humans to obtain food and safety.

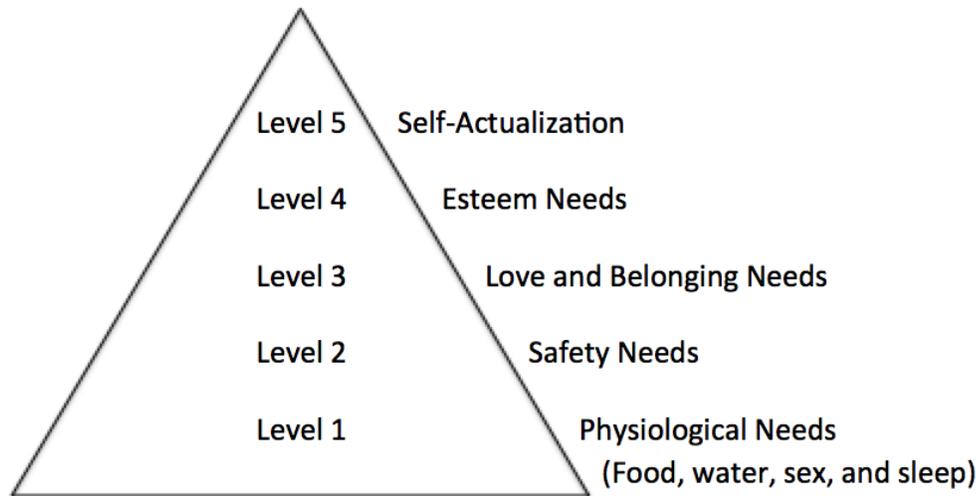


Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

To help us better understand how Maslow got it backward, psychologist Pamela Rutledge explains why belonging, in the form of social connection and collaboration, is in fact a basic need that must be satisfied before humans can obtain food and safety:

Maslow's model, as its name suggests, organizes groups of human needs into levels in a hierarchical structure, forming a pyramid. It's similar in some senses to video games in that you have to fulfill the requirements of one set of needs before you can level up. But the same things that make Maslow's model cognitively appealing—that sense of order and predictability—also make it wrong. If only life were so simple...

Here's the problem with Maslow's hierarchy. None of these needs [such as food and safety]—starting with basic survival on up—are possible without social connection and collaboration. None of Maslow's needs can be met without social connection. Humans are social animals for good reason. Without collaboration, there is no survival. It was not possible to defeat a Woolly Mammoth, build a secure structure, or care for children while hunting without a team effort. It's more true now than then. Our reliance on each other grows as societies become more complex, interconnected, and specialized. Connection is a prerequisite for survival, physically and emotionally...

Needs are not hierarchical. Life is messier than that. Needs are, like most other things in nature, an interactive, dynamic system, but they are anchored in our ability to make social connections. Maslow's model needs rewiring so it matches our brains. Belongingness is the driving force of human behavior, not a third tier activity. The system of human needs from bottom to top ... are dependent on our ability to connect with others. Belonging to a community provides the sense of security and agency that makes our brains happy and helps keep us safe.⁵

What is the most common characteristic that all serial killers and mass shooters have in common? In his book *Female Serial Killers*, Peter Vronsky says that “social isolation—loneliness—might be arguably the *most* common characteristic of the childhood of serial killers.”⁶ A lack of belonging in the form of social isolation, loneliness, or alienation is also common among mass shooters. So what is more important for humans: food or belonging? People do not become serial killers or mass shooters because they lack food. But people can become serial killers or mass shooters because they lack belonging.⁷

Self-Worth

When I ask audiences what our human needs are, another need they almost never mention is our need for *self-worth*. I then ask them, “Is self-worth a basic human need? What is more important for humans: self-worth or staying alive?”

After giving the audience a few moments to ponder this, I say, “It depends on the person,” and then I discuss how people can prioritize self-worth over staying alive.

Roman general Julius Caesar, who became emperor of Rome through military conquest, said, “Prestige has always been of prime importance to me, even outweighing life itself.”⁸ Caesar placed a higher priority on prestige, status, and self-worth than on staying alive, and this was reflected in his actions. On many occasions, he risked his life in war to protect and increase his prestige, status, and self-worth.

Caesar was not unusual, because in cultures around the world, many people have made a comparison between self-worth and life itself. In Judaism there is an idea that humiliating people is akin to murdering them, which can describe the painful sense of annihilation that people in the modern world can feel when they are bullied and publicly humiliated. According to Rabbi Aryeh Citron, “One should be extremely careful to never shame another in public. This sin is akin to murder; just as blood is spilled in the act of murder, so too when one is shamed the blood drains from his face.”⁹

This comparison of humiliation and murder is not just metaphorical, because throughout human history many people who were humiliated would kill themselves, or they would respond to humiliation by risking their lives to regain their sense of self-worth. During the Trojan War, the Greek soldier Giant Ajax felt humiliated and betrayed by his comrades. As a result, he fell on his sword and killed himself. When the samurai in medieval Japan were humiliated and their “honor” was wounded (“honor” back then was equivalent to “self-worth”), many of the samurai would kill themselves through ritual suicide. If you were to insult and humiliate a man in Europe or the United States during the eighteenth century, endangering his honor and self-worth, he might risk his life by challenging you to a duel.¹⁰ Today many incidents of youth gang violence among both boys and girls are caused when a disrespectful act attacks someone’s sense of self-worth, which can cause this person to retaliate with violence even at the risk of going to prison or dying.

Furthermore, when people today are bullied, humiliated, and their self-worth is wounded, some of these people kill themselves, and many of these people might not kill

themselves, but they at least think about killing themselves. If bullying is unable to harm someone's sense of self-worth, then suicidal thoughts are unlikely to occur as a result of being bullied. But if someone who is bullied feels worthless to the point of hating oneself, then suicidal thoughts are likely to occur. To perform a thought experiment that shows how self-worth is a basic human need, imagine if I had a magic dial that could control your sense of self-worth. If I turned the dial so low that you felt completely worthless and even hated yourself, it is likely you would think about killing yourself, even if all of your physical needs were met.

Although it is becoming more common for girls to bully each other with acts of physical aggression, girls in the past more often relied on social aggression. Self-worth is such a vulnerable part of the human condition that women in many cultures target and attack the self-worth of other women, sometimes in an attempt to destroy their lives or induce suicidal thoughts. In her book *Social Aggression Among Girls*, Marion K. Underwood describes the intense pain that can result from attacks upon one's self-worth:

When adolescent girls engage in social aggression, they are enacting their wrath by hurting what other girls strongly value within the very domain that is often their own focus of concern [such as self-worth or relationships]. When seeking revenge, nothing may satisfy more than hurting someone in the arena in which you yourself feel most threatened . . . The evidence to date suggests both that social aggression is fairly widespread among adolescent girls and that it is perceived as extremely hurtful. In a large-scale survey with more than 6,000 secondary students in Great Britain, 20% of youth reported having been bullied by others spreading rumors about them. Regardless of gender or age, youth reported that the most stressful type of bullying for them was being the target of malicious rumors.¹¹

Today when people's self-worth is wounded, they might not kill themselves quickly the way Giant Ajax did by falling on his sword, or the way a samurai would through ritual suicide, but they do kill themselves slowly through alcoholism, drug addiction, stress, or some other means. There are also examples where people prioritize self-worth over food and health, even to the point of risking their lives. One example is anorexia, which can affect men and women, although it affects far more women than men.

