

Transcending Fear and Anxiety: The Great Cleanup

Yolanda Dreyer¹

Abstract This article demonstrates that a state of anxiety, which includes fear, can be harmful and destructive not only on the personal but also on the communal and societal levels. Democratic South Africa (post-1994), a highly religious country, is a case in point. Rather than experiencing and conveying to others the positive, life-affirming effect of faith, pervasive anxiety and fear have taken hold of the people, the effect of which is disruptive and destructive. The author argues that the challenge is to transcend fear and anxiety, participate in “the Great Divine Cleanup,” and touch the lives of others with a message of freedom and hope.

Keywords Anxiety and fear, Violent crime, Life-affirming faith, Pastoral care

The positive, life-affirming effect of faith manifests on two levels: the personal level of the life of the individual and the interpersonal level, where the message of freedom and hope touches the lives of others. Anxiety and fear disrupt this life-giving and life-enhancing momentum.

¹ Y. Dreyer (Contact)

Faculty of Theology

University of Pretoria

Lynnwood Road, Hatfield, Pretoria, South Africa

E-mail: yolanda.dreyer@up.ac.za

Telephone: +27 12 420 2385

From an evolutionary perspective, anxiety, as one kind of emotion, has its functions (see Bowlby 1973; Darwin 1982; Klein 1981, p. 248). Emotions are response patterns for coping with specific situations (see Lelliott et al. 1989; Marks 1987), and the function of anxiety is to increase an individual's ability to deal with threat and avoid loss. Both too much and too little anxiety can be harmful (see Marks and Nesse 1994, p. 248). Appropriate anxiety matches the corresponding danger.

Again, from an evolutionary perspective, anxiety “goes wrong,” but in an innocuous way, where old and redundant fears are ingrained but new and “evolutionarily recent” dangers do not evoke the same response. Spiders that are mostly no threat to people today often evoke fear, whereas “evolutionarily recent” dangers such as driving a car, saturated fat, and very loud music do not signal danger or evoke a fear response. This amounts to a “false correlation” between the threat (or not) and the perception of threat (Marks and Nesse 1994, p. 256).

Anxiety as part of “the human condition” is not, however, always innocuous. It is often the root of destructive human behavior. Though the *form* of fear, anxiety, and destruction has changed over the ages—from the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in biblical times to the destruction of the two world wars in the previous century to the destruction of terrorist attacks today, for example—the human condition remains the same.

Throughout the ages, the question of believers has been how to respond to events that evoke fear and anxiety. Van Aarde (2015, pp. 2–3), in his reading of Matthew 5:9 on “the peacemakers,” identifies four possible responses to violence. The first is *collaboration* for the sake of one's own safety. The second is *retribution*—responding to violence with equal violence. The third is the apocalyptic notion that *God will punish* the perpetrator eventually. The fourth possibility is to respond with passive resistance, *nonviolent protest*, or “turning the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39). He emphasizes that a nonviolent response is not capitulation. It

still is protest and resistance, but in such a way that it has the potential to break the cycle of violence rather than exacerbate it. The question is whether the simple instruction to go and be “peacemakers” is sufficient to provide people trapped in the human condition with a way to transcend fear and anxiety in their own lives and touch the lives of others with the gospel message of freedom and hope.

Fear and anxiety: Insights from psychology

From a cognitive perspective on anxiety, emotions are the product of complex cognitive systems. Primary anxiety is a state of cognitive disintegration as a result of abrupt and threatening change. The individual fails to find meaning in the events. This is existential anxiety (Zuckerman and Spielberger 2015, p. viii). According to Carroll Izard (2013, pp. 55–62, 75), anxiety is a complex phenomenon consisting of a combination of fundamental emotions. Fear is part of anxiety, along with other fundamental emotions such as shame (including shyness, guilt), distress, anger, and interest. Anxiety can be triggered by something or someone from the outside or by intrapersonal processes. Emotion, on the one hand, is independent of cognition, but on the other hand, it is always interacting with cognition as well as with a variety of other influences and functions (see Izard 2013, pp. 66–68). Cognitive processes are not the sole origin of anxiety. There has to be some sort of *motivation* for the thought processes. This can come from conditioning, learning, or experience.

People do not learn how to be afraid. Being afraid is part of being human. However, people do learn to distinguish what to be afraid of. This discernment is a cognitive process. There is a variety of possibilities of how to react to potential threat. In making their choice of how to react, people’s value system, ethics, and faith play a role. Thomas Aquinas describes anxiety (“apprehension”) as a function of the intellect which in turn is a power of the soul.

The 19th-century philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1844) also links anxiety to choice.

