

SCALING TRAUMA SOLUTIONS



Living with Trauma's Legacy

A search for innovations to better and more compassionately serve those with PTSD

THE PROBLEM: Nearly eight million Americans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder each year. Although most often associated with combat veterans, PTSD is especially common for rape victims, as well as for those who experience other violent crimes or life-threatening events. **About ten percent of women and four percent of men will experience PTSD at some point in their lives.** Trauma, a root cause, runs like a river through multiple lands of social challenges and dysfunctions that we typically label and recognize as separate issues: depression, domestic violence, unemployment, under-employment, substance abuse, and suicide. Imagine what improvement we might see across a plethora of social challenges if we simply invented a better way to diagnose and support those suffering from trauma.

Three decades of research have delivered promising progress in understanding the biological triggers, effective diagnosis, and even preventative treatments for PTSD. But we are far from a reliable and consistently successful approach to spotting, treating and resolving this condition for the millions who struggle with it daily. Further, the most cutting edge insights and approaches are not accessible to the majority of those who suffer, as suggested by the fact that suicide has surpassed war as the leading cause of death for members of the U.S. military with 22 former servicemen and women taking their lives every day. And outside the US, it is unknown the rate of suicides among former servicemen and woman.

THE OPPORTUNITY: As with many chronic issues, the current medical approach to PTSD assumes a curative framework. However, a “cure” is not a reality for many PTSD sufferers. We, however, know how to make real progress in preventing, treating, and managing PTSD: The problem can be examined through a systems lens—one that recognizes the diverse factors that affect development of PTSD in an individual, the personal characteristics and unique experiences that determine responsiveness to treