

The Media and the Understanding of The Trauma Vortex at the Political Level.

The situation in the Middle East seems hopeless. Every day, the media reports stories of trauma and violence and seemingly irreconcilable political positions agitated by individual passions. We become intimately acquainted with stories of enormous suffering on both sides that leave us ever more resigned and helpless at the incomprehensibility and futility of the situation. We say that the violence is contagious and spinning out of control. But in reality, *trauma* is contagious. It manifests in violence, which begets more trauma, which begets further violence.

This article explores the role of the media in the healing of trauma as well as the role of trauma in conflicts between nations. My intent is to create new thinking about why and how the media can disseminate information on trauma to help the public: to create guidelines on how to present tragic events so they will contribute to a better coping rather than amplifying trauma. I also aim to shift the way we view political situations such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In truth, creating peace through cease-fires and pact signing does not resolve trauma. As it seethes beneath diplomacy, repeated violence is inevitable. We need innovative thinking. I offer a novel framework that allows for hope and new solutions to emerge. I present the concepts of the trauma and healing vortices, terms coined by Peter Levine, creator of Somatic Experiencing. With the help of the media, these concepts can transform our understanding and the resolution of the problem.

The “Trauma Vortex” and the “Healing Vortex”

The “*trauma vortex*” is a metaphor that describes the whirlpool of chaos in trauma’s aftermath. Also called the “black hole” of trauma, it is a downward spiral that traps the traumatized. They become unable to control their sensations, images, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. The “*healing vortex*” refers to mankind’s innate resiliency, the capacity of people to cope with tragedy and to heal on their own. When this vortex gets stuck, it needs awareness and resources to reengage it.

The trauma and healing vortices apply at the individual and collective levels. The interplay between the two will determine whether individuals, communities, or countries will engage in destructive actions such as conflicts, violence and war or constructive measures, such as forgiveness, rebuilding, and peace.

The Trauma Vortex

Wrenching events, whether they happen to individuals or nations can leave people and whole nations traumatized. Trauma occurs when a person is overwhelmed by a harrowing and distressing event that his nervous system is unable to assimilate. The arousal was too great and too rapid to digest. Instinctive survival mechanisms summon powerful energies to meet the threat. In trauma these energies are not completely discharged and remain stuck in the system. This excess energy throws the

system off balance and symptoms may manifest in myriad ways in one or more of the following manners:

- Traumatized people cannot stop revisiting the horrible images of the event. Unable to control their thoughts, they ruminate obsessively, repeatedly asking themselves the same questions: “Why me? What if...? How can I change what happened? What’s wrong with me?” They cannot control feelings of fear and terror, even though the event is over.
- They are overcome by a sense of utter despair and hopelessness. Everything seems meaningless. Life’s normal sense of security and ease seems to be gone forever. Nothing seems trustworthy anymore.
- Deep feelings of inadequacy, shame, guilt, and hurt pride come by waves. Especially when they are the victims of man-made traumas, people have a profound feeling of being out of grace, feeling abandoned by God, by others, and by life. Their essential needs for safety, the right to exist without danger, the trust in the good will of the other, and the sense of empowerment are shaken. The sense of predictability, competency, and the ability to control one’s destiny are gone.
- The strength of these chaotic feelings, sensations, and thoughts leaves them bewildered and questioning their sanity. They cannot use reason. They lose their capacity to see events and situations in a balanced, composed way. Everything feels extreme and off.
- They are vulnerable to all triggers that remind them of their initial pain, helplessness and suffering.
- People different from them suddenly appear threatening and dangerous. They feel polarized in their thoughts and emotions.
- Anger and rage mount, coupled with a deep sense of powerlessness at their ability to right the situation. It is a rage that can be turned against themselves or against others.
- The effects of trauma can manifest rapidly or have a long gestation period. They are manifold and can be devastating. At the individual level, traumatic symptoms manifest as psychosomatic problems.
 - Physically: chronic pains, hyper-arousal, flashbacks and nightmares.
 - Emotionally: feelings of terror, rage and helplessness, depression, numbness, and confusion.
 - Mentally: paranoid beliefs, blame, judgment, criticism, and polarized thinking.
 - Behaviorally: family disputes, breakups, divorces, impulsive behavior, addictions, family violence, more risky behavior, rise in car accidents.

- At the collective level, whether between groups or nations, we see not only the above symptoms assailing individuals and their families, but also polarized thinking between different groups, demonizing and dehumanizing the other. Seeking justice through violence and revenge appears logically to be the only choice.

The trauma vortex is contagious and its pull magnetic. It occupies all of our attention and energies. When traumatized, nothing else matters. Our focus becomes narrowed. We ruminate only on our traumatic narrative, which becomes increasingly distorted over time, as more elements of our traumatic lives become subjugated to it and contaminated by the original event. In fact, this traumatic narrative encourages and maintains our traumatic state. Victimhood becomes an identity. It may give us a sense of righteousness, a deep relief in thinking we are good and right and that we have been greatly wronged. But it also implies powerlessness and lack of control over our lives.

Our responses, now informed only by trauma, create more traumas in our lives. As we approach life with trepidation, caution, and lack of trust, we generate in turn mistrust and suspicion around us, confirming our initial feelings. Moreover, the media may unconsciously amplify the trauma vortex since it mirrors what is going on and is itself caught in the trauma vortex. Traumatic reactions can be re-triggered on anniversary dates or by similar stimuli or even predictions of such events.

However, trauma can also trigger the healing vortex: people reflecting on their own values, turning towards their families, healing tense relationships, choosing compassion, restraint and forgiveness. Some may commit to charitable work and important causes; others may curtail their materialism. Nations let go of their grievances, offer a helping hand to each other and commit to truce, joint projects, and economic and cultural exchanges.

It is crucial to help people understand that they might be caught in the trauma vortex; to help them re-ignite hope, and reestablish dreams; to help them direct themselves towards life-affirming beliefs; to provide knowledge on how to cope best with trauma. There are healing methods that will help traumatized individuals manage their hyper-arousal and contain their explosiveness and hyper-sensitivity. This can be done by:

- Shedding light on the pull of the trauma vortex
- Shedding light on the need to encourage the healing vortex through support groups and safe forums to vent anger and frustrations
- Helping people develop or reconnect with their individual or national resources

It is imperative to understand the nature of traumatic reactions and how individuals and countries oscillate between the two vortices from hope, optimism, energy, and altruism to fatigue, frustrations, disillusionment, and polarized thinking and back again.