According to a study by the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, five to ten percent of people with anorexia die within ten years, eighteen to twenty percent of people with anorexia die within twenty years, and only thirty to forty percent of people with anorexia ever fully recover.¹² Anorexia is a tragic example where people prioritize self-worth over food, health, and in some cases even staying alive. Anorexia can also be about the desire to have control in one's life, which I will address later when discussing the *tangles of trauma*.

Self-worth is a primary driver of human behavior. Think of how much human behavior is driven by people simply wanting to feel worthy rather than worthless. In countries that have speed limits, why do so many people have a desire to own

Lamborghinis and Ferraris? Cost prevents most of these people from acting on this desire. A person can certainly appreciate these vehicles as works of art or as technological marvels, but for the most part these luxury cars are status symbols that increase people's sense of self-worth. And consider how applying to college can affect the self-worth of high school students, with some students feeling an unhealthy amount of anxiety because they are worried about not getting accepted to Harvard, Yale, or other prestigious universities. A person can have a very happy, meaningful, fulfilling, and successful life without going to Harvard or Yale. The anxiety that high school students feel over getting accepted to a prestigious university has a lot to do with their self-worth (or the self-worth of their parents).

Many people in our society are not taught how to feed their need for self-worth in healthy ways. Furthermore, we live in a society that tends to value our worth based on how much money we make, and this has harmful side effects. If we make a lot of money, many people in our society view us as worthy, even if we lack empathy, integrity, and a sense of service to others. If we make little money, many people in our society view us as worthless, even if we have outstanding personal qualities. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "We are prone to judge success by the index of our salaries or the size of our automobiles, rather than by the quality of our service and relationship to humanity."¹³ This is something we can change by improving our society's value system, which first requires us to understand our human needs in a more realistic and thorough way.

Explanations

When I ask audiences what our human needs are, a need they have never once mentioned is our need for *explanations*. As far as we know, when lightning strikes the ground we are the only species that asks "why?" As far as we know, we are the only species that comes up with religious and scientific explanations that attempt to explain the underlying cause of lightning. Every known culture has explanations for lightning, natural disasters, and the origin of humanity. Every known culture has "creation stories" that offer explanations for how various aspects of our reality came into existence.

When bad things happen to us, we also have a need to ask "why?" Our way of explaining why bad things happen to us can include a wide variety of explanations, such as luck, fate, or karma, which are human concepts. When people have problems in romantic relationships, they also have a need for explanations. Why did this person betray me? Why doesn't this person like me? Why is this person upset today? Why am I having relationship problems with this person? As far as we know, fruit flies don't ask those kinds of questions.

If you ever doubt that human beings have a need for explanations, look at how people react when a terrorist attack happens. Practically everyone wants to find an explanation (even if the explanation is as general as "evil"), which gives those in power an opportunity to spread misleading explanations. In fact, people will often argue about which explanation is correct. For example, when a mass shooting happens in the United States, people can argue about whether it was caused by mental illness, an evil gene, not enough gun control, too much gun control, violent media, bad parenting, bullying, or a

combination of factors. When our economy descends into a recession, there is always an intense debate to explain why.

Our need for explanations is so powerful that if people don't have an accurate explanation, they will come up with an inaccurate explanation. People in medieval Europe lacked microscopes and did not know about viruses and bacteria. Needing an explanation for the cause of plagues, many Europeans said plagues were caused by the alignment of the planets or the wrath of God. In *The Cosmic Ocean* I discuss the dangers of inaccurate explanations, not only in terms of preventing us from understanding and solving the root causes of our problems, but also in terms of sustaining injustice, since unjust policies are always based on inaccurate explanations.

Frederick Douglass, who was born a slave in 1818 and later became an advocate for women's rights and the abolition of slavery, describes one of the inaccurate explanations that sustained state-sanctioned slavery in America: "[As a child I wondered] why am I a slave? Why are some people slaves and others masters? These were perplexing questions and very troublesome to my childhood. I was very early told by some one that 'God up in the sky' had made all things, and had made black people to be slaves and white people to be masters ... I could not tell how anybody could know that God made black people to be slaves."¹⁴

Again, our need for explanations is so powerful that if people do not have an accurate explanation, they will come up with an inaccurate explanation. A common example of this can be seen in childhood trauma. When people who suffer from childhood trauma wonder, "Why me?" or "Why did this happen?" it is because they crave an explanation.¹⁵ When children blame themselves for their parents' divorce, it is also because they crave an explanation, even if the explanation is inaccurate. An abused child can come up with many inaccurate explanations, including, "This person abused me because I am bad and deserve it." The book *Treating Trauma and Traumatic Grief in Children and Adolescents*, written by Judith A. Cohen, Anthony P. Mannarino, and Esther Deblinger, tells us:

Following a traumatic event, children typically search for an explanation for why something so terrible has happened to them or their loved ones. If no rational explanation is found, children may develop *inaccurate* or *irrational cognitions* about causation in order to gain some sense of control or predictability. A very common irrational belief involves children blaming themselves, either by taking responsibility for the event itself ("He sexually abused me because I wore a dress") or for not foreseeing and avoiding the event (e.g., "I should have known Dad would be in a bad mood—why didn't I warn Mom to be especially nice so he wouldn't have beaten her up?"; "I should have stopped my brother from going to school today so he wouldn't have gotten shot on the way home").

Alternatively, although not blaming themselves directly for the traumatic event, children may come to believe that they are bad, shameful, or otherwise lacking in some way that "justifies" bad things happening to them [such as the explanation] "I must be stupid for this to

have happened to me.” In this manner the world remains fair, predictable, and makes sense . . . Developing realistic cognitions of responsibility (i.e., blaming the parent perpetrator) is often more difficult and painful for children than blaming themselves.¹⁶

Explanations create our worldview. All animals, including human beings, have physical needs for their survival, but human beings have some unique psychological needs for their survival that no other animal seems to have. One of these unique psychological needs is that we must have a worldview, which can consist of political, religious, scientific, philosophical, or cultural beliefs. This need for a worldview is so powerful that if you threaten people’s worldview, they will often react as if you are threatening their physical body. One reason for this is that if your worldview, or in other words *everything you believe to be true*, ends up not being true, the disillusionment you experience might be so severe that you will be at risk of committing suicide or going insane.