Fear and anxiety: Insights from Scripture

Fear and trembling

In biblical and extra-biblical literature, “fear” and “trembling” are combined to form a fixed expression: *phobos kai tromos* (see Vorster 1967, pp. 48–71). Both the expression and the separate components of “fear” and “trembling” sometimes denote the fear of concrete enemies or intimidating circumstances, being anxious, confused, getting a fright (see the discussion by Rapoport [1982, pp. 13–42] on parallels between biblical and modern experiences of terrorism against the background of the war of the Israelites against the Romans). In the religious domain, the expression *phobos kai tromos* can also denote “awe”—the deep respect and wonder experienced in God’s presence and in reaction to God’s action (Vorster 1967, pp. 8–20). The content of the experience of fear, anxiety, fright, or awe is determined by the situation (see Stoian 2016, pp. 69–78). Fear and trembling (*phobos* and *tromos*), separate or used together as an expression, describe a variety of human perceptions, emotions, experiences, and even actions (Vorster 1967, p. 25).

The expression “fear and trembling” evolved over time. Initially, it denoted intensified fear or “terrible fear” (Exod. 15:16; Isa. 19:16). Already in the Hebrew Bible there are signs of the transition from the fear of something concrete to religious awe (Ps. 2:11; Dan. 4:37; 6:27) (see Goldingay 2010, p. 77). In the New Testament, the expression usually has a religious connotation, although it is still sometimes used to express intense fear of something concrete (Vorster 1967, p. 112).

When confronted with supernatural events, the human reaction can be fear, trepidation, fright, or confusion as well as some form of joy or wonder. Mark describes the

reaction of the women at the empty tomb as *tromos kai ekstasis* (fear/trembling and ecstasy/joy). After having heard of Jesus' resurrection from the angel at the empty tomb, the women leave that place with *phobos kai chara* (fear and joy). The divine presence causes both fear and joy (see Noonan Sabin 2002, pp. 199–200).

In the Hebrew Bible, “fear and trembling” could have the positive effect of “turning to God,” that is, conversion (Vorster 1967, p. 71). Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 6) experienced “fear and trembling” before God but also trusted in God and therefore ordered his subjects to worship God. A person who experiences “fear and trembling” does not have to flee from God. This mental state can provide the incentive to bow down and serve God. The psalmist could trust in God's saving grace while simultaneously being in a state of “fear and trembling” before the enemy (e.g., Ps. 55). However, “fear and trembling” can also lead to bad choices made out of fear rather than out of faith and trust. Some choose to flee (Judith 15), others to capitulate (Judith 3) (Enslin 1978, p. 163; see West 2003, p. 756). The novice in Qumran nearly broke his vow because of his fear of Belial (1QS I, 17) (see Vorster 1967, p. 110).

In the New Testament, the expression “fear and trembling” mostly denotes something of a religious nature, also with a variety of meanings. Awareness of one's insignificance before God is the main reason for experiencing “fear and trembling.” This awareness leads to “obedience,” which stands in the tension between “fear and trembling” and trust. “Fear and trembling” is not only of a *psychological* and *religious* nature but also includes an *ethical* aspect (see Elrod 2003, p. 181): it is the motivation for living according to God's will (Vorster 1967, pp. 107–108). “Fear and trembling” in God's presence affects not only the relationship with God but also how to be with others in this world. “Fear and trembling” can bring believers to the ultimate goal of their humanity: a life that glorifies God (Vorster 1967, p. 111).

In Protestant theology, it was the philosopher-theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1950, 1983) who revived the concept of “fear and trembling.” Whereas Hegel’s aim was to construct a logical and coherent system of reality that could be thought through objectively, Kierkegaard championed subjectivity. He did not see human beings as parts of an objective whole. Their calling was to encounter God, live their life in faith, and come to ethical decisions. He opted for faith over against philosophy, subjectivity rather than objectivity, and individual existence above a system (see Verheule 1997, p. 72).

Fear in the synoptic gospels

The narratives about Jesus of Nazareth in the gospels have ample references to fear and anxiety. *Fear* is a key term in the Gospel of Mark, the oldest narrative of Jesus’ life available to us. The “weaknesses and foibles” of the followers of Jesus are portrayed throughout the story (Turner 2008, p. 691), and the gospel ends with fear (Mark 16:8). Fear is, as it were, Mark’s last word. Because of their fear, the followers of Jesus were not able to take the cause of Jesus further. They could not bring the message of hope to the world because they themselves were “terrified people of little faith” (see Van Aarde 2015b, p. 5). According to Rhoads and Michie (1982), the rather abrupt “brief ending” (Mark 16:9–10) challenges the reader to complete the open-ended story and to make a decision: “whether to flee in silence like the women or to proclaim boldly in spite of fear and death” (p. 140).

Because of the prevailing sense that such an abrupt ending was not sufficient, the “longer ending” (Mark 16:11–20) was added in an attempt to overcome the impasse caused by fear and despair. However, the longer ending also contains evidence of disbelief (Mark 16:13–14; see Bratcher and Nida 1961, p. 506). In the synoptic gospels, the shift from trust to disbelief “has nothing to do with a cognitive state of consciousness, but with a psychology of fear” (Van Aarde 2015, p. 4). The story ends with “a total human failure.”

In the Gospel of Matthew, the “state of being” (over against cognitive states) of the followers of Jesus is described as “little faith” (Matt. 13:53–17:2). According to Van Aarde (2015, p. 1), “little faith” equals *fear*. If fear is their “state of being,” the authenticity of their message is questionable. Matthew uses the term *little faith* four times (Matt. 6:30, 8:26, 14:31, 16:8). Luke uses it only once (Luke 12:28) in order to urge readers not to lose their trust in God even if life is difficult (see Wolter 2008, p. 455). According to Mark, the cause of Jesus cannot be taken forward because of fear (*phobos*). The witnesses are unreliable. Though the disciples are prone to “disbelief and distortion” (Luke 9:41), Luke is more optimistic. They can overcome their fear and speak courageously, boldly, and with confidence. Therefore, their witness can be regarded as reliable.

Those of *little faith* do believe but are also afraid (see Petersen 1978, p. 60; Van Aarde 2015, p. 4). In Mark, they “know” but also “do not know.” They want to be loyal to Jesus, but because of their fear they deny him. This is not about cognitive knowledge but rather about “lived experience.” Though they believe, they are still overcome by fear.

The *little faith* of the disciples in Matthew is their lack of trust that Jesus will care and provide for them (8:26; 14:32; 6:30; 16:8) and their ministry (17:20). “Their ‘little faith’ is evidenced by anxiety for daily needs (6:30); fear and timidity (8:26); hesitation (14:31); and inadequate understanding (16:8). They still exhibit this ‘little faith’ after the resurrection, when they both hesitate and worship in response to the risen Christ” (Brown 2002, p. 119).

The “New South Africa”: A case study²

Violence and violent crime

South Africa is by and large a religious country. Statistics from 2010 indicate that the

² In the case study, I utilize aspects of the research done by Jaco Heymans under my supervision for the degree of Magister Divinitatis at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

population is 82% Christian, 7.1% indigenous religions, 2.4% Hindu, 1.7% Muslim, and 0.8% other religions, including Bahá'í, Buddhist, and Jewish. Only 0.3% of the people identified themselves as atheist (Association of Religion Data Archives, 2010). However, rather than experiencing and conveying to others the positive, life-affirming effect of faith, a pervasive anxiety and fear has taken hold of the people, the effect of which is disruptive and destructive. The people of South Africa live in a state of constant fear and anxiety on account of inordinately high levels of violence and violent crime. It is, in many respects, a traumatized society.

Violence is deeply rooted in South African history. During the apartheid era, political violence by both the state and liberation movements was rife. Liberation movements used violence to pressure the government into changing its policies. The government used violence to maintain law and order and suppress resistance. After the transition to democracy, the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see Krog 2015, pp. 181–196), under the leadership of then Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was an attempt to address the traumas of a violent past and bring healing to the citizens.

After 1994, the new democracy was not free from violence; it just took a different form. Where violence previously was politically motivated, there has been a shift to criminal violence (Dirsuweit 2002, pp. 3–6). This includes murder, rape, hijacking, assault, and mutilation. These crimes are not restricted to specific areas or neighbourhoods but affect people of all walks of life everywhere. Violent crime is highly publicized in the media, often with a focus on the increasing brutality and cruelty of the crimes (Pretorius 2008, p. 81). People in general do not feel safe. They live in fear. A sense of powerlessness and pervasive anxiety prevails.

The level of criminal violence in South Africa is nearly double that of the worldwide average (Matzopoulos et al., 2004 p. 10). In 2006, 1.75 million South Africans received

medical treatment for injuries sustained in acts of violence (Matzopoulos et al. 2004, p. 11). Some 75% of South Africans experience at least one violence-related traumatic incident in their lifetime (Matzopoulos et al. 2006, p. 50). Violent crime in South Africa has a complex gender, age, and socioeconomic dynamics (see Lazarus et al. 2009; Seedat et al. 2009, p. 70). The percentage of women murdered by males known to them is eight times higher than the worldwide average—more than half occurring in intimate relationships (Abrahams et al. 2009, pp. 546–556). The highest percentage of death due to interpersonal violence occurs among males between the ages of 15 and 29 (184 per 100,000), whereas 14 out of 100,000 boys and 11.7 out of 100,000 girls who die before the age of five are murdered (Seedat et al. 2014, p. 137). This is double that of comparable low- and middle-income countries (see Mathews et al. 2013, p. 564). Causes of the violence include poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, patriarchal views on masculinity, child abuse, easy access to weapons, alcohol and drug abuse, and insufficient policing (see Seedat et al. 2009; Seedat et al. 2014, p.137).

Internationally, the country is steadily earning a reputation as a “highly dangerous” place to live and work. According to the *Ibrahim Index of African Governance* (Vuylsteke 2015, p. 3), which provides statistics and analyses regarding the quality of governance in African countries, South Africa is the tenth most dangerous of the 54 Sub-Saharan African countries. There have been waves of emigration, mostly to Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Europe.

A substantial number of citizens have been victimized in one form or another, which means that there is a large number of trauma survivors in the country (Kaminer and Eagle 2010, p. 8; see also Davis and Theron 1999, p. 57). In a study by Williams et al. (2007, p. 846), 75% of their respondents indicated that they had experienced some form of violent crime firsthand. More than half of them had experienced multiple incidents. A large number of South Africans are also indirectly affected by violent crime. Though they may not have

experienced it firsthand, they are indirectly traumatized by, for instance, the sudden death of a loved one, having been an eye witness of a traumatic incident, or having to care for a loved one who was affected directly by a trauma. Crime statistics do not always paint an accurate picture since many crimes, especially intimate crimes, are not reported. Statistics present the facts about violent crime but do not reflect the extent of people's suffering (De Beer 2007, pp. 5–6). Recent statistics provided by the South African Police Services indicate that violent crime has been steadily rising since 2011. It has increased by 0.9% during the period 2013/2014 to 2014/2015 (Analysis of the National Crime Statistics, 2014/2015, p. 9). Analyses of these statistics have shown that violent crime has dire consequences not only for individuals but also for the country as a whole (see Engelbrecht 2009; Louw 2007).

According to Norris and Sloane (2007, pp. 78–98), some 90% of all people experience at least one form of traumatic event in their lifetime. This disrupts their life on all levels. On a psychological level, their image of themselves and others is distorted. On a physiological level, brain networks can change. On a spiritual level, their sense of the meaning of life and their place in the world can change (see Southwick and Charney 2013, pp. 3–7). Violent crime and trauma caused deliberately by another person disrupt people's trust in others and their assumption that they are safe in the world and that human beings basically have good intentions towards one another. In the face of violent crime, people feel traumatized, powerless, vulnerable, and insecure. Culture, religious conviction, and personal spirituality can play a role in the healing process (see Anderson 2000, pp. 91–104).

De Beer (2007, p. 8) distinguishes various types of violence: war, terrorism, individual violence, language violence, medical violence, esthetic violence, and institutional violence. South African law defines violence as the intentional defamation of a person's *dignitas* (dignity), *fama* (reputation), or *corpus* (bodily integrity) (Snyman 2008, p. 465). The World Health Organization's definition is broader: the intentional use of physical violence or

power against oneself, another person, a group or community, which can lead to injury, death, physical harm, neglect or the impairment of development (Krug et al., 2002, p. 4). This definition includes both physical and emotional violence that is perpetrated against individuals or groups.

“Violent crime” varies across cultures (see Tolan 2007, pp. 5–11). Some forms of violence may be acceptable in one culture but not in another. A great variety of behaviors can be regarded as “violent,” such as murder, culpable homicide, socially acceptable killing such as in war, rape, and intentional or accidental death or injury. Bruce (2010, p. 14) distinguishes between instrumental and expressive violence. With instrumental violence there is a goal, such as threatening a victim in an armed robbery. Expressive violence has no economic benefit, but the perpetrator can derive emotional satisfaction by expressing hatred and aggression. There is much of both in South Africa—many robberies with aggravating circumstances and also much senseless mutilation and killing for no apparent reason.

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2007, p. 33a) defines violent crime as “applications or threats of physical force against a person, which can give rise to criminal or civil liability, whether severe or not and whether with or without a weapon. When more severe such violence may be associated with intimate violations of the person or the potential to cause serious physical pain injury or death.” The South African Police Service (2012/2013, p. 3) refers to violent crime as “contact crime” because there is physical contact between the perpetrator and the victim. Robbery with aggravating circumstances in its various categories has risen sharply over the past five years (Analysis of the National Crime Statistics 2014/2015, pp. 30–40). Car hijackings increased by 21% over the past five years, with 14.2 % during the period 2014/2015. Robbery at residential properties increased by 20.1% over the past five years, with 5.2% during the period 2014/2015. Robbery at non-residential sites increased by 31% over the past five years, with 30.2% during the period

2014/2015. This contributes to a general sense of fear, anxiety, and insecurity in South African society (Pretorius 2008, p. 89).