Trauma Is a Root Cause of Violence

Researchers have established that the most serious repercussion of unresolved trauma is violence. Trauma begets violence, which begets more violence, which begets more traumas. Furthermore, when a critical mass in a population has been traumatized, the general population is impacted. The most dangerous aspect of the trauma vortex is the loss of all reasoning power and the hijacking of one's emotions by the part of the brain called the amygdala. Like any individual, any nation can be vulnerable to the irrationality of the trauma vortex.

National signs of the trauma vortex can include:

- Aggressive and bellicose language regarding other nations
- Instilling hatred in children
- The use of visual or written media to incite polarized thinking
- Demonizing of the other
- Incitement to hatred and violence

How might we benefit from better understanding the dynamics of trauma? How can we, as individuals and a society, better deal with traumatic events taking place almost daily? How do conflicts between nations arise and what makes them erupt? Finding answers to these questions, although an always pressing question, has become a critical one as the Middle East trauma vortex is in full swing and as national trauma has burst on the American scene with the events of September 11 that threaten to engulf the whole world.

Unhealed trauma compels one to reenact the ordeal and to polarize, creating an ever-expanding cycle of trauma and violence. We are just beginning to recognize how much collective national traumas may underlie most international conflicts. Knowledge of trauma's impact must inform our analysis of how warring nations act toward each other. This knowledge must inform the interventions of the international community.

Once we recognize the dynamics of trauma and violence, we may be able to slow that process. We may be able to help nations identify when they are under the influence of the trauma vortex. We may be able to warn them and even pressure them, if need be, as soon as we notice the first signs of the trauma vortex.

The Urge to Repeat or the Pull of the Trauma Vortex

The urge to reenact trauma has major implications for society. Though we'd like to think that "time heals all wounds," often trauma persists if memories have not been integrated or accepted as part of one's past. Instead, the traumatic event exists as if in the present, independent of other experiences, with a life of its own. The signal of impending danger is now internalized. Traumatized individuals relive memories with the same intensity as if the event were repeatedly occurring in the present. Replayed incessantly, these images add more distress and sensitization until their effects become

difficult to reverse. This repetition forms a destructive learning loop that can result in hyper-alertness and hyper-arousal. It can create paranoia and impair our ability to discriminate between stimuli and can set the stage for reenactment.

The compulsive urge to repeat trauma is one of its most frustrating, disturbing, and dangerous aspects. It is an unconscious attempt of the nervous system to achieve resolution. Experiencing and confronting trauma helps us learn what to avoid, how to protect ourselves. The reenactment is really an attempt to seek completion and mastery of unresolved traumatic situations, but it is unlikely to accomplish those positive ends. Instead, it perpetuates and deepens the cycle of pain. Because completion cannot be achieved, the nervous system stays stuck in a hyper-aroused state, unable to discharge the excess energy and its associated thoughts, feelings, sensations and behaviors. Only awareness and consciousness can break the cycle of reenactment. Only discharging the energy can reestablish the balance in the nervous system and stop the need for reenactment.

The drive for re-enactment is a major factor in the perpetuation of trauma. Sometimes the re-enactment is blatant: one of my clients came in with a history of seven car accidents, another was raped several times, and another broke his knee once a year for the last five years. At other times, the reenactment is indirect: a sexually abused girl may become promiscuous or a war veteran may provoke fights in bars. Even more tragically, this drive for re-enactment also contributes to the escalation and perpetuation of violent behavior. Often abused and traumatized children grow up to become perpetrators and violent offenders, wife-beaters or self-mutilators.

On a larger scale, traumatized social groups often organize their identities around revenge, leading to ethnic strife, civil war, and war between nations. Historically, we have many examples of the trauma vortex in action. The Hundred Years War between England and France provides an old and classic example of a full-blown trauma vortex that lasted a century and that may inform contemporary conflicts. The present on-going struggles between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; the Israelis and Palestinians; the Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians in Eastern Europe; the Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda; the Pakistanis and Indians in Kashmir, the Hindus and Muslims in India have the same character: unresolved trauma creating a vortex in which each act of violence on one part sparks another act of violence from the other part into an ever-escalating spiral of chaos, pain, and destruction.

Serbia may be a clear recent example of unresolved trauma being re-ignited. In 1989, Serbia commemorated its six hundred year old 1389 defeat in Kosovo at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. This set the stage for the revitalization of the fears of loss of territory and being attacked. It did not help that Milosovic, the Serbian leader, had ambitions for a Greater Serbia or that the aspirations for autonomy of the diverse populations of Yugoslavia was led by Muslim mujahedeens.

Furthermore, the trauma vortex had already been reawakened in the twentieth century when these ethnically diverse populations were at each other throats. World

War II, in particular, saw hundreds of thousands of Serbs massacred or sent to concentration camps when the Muslims sided with the Third Reich. The troubled Serb leader, himself a product of intense personal trauma (the suicide of his parents) was able to re-ignite the unresolved trauma of his people by continuously replaying traumatic images from World War II on television.

Caught in the trauma vortex and its spiral of fear, terror, paranoia, and rage, the Serbs began reenacting their war traumas and, in face of Muslim opposition, lost all sense of perspective. In the true spirit of the trauma vortex, they relived the humiliation of losing their power when Croatia and Slovenia wanted their independence and turned their rage on the ethnic and religious groups they felt had traumatized them decades or centuries ago, forgetting that they had been living with these same people in relative peace for decades. A macabre detail of reenactment was impaling their enemies' decapitated heads on spears, just as it was done under the Ottoman Empire.

Eventually the trauma vortex runs its course (as in Serbia), but not before leaving untold destruction and suffering in its wake. How long the vortex lasts depends on the momentum behind it, the depth of the unresolved trauma, the amount of present frustration and unmet needs of the populations under its spell, its impact on the global community, and the subsequent interventions of outside forces.

We cannot afford to let trauma vortices start spiraling unbeknownst to us; we cannot let the momentum of trauma accelerate once we have been able to identify them. The trauma vortex taking shape in front of our eyes in the Islamic world and the one already in full force in the Middle East will leave unimaginable mayhem and devastation if we let them develop or feed them unwittingly.

The truth is, any nation can eventually escape the trauma vortex. Often it runs out of steam when people are no longer willing to pay the price of its aftermath or when other powers intervene.

The Role of the Trauma Vortex and Survival in International Conflicts

How can the trauma vortex perspective change the way we perceive some of the conflicts raging in the world, and particularly the daunting Israeli-Palestinian one? To get an idea, we can look at some events through the lenses of the trauma vortex.