Because our worldview shapes our sense of purpose, meaning, belonging, and self-worth, people can also react aggressively to threats upon their worldview because their sense of purpose, meaning, belonging, or self-worth is threatened. Sometimes, people will defend an explanation in their worldview because they don’t want to experience the embarrassment and reduction in self-worth that might result from admitting they are mistaken.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs does not mention humanity’s need for a worldview as basic to our survival.¹⁷ What is more important for human beings, our need for explanations or our need for food? Our need for explanations is a *foundational need* that expands our access to food and other physical necessities, because it allows us to ask, “Why are my crops dying? Where did all of the water go? Why am I not safe? What is causing this disease? What causes fire, and how can I control fire?” According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, when people lack food, water, and safety, they simply want food, water, and safety. But in every known culture, when people lack food, water, and safety, they also want explanations for *why* they lack food, water, and safety. They want *answers*.

An adult human brain cannot function without a worldview. This is why children naturally start forming their worldview at a very early age when they seek explanations by asking countless questions. Four-year-old children can ask questions such as, “Where do babies come from? Why does it rain? Why is the sky blue?” Sometimes adults can become annoyed by the large amount of questions that young children ask. Young children need explanations and a worldview, yet this basic human need is not listed anywhere in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

Because our brains cannot function without a worldview, many people would rather die than lose their worldview. Many people would rather die than lose their religion, which comprises a large part of their worldview. As John Steinbeck says in *The Grapes of Wrath*, human beings are the only species on the planet that will die for an idea.¹⁸ We cannot understand our modern political and social problems unless we understand our human need for explanations and a worldview, because this basic need is behind so many of these problems.

Because we can react to a threat upon our worldview as if our physical body is being threatened, this is one reason why the Roman Catholic Church threatened Galileo and censored his ideas when he said the earth revolves around the sun. He had threatened their worldview. This is also why it can be so difficult to challenge people's views on politics and religion without them becoming aggressive. Have you ever seen someone become aggressive over a discussion about politics or religion? You have probably seen this happen more often than you can count.

Usually this aggression takes the form of *posturing* (what I describe as “warning aggression” in *The End of War* and *The Cosmic Ocean*), but sometimes this aggression can become lethal, since there are examples in history where people have been willing to risk their lives and kill others in order to protect their political or religious worldview. Furthermore, just as the “flight response” causes many animals to create distance between themselves and a threat when their bodies are in danger, many people will create distance when you threaten their worldview by walking away from you, unfriending you on Facebook, or separating themselves from you in some other way.

I meet many well-meaning people who say, “I often give people facts and evidence, but people don't care about facts and evidence when it contradicts what they believe.” What we must understand is that a worldview can function like a force field, and facts and evidence can bounce off that force field. A human being is not a computer that automatically absorbs the information we type into it. Unlike human beings, computers don't have a worldview that consists of political, religious, scientific, philosophical, or cultural beliefs.

In *The Art of Waging Peace* I discuss how we can tie new ideas into people's existing worldview, rather than directly attacking their worldview. This pamphlet is an excerpt from an upcoming book I am writing titled *The Transcendent Mystery*. In that book I will take these ideas further to discuss how human beings actually share a universal worldview that transcends religion, nationality, and culture, which many people do not know about, and how we can harness the power of this universal worldview to create a more peaceful and just world.

Our Shared Human Hunger

When we understand our shared human hunger for purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations, we can better understand how Adolf Hitler was able to appeal to people. Hitler offered people purpose and meaning. He also offered them belonging and self-worth through a sense of national and racial superiority. And he offered them explanations. People in Germany wanted to know, “Why am I poor?” Hitler offered them explanations, such as telling them they were poor because of the Jews. He wasn't offering accurate explanations, but people wanted answers.

Understanding our shared human hunger for purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations also helps us better understand how violent extremist groups appeal to people. Imagine you are an alienated Muslim living in France, and you feel like a second-class citizen. You feel worthless. And then ISIS comes along and offers you purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations for why people mistreat you,

explanations for why you are suffering, and explanations for how the world works. There are many reasons why people join gangs in the United States and around the world. One of those reasons is the hunger for belonging and self-worth.

Today many liberals, conservatives, socialists, and libertarians view humans primarily in materialistic terms, which can lead to the naive view that if everyone has enough material things, we are all going to be happy and live in peace. But that is not how humans actually are. For example, many people in Hollywood have a lot of money, physical luxuries, and fame, yet they can still suffer from drug addiction, alcoholism, depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts. These problems can affect people from all walks of life.

If having enough material things made people happy and peaceful, then why does violent extremism exist? Osama bin Laden was very wealthy, and the September 11th hijackers were not living in material poverty. Furthermore, most mass shooters in the United States are not poor people. Throughout history in every known large society, the people who initiate wars have usually been members of the upper class.

In my early twenties I read psychologist Erich Fromm, whose critique of Sigmund Freud reminded me of the leadership lessons I learned in the military, where I learned that people will die for purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, or an idea. Sigmund Freud basically said that our human problems come from trying to fulfill our physical needs, such as our need for food, water, safety, and sex. But Erich Fromm said Sigmund Freud was incorrect. Erich Fromm said that when we have satisfied all of our physical needs, that is not when our problems end. Instead, that is when our problems truly begin.¹⁹

The *Iliad* was written almost three thousand years ago. There is a scene in the *Iliad* where Zeus, king of the gods, looks upon humanity and says, "There is nothing alive more agonized than man of all that breathe and crawl across the earth."²⁰ So three thousand years ago, people realized that no other species on the planet has the range of psychological problems that humans have. No other species on the planet self-destructs from alcoholism or drug addiction. No other species on the planet, as far as we know, looks in the mirror and says, "Oh no, I have a gray hair," or "I don't like how these pants make me look." No other species on the planet joins ISIS or neo-Nazi groups. All of their members are humans. There aren't any chimpanzees or dolphins in ISIS.

Furthermore, no other species on the planet has anything like human religion, while every known human culture either has religion, or something that looks a lot like religion. Throughout history, religion has given people purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations. When people get their purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations from a national leader or political party, they can worship a national leader or political party in a way that resembles religion. Sports can also emulate some aspects of religion. As someone once told me when describing the popularity of football in the United States, "Sunday used to belong to God. Now Sunday belongs to football."

To gain a deep and practical understanding of extremism, trauma, and the nature of human happiness, and to solve our national and global problems in the twenty-first century and beyond, we need a realistic and pragmatic model of the human condition that is more accurate than Maslow's oversimplistic hierarchy of needs.

Cindy Blackstock, executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, discusses how Maslow's hierarchy of needs oversimplifies the complexity of the human condition:

Native American scholar and child welfare expert Terry Cross (2007) reinterprets Maslow's hierarchy of needs through indigenous eyes to create the relational worldview principles . . . For example, Cross (1997) argues that physical needs are not always primary in nature as Maslow argues, given the many examples of people who forgo physical safety and well-being in order to achieve love, belonging, and relationships or to achieve spiritual or pedagogical objectives. The idea of dying for country is an example of this as men and women fight in times of war. Cross (1997) believes that spirituality is the unique force differentiating human life from other forms of life, defining our individual and collective experience. Spirituality should not be misinterpreted to mean organized religion alone; rather it is a personally defined force that centers one's sense of self, community, and world across time.²¹

Maslow expressed criticism of his own theory. According to Fiona Wilson, a professor of organizational behavior: "Maslow's theory lacks empirical support (Wahba and Bridwell, 1976), as Maslow himself admitted when, in 1962, he wrote: 'My motivation theory was published 20 years ago and in all that time nobody repeated it, or tested it, or really analysed it or criticized it. They just used it, swallowed it whole with only the minor modifications.'"²²

In a journal entry that he wrote on August 30th 1962, Maslow further said: "This a.m. finally dictated a little bit about being cautious with the over extensive use in business of my theories and findings. They're being taken as gospel truth, without any real examination of their reliability, validity. The carry-over from clinic to industry is really a huge and shaky step, but they're going ahead enthusiastically and optimistically . . . I *must* publish the critiques . . . of my motivation theory. Even so, I must expect to be blamed for all the mistakes of these enthusiasts if any real discrepancy or contradiction turns up. Then I'll really get hopped on as an unscientific optimist. Oh, well! There's no avoiding that."²³

Two Kinds of Poverty

What our shared human hunger for purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations reveals is that there are two kinds of poverty. The first kind of poverty is *material poverty*. The second kind of poverty is what we can call *spiritual poverty*. As Cindy Blackstock said in her previous quote, "Spirituality should not be misinterpreted to mean organized religion alone; rather it is a personally defined force that centers one's sense of self, community, and world across time."²⁴

Spiritual poverty consists of poverty of purpose and malnutrition of meaning. Spiritual poverty can also consist of poverty of belonging and self-worth. Spiritual poverty can occur when our explanations are based on propaganda rather than truth, and when we lack a worldview that has high ideals, the kind of high ideals that help us live with integrity, empathy, courage, and an attitude of service to others. When people have unhealthy sources of food and water, we can consider this material poverty. In a similar way, when people have unhealthy sources of purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations that promote violence and injustice, we can consider this spiritual poverty.

People can suffer terribly from material poverty, and people can also suffer terribly from spiritual poverty. However, what we must understand is that the people suffering from spiritual poverty are far more dangerous than those suffering from material poverty. In other words, if a person has unhealthy sources of food and water, that person is not nearly as dangerous as someone who has unhealthy sources of purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations.

Conquerors throughout history do not wage war because they lack food and water. Adolf Hitler did not want to rule Germany and conquer Europe because he was physically hungry and thirsty. If you were to ask conservatives who are the most dangerous humans on the planet, many conservatives would respond, "The liberal elites." If you were to ask liberals who are the most dangerous humans on the planet, many liberals would respond, "The conservative elites." All of these elites have plenty of food and water. They are not suffering from material poverty.

In fact, spiritual poverty can cause material poverty. To offer just one example, when people find purpose through the spiritually impoverished attitude of excessive greed, this can cause material poverty on a broad scale. When people have a worldview based on a racist ideology, this can also cause material poverty for others.

Questioning his own hierarchy of needs, Abraham Maslow spent the last years of his life trying to create a system that framed needs as interconnected and complex rather than hierarchical and oversimplistic, and he wondered what essential nutrients are required to feed these needs in healthy ways. Just as our need for food requires essential nutrients such as zinc and magnesium, our need for explanations requires the essential nutrient of truth and our need for belonging requires the essential nutrient of justice. Because Nazi Germany lacked truth and justice, millions of people died. The lack of these essential nutrients have killed countless people throughout history, which shows how a lack of truth and justice can kill people just as a lack of food can.

The ability to experience profound rather than shallow beauty is an essential nutrient for experiencing higher purpose and deep meaning, which are powerful forms of purpose and meaning that become even more important during turbulent times. Discussing how nutrients such as truth, justice, and beauty are essential rather than hierarchical, Maslow said, "Just as we need to ingest a certain amount of magnesium or zinc in our diet for healthy functioning, I am suggesting that we all need to ingest or experience unadulterated truth, justice, or beauty for our inner wellbeing. The lack of these minerals or vitamins will inescapably cause certain kinds of illnesses."²⁵

If we want to create a more peaceful and just world, it is important to not only reduce material poverty. We must also reduce spiritual poverty. We must also increase truth, justice, and beauty. Because trauma can lead to both material poverty and spiritual poverty, along with extremism and violence, creating a more peaceful and just world requires us to learn how to heal trauma. But first we must understand the epidemic of trauma in a realistic rather than naive way.

The Tangles of Trauma

So far I have discussed four human needs that are not physical. The first is purpose and meaning, followed by belonging, self-worth, and explanations. Human beings actually have *nine non-physical needs*. I discuss all nine of these non-physical needs in *The Cosmic Ocean*, and I list them all in the diagram below. Because human beings crave purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations like plants crave sunlight and water, we can call these nine non-physical needs *psychological cravings* or *spiritual cravings*, if by the word “spiritual” we reference the quote from Cindy Blackstock that I cited earlier by not meaning “organized religion alone” but “a personally defined force that centers one's sense of self, community, and world across time.”²⁶

Trauma can become tangled around our cravings for purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and explanations. When trauma becomes tangled around our craving for purpose and meaning, this can cause us to suffer from persistent feelings of meaninglessness or nihilism. Like a cord tangled around our throat, preventing us from getting oxygen as we painfully gasp for air, trauma can become tangled around our craving for purpose and meaning, resulting in painful gasps of meaninglessness and nihilism. Like a butterfly tangled in a spider web, our craving for purpose and meaning can become tangled in trauma, preventing us from soaring toward a purposeful and meaningful life. And just as a cord can be tangled around our neck in varying degrees of tightness, or a butterfly can survive for varying lengths of time when tangled in a spider web, trauma can kill us quickly or slowly. Or we can free ourselves from the tangles of trauma.

When trauma becomes tangled around our craving for explanations, this can cause us to suffer from disillusionment or a ruthless worldview. What is a ruthless worldview? As I discussed earlier, human beings try to explain why bad things happen to them, and our need for explanations is so powerful that if people do not have an accurate explanation, they will come up with an inaccurate explanation. If I am trying to explain why I was abused as a child and the explanation I come up with is, “I was abused because humans are inherently dangerous and untrustworthy,” then my worldview can become ruthless.

If my explanation for why people have hurt me is the inaccurate belief that all people are *inherently* dangerous and untrustworthy, then I can develop a ruthless worldview that encourages me to hurt people before they hurt me or control people so that they cannot hurt me. A common consequence of childhood trauma is that people can become very controlling, because they are worried that people will hurt them through betrayal, humiliation, or in some other way. Sometimes a person traumatized by a man

can develop a ruthless worldview toward most or all men, or a person traumatized by a woman can develop a ruthless worldview toward most or all women.

The following diagram shows how trauma can get tangled around our nine spiritual cravings, which a person might prefer to call our “nine non-physical needs” or our “nine psychological cravings” (later in this section I will add more precision and philosophical depth to the words “spiritual” and “psychological” by discussing the connection between the Latin word “spiritus” and the ancient Greek word “psyche”). As this diagram shows, trauma creates distortions in these cravings. Trauma corrupts these cravings, which can result in behavior that harms ourselves and those around us. I use the metaphor of tangles to describe these distortions and the harm that often results from trauma. This diagram lists these nine cravings in the order that I introduce them in *The Cosmic Ocean*:

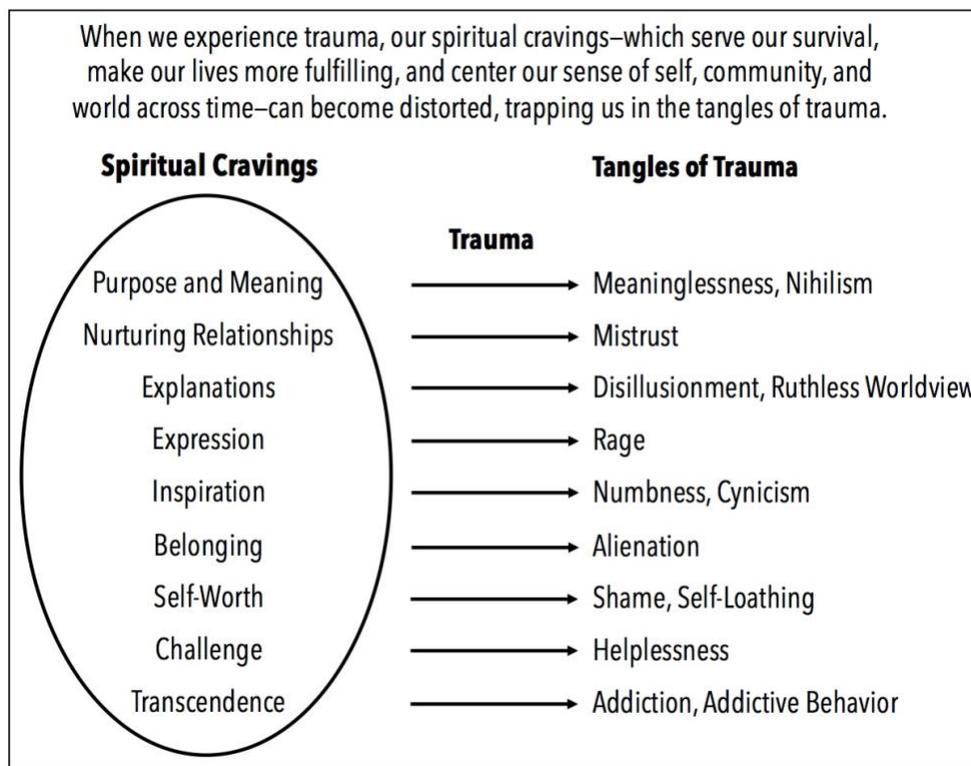


Figure 2: Spiritual (Psychological) Cravings and the Tangles of Trauma

To quickly discuss a few of the spiritual cravings on this list that we have not yet covered, human beings have a craving for *nurturing relationships*. Nurturing relationships consist of being respected, listened to, and treated with empathy. The foundation of nurturing relationships is our need for *trust*, which is a basic human need. All people want to be around people they can trust. Do conservatives like to be around people they can trust? Yes. Do liberals like to be around people they can trust? Yes. Do Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, and agnostics like to be around people they can trust? Yes. Do people in the Mafia like to be around people they can trust? Absolutely. Do

people in ISIS like to be around people they can trust? Certainly. Did Hitler and Osama bin Laden like to be around people they could trust? Of course. To show audiences that we all have a need for trust I ask them, “Raise your hand if you like being betrayed.” Nobody raises their hand.

Although trust (as the foundation of nurturing relationships) is a basic human need, it is not listed anywhere in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Our need for trust does not go away when we lack food and safety. On the contrary, when these physical needs are not met and we feel insecurity and fear as a result, our need for trust can increase, because having people in our lives that we can trust and rely on helps reduce our feelings of insecurity and fear. Hitler manipulated the German people’s fear of lacking food and safety, which increased their need for trust, in order to mislead them into believing that he was the only politician who could be trusted to protect them.

When people betray and abuse us, causing trauma to get tangled around our craving for nurturing relationships, this can cause us to suffer from persistent feelings of mistrust. Like a cord tangled around our throat, preventing us from getting oxygen as we painfully gasp for air, trauma can become tangled around our craving for nurturing relationships, resulting in painful gasps of mistrust. Like a butterfly tangled in a spider web, our craving for nurturing relationships can become tangled in a traumatic web of betrayal and abuse, preventing us from soaring within human relationships that are trusting, nurturing, and deeply fulfilling. When just one or a few people abuse and traumatize us, the tangle of mistrust can form and make it difficult for us to trust all human beings. I have had immense difficulty trusting all people because of the tangle of mistrust that resulted from my childhood trauma, and I have had to learn how to free myself from mistrust and the other tangles of trauma.

Human beings also have a need to express their emotions. *Expression* is a basic human need. We can express ourselves through language, laughter, crying, facial expressions, body language, music, art, ritual, how we dress, tattoos, bumper stickers, social media, and even through violence. When trauma becomes tangled around our craving for expression, this can lead to rage, where rage becomes our preferred method of expression. Rage differs from anger, because if you feel so angry that you want to punch someone, you will probably back down if that person points a gun at you. But people filled with rage can care more about hurting someone than their own personal safety.

People often think of our need for food as our first human need, but our need for expression can actually be considered our first human need. When you come out of your mother’s womb, before you even have your first meal, you have the capacity to cry. Someone might say that when we come out of our mother’s womb, our need to breathe oxygen on our own is the first human need to activate, but babies can start crying as they take their first breaths of air. After leaving the mother’s womb, a baby’s need to breathe oxygen and capacity to cry seem to activate at about the same time. Babies cry so that adults will tend to their needs, yet our human need for expression, which can be considered our first human need and is essential to our survival, is not listed anywhere in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs neglects a basic truth of the human condition, which is that *our nine non-physical needs (nine spiritual cravings) help us fulfill our physical needs*. Purpose and meaning help us overcome the physical and psychological adversity that can block our access to food and safety, explanations help us understand the root causes of why we lack food and safety and how we can solve these problems, and belonging is the precondition that allows us to fulfill our physical needs by being part of a community. When we have nurturing relationships based on trust, this helps us fulfill our physical need for safety, and cooking food for people and eating together can be motivated by our yearning to nurture each other and to feel nurtured. Before becoming a professional chef, Thomas Keller learned that food goes beyond our mere physical needs. He tells us, "In 1977 I met a French chef. He said to me, 'Cooks cook to nurture people.' That moment is when I decided to become a professional chef."²⁷

Furthermore, if babies do not have nurturing relationships in the form of an adult who feeds and cares for them, they will not have their physical needs met and they will die. Our need for expression helps us fulfill our physical needs by allowing us to tell people, "I am hungry. I am cold. I am afraid. I don't feel safe." Because expression is such a basic human need, our need for expression does not go away when our physical needs are not met. On the contrary, when our physical needs are not met, our need to express our hunger, fear, and pain can increase. When people's physical needs are not met, they might express themselves through dialogue, shouting, voting, protesting, or rioting.

In the military I learned that *inspiration* is a basic human need. Our need for inspiration can be seen in our need for role models. Children's need for role models is so powerful that if they don't have good role models to look up to, they will look up to bad role models. The military taught me that people learn a lot by watching the behavior of others (which is why it is so important to *lead by example*) and that it is common for people to mirror both healthy and unhealthy behavior they see. Some of the behavioral problems children exhibit in school can be partially attributed to the way they mirror unhealthy behavior in the role models they look up to, such as celebrities they see in the media or adults they interact with in their home or community.

In her book *Social Aggression Among Girls*, Marion K. Underwood explains how children can mirror the unhealthy behavior of their parents in more ways than many people realize: "Chronic exposure to parents' anger has negative consequences for preschool children, some of which persist long term. Research on marriage conflict shows that children exposed to interparental anger have higher rates of physically aggressive behavior . . . Even if parents are not divorced, exposure to their anger can have negative consequences. In a sample of 4- to 8-year-olds, children exposed to angry marital conflict were rated as more aggressive by peers, teachers, and mothers, and were observed to show more angry responses in peer interactions . . . Cognitive contextual theories suggest that watching parents engage in heated, intense, unresolved conflict may be disorganizing and distressing for youth, causing them to have poor social adjustment and to behave aggressively with peers."²⁸

To show audiences that our need for inspiration is fundamental, I ask, "If you look at leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Winston Churchill, Wangari Maathai, or even the way leaders are depicted in films such as *Braveheart*, *300*, and *Gladiator*, when people's

physical need for safety is not met, what do effective leaders always do?” After giving the audience a few moments to ponder this, I say, “When people don’t feel safe, *effective leaders always give an inspiring speech*. Effective leaders know that when people lack physical needs such as food and safety, the most *immediate need* you have to feed is their need for inspiration so that they can overcome the physical and psychological adversity blocking their access to food and safety.” When trauma gets tangled around our craving for inspiration, this can cause us to suffer from persistent feelings of numbness or cynicism that reduce our ability to feel realistically hopeful, intensely enthusiastic, and fully alive.

One of the biggest weaknesses of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is that it does not address trauma or the destructive desires that can result from the many tangles of trauma. During my childhood, tangles of trauma such as nihilism, mistrust, a ruthless worldview, rage, alienation, and self-loathing caused me to develop a mass shooter personality, in the form of an obsessive desire to destroy as many people as I could and self-destruct in a single violent act. Maslow is one of the founders of humanistic psychology, and in an exceptional example of intellectual honesty, he says that humanistic psychology is “worthless” for understanding the most dangerous forms of human destruction and self-destruction. In 1966 (four years before he died), he wrote the following critique of humanistic psychology:

For several years, I have felt that humanistic psychology's tacit assumptions should be dragged out into the open and that an astute philosopher could legitimately raise questions about these unproven beliefs . . . First, it should be made clear that the entire model of humanistic psychology and *self-actualization* rests on the assumption that the person wants to live. When an individual's death wishes are strong, the whole psychological system falls to the ground . . . In short, when life is judged as not worthwhile—whether through the accumulation of pains or the absence of peak-experiences and positive joys—then humanistic psychology is worthless.²⁹

Practically all people have felt meaninglessness and mistrust at some point in their life because of reasons unrelated to trauma, but trauma can cause these feelings to become persistent and last for years and even decades, changing our personality in dangerous ways. Trauma can strangle us quickly in the form of suicide, or kill us far more slowly, like slow suffocation, in the form of alcoholism, drug addiction, stress, or making our body more susceptible to illness. Using breathing as a metaphor for the human psyche (from which I use the harm caused by constricting our breathing as a metaphor for the harm trauma can cause to our psyche) has an ancient origin. The word “psyche,” which people use today to mean the human mind or soul, meant “breath” in ancient Greek. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology*, psyche derives “from Greek *psyche* breath, from *psychein* to breathe, alluding to the ancient belief that breathing was evidence that the soul had not yet left the body.”³⁰

When I compare aspects of our psyche becoming tangled in trauma to a butterfly becoming tangled in a spider web, the metaphor of a butterfly was also used to describe the human psyche in Greek mythology. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology*, “Psyche [is] the human mind or soul. In Greek mythology, the soul was personified by Psyche, a young woman . . . Psyche is often depicted in works of art with butterfly wings or as a butterfly, because she symbolizes the human soul, suffering hardship and struggle in life but re-emerging after death in a new and better existence, like a caterpillar reborn as a butterfly.”³¹ When we untangle ourselves from trauma, we can re-emerge “in a new and better existence” in *this* life and save ourselves from a premature death, like a butterfly freed from a dangerous web.

Because reality is so complex, we can use a variety of metaphors to better understand any aspect of reality. When metaphors are used properly, they make our complex reality appear simple, accessible, and understandable without oversimplifying complexity. Depicting trauma as a tangled cord that restricts our breathing uncovers one angle of the reality of trauma. Depicting trauma as a tangled spider web that restricts our ability to soar uncovers another angle of the reality of trauma. In *The Art of Waging Peace* I depict trauma as a labyrinth, a tangled maze that we can become lost in, which uncovers yet another angle of the reality of trauma.

The words “psychological” and “spiritual” are actually metaphorically related, because they both refer to breathing. Similar to how psychology derives from “psyche,” which means both breath and our human essence in ancient Greek, spirituality derives from “spiritus,” which means both breath and our human essence in Latin. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*, “Our word spirit is based on Latin *spiritus* ‘breath or spirit,’ from *spirare* ‘to breathe.’ . . . *Spirare* forms the basis of numerous English words including **aspire** from *adspirare* ‘to breathe upon, seek to reach’; **conspire** from *conspirare* ‘to breathe together, agree’; **expire** ‘to breathe out’; **inspire** ‘breathe into’ from the idea that a divine or outside power has inspired you; and **perspire** ‘to breathe through’; and **transpire** ‘breathe across.’”³²

Many ancient and indigenous languages have used the same word to mean both breath and our human essence. Similar to our breathing, our spiritual cravings can always be felt but not always seen. Just as we can see our breath manifest when we exhale in the cold air, we can see people’s spiritual cravings manifest when they exhale through violence in the cold air of rage and alienation. If people don’t have healthy outlets for their spiritual cravings, they will choose unhealthy outlets.

People will feed their hunger and thirst with unhealthy food and contaminated water if they lack healthier options. In a similar way, people will feed their nine spiritual cravings with unhealthy ideologies if they lack healthier options. The tangles of trauma can also compel people to choose unhealthy options, even if they have access to healthier options, because trauma can cause our actions to be guided not by what is best for us and those around us, but by the pain caused by meaninglessness and nihilism, mistrust, disillusionment and a ruthless worldview, rage, numbness and cynicism, alienation, shame and self-loathing, helplessness, or addiction and addictive behavior. Our yearning to feed our spiritual cravings can also cause us to give up our freedom in both healthy and unhealthy ways.

Freedom is most realistically understood not as a basic human need, but as a metaphorical currency that we can use to satisfy both our physical needs and non-physical needs (spiritual cravings). Where our craving for purpose and meaning is concerned, freedom allows us to have some control over what purpose we seek in life and gives us more options for finding meaning in life. Where our craving for expression is concerned, freedom of expression gives us more options for expressing ourselves. Voting and protesting are forms of expression, and the freedom to participate in a democratic system gives us more ways to express our hopes and grievances. People's freedom can decrease significantly when they serve in the military, have a demanding but fulfilling job, are deeply committed to their religion, dedicate themselves to an activity (such as playing a sport, writing, or making music) in a disciplined and time-consuming way, raise children, or devote their lives to a cause, but if this reduction in freedom leads to a substantial increase in purpose, meaning, belonging, or self-worth, then people will feel that they have used the currency of freedom well.

In *The Cosmic Ocean* I compare these spiritual cravings to organs, because just as the physical organs in our body crave nutrients, but can be fed with foods that vary in nutritional quality, the spiritual organs in our psyche also crave nutrients, but can be fed in ways that vary in nutritional quality. For example, using shallow materialism or violent extremism to feed our spiritual cravings is far less healthy for us and our planet than feeding these cravings with the nutrients of truth, justice, and beauty. Furthermore, just as the organs in our body are interconnected, the same is true for the metaphorical spiritual organs in the human psyche. Damage to our pancreas can harm our kidneys, and in a similar way, damage to our organ of self-worth can harm our organ of expression, impairing our ability to express ourselves in healthy ways and inducing rage. Also, when we express rage it can cause us to feel shame. Just as swallowing a sharp object can harm multiple bodily organs such as our stomach, small intestine, and large intestine, a traumatic wound to our psyche can harm our organs of belonging, self-worth, and challenge. This can cause alienation, shame, and helplessness to combine, forming anorexia or other problems.

One reason I developed the tangles of trauma framework is because I have noticed how the word "trauma" is becoming a cliché. If a person says, "I am suffering from trauma," that can mean almost anything. Imagine if we lived in a world where people could only say, "There is something wrong with my body," because organs such as the liver, kidneys, and heart had not yet been clearly identified. Just as people are empowered when they know what organs within the human body can be harmed, people are also empowered when they know what metaphorical organs within the human psyche can be harmed by trauma.

Instead of saying, "I am suffering from trauma," a person can speak with much more precision by saying, "I am suffering from meaninglessness," or "I am suffering from mistrust," or "I am suffering from shame," or "I am suffering from helplessness," or "I am suffering from rage." In a similar way, a person can speak with much more precision if instead of saying, "I have pain in my body," the person says, "I have pain in my stomach," or "I have a pain in my lungs," or "I have pain in my heart."

Everything that people describe as trauma is encompassed in the tangles of trauma framework. This framework primarily deals with the trauma that human beings inflict on us, but mistrust can also describe the fear a person feels toward all dogs after being attacked by a dog. When people suffer from persistent feelings of fear, they can really be suffering from tangles such as mistrust, shame, or helplessness.

Helplessness can describe the fear a person has after surviving a natural disaster, growing up hungry as a child, or not being able to feed one's family. The most painful forms of fear involve a sense of helplessness. In the military I learned that human beings are very capable of managing fear when they have a strong community (through people they can trust and rely on) and feel empowered rather than helpless. Helplessness in the face of fear, rather than fear by itself, is linked to the most severe forms of trauma, which can cause the feeling of helplessness to become persistent and make us afraid of living.

Another reason I developed the tangles of trauma framework is because it helps us understand three forms of trauma that cause so much suffering around our world and underlie many of our national and global problems: childhood trauma, war trauma, and racial trauma (the trauma caused by racism and racist policies). I spent my childhood in the midst of the madness caused by these three forms of trauma. Growing up as a racial outcast in Alabama, the son of a half black and half white father and Korean mother, I spent my childhood in the shadow of racial trauma. Growing up in a violent household with a father who fought in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, I also spent my childhood in the shadow of childhood trauma and war trauma, and I later deployed to Iraq.

The tangles of trauma framework describes the trauma of Achilles in the *Iliad* and the later suicide of his comrade Ajax, stories that are nearly three thousand years old, which show the timelessness of the human condition. This framework also describes how racism can create tangles such as mistrust, disillusionment, rage, cynicism, alienation, shame and self-loathing, helplessness, and addiction. Our parents can pass the tangles of trauma onto us, creating intergenerational trauma that we must learn how to overcome so that we do not repeat this cycle. In addition, this framework shows how veterans can face problems that not only involve war trauma, but also losing their sense of purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, and challenge when they leave the military. Maslow's hierarchy of needs not only oversimplifies the complexity of the human condition, but it also does not address the trauma that has tormented so many people throughout history and continues to torment people today. Maslow's hierarchy of needs does not give us a framework that empowers us to understand and heal childhood trauma, racial trauma, and war trauma.

During my lectures I have found that trauma is a topic that interests people regardless of their economic status, race, gender, nationality, or political affiliation, because it affects all of us either directly or indirectly. The United States has the most powerful military in human history, but trauma is a metaphorical ghost that cannot be destroyed by missiles and bombs. Like a phantom that can bypass locked doors and walk through walls, trauma can enter children's homes in the form of domestic violence, being around adults suffering from alcoholism or other addictions, the rage and shame our parents carry with them, child abuse, lack of love, and numerous other ways.

We need a much more precise, thorough, and empowering way of understanding trauma, along with a much more precise, thorough, and empowering way of talking about trauma, if we are going to heal the trauma epidemics that harm so many people in our country and around the world. Also, we can inhibit the healing process if we allow trauma to become the central feature of our identity. On the path toward healing, I have benefitted from not seeing myself as a “traumatized person” or victim, but instead seeing myself as a human being with many positive qualities who is struggling with the tangles of trauma. These tangles are looser on some days and tighter on other days, and sometimes they seem to go away completely for a long period of time and then revisit temporarily, but never do these tangles define who I am.

Our understanding of peace is only as good as our understanding of the human condition and trauma, and this is why *peace literacy*, a new peace paradigm that educators and I are working to integrate into schools, includes a realistic, practical, and accessible framework for understanding our human needs and the tangles of trauma. Peace literacy also views peace as a skill-set. The skill-set of peace literacy empowers us to feed our spiritual cravings in healthy ways, reduce material poverty and spiritual poverty, untangle trauma from our lives and society, heal the root causes of our human problems, and increase realistic peace in our personal lives, communities, country, and world.

Note on this essay:

This essay is the third printing of an excerpt from *The Transcendent Mystery* (tentative publication date: Fall 2021), Chappell’s last book in his seven-book *Road to Peace* series. Another essay excerpted from the *Transcendent Mystery*, titled “The World of Electric Light,” builds on the ideas discussed here and offers a new paradigm for understanding technology (especially the Internet, social media, and future technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality). Both essays are available for free download at peaceliteracy.org.

AUTHOR BIO

Paul K. Chappell is an international peace educator, author of the seven-book *Road to Peace* series, and serves as Executive Director of the Peace Literacy Institute (peaceliteracy.org). He graduated from West Point, was deployed to Iraq, and left active duty as a captain. He lectures across the country and internationally, also teaching courses and workshops on Peace Literacy and Leadership. His father was African-American and served in the Korean and Vietnam wars; his Korean mother grew up in war-torn Japan. Both his parents brought their war-trauma home with them to Alabama where Paul was raised. Growing up as a multi-racial child in a violent household, Chappell has forged a new understanding of war and peace, rage and trauma, and vision, purpose, and hope. His author website is peacefulrevolution.com.

¹ Matthew 4: 4, Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV).

² Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon, 2006), 76.

³ Personal conversation with Bernard Lafayette, June 2013.

⁴ Adult wolves can sometimes hunt alone, although they have a much better chance of surviving if they cooperate as a group. Wolf pups certainly need a community to get their physical needs met, since they cannot feed themselves, and successfully raising pups requires cooperation among wolves. In *Will War Ever End?* I discuss how human beings, more than any other mammal, rely on cooperation to survive.

⁵ Pamela Rutledge, "Social Networks: What Maslow Misses," <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/positively-media/201111/social-networks-what-maslow-misses-0>.

⁶ Peter Vronsky, *Female Serial Killers* (New York: Berkley Books, 2007), 47.

⁷ Usually serial killers and mass shooters suffer from a variety of risk factors, but lack of belonging, in the form of social isolation, loneliness, or alienation, seems to be a risk factor that is common to many mass shooters and serial killers.

⁸ Julius Caesar, *The Civil War of Caesar*, trans. Jane F. Garner (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), 40.

⁹ Aryeh Citron, "Hurtful Words,"

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1218154/jewish/Hurtful-Words.htm.

¹⁰ When people's self-worth was wounded in these examples, they could commit suicide or risk their lives to protect their sense of self-worth not only because societies caused people to internalize this value system, but also because societies exerted pressure to uphold this value system. A modern example is a person in a gang who is publicly disrespected and then feels pressure from the gang culture to retaliate with violence.

¹¹ Marion K. Underwood, *Social Aggression Among Girls* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), 141-142.

¹² South Carolina Department of Mental Health Eating Disorder Statistics, <https://www.state.sc.us/dmh/anorexia/statistics.htm>.

¹³ *The Words of Martin Luther King Jr.*, selected by Coretta Scott King (New York: Newmarket Press, 1987), 21.

¹⁴ Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Dover, 2003), 29.

¹⁵ Sometimes people can prefer to not have an explanation or know the truth if they believe that it will cause them pain or further traumatize them.

¹⁶ Judith A. Cohen, Anthony P. Mannarino, Esther Deblinger, *Treating Trauma and Traumatic Grief in Children and Adolescents* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2017), 15.

¹⁷ In Maslow's original paper, he discusses the human search for a "world-philosophy" and "systematizing the universe" (which can be interpreted to mean worldview) as a subcategory under safety needs or "for the intelligent man, expressions of self-actualization," but this greatly underestimates the importance of our need for a worldview, which is not only connected to safety but also creates the foundation for our sense of purpose, meaning, belonging, self-worth, culture, and every other aspect of our identity and conception of the world. Having a worldview is not simply about safety, because many people throughout history have risked their lives and made themselves less safe to protect and/or assert their worldview. Many people have died for their worldview, for their religion, for an idea that makes life worth living. Maslow also says that "curiosity, exploration, desire for the facts . . . are often pursued even at great cost to the individual's safety," but he is not really discussing worldviews here, which can suppress curiosity, exploration, and desire for the facts. As I explain in the full version of *The*

Transcendent Mystery when discussing the Trojan Horse story (which is a brilliant metaphor for self-deception), people will also risk individual and group safety in order to ignore and suppress facts, to protect their worldview, and to preserve what they already believe.

¹⁸ John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York, Alfred Knopf, 1993), 192.

¹⁹ Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 46.

²⁰ Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Viking, 1990), 457.

²¹ Cindy Blackstock, "The Emergence of the Breath of Life Theory," *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 2011, 4-5.

²² Fiona M. Wilson, *Organizational Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 125.

²³ Abraham Maslow, *The Journals of Abraham Maslow*, ed. Richard J. Lowry (Lexington, MA: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1982), 63.

²⁴ Cindy Blackstock, "The Emergence of the Breath of Life Theory," *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 2011, 4-5.

²⁵ Abraham Maslow, *The Unpublished Papers of Abraham Maslow*, ed. Edward Hoffman (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 95.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Thomas Keller Teaches Cooking Techniques,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGw2xU5nN3I>.

²⁸ Marion K. Underwood, *Social Aggression Among Girls* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), 83, 84, 122.

²⁹ Abraham Maslow, *The Journals of Abraham Maslow*, ed. Richard J. Lowry (Lexington, MA: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1982), 26.

³⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology*, ed. Andrew M. Colman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 613.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*, ed. Julia Cresswell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 416.