The effect on individuals and communities

There is an increasing awareness worldwide of the consequences of violent crime (see Roberts and Green 2007, p. 255; Young et al. 2007, p. 2). Earlier, the focus was on a sensitive approach to victims of violence in the legal system (Young et al. 2007, p. 2), but it was soon realized that more support would be needed. Crisis intervention programs were developed (see Roberts and Green 2007; Young et al. 2007, p. 2). Recently, studies in victimology have focused on the short-term effect of crisis and the long-term effect of trauma on people's emotional well-being (Eagle and Kaminer 2015, p. 22).

Violent crime reduces people's quality of life and causes financial loss and physical and emotional injury. A general sense of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty affects people's socioeconomic development and productivity (see Pretorius 2008, p. 82). The effect of violent crime depends largely on the vulnerability of the individual or group. It generally affects women, the elderly, and young children more severely (Roberts and Green 2007, p. 255). Sudden and unexpected events such as violent crime are experienced as traumatic (see Carlson 1997, pp. 25–38) if the person's coping skills are insufficient to deal with what happened.

The sense of a lack of control compromises an individual's physical safety and emotional integrity (Carlson 1997, p. 32). Cognitive schemas are destroyed (Roberts and Green 2007, p. 23). Trauma often also affects the personality of the individual (Everly and Lating 2003, p. 34). When the most basic assumptions about the self and the world suddenly change, an existential crisis results. Violent crime radically changes individuals' views and assumptions about the world and other people. Violence dehumanizes people and causes

disruption on various levels of their lives. People often distance themselves from others and experience a sense of helplessness and alienation, and some simply shut down. They worry about their own safety and that of their loved ones. This can lead to a limited and limiting lifestyle. The high incidence of hijacking, armed robbery, and burglary in South Africa causes people to live their lives behind electric fences in homes fitted with alarm systems, to spend large amounts of money on security companies, and to be generally reluctant to leave their property at night or for longer periods of time (see Pretorius 2008, p. 88). Those who have experienced violent crime firsthand are especially vigilant and tend to limit their freedom of movement substantially in order to try to avoid being revictimized (Engelbrecht 2009, p. 65). This adversely affects their quality of life.

Most people gradually return to a “normal life” after having experienced a violent crime. Others start the process of emigration. Some develop long-term trauma symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Post-traumatic stress symptoms as a consequence of intentional harm are more complex and difficult to treat (Schiraldi 2009, p. 4) than symptoms that result from an accident or natural disaster. According to Green and Roberts (2008, p. 25), the incidence of post-traumatic stress is higher among people affected by crime (25.8%) compared to those affected by other traumatic experiences (9.4%). Those affected by violent crime who show signs of post-traumatic stress, often need some sort of intervention or counseling in order for healing to take place. Others develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress years after they were victimized (Green and Roberts, 2008, p. 26).

Resources for healing

Spirituality is about how people make sense of life and what meanings they attach to their experiences. It is also about their morality, how they relate to the world around them, and their relationship with the transcendent (see Van Hook 2016, p. 11). Recently, there has been

much interest in the positive effect of people's spirituality on their recovery after a traumatic experience (see Almeida et al., 2014, pp. 176–175). Two U.S. studies indicate both an increase and a decrease in spirituality and religiosity after trauma. A study by Seimarco et al. (2012, pp. 10–18) on 9/11 survivors found that 78% of the respondents did not experience any change in their spirituality. For 10%, their spirituality declined, and for 11% it became more important to them. The outcome was influenced by the severity of the loss and the degree of exposure to trauma. In particular, parents who lost children in the terrorist attacks showed a decline in spirituality. A study by Pargament and Brand (1998) after the Oklahoma bombings showed a correlation between personal growth and an increased spirituality, whereas the prevalence of post-traumatic stress symptoms could be correlated with a decline in spirituality (see Pargament and Brand 1998, pp. 111–128).

Violent crime affects people on all levels of life. Some are resilient and find ways to lead a meaningful and productive life again (see Southwick and Charney 2013, p. 7). Walsh (2006) describes resilience as the ability “to rebound from adversity strengthened and more resourceful. It is an active process of endurance, self-righting, and growth in response to crisis and challenge” (p. 4). Resilient people have the ability to function effectively relatively soon after a traumatic experience.

Internal factors that contribute to recovery and sustainability include the inner strength to face one's fears (Southwick and Charney 2013, p. 46). Inadequate strategies such as avoidance lead to higher levels of distress (Folkman and Moskowitz 2004, p. 755). Persons affected by violent crime try to avoid everything that could possibly remind them of what they have experienced and fear.