In 1967, the Egyptian army engaged with other Arab armies, in one more war with the Israeli army, in a reenactment of the 1948 war. When the Israelis counterattacked, the media focused on images of thousands of soldiers' boots left in the sand, depicting the Egyptian army in cowardly retreat in the face of an invincible Israeli army. However, if we look at this event in terms of the instinctive fight-flight survival instincts, it is completely understandable that an army that was not fighting for survival would run for its life when it recognized the deadly superiority of its enemy. There is nothing shaming or cowardly about that; to the contrary, it was the survival instinct at its best.

On the other hand, the Israeli army, despite its superior training, was fighting for the survival of its people and country. It had to fight and win—there was no other choice. But ridiculed as cowardly, the Egyptian army had to return to the battlefield years later, even knowing it would probably lose the overall war, to save the pride of its people, paving the way for the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The latter allowed the Egyptian army to show its courage and valor. Indeed, the Israeli army, lulled by its supposed invincibility, had let down its guard, suffered heavy losses, and almost succumbed. Egyptian president Anwar Sadat was able to reach out for peace from a place of strength and dignity.

The last Israeli soldiers in Lebanon at the first months of the year 2000, afraid of dying and wanting to go home, were not cowards, as some in the Israeli media have suggested, nor had they lost their power as the Arab media wrote. They were merely in touch with their survival instincts. As long as they believed they were defending the security of their country, they did not protest and dutifully served, although soldiers' lives were lost weekly. Once their government pledged to depart from Lebanon, they were no longer defending their country but merely sitting ducks to an ever-emboldened enemy. No one wanted to be among the last soldiers to die in meaningless skirmishes. They had not lost the will to defend themselves; they were, instead, asserting their instinct to survive. An accurate reading of their motivations might have dampened attacks by the Hezbollah, whose leaders believed the Israelis had left out of fear.

If we apply the trauma vortex to the latest situation between the Israelis and Palestinians, we can recognize the trauma of both people in action. The Palestinian trauma is the loss of the 1948 War after the Arab refusal to let foreign powers dictate the division of Palestine. This trauma kept being re-ignited in the subsequent losses of the 1956 and 1967 wars against Israel, and the helplessness of being unable to control their destinies under Egyptian, Jordanian, and Israeli rule. Furthermore their situation is intrinsically linked to the Arabs' historical vortex of trauma that includes domination by the Ottoman Empire and then Europe. It is a trauma of defeat and lack of control over one's destiny.

Both the 1987-1993 Intifada and the current ongoing uprising (called the Intifada Al Aqsa by the Palestinians and the Palestinian terror campaign by the Israelis), however tragic, may have helped in their own ways to reestablish a sense of pride and dignity among the Palestinians after such a deep loss of control. Having the power to inflict fear and losses on a militarily more powerful adversary was important to the Palestinians, despite serious costs to their own safety, autonomy, and infrastructure.

It is a perfect example of trauma vortex in action, attempting to redress a perceived wrong and reestablishing some measure of power and justice. As with all actions driven in this way, solutions that come from the urge to reenact lead to further trauma and destructiveness, not the least the tremendous price of sacrificing their children's lives.

Nevertheless, having reestablished Palestinian pride and dignity by having been able to inflict fear and losses onto a much more powerful enemy may allow the Palestinians to reach for another type of resolution to the political impasse in much the same way that Egyptian president Anwar Sadat did. With the clear support of all the world's leaders for an independent Palestinian state, they may take the lead and be the ones to offer Israel security and the right to live in peace. Clearly Israel can and will survive. But whether or not it does so in security is in the hands of the Palestinians.

The Israelis' trauma vortex is somewhat more complex. The still operative declaration by most Arabs (including Palestinians) of their intent to fight for the demise of Israel, and a virulent reawakened anti-Semitism in Europe and anti-Jewish propaganda in the Muslim world have legitimately reawakened the fear of survival in many Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora.

Furthermore, for the first time in the last 2000 years, the Israelis are able to exercise their instinct for physical survival. In the past, Jewish efforts have been devoted to surviving spiritually and morally as Jews were relatively powerless to assure their physical survival. Today, Israeli society and the Jewish world are split between these two needs: to recuperate a healthy survival instinct and to maintain spiritual/ethical survival—as a people that does no harm to others—that they fought for in the Diaspora.

The 50 year-old impasse between the Israelis and Palestinians has polarized the Jewish world into two camps, each vying to protect the issue they believe most relevant. The effect of Intifada II may be to help both of these compelling preoccupations come together instead of splitting the fabric of Israeli society into two opposing camps. It behooves everyone truly interested in the well-being of Palestinians and Israelis to avoid playing on the Israelis' existential fear. Otherwise the Israelis, feeling totally isolated and threatened, will keep pushing their governments for knee-jerk, short-term security measures. Unfortunately, these often result in prematurely toppling the Prime Minister when a disillusioned populace becomes disappointed that the measures did not work. No Israeli leader has time to stabilize his government long enough to search for creative solutions to a most daunting problem.

A stable and reassured Jewish state might be able to integrate these two main preoccupations: access to a healthy government with the unequivocal right to defend itself within the context of spiritual/ethical survival which demands that they care for and deal in fairness with the Palestinians and the Israeli Arabs. (Israeli Jews know well what it means to be disadvantaged.) A stable Israel may also have more money to develop infrastructures for all its citizens and help neighboring populations.

Understanding the nature of survival instincts, of the impact of psychological trauma, and of the urgent need to process trauma at national levels can change the direction of conflicts between countries and inform solutions for peace. Peter Levine traveled to Washington hoping to warn President Clinton not to return the Serbs to Albania without some preemptory healing efforts first. He did not succeed in his

attempts to reach the President. As he had anticipated, the traumatized Kosovo population, which had had no opportunity to process its individual and collective Serbian-inflicted traumas, slaughtered their returning neighbors.

Everyday it becomes more urgent to bring this knowledge to the international community as the trauma vortices developing before our eyes risk death and destruction. These vortices are fed by so many confluent winds that they will leave no place in the world untouched. We all are at great risk. To bypass the terror of using nuclear power, we have developed ever more sophisticated biological and germ warfare. Even more lethal, we have developed a communication network that allows mere individuals to use these biological and germ weapons.

