MY (TRAUMA) HEALING STORY

Understanding, Managing and Avoiding Burnout
Dealing with STRESS and TRAUMA
Follow Up Workshop, BOHOL November 2008
Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

Tired, wounded and weary I maybe in the vicissitude of life, I find comfort in the belief that I too can withstand all this. With the strength of my soul and the might of my heart, I'll be victorious and be appreciative of life and what it has to offer.

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today

The untimely demise of a Father and without having the chance to say or express that you have cared and loved him to me had been a traumatic experience I found myself trying to overcome. Having not to stand up and the expectation of loved ones similarly affected by the tragedy has generated deep seated regrets and remorse on my part. But I am fervor hope that these things shall pass and have been finding ways to learn to accept things that are not within my disposition or control. With these thoughts, I am ever hopeful and have looked at the future with enthusiasm and with a grace of mature adult.

Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” - What will happen if I relax?

My thoughts are many, galloping in the wilderness
But when my Heart began to speak, I found Silence
Be still says the Heart to my confused mind
You need not suffer for I too will ache
Be still my old battle scarred Heart now says the Mind
Let's comfort one another and go to slumber in bliss

Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of...

Tired body and tired soul I am at times
But I must surrender and listen to what its says
I cared for this temple of my soul and the body which resides
So I beseech you Oh! dear glorious sleep
to please come to me now

Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation

I've been a great lover of nature
During darkest moments of life, I seek its company
And found that the old friend of my soul is there in open arms
Ready to embrace me and nestled in its care
I shall endeavor to find more time with you old friend of mine

Chapter 6: Reconciliation and forgiveness

Be gone misery, the villain of my soul
I am but longing for a peace of mind
I shall try to forget our painful past
make amends and right grievous wrong we had
But let me begin by saying: I am sorry

Chapter 7: My vision of a healthy future

I shall grow old, rich with experience and wisdom of the ages
Surrounded with friends and loves one who define my very existence
And when I too must come to pass, I have but you,
beloved friend of my soul to thank you for a fulfilled life

MY (TRAUMA) HEALING STORY 2

Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

I glorify the GOD's gift to me as journalist as member of the third state and the bear of truth and living witness of realities in warton Mindanao.

I love my profession and I will stand for it no matter what in the name of peace, justice and equality among the Filipino race.

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today

My (trauma) healing process unfolds with the PECOJON training 2.5 session Cebu City where useful mind and body exercise neutralized tension caused by trauma. As news and photo journalist, in a series of armed conflict coverage’s, trauma had developed within me in
silence. These include photos an hour after the conflict or atrocities. An images of dead civilians and burned houses and the running civilian evacuees.

Only such training of Pecjon 2.5 had gradually diffused such tension. The exercises introduced had been constantly practiced and applied consistently and had created a great positive change and outlook in my inner and outer self.

Trauma in war are manageable and controllable.

**Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” - What will happen if I relax?**

A healing process takes place when I communicate with my heart.
My heart said," If you take care of me, I'll take care of you".
Heart disposes bad emotions if consistent healthy proper breathing is being done.
The heart represents GOD.
A gesture of good to mankind is an expression of a kind heart..

**Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of…**

I am tired of covering atrocities and armed conflict.
I am tired of seeing bad images. o have good stories to tell.
I am tired of seeing rebels and soldiers fighting.
I am tired of looking at bombs and bullets.
I am tired of taking photos of armaments of war.

**Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation**

Constant application of breathing exercise as healing process.
Focus images on good environment and kindhearted people.
Listen to soft and melody sounds .
Think or imagine positive future.
Communicate good things with the community who has wonderful experience to share with.

**Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future**

That everyone live in peace and harmony.
That every human race respect each culture and religion.
That everyone love peace from inner self to share with those who are in chaos.
Transcend good moral values.
Glorify success in the efforts of sustainable peace, unity and prosperity.
Chapter 7: Reconciliation and forgiveness

Community dialogue in rebuilding peace.
We will not only rebuild burned houses but rebuild relations.
Forgiveness to oneself and others.
Interfaith dialogue.
Family strengthening.

MY (TRAUMA) HEALING STORY 3

Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

Wayward wisp of cobweb
Captive of the wind
Drifting here and there
Until your strong branch reaches
To catch me. I am home

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today
When your brother is your killer,
Can the night ever turn to day?

Impact of event:
Intense distrust of military
Difficulty in maintaining long-term friendships
Recurring cynicism about trust and goodness

Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” - What will happen if I relax?

Everything sheds off
All thought, all feeling
A blank

Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of…

I am tired of...being tired, being helpless, being afraid
We are tired of...being helpless
Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation

Walk away
Don't look back
But if there's no other way
Stand your ground

Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future

lives lived
For each other
A world shared
By all

MY (TRAUMA) HEALING STORY 4

Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

I am nothing.
I do not have any knowledge why I am here.
Life in this world has always been only in my mind and what I want to do.
My brain and my imagination of a just world is my path.
Nothing more.

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today

When: May 2000
Where: Aleosan, North Cotabato
Who: A small Moro village
Feelings: Anger
Impact: my personal hell

Story

I came to a village in the town of Aleosan, North Cotabato during my coverage of the all-out war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 2000. The houses in the village were
empty; its streets empty of laughing children and residents-- except for a brown rice dummy or scarecrow on the middle of a concrete basketball court. Approaching the scarecrow, I saw that around its neck, hanged a brown cartolina that reads “We killed all the Muslims here.” After taking a few photographs, I left the place wondering whether what was on the cartolina was true.

I went on with my coverage and came upon a row of houses still burning on the side of the highway. I was shocked since I passed the houses a few hours before still untouched. Then I saw a small health clinic on the side of the road and noticed a woman with a baby sitting on its porch. Stopping, I went to the clinic and found that in small room-- ten Moro women and ten babies sitting, waiting for a doctor to come. Learning that they waited for several hours, I called up a friend, a doctor, who came. My friend told me the babies were sick of diarrhea for drinking dirty water in the evacuation center. My friend said there was little else to do because he had only four bottles of intravenous liquid with him and no medicine. I frantically called up every government official I knew but was told there was no medicine left because of the large number of evacuees.

I wanted to bring the babies to the hospital but my friend told me it was also filled up with sick children. My friend told me we have to hope for the best and treated the babies right in that small clinic. He chose the worst case and injected the bottles. We waited but the babies were so sick. They died one after another.

I went back to my hotel and cried. I could not write the story and never did. That story became one of the untold stories of the war and became my personal hell.

Impact

After that, the scene of dying babies always haunted me especially if another fighting erupts in Central Mindanao. I became passionate of trying to find a way to end the conflict but I failed. It has too many players.

Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation

My preferred technique is deep breathing if scenes like these triggered the coming back of the images of the dying babies. Sometimes I will cry secretly. It helps me pull through.

Breathing is a relaxing exercise and gives back my natural rhythm. Besides, I can do the exercise anywhere, anyplace, anytime compared to other exercises.

Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future

I want to fulfill my family obligations.
Retire in a peaceful place and write the book I am planning to do.
Die quickly and quietly.
Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

I am a bit tired.
I am grappling with feelings relating to my present relationship.
I am inspired to move forward by a radiant beauty.
I look forward to repairing strained relationships
And to hugging my kids.

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today

The Incident
…traumatic event arose from coverage of a series of killings of Subanen tribal leaders in 2002
…issue came to the fore with the murder of the most prominent of the leaders who was expected to run for mayor of a hinterland Misamis Occidental town by 2004, challenging foothold of a Bisaya in the seat
…discovered that goons of mayor were casing me; mayor refused to be interviewed for the story
…was not able to fully write about the tragedy of the Subanens
…felt being muzzled down because of the threatening presence of the armed goons

Current Impact
My parents who are friends of the mayor seem to have “distanced” themselves from the latter knowing what transpired between us
I continue to be wary of being surveilled by the mayor’s goons
I refuse to join colleagues in press conferences and/or coverage at the mayor’s office, or relating to events of his town
I am coy to coverage of the mayor’s activities; he also does not feel comfortable opening up with me in the crowd
I feel anger every time similar incidents arise; I have flashbacks of the incident when doing stories on indigenous peoples

Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” - What will happen if I relax?