Optimism and positive emotions contribute to resilience and recovery after traumatic experiences (see Fredrickson and Joiner 2002, pp. 172–175; Ong et al. 2012, p. 81). Barbara Fredrickson (2001, pp. 218–226) developed the *broaden-and-build* model of positive

emotions. Positive emotions broaden a person's perspective, strengthen their internal resources, and improve their emotional and physical well-being (Fredrickson 2004, p. 1373). Positive emotions provide a buffer against the negative effects of stress. They enable flexible thought patterns and problem-solving abilities. A physical effect of positive emotions is a more rapid cardiovascular recovery after agitation. They enable better concentration and reduce restlessness and psychic discomfort (Fredrickson 2004, p. 1375). Positive emotions are an internal resource that can enable people to move forward with their lives after a traumatic experience.

Optimism is a positive emotion that enables creativity and problem-solving (see Ong et al. 2012, p. 82; Southwick and Charney 2013), a vision of the future, and the hope and faith that things will work out. Optimistic and resilient individuals succeed in finding hope even amid difficulties and after traumatic experiences. For Walsh (2012), hope is the disposition which "fuels energy and efforts to rise above adversity" (p. 179). It is future oriented—a better outcome is expected. Hope often comes from people's faith and spirituality.

Positive emotions, optimism, and hope enable people to deal with stress and trauma proactively and to see themselves as survivors rather than victims. They can gain knowledge, develop skills, and find creative solutions to problems rather than accepting them as givens. Resilient individuals are flexible in both their thinking and their emotional reactions. They do not cling to a specific defense mechanism but develop a variety of skills as required by the situation (Southwick and Charney 2013, p. 165). They use the opportunities available to them and succeed in finding meaning even in difficult circumstances.

A cognitive reevaluation of a traumatic experience aims to regulate emotional reaction. Emotional reaction can change if the meaning of an event is reinterpreted (Coetzer and Snell 2012, p. 4). Through cognitive reevaluation, people who have been victimized by

violent crime can find alternative meanings. Southwick and Charney (2013, pp. 173–177) identify *gratitude* and *humor* as two ways cognitive reevaluation can be achieved.

Though *gratitude* may sound inappropriate in the context of trauma and victimization, resilient people are often able to find things for which they can be grateful. In the South African situation, people are often grateful that they survived, that they did not incur permanent physical damage, that their family was not harmed, and the like. Some attribute this to God's care. Resilient people may find that the experience has enriched their lives in some way (see Anderson and Anderson 2003, p. 54). Cognitive reevaluation by means of gratitude can have a spiritual basis since gratitude is a central religious category.

Viktor Frankl (1963) calls *humor* “another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation” (p. 63). According to Frankl, humor, more than anything else in the human makeup, can enable people to rise above a situation. Humor contributes to gaining a more balanced perspective on a trying matter. It broadens one's focus and enables creative and flexible thinking. It also enables people to confront their fears (see Southwick and Charney 2013, p. 177) and to create distance between themselves and what they fear without denying the pain or anxiety.

The main external resource for people who have experienced traumatic incidents is social support (see Charuvastra and Cloitre 2008; Glasper and Detillion 2003). Southwick and Charney (2013, p. 100) point out that close relationships build strength and form a buffer against stress and danger. Relationships in which people feel safe counteract the negative effects of stress or trauma (Shaver and Pereg 2003). Support groups in which people who have fallen victim to violent crime can tell their story in a safe space can help them to make the transition from victim to survivor. Strong social support networks contribute to the resilience and mental health of people affected by any form of trauma and facilitate recovery.

Meaning, attitude, and morality

Friedrich Nietzsche's famous words, "He who has a why can endure almost any how," refer to the role of meaning-making in suffering (see Southwick and Charney 2013, p. 184).

According to Carl Jung (1968, p. 76), people can withstand the most incredible hardship when they are convinced that it has meaning. For Viktor Frankl (1963), meaning-making is a central human motivation, which he calls "the will to meaning," the search for "a higher and ultimate meaning to [one's] existence" (p. 20). Traumatic incidents affect people's meaning-making ability. Regaining a sense of meaning in life is a central part of healing after trauma. People's religious convictions, practices, and spirituality can support them in their search for meaning and contribute to their well-being and sense of connection with others (Walsh 2009, p. xi; see Schermer 2003, p. 21). Spirituality has an influence on value systems that, in turn, determine people's behavior.

A holistic approach to the care of people who have been victimized and traumatized due to violent crime requires the inclusion of the spiritual aspect, especially among highly religious people. Walsh (2009, p. 5) describes religion as an organized system of faith practices, rituals, and symbols that aim to facilitate a connection with the transcendent. Spirituality is that dimension of human experience that relates to transcendental convictions and practices. Spirituality is individual and subjective and operates on the emotional level (Hills and Pargament, 2003, p. 26). Charles Taylor (2002, pp. 102–107) points out that spirituality manifests in a variety of ways in individuals and communities. Daniël Louw (2012) sees spirituality as the embodiment of ideas and norms within existential realities. It is not only about worshipping a specific god; it is also about one's understanding of powers greater than oneself.

Walsh (2009, p. 6) distinguishes between spirit and soul, "spirit" being the source of life and internal power whereas the "soul" is the source of the authentic self, of spiritual

depth, joy, and lament. In many religions, it is the soul that is in relationship with the transcendent. This relationship is a motivating power. If the soul is wounded or neglected, the effect is detrimental to the person (Walsh 2009, p. 7). Symptoms such as obsessive behavior, addiction, violence, and a lack of hope are some of the consequences.

Resilience and spirituality

If coping skills are not sufficient, the effect on the person is traumatic. Trauma that is a result of violent crime causes individuals to be confronted with their own underlying insecurities and instabilities (Smith 2004, p. 233). Barrett (2009) describes it as follows: “When individuals are abused or subjected to violent crime they experience a loss of trust, innocence and peacefulness” (p. 270). Survivors of violent crime see the world as a dangerous place and are intensely aware of their own vulnerability and lack of control. Basic distrust (see Erikson 1968) influences all levels of a person’s life (Smith 2004, p. 233): their relationship with themselves, others, and God. If basic trust in the world is damaged, trust in God is often also affected since people expect God to provide for all their needs. A crisis of faith is often the result of having experienced a violent crime. People question the balance between good and evil in life and have to revisit their entire spiritual structure. Smith (2004) puts it as follows: “Trauma may attack and displace a sense of life’s meaning and purpose” (p. 233). In this sense, the experience of violent crime can rupture a person’s spirituality. The person struggles to make sense of what happened and of God’s place in it. Emotions such as aggression, despair, confusion, and guilt can manifest (Parlotz 2002) and people tend to withdraw from social contact. They often feel that God has left them in the lurch. This feeling can lead to further guilt and shame (Smith 2004, p. 233). Identity, responsibility, justice, suffering, and forgiveness have to be reevaluated in light of the traumatic event.

However, a traumatic experience can also be a catalyst for spiritual and personal growth. Smith (2004) puts it as follows: “A traumatic event may overwhelm the soul’s ability to contain it and fit it into the larger spiritual consciousness, as a result processing a traumatic event almost always leads to the search for new meaning and purpose as well as a need for the soul to expand enough to contain trauma” (p. 234). The need to better understand and the search for answers can be the stimulus to developing a deeper spirituality.

The way in which people work through and recover from adversity is influenced by their spiritual convictions (Pargament and Cummings 2010, p. 193). Bonelli and Koenig (2013, pp. 657–73) point to more than 3,000 recent studies that have shown a definite connection between spirituality and mental health. In general, people who are more spiritual or religious have lower levels of depression, anxiety, suicide ideations, and addiction. They succeed in maintaining a better quality of life and tend to recover more quickly from depressive symptoms than others. The studies show that spirituality can be a positive influence on resilience and can enable quicker recovery after a traumatic incident (see Walsh 2006, 2009).

Survivors of violent crime often see themselves as victims. Recovery is hampered by emotions of aggression and the need for revenge. This clashes with previously held spiritual convictions and can result in moral injury (Maguen and Litz 2012, pp. 1–16).³ Walsh (2009) describes healing as “the process of becoming whole or finding some way to adapt and compensate for losses” (p. 32). This acknowledges the inherent emotional and spiritual ability of people to heal after a traumatic experience, even though the experience cannot be erased. Spirituality as a search for meaning can contribute to healing even in dire circumstances (Van Hook 2016, p. 13). People can heal on a psychological and spiritual level even if physical

³ Shira Maguen and Brett Litz (2012, pp. 1–16) reflect on the ethical and moral challenges of veterans of war who have been victimized by moral injury.

healing is not possible because of long-term damage done to their bodies (see Southwick and Charney 2013, p. 169). Healing is about becoming whole. Recovery is about returning to normal functioning—in other words, the state before the traumatic incident happened. For some survivors of violent crime, recovery is not possible, but healing is always possible. Spiritual resources that can contribute to healing are hope, forgiveness, and ritual.

Hope

Traumatic experiences often cause people to lose all hope. If hope can increase and hopelessness and despair can decrease, healing and health can be fostered. Religious or spiritual people's search for meaning, for understanding ultimate questions about life, and for relationship with the sacred or transcendent can contribute to their acquiring and strengthening hope after trauma (see Almeida and Koenig 2006, p. 840). For Donald Capps (1994, p. 75–89), hope is a future projection that is not real but is also real. It is the yearning for something that does not yet exist, though it can be more real to people than what they see in the concrete world. Hope enables people to visualize possibilities. The future is open to them because they are convinced that human endeavor can make a difference (Capps 1994, p. 88). Authentic hope is based on what is possible. Kaethe Weingarten (2010, p. 7) emphasizes that hope should be reasonable, sensible, and moderate. What is hoped for should also be attainable.

The “theologian of hope,” Jürgen Moltmann (1974), connects hope with two theological ideas: that God identifies with human suffering (as can be seen in the event of the cross) and the resurrection of Jesus, which offers the hope of an alternative future to those who suffer. The task of the theologian is not only to provide a different interpretation of the world, of history, and of human nature “but to transform them in expectation of a divine transformation” (Moltmann 1981, p. 200). For Moltmann (1974), “God and suffering are no

longer contradictions,” but “God’s being is in suffering and the suffering is in God’s being itself, because God is love” (p. 227).

Reasonable hope is *relational* (Weingarten 2010, p. 7–10). It is about creating a new reality together, also together with God. Reasonable hope is *practical*. It is more about the journey than the ultimate objective. Reasonable hope is about embracing an unknown future because the future is open, fluid, and uncertain. This need not be intimidating; it can be a source of hope because it is open to new possibilities. The future should not be approached with resignation but rather with hope. Reasonable hope can accommodate ambiguity and doubt. These are not signs of a loss of hope but rather of a realistic approach to hope. Hope is an ongoing process.

Forgiveness

When harm is deliberately caused by a person, forgiveness is central to the process of healing. Forgiveness has religious and spiritual overtones and has been avoided by psychology because of its moral connotations (see Freedman 2008, p. 96). However, because of its social, spiritual, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, forgiveness should be approached from both a psychological and a pastoral perspective (see Ysseldyk and Matheson 2008, p. 145). Though it is not the only aim of pastoral counseling, forgiveness can be one of the main outcomes (see Malcolm 2008, p. 290).

An aim of forgiveness is letting go. On an intrapersonal level, forgiveness can be seen as the process whereby negative thoughts are replaced by positive thoughts (see Enright et al. 1992, pp. 99–111; Enright and Fitzgibbons 2000). The former causes harm, whereas the latter can bring a person to a state inner peace and wholeness. Emmons (2006, p. 75) describes forgiveness not as an emotion per se but as a spiritual process with emotion-regulating properties.

On an interpersonal level, forgiveness aims at reconciliation and restoring relationships (see Hargrave 2009, pp. 79–106; McCullough et al. 2003, pp. 540–557). This requires communication and the will to forgive (see Baumeister 1998, pp. 79–106). Worthington (2006, p. 33) identifies three types of forgiveness: (1) *divine* forgiveness, which is God’s grace for those who have remorse for what they have done; (2) *social* forgiveness, when individuals or institutions apologize for social injustice; and (3) *interpersonal* forgiveness, when people forgive one another and restore their relationship.

For those who have survived violent crime, working through the pain is central to the process of forgiveness (see Belicki et al. 2008, p. 177; DeCourville et al. 2008, p. 3). The process entails a conscious choice on the part of both parties (see DeCourville et al. 2008, p. 8; Louw 1999, p. 479). When people have been severely damaged by others, this is not a simple matter. Though many obstacles have to be overcome on the road to forgiveness, studies have shown that forgiveness can contribute to physical and psychological well-being and to positive emotions, healthy social interactions, and life satisfaction (see DeCourville et al. 2008, p. 2; Malcolm et al., 2008, p. xxiv). Forgiveness can therefore be a spiritual resource for healing.

The Great Cleanup

In the process of pastoral care, healing takes place “when we enable individuals, groups, and communities to find meaning and make connections between their experiences and the God who is concerned for the whole of the created world” (Stairs 2000, p. 10). People are always searching for meaning, for a better quality of life, and for better health. In a broken world, broken people are in need of healing and of feeling that their life has value (Dykstra and Bass 2010, pp. 1–12). The pastoral care relationship with survivors of violent crime aims at supporting individuals to find meaning in their lives and life experiences; providing hope in

order that faith can become a resource for coping with life experiences; creating a safe space for them to experience comfort and care and a sacred space for encountering God; connecting their life story with the story of God; and discovering joy, gratitude, and grace again in the midst of and in spite of crisis (Louw 2012, p. 15).

If our faith tells us that God is just and the world belongs to God, as the great majority of South Africans believe, but our experience tells us that the world is unjust and destructive then, says John Dominic Crossan (2010, p. 79), God is busy with the “Great Divine Cleanup of the World” (see Stewart 2006, pp. 24–25). Even though we are an insignificant and battered people, as believers and “healed healers” we are challenged to transcend the fear and anxiety that cause and perpetuate the mess, allow ourselves to be “surprised by hope” (Wright 2008), and become motivated to take part in the Great Divine Cleanup. Then, the positive life-affirming effect of faith can manifest in people’s personal and communal lives. Then, the message of freedom and hope can be taken further without being obstructed by fear and anxiety and can touch and heal the lives of others.

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