We all intuit today that trauma is contagious. But governments and media need to know that the trauma vortex is easily instigated when unconsciously fanned. The pull of the trauma response is hypnotic. Trauma reenactments have often spun over many generations and have made entire nations and cultures act out violently. The intense feelings that trauma generates, allied with tribal conflicts, ethnic and religious differences, and threats to national interests, render large social groups more susceptible to violent, irrational behavior. Because trauma creates disconnection, it makes it easier to externalize the “other” and blame him for one’s unresolved distress. It becomes easy to dissociate from the pain one causes the “other”. But, in reality, when revenge is chosen as a response, people simply end up participating in furthering their own traumatization.

Nations must learn to recognize the presence of the traumatic energy, let it run its course, and not succumb to the urge to retaliate. Groups caught in the vortex need help to allay their fears and to focus on how life was before trauma overtook them. They need to resolve their trauma at the national level. All resources must be used to prevent panic and despair and curtail the desire for revenge. Witness the government of Sri Lanka, which ordered the soldiers who were traumatized from fighting against the fierce Tamils to undergo treatment. They needed support to contain their traumatic reactions and not take them home. Validation of suffering and grievances is helpful and a forum to air national distress can be crucial.

What would have happened at the Durban Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance if the United Nations leaders had already understood what the trauma vortex is and what needs to be done to stop it instead of being pulled by it or being helpless in face of it? For days the Conference turned into a row over the Middle East, with the extremists Arab countries attempting to politicize it, delegitimizing the State of Israel by equating Zionism with racism and singling out the Palestinian issue. The 160 delegates had to meet a ninth extra day, the US and Israeli delegates walked out in protest, and the leaders of the Conference struggled to stop a conference against racism from turning into a conference promoting racism.

Both the media and the diplomatic community must become fluent in the language of trauma and recognize its role in regional and international conflicts. The recognition of trauma dynamics at play opens the door to a paradigm shift in framing the broader political issues of our times.

Is There a Collective Trauma Vortex?

Trauma is a universal condition; everyone is vulnerable to it. Cultures pass on their historical traumatic events through literature and art. Cave paintings depict life-and-death confrontations with predators. The Bible is full of disaster, violence, and tragedy, as are the myths of most cultures. In the traditional hero's journey, the pursuit of an ideal requires the hero to first descend to the underworld, successfully encounter a dangerous situation, and gain some quality of mastery in order to survive. Humankind may well be defined by our ability to learn and to tell stories. So it has always been.

But something has happened over the last one hundred years to change our relationship to storytelling. Even early in this century, a resident of a village or small town might be touched by a few calamities per year—family conflicts or sickness, a flood, a fire, an explosion, perhaps a few murders or rapes that became public knowledge, possibly a regional or national conflict that impinged somehow on the lives of local citizens. People paid serious attention to these events. Newspapers wrote about them. But such trauma did not make up the majority of people's reality.

But during the twentieth century, events and information became national and then global: commerce, trade, politics, technology and communications, war, and crimes against humanity. We now live in simultaneous cultures in which our stories are told by global instantaneous media. Crimes and calamities in Istanbul and East Timor are witnessed and felt in Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania. The media is a mirror. It always has been. Today it is a global mirror and a magnifying one. However, the media supplies the vast majority of our collective reality.

The healthy process of dealing with traumatic stories moved from the individual into a collective trauma vortex. Once the collective consciousness is traumatized, even those not personally traumatized participate in its effects. Untold millions around the globe, their number growing every day, share in broadcast trauma. This may well generate a hunger and a compulsion to repeat and re-enact. In our collective trauma vortex, too many of us suffer from chronic stress or chronic numbness. As mirror and storyteller, media members confront in their audiences a rising threshold of stimulation, sensation, and speed and as they are part of the collective, they are affected as much as everyone else, if not more.

The Role of the Media

Many media professionals have themselves experienced first hand trauma by being on the front lines, witnessing war, violence, and tragedy, or, more personally, by being threatened and beaten or even killed by governing entities angry at their reports.

Also consider the subtle moral and psychological trauma resulting from being coerced to report only what these governmental entities approve of in order to have access to information. Some may even suffer from the Stockholm syndrome, in which, when challenged by the difficulty of handling incongruence, it becomes easier to adopt the philosophy of the entity that threatens.

As the media reports tragedies, war, and violence globally on a daily basis, it is, in fact, exposing us to these traumas every day. It can have a central role in educating the public about trauma, its costs to individuals and society as well as its impact on political policy nationally and internationally. Reporters can thus be ideally and uniquely positioned to help us recognize the long-term impact of trauma on individuals and nations and to play a role in healing trauma domestically and globally.

The media can reduce the immediate impact of trauma and have far reaching effects on the physical and mental health of the world because of its capacity to disseminate information to billions of people at the same time. It can play an influential role in minimizing the impact of trauma by raising political awareness. It is the only organ that can put trauma on the global agenda and increase awareness of solutions to heal it.

Indeed, to effect that healing, we must offer validation of suffering and international forums for handling grievances. We must help with mediation teams well grounded in the knowledge of history and cross-cultural understanding. We must introduce cutting-edge methods of trauma treatment that can be taught at mass levels. It is a monumental task that can only be accomplished with the help of a media well versed in trauma. A safer and healthier world will emerge when trauma can be more fully understood in this context. Trauma specialists must work hand in hand with the media, to bring this awareness to governments and international bodies, as they continue to explore trauma's impact on political events.

The Media and Second Hand Trauma

Second hand trauma, like second hand smoke, refers to the impact trauma has on the witnesses associated with trauma victims. Also known as "vicarious traumatization" or "compassion fatigue", it arises from the simple fact that, in dealing with the fear, pain, and suffering of traumatized people, professionals and other bystanders often experience similar emotions and after-effects themselves.

Secondhand trauma is also emotionally contagious. Anyone who comes in contact with a traumatized person is exposed to possible secondhand trauma, especially those on the front lines: people in the healing, helping, and protective professions such as therapists, doctors, nurses, medics, social workers, firemen and police, clergy, emergency and disaster workers. Police, firefighters, and rescuer workers, already aware of the impact of secondary trauma, have introduced the practice of debriefing as an initial attempt to diffuse harmful effects of exposure to trauma. Non-governmental workers must also become aware of the impact of secondhand trauma on themselves

and their judgment. Working with the victims of trauma in a war zone can make them easily espouse the polarized beliefs and emotions of its constituents and lose their impartiality without knowing the other side of the story.