I felt a soothing energy entering into my body
I can only see empty darkness
I then become dead sleepy
I can’t figure out from whom specifically I got the soothing feeling
I felt inner peace
Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of…

violence
evacuation
fighting over notions/ideas
heated debates over what constitutes a commonly desirable future
blames

Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation

a talk with a colleague
opportunity to rest and relax
opportunity to be alone with my self
a loving and caring crowd
healing exercises

Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future

a healthy relationship with my kids and their mother
a loving, caring partner who understands my work
a flourishing journalism career
a peaceful community where my children live
constant opportunity for self-renewal

MY (TRAUMA) HEALING STORY 6

Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

Myself is the center of my existence
What I do affects others
I am a part of everything that happens
I have responsibility to things around me
I make my own decisions
Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today

I have covered conflict incidents for years now and it was only in recent accounts that I seem to get affected, especially by grieving families of victims of violence. One incident that recurs is that of a three year old who was crying uncontrollably over the mangled body of his eight-year old brother in a bomb attack in 2007. I just kept hearing the cries of “Kuya, kuya, kuya…” as I late wrote the story of the incident.

With that, I now fear for the lives of my own children. The continued coverage of conflict incidents may have brought effects to what I do.

Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” - What will happen if I relax?

I see images
The image of my mother appears
I feel relaxed
I feel like I want to sleep
A refreshing experience

Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of…

I am tired of …
what is happening to Mindanao
the way so-called leaders treat issues in Mindanao, especially the Mindanao conflict
those that use issues in Mindanao for their own interest
how Manila media treat Mindanao conflict stories
inadequacies in understanding the Mindanao situation

We are tired of …
corrupt officials of the government
insensitivities
living in fear
uncaring local officials
thugs disguised as public servants

Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation

Bring an image of my mother, children
Breathing attitude
Bring an image of healthy, colorful scene
Hum a tune
Images of nature
Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future

Mutual respect, understanding, trust, love and joy.

Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

I always find myself at a fork—in a blue space.
Blue is my moment of serenity.

Within the confines of that ‘blue space’
I am one—with Bluefork.

Bluefork is a celebration of my presence.
He is an affirmation of my alter ego—
A character I cannot have, and hold, but
A heart, mind and soul I can keep
With my faith, that life is beautiful,
And Bluefork is there, forever.

Bluefork is he I cannot become, but
He I can live my life with.
He gets me dreaming—and moving.

Bluefork completes me.

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today

My Most Recent Traumatic Story

I thought all the while facing armed men on the ground, or witnessing the impact of war, or listening to victims of war were among the worst experiences I could face as a journalist.

Even facing charges for a libel suit was another challenge to deal with. But in each of this, I felt that I still had a space to run to—and all were manageable.
On Monday this week, my publisher, his son, and the managing editor (whose best qualification is being the son’s friend) had entered into a contract with our City Mayor, which may have been legitimate, but which I felt was a slap to my principles as head of the media organization.

This only happened in our workplace. The City Government of Zamboanga paid for full color, full page advertisements which were valid—truly legitimate. But these contracts sought an exchange, which bought off the banner story of the newspaper for four issues.

I felt I was stabbed behind my back, but I felt my principles as a journalist were nailed to the Cross. Envelopmental journalism simply took on a “more classy” form in this case, and I thought my ideals in the fight against media corruption were crushed—right under my nose.

I hardly slept all week. I felt betrayed. I was out of full of anger at the office, laden with hatred, consumed with disgust.

I have come to this session in an infuriated state.

Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” — What will happen if I relax?

Pa, I am with you.
Ma, only you can make me move this way.
Kids, you are my life.
Sisters, you inspire me.
Jim, you complete me.

I am relax.

Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of…

I am tired of routine,
Of people who, from time and again, cannot cope with me.
I am tired of those who keep on clinging on to the past.
Some things cannot be undone.
But we can do something by not allowing the same situations
To happen exactly the way they did.
Then design the change.

Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation

Welcome the silence.
Listen to soft music.
Think of possibilities of a life ahead.
Recollect to define the vision.
Move on.

Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future

A happy life with my kids
A comfortable home
A well-earning stable career
A peaceful city
--Bluefork, content.

Chapter 7: Reconciliation and forgiveness

I concede—Things cannot be undone.
I forgive—your arrogance seeks refuge in an ocean of ignorance.
I envision—you out of the picture, soon.
I take a deep breath.
Salaam.

Postscript:

At times, when life gets difficult
I find myself in a strange place
A novel experience awaits
A hand is offered and helps me
In the healing of my anger
And pain.
I brush my tears away
Look up, and see warm smiles,
Kind eyes, gentle hearts
--Thank you, Antonia.
--Thank you, Matthias.
Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

I am Here. Now
Opening up and reaching out
To You, without worry of the past
Nor the future.
Just Here. And Now.
With you.

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today

A reply to a question mistaken
For a personal attack.
A refusal to listen to the explanation.
A judgement.

Frustration. Disappointment
The tendency is to avoid.

Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” - What will happen if I relax?

I feel myself, my whole being
Beating against my chest.
For a while, I thought something
Needed to get out.
Turns out, I just needed
To listen.

Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of... We are tired of...

I am tired of explaining
Myself, of being judged.
Of being mistaken
For something else.

We are tired of lies
And corruption.
We are tired
Of being tired.

Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation

Breathe through the nose,
Exhale through the mouth.
One hand against the chest
Where the heart is.
The other against the belly
Where the stomach is.
Imagine.

Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future

Openness, honesty.
People from various
Backgrounds unite.
Unity among religions.
Love, respect, hope.
Hope.

MY (TRAUMA) HEALING STORY 9

Chapter 1: The traumatic event and the impact until today

Each and every journalists covering conflict areas has their story to tell about such traumatic experience they had in one of their many coverage.
I am only one of those who got a story to tell, because many times in eleven years of covering the Mindanao conflict, hundreds of untold stories comes into my way, stories
which keeps lingering in my mind, gave me nightmares, distress, burn-out and pity, being unable to do something to give justice to each situation which I experience. I am helpless, and my conscience keeps bothering me about it, but what can I do to make a difference, I am just a journalists whose doing my given job and performing tasks given me by my network who pays my salary every month? Many times in my life, I have tried to forget such unwilling traumatic stories we see on the battle ground, but it keeps on haunting me, even unknowingly, it is corrupting my life and existence, physically and emotionally. But what can I do? NOTHING!

Indeed, the impact on feelings, emotions, habits, behavior and thoughts keeps on flashing back my memories and is very hard to overcome, I don't know anymore where to start, it even came to a point that I would like to give up, give up my career and live a peaceful life far away from Mindanao where the conflict is.
In my long years of experience, the conflict in Mindanao is a cycle of war, a cycle which repeats the turn of events, what only matters was the change of characters performing every role in such conflict, but what is constant was the permanent presence of casualties who are the innocent ones, children, women, old and innocents who are caught amidst the restless battle for unknown cause and justifications than just to comply the mission and kill the enemy.
Until when? From generation to generation, Mindanao conflict brews a new environment of fighting, young generations with new technologies and strategies of war, influenced by those who took advantage of such situation for their vested personal, business and political agenda, disregarding whoever will be the victim of such permanent interests they wanted.
My presence within the war is just a role to play, I may be just one of those who portray the position of the needed figure to complete the entire picture of the conflict, the existence of a mediaman in the middle of the battle can paint either a good picture or a bad image to whatever clashing groups, but how can it be justifiable to the unwilling victims? It is not that easy to disregard the lost of life of those who are only sacrificial lambs, which can also happen to us.
What can we do, than to embrace the reality of our existence and the unwanted dilemma which we embrace while performing our job.
Experiencing a traumatic situation while covering the conflict is not that easy to overcome, it can push you to the limits, enables you to sometimes ending everything and get crazy. But we have to go on and on and on even though it overwhelms your emotions most of the time.
My heart is bleeding every time I see an innocent newly-born baby being killed in the middle of a crossfire without knowing why he has to die for nothing. I keep on asking why, why and WHY?

Chapter 2: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of…

I am tired of emotional impact in every coverage, I am tired of seeing innocent people dead and slaughtered, we, journalists are tired of the cycle of war which leads to nothing but waging another war after the other.
Chapter 3: My vision of a healthy future

All I can do is just to dream, a dream of a Mindanao with no guns, no fighting, Muslims and Christians alike living in a harmonious community, no suffering, agony and hatred, and of peace and reigning love for everyone.
I am still hopeful that time will come, my very own children can enjoy playing and enjoying each and every moment we cherish together within a community of peace and equality. That when we go to sleep, all we have to dream is the sweet memories of our love and existence in this earth, one with our CREATOR whom we cling in times of distress.

MY (TRAUMA) HEALING STORY 10

Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

How grateful am I to be alive and be here today right now feeling so lucky and blessed for my existence fortunate enough to have someone to love so dearly

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today

Clash between a religious cult and the combine forces of the afp, and pnp resulting to 21 people dead and 6 injured.

Environmental protest led by the roman catholic church protesters clashed with the transport group, mobbed/lynched the truck helper with the intent to kill have I not intervened

The Church wanted to silenced the story calling me to edit out the scene/video clip

Feeling so angry of what happened Galvanized my prejudice against the church and protest organizers of inner motives

Still unresolved issue in my mind.

Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” - What will happen if I relax?

feel so sleepy
can’t feel my heartbeat
empty mind

Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of…
I am tired of war/conflict
Tired of corruption, poverty, politics
Tired of beggars, oppression, criminals
Tired of being angry

Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation
Deep regulated breathing with meditation always make me relax

Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future
Peace
Equality
Prosperity
Peaceful co-existence of all religions
Harmony

MY (TRAUMA) HEALING STORY 11

Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence
Full of love
Sincere in doing things
Appreciative of beauty and things
Power of the eyes
Responsible

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today
Being a journalist, we cover many traumatic events like war and disasters. A fire had broken out of our apartment building and destroyed my home along with 90% of my belongings. I
was helpless as it happened when we were sleeping and when we woke up the fire was already at the next door apartment unit. For the first time, I was part of the traumatic story which in the past I had been covering. I had mixed feelings about other journalists who were there who covered the fire but there were also some who went there to only help and I was appreciative.

It’s only until now that I have realized I was deeply affected by it. I have unconsciously decreased the passion I have for the job I have come to love. But I know it will all change and there will be better days. It only takes an inspiration to change everything.

Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” - What will happen if I relax?

Tingling sensation along my arms and parts of my back
Feel my heart beat as I progress
Feeling light and refreshed
Images of nice things appear in my mind
Images of loved ones and those whom I hold dear come forth

Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of…

I’m tired
I am tired of suffering
I am tired of debts
I am tired of nagging
I am tired of the hardships in life

We are tired of corruption
We are tired of war
We are tired of manipulative politics
We are tired of lawlessness

Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation

When a situation triggers a trauma, I prefer to go into a beautiful place in my mind. If I am in a particular situation that is stressful, I laugh at it.

Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future

Peace in heart and mind
Time to relax
Time to go to that beautiful place
Accept, deal and overcome the situation
Be fit in heart and mind
Chapter 1: Appreciation of my own presence

I am here
I give love
I am able to make my love ones happy and sad
Show affection to love ones

Chapter 2: The traumatic event and the impact until today

A massacre in the town of Indanan, Jolo Sulu where 4 families were killed including a 7 month old baby girl.

It made me feel so bad to see a baby so innocent being killed senselessly especially I have 2 kids myself.

Chapter 3: My healthy “heart breathing” - What will happen if I relax?

Healthy Breathing
I feel my lungs expanding than my usual breathing
I feel the cold air passing through my nostrils
I sometimes feel dizzy when doing the breathing exercise with my eyes shut
I feel light-headed after

Heart Breathing
When I close my eyes, I try to feel my heartbeat
Pictures of my kids flash in front of me while I open my arms ready to hug them
As soon as I held them in my arms, I feel calm, peace and then sleepy

What happen when I relax
I feel calm, peaceful and sleepy
I can’t feel and think of any problems
I feel so serene that I get sleepy
Chapter 4: I am tired. I am tired of… We are tired of…

I am tired of the senseless killing, bombing and seeing children specially babies dying during conflicts.

We journalist are tired of covering conflicts that we later discover that the conflict was just staged by the government and we are being used of their propaganda and cover-ups.

Chapter 5: My preferred technique to cope with triggered situation

I have already managed myself unconsciously on how to deal with different situation or event that I manage myself not to be affected and be able to do my job as a journalist.

Chapter 6: My vision of a healthy future

Vision with regards to my current job, I want to quit which I’ve tried before but it just rush through my blood that I just went back covering again. Nonetheless, I would like to try and quit again and do something different in the future. But if I fail, I do see myself going back to the field covering again.

Chapter 7: Reconciliation and forgiveness

I easily forgive, some circumstances it takes a while but I still do forgive
Sometimes forgiveness need not be seek or vice versa but it just comes on its own
Sometimes I find it hard to reconcile after forgiving…