We see the world through the media, which is to say we see it through the lenses of individual reporters, editors, and packagers of news. What kind of lenses do these individuals wear? What happens to each of them when they view traumatic events day in and day out? Is the very lens through which we perceive the world shaped by the trauma the media reports on? Is not second hand trauma at work with media personnel too? Just like firefighters and police, print and video reporters, news media editors and researchers, newscasters, and camera personnel spend much time covering the fear, pain, and suffering of individuals and groups when reporting on traumatic events. Consequently, they are continually at risk for secondhand trauma.

Indeed, there has been a growing realization in the industry that, despite long-held journalistic tradition, members of the media can hardly operate as impartial witnesses. They are human beings with their own psyches, emotions, and personal histories, and they are far from immune to the events they report or photograph.

Perhaps the ultimate argument for a sincere reappraisal of trauma in the news media is that reporters are themselves suffering from secondhand trauma that is injurious to their health. Awareness is growing that covering gruesome stories can create much psychological stress and that denying or “stuffing” the aftermath of trauma is likely to cause the stress to build resulting in nightmares, flashbacks, and intrusive images. Moreover, research shows the effects of witnessing horror can be cumulative. Media people must be aware of the risks involved in their jobs. They must be encouraged to seek help when they recognize traumatic symptoms in themselves without risking the loss of important assignments.

They also must recognize that untreated personal traumas from their past might make them more vulnerable to biased reporting, job stress, and burnout; that it can influence their choice of what is newsworthy and their style of coverage. When journalists truly understand how they are affected by secondhand trauma, they can recognize how it can impair their ability to represent the whole spectrum of human experience as they proceed in their work. Having themselves shut down psychologically, they cannot access their full range of emotions. Trauma is so arresting that the person’s attention focuses on it automatically, even compulsively. It is obvious how reporting can become compromised.

There are, however, other forms of second hand trauma with which we must familiarize ourselves. Trauma’s hypnotic pull explains the public’s drive for repetitive viewing and the media’s repetitive showing of violent and tragic events. Audiences who gravitate to extreme programming, who are “glued to the tube,” hypnotized repetitively by traumatic images are quite vulnerable to second hand trauma and along with media professionals can be caught in a collective traumatic vortex.

What to Do About Second Hand Trauma

As the media better understands trauma-based dynamics, it can take action to interrupt the vicious cycles of trauma related to news coverage. There are constructive ways in which the media can truly serve the public. If violence were shown as a public health issue, then audiences would emerge educated, enlightened and empowered.

There are practical ways to do this:

- The media can explain to the public that they must keep reporting the tragedy so that viewers can tune in at all times.
- They can explain the pull the trauma vortex has on especially sensitive people and how it keeps them glued to the tube, ingesting the same traumatic images over and over.
- They could recommend to their viewers to get the information offered and then turn to other programs or activities that will calm them.
- They could suggest that viewers tune in later for further news and resource.

In a broader context, media organizations can sponsor well-funded and rigorous research on the media's impact on society. They can take a leading role in hosting public discourse on values and policies. They already hold politicians and public institutions responsible for demonstrating integrity in their public functions. They need to develop their own watchdogs for themselves. An excellent example of such organizations include the recently created Norman Lear Center, whose mission is to study the impact of the media on society's values and the Creative Coalition.

The Media's Influence and the Copycat Phenomenon

The copycat phenomenon refers to individuals acting out or "copying" a reported event. There are compelling examples of the effect of copycat phenomenon in our own media history. We are reminded of beneficial examples from as far back as a decades old episode of *Happy Days*. The teenage role model, Fonzi, applied for a library card, and the following week, thousands of young students got their own cards. Oprah Winfrey interviews a woman who reveals her sexual abuse as a child for the first time, and hundreds of women dial for a therapist to process traumas they'd hidden for their whole lives. Oprah talks to her audience about how a book revolutionized her life, and the book becomes an instant bestseller.

Alternately, the tragic side of the copycat coin was illustrated right after the news coverage of the Littleton tragedy. Immediately following the rampage at Columbine High School, 1,000 bomb scares in Mexico and hundreds of copycat threats and some actual occurrences popped up in the United States and Mexico. The same held true after the first anthrax letters were discovered.

When the media is blamed for the results of a copycat crime, it may rightly become defensive, fearing legislation, legal sanctions, or a limiting of freedom of speech. With a few exceptions, confrontations and counterattacks rather than communication and problem solving have been the norm between the media and its

accusers. Responsibility needs to be shared by all: the media, the government, and the general public.

Consider how the presentation of events can inspire copycat phenomenon. CNN shows excited and angry young Pakistanis joining the Taliban in Afghanistan. They also show a demonstration of a few thousands Pakistanis against their government for its cooperation with the America. These images typically increase a sense of fear and anxiety in the West. But more seriously, they may also incite many Muslim young men, offering excitement and a “raison d’etre” they might not find elsewhere in their lives, to join the fight, influenced by what they see on television.

One possible way to counteract these images may be to put their numbers in perspective and show in the same report or soon thereafter the millions of Pakistanis who do not think joining the Taliban’s war is a good idea. Programming can include calls of religious leaders cautioning their youth against this influence, or mention casualties that have already occurred among the Taliban and their allies.

The media has been seriously concerned with the copycat phenomenon and is attempting to address this issue. This is an area where collaboration with psychologists and trauma specialists is of crucial importance. For example after September 11, the media set up a forum for intelligent discourse, analyzing all the elements involved in current terrorist activity: the ideological reasons for it, the cross-cultural nature of the conflict, the effect of our responses, and the public’s reaction. It helped the public by televising dialogs on the possible triggers surrounding the attack. Adding the trauma and mass psychology angle as an influence on the copycat phenomenon can shed further light.

It is particularly crucial now to be aware of the copycat phenomenon on the international scene regarding the behavior of groups and nations during the current political events. The searing images of the collapsing Twin Towers repeated over and over and the later ongoing threat of anthrax and biochemical terrorism brought home to Americans feelings of helplessness and deep worry that their country has been weakened. However, these repeated images can drive the picture of a vulnerable America deeper into their adversaries’ psyches, and inspire more terrorism as it reinforces the terrorists’ sense of power. We have already seen the media utilize discernment regarding how adversaries and the public may react to certain data and the way it is delivered. Cooperation with our government’s request to limit Bin Laden’s airtime was well received. Is there more that can be done?

A recent and hopeful example of collaboration is the London Conference, organized by the BBC World Service in partnership with the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. More than 60 journalists, psychotherapists, editors and journalism educators from Britain and the U.S. met to discuss new ways to support journalists who report on traumatic events. It is the beginning of a more elaborate dialogue to better serve the public.

The Accusation of Sensationalism

“It seems to me that we make money out of exploiting suffering. We package trauma,” said Akila Gibbs, a journalist I interviewed. Though she thought the media would be reluctant to change, she also acknowledged that it had often recognized and mirrored necessary changes in society. Certainly, after September 11, both news and entertainment media are more aware of trauma and its impact and much more open to the possibility of playing a crucial role in the recovery process.

The traumatic shock of the attack is a clear example of how widely and immediately trauma can affect hundred of millions at once. This traumatic shock seemed on the verge of turning into a traumatic vortex that could well engulf the whole Islamic world and consequently the planet. Instinctively, the American and the international media responded well. If the media had focused only on the Americans’ angry response, they would not have helped the public place it in a larger perspective of further stages of resolution. The anger phase could have spread like a virus and could have manifested with angry policymakers, supported by an enraged public, determining premature or inflexible military actions. It could have spun further into a larger trauma vortex.

As it is, the media acted responsibly and addressed the different quandaries reflected in the population. It focused on anger, but also on the determination and courage of the American public, its soul searching and its intent to protect civil liberties and religious freedom, including the well being of its Muslim population. It is apparent that the media is the entity that can carry to the public a comprehensive understanding of the different stages of traumatic responses and how to cope with trauma.

It is vital for the media to bring the same care of wider perspective and complex coverage to other traumatic situations in America and elsewhere. It would have been irresponsible and downright self-destructive to fan the home trauma. The same sense of responsibility and self-preservation needs to be brought in covering other tragedies. The world is so interconnected that every tragedy reverberates everywhere, even when it doesn’t seem to impact us. In covering war in other parts of the world, we must understand the inadvertent capacity to incite more violence just by the media’s presence, not to mention the fueling of violence when coverage is lopsided.

The Dangers of Subtle Manipulation

During the Golf War, Iraqis watched CNN reports to get information on the fate of their own country. Today, many countries have their own well-organized media. The governments of some countries have been and are presently using the press for indoctrination and the promotion of a spirit of war. The international media can be an unwitting participant even with “objective” reporting when indoctrination media is unidentified and is reported as news only. The press must be aware that it can be subtly manipulated to further the promotion of conflict. One must be keenly conscious of the total impact of whatever is reported. Today, nothing falls on objective ears.

Furthermore, this kind of awareness may help the international community warn and put pressure on the countries where indoctrination is taking place.

Nations in conflict escalate the trauma vortex by continuously running on television traumatic images from the past or the present. Recently, Arab television even showed fabrications of traumatizing images in order to incite hatred—scenarios of Israeli soldiers raping Arab girls or throwing poison-laced candies to Arab youngsters. The reporting of unchecked pronouncements of hundreds of people massacred in Jenin by the Israeli army, served to further polarize public opinion in the Arab world and encourage stabbings of Jews around the globe, acts of arsons and desecrations of Jewish property and cemeteries. The Taliban showed Americans throwing food packages laced with poison to Afghani children. Some Arab leaders exacerbate the trauma of their people to encourage a more fundamentalist outlook. The leaders themselves are driven by unresolved previous personal, cultural, or national traumas into an apparently distorted interpretation of their Islamic values.

The Media's Opportunity in the New Millennium

Clearly, the media has the power to stir up passions. It has long been used as a vehicle to mobilize people around an issue, be it American newsreels rallying concerned citizens during World War II, the German media rallying Nazi sympathizers to the Third Reich, or Al Jazeera rallying the Muslims around the world. The media is the most powerful force in shaping the world in the twenty-first century. It is more influential than ever: information is now instantly accessible to the entire world, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. The capacity to televise anything live from anywhere has changed the impact of information. Critical though this change may be, we may not have slowed down long enough to analyze this shift or evaluate its effects.

The media's challenge in the new millennium is as follows: if coverage of trauma helps to “normalize” violence, then coverage of our collective healing capacity could normalize harmony. Members of the press can take on leadership roles that support the best values of our society in unprecedented ways. The media determines what the general public will see, and it knows how to use the power of suggestion. It can reflect society in ways that foster well-being by covering tragic events in the context of the healing vortex. For instance, when the press focused on people in New York helping each other instead of dwelling on looters, it demonstrated its capacity to be guided by the healing vortex. If this becomes a voluntary policy, such a visionary role can interrupt the cycle of trauma and violence and create meaningful bonding and loyalty between the media and its public.

The media can further counteract the pull of the trauma vortex by consciously tipping the scale towards the coverage of positive and uplifting events. It can collaborate with trauma specialists to develop models and test strategies on how to inform the public with as little secondhand traumatization as possible. We can align visionary professionals in both fields to work together on transforming the media's impact on society in relationship to trauma.

If the threat of a Third World War is looming, much of it might be fought through the media. This implies an involvement that was not part of the media's original mission—to report objectively and to inform the public about world events. The media's added task might be to counterbalance the effect of unwittingly amplifying the trauma vortex sometimes just by its coverage (like in scientific research, the media is the observer that changes the object of its observation), as well as the effect of state-run media in non-democratic countries exacerbating and inciting trauma.

As of this writing, there is no clear picture of the impact of the copycat phenomenon on this critical situation. Therefore, it behooves us to look carefully at all the issues that may negatively affect an already aggravated public. It is crucial to engage our best minds including media trendsetters in a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon, so that more destruction does not take place. Transcending politics, the media must become a healing force by addressing the impact of trauma on society as well as on international politics. At the same time, it might be in the position to engage in constructive countering of the trauma vortex and emphasizing the healing vortex.

Consciously searching for, empowering, and supporting the voices of reason and moderation that now have a timid presence in the majority of the Arab world would be a clear example of encouraging the healing vortex. Other efforts could include recognizing cultural traumas and validating grievances without indulging in the role of the victim. Specialists in trauma, in the psychology of human behavior, in mediation and cross-cultural awareness can clearly be of help. This type of collaboration may change how things have been done until now.

Our Hope: The Healing Vortex

What is most energizing about trauma, paradoxically, is that its healing is transformative for the individual as well as for society. Knowing how unresolved trauma engenders pessimism, cynicism, despair, and paralysis of the will, on one hand, and desperate and uncontrolled acting out, on the other, we can understand how healing opens the door to hope, optimism, and the desire for creative action.

The capacity to heal is always present and accounts for humanity's remarkable resiliency. Given the amount of traumatization, neglect, and strife in the world, it is amazing that people do so well. But often, innate healing does get blocked when unresolved traumas trigger a downward spiral. We need to respect and work with our physiological and neurological patterns in order to restore the healing capacity. In the last several years, the scientific community has developed a number of methods to release and master traumatic events, memories, and patterns, such as Somatic Experiencing, Prolonged Exposure, Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing, Thought Field Therapy, Traumatic Incident Resolution, etc. With these proactive interventions, trauma's momentum can be reversed and the equally dynamic upward cycle generated. These techniques can help develop resiliency from trauma, a task crucially needed in the immediate future.

The only way to reduce our individual and societal traumatic legacies is to transform them. Levine's 'healing vortex' is really just a transformative process. Immediately after a traumatic event, the swirling motion of the trauma vortex is immediately counteracted by its opposite, the motion of the healing vortex. But because our bodies and psyches have been overwhelmed with so much collective trauma this last century, we need more awareness to help activate the innate healing vortex. To remedy this problem, we must learn how to reconnect to our animal instincts. We must restore the body/mind connection. We can do so by being fully aware of the sensations in our body and by using our intelligence in a compassionate way. Witnessing what's going on with us at the sensation, emotional, thinking and behavioral level, allows our body to return to the natural cycles of trauma and healing, to our natural capacity to cope with tragedy. When we regain this balance, both personally and collectively, we can hope of bringing our children into a safer world.

Bruce Perry, professor of child psychiatry at Baylor University School of Medicine and author of *Maltreated Children*, points out that humans evolved through community. This is a critical piece of information. The biology of the brain is designed to keep small, naked, weak, individual humans alive by being part of a larger biological whole—the family, the clan. We survived and evolved interdependently with one another—socially, emotionally, biologically.

The participation of one's community is fundamental to the healing of trauma. An example still fresh in our minds is of New Yorkers, who astounded us as well as themselves with their deep well of compassion and resources shown after the attack. And the media chose to broadcast this very wonderful humane side of humanity so that the rest of us could share in the feelings of healing in community.

The mass media has enabled change to occur in the way people in many nations think and act regarding race issues, gender differences, and the environment, to name a few. In the United States, great educational strides have been taken against drunk driving, unprotected sex, and smoking. Society has a huge reservoir of healing efforts with which the media can and does collaborate to make information available.

Specific Ways the News Media Can Help

When the media develops an accurate understanding of the patterns of traumatization and the pull of the trauma vortex, it will recognize that an emphasis on the violent, the abnormal, and the tragic is an understandable but dangerous manifestation of the trauma vortex. They will see its relentless pull in conflicts and war between tribes and nations and how it affects both selection and delivery of news. They will add to their coverage the awareness of this pull. They will add the attempts of people and institutions to work with the healing vortex. This new perspective can foster an organic and balanced shift in the media's coverage of events as well as in the creation of entertainment.

There are simple but specific changes in news coverage that have the power to bring about a healthier society. This can be done by:

1. Inserting healing images along with the coverage of traumatic events.
2. Becoming aware of the “tunnel vision” of a trauma-saturated perspective. With an understanding of the trauma vortex, the media has the opportunity to balance the effects of tragic stories. A heavy focus on negative news unwittingly reinforces people’s fears. At any given moment, there are endless examples of violence and catastrophes to cover as well as endless examples of courage and resiliency. Assess whether a news item is likely to add to the well-being of society or worsen it. A choice of what to cover is taking place anyhow. Questions to ask: Which events should we choose? How many of each kind? What are the criteria? Does the public truly benefit from this piece of news, rather than this other one? Does it serve the trauma or the healing vortex?
3. Recognizing and analyzing the copycat phenomenon with the help of psychological researchers. Consulting the therapeutic community on how to present tragedies in a manner that does not feed the copycat phenomenon might have helped in the aftermath of Columbine, for instance. (This would include neither disclosing the identity of the perpetrators, nor giving air time to their distorted messages).
4. Warning viewers of upcoming disturbing images. Besides children, older people and many sensitive women do not turn on the TV for fear of seeing traumatic images. Suggesting to them to take the bad news in small doses and engage immediately thereafter in a calming activity that helps them relax, an activity that is a resource for them.
5. Blacking out gory details such as remains or disposal of bodies, visual evidence of brutality, instruments of torture, etc. We routinely bleep sexual and curse words. We could readily obscure gory details once we understand how disturbing their effects are on children and sensitive adults.
6. Avoiding incessant coverage of events involving violence or tragedy and repetitive showing of disturbing images: the repetition drives the image deep into the psyche and exposes people to flashbacks and obsessive thoughts.
7. Warning viewers that incessant watching could be disturbing. For instance, one station decided not to cover the Littleton, Columbine tragedy until 11:00 p.m. to mute its impact on children. That is a perfect example of sensitive and responsible coverage. Consider this situation: a four-year-old boy, watching the Columbine shooting being shown over and over thought that kids were shooting other kids in many schools, not understanding his station was rerunning the same tape. A car chase reported on the 6 o’clock news ended in the chased driver killing himself, live on television. Some news stations, shaken by what

happened, decided to allow a few second intervals between the live shooting of a scene and its transmission, for fear that this kind of traumatizing occurrence might happen again. It is true that it is up to the parents to choose what their children watch, but the first evening news is broadcast during family hour, and the media and the public must be made more aware of children's vulnerability.

8. Informing viewers of the help available while the tragic events are being reported. Many children have watched images of fire and felt desperate because nobody seemed to be doing anything about it. Scenes of firemen putting out the blazes would be helpful here.
9. Recognizing that the observer of any event becomes part of the event (Niels Bohr's theory). Media people, as observers of society, influence it just by the act of observing, and more significantly, the act of reporting. They must reassess what they think of as objectivity.
10. Avoiding reporting speculation and rumors that can cause anxiety and provoke erroneous conclusions that are much harder to dispel. Clearly many media members have made real efforts in this regard lately. But the pressure is great to deliver cutting-edge news, and the damage done by speculation can be shattering.
11. Understanding the vulnerability of victims and avoiding unnecessary broadcastings of details that embarrass, humiliate, or hurt victims of crime. Victims' lack of privacy destabilizes the privacy and sense of safety of all of us. Do we really have the right to know everything about a person in the public eye, even if this piece of information does not add to our lives, but creates havoc in the person's life? Ted Koppel, in his "Sixty Minutes" show aired on January 15th, 2002, accused the press for unnecessarily revealing the drug problem of the English Prince. Did the information help the public or did it create unnecessary pain and shame in the targeted people?
12. Checking the tendency to look for spins on coverage to keep a story in the news.
13. De-emphasizing the cult of celebrities, specially the ones who act out or commit crimes or violence. Too many celebrities and political figures are left unscathed by their behavior and this serves as examples of impunity.
14. Withholding the identity of perpetrators to deprive them of their "fifteen minutes of fame." Too often, they are allowed to pronounce their destructive messages. The public is ready for more upbeat reporting. Witness its positive response to the firemen in New York as heroes.

Specific Ways the Entertainment Media Can Help

The public is angry. Much data has been compiled on the effects of entertainment on violence, especially among young children. Numerous parental organizations as well as health and government agencies have accused the entertainment industry of being the source of the violence that exists in our society. Unfortunately, the entertainment industry also focuses on trauma and violence as subjects for creativity. Targeting a society of "channel surfers," it can inadvertently spread the impact of trauma.

Shifting the perspective toward the healing vortex can be accomplished by:

1. Recognizing that ratings alone, important as they are, cannot be the bottom line. Luckily the public seems ready to cooperate. Changes in programming do not need to affect the earnings. On the contrary, today many people turn off violent programming. The entertainment industry could create more characters and stories showing helpful and inspiring behavior and events, including more effective ways to address violence, cruelty and evil.
2. Portraying violence in a manner that does not encourage it. For instance, programs could show the public the consequences to the perpetrators of violent acts, as well as the physical suffering of the victims. This also means avoiding violent behavior where the consequences to the perpetrators and the victims are not shown. When neither regrets nor grief over violent acts are expressed, this negatively influences impressionable and troubled people.
3. Avoiding violent scenes which include: a clear intention to harm or injure; portrayals of physical and verbal abuse; violence that leaves the viewer in an aroused state; violence that is uninterrupted and not subjected to critical commentary; violence portrayed realistically. All of these scenarios influence the viewer already predisposed to act aggressively;
4. Avoiding portrayals of well-intentioned heroes who use violence and aggressive behavior that seem justified. Children are highly influenced by the actions of characters they can identify with and by violence that has cues similar to ones in real life.
5. Understanding that humor combined with violence trivializes viewer's perception of the violence and its consequences.
6. Promoting people that show courage, dedication, and heroism as having both entertainment and news value.
7. Telling stories with a healing reframe and showing how people have successfully recovered from tragedies.
8. Promoting stories that encourage connections between people and their communities.

How Do We Activate the Healing Vortex?

At the political level, the media can help bring forth resources and validate people's historical traumas. They can help people reframe the underpinnings of violence and horrors committed as a trauma vortex spiraling out of control instead of demonizing nations and individuals or calling them evil. The media and the international community must understand how the media can unwittingly (and in state-run medias not so unwittingly) amplify the trauma vortex. International institutions and governments interested in helping must make judicious use of the media to engage the healing vortex, instead of feeding the trauma vortex.

The media can encourage the healing vortex by:

- Reporting on healing rituals for collective mourning such as community vigils, contributions of time, money and goods to help victims, acknowledgment and rewards ceremonies, appreciation of heroic deeds.
- Reporting national, cultural and historical celebrations.
- Promoting the healing arts (music, dance, poetry, literature, theatre, movies)
- Giving information on mass healing techniques.
- Helping people understand the concept of resources and its importance in helping us become more resilient in coping with trauma and preventing trauma. We call a resource any belief, activity, place, person, characteristic or object that allows a person or group to calm down, feel stronger and more empowered, that brings the community together and that does not rouse negative passions. Individuals and groups can be directed to engage in as many resources as they can--nature, poetry and literature, singing, dancing, prayer, hobbies--to explore their cultural strengths, their ethical and moral values, and to enhance the capacity for acceptance and forgiveness of which all cultures are capable in times of tranquility.
- Teaching people how touch and hugging can help heal trauma. Touch is therapeutic. It is received as a healing message by the primitive brain (brain-stem response). People can be encouraged to hold hands, rock, sing in sadness and mourning, as well as in relief (music healing). We do not want to take away the enormity of the sadness. We just need to acknowledge that we are still horrified by what we had to do.
- Reporting innovative trust-building measures such as babies-mothers-blanket exercises in which mothers from rival groups put their babies in the same blanket and swing and rock them while singing ethnic songs from both groups.

- Helping national or ethnic groups recover pride in their identity, focus on its positive aspects and help identify the negative ones.
- Helping the public reframe rage, the desire for revenge and violence as understandable attempts to redress wrongs that nevertheless backfire and further their victimization. Though valid, these defensive responses also create and perpetuate their own guilt, as we do know deep inside when we are betraying life. (Remorse is connected to the instinct to love and we all have the instinct to love.) Because guilt and remorse are painful, difficult feelings to experience, they further compel us to demonize the other in order to justify our destructiveness. It is thus easier to convert these feelings into further righteous hatred and violence. We are impelled towards more polarization in order to justify our actions; all of us feel the horror of killing even if we believe we must do it.

The media can help translate these deep psychological insights and help us acknowledge, expose, and process the complexity of our inner world. When we feel hurt and violated, the desire to destroy and harm is normal, but we also must acknowledge the horror and damage of polarization. Only then can the healing start.

Indeed, the media must report stories that serve the healing vortex. One Arab restaurant was bombed because it was assiduously frequented by Israeli customers. The Arab owner vowed to keep the restaurant open and serve the same clientele because he wanted to serve peace and not give in to violence. Another Palestinian refused to put a mark on his car identifying it as belonging to an Arab so that he would not get shot at by Palestinian youth. He did not want to do anything that would encourage discrimination. For every story of negligence, abuse or violence, there are dozens more that show courage, caring and commitment for co-existence. These are the stories that can help people come out of the trauma vortex and start to trust each other.

Summary

As the media's role has expanded, its responsibility has expanded. As we recognize the powerful influence of the mind, the media's responsibility to incorporate that reality fully into its presentation also expands. This is an invitation to put trauma, its impact and healing on the global agenda and to bring awareness to the effects of instantaneous communication.

The media mirrors society and society mirrors the media. This interrelationship takes on a more pointed meaning when related to trauma. Media members, trauma researchers, and clinicians are invited to engage in a dialogue on the expanding field of trauma knowledge. The media are the eyes, ears and voice of our collective body. We must trust them and help them to serve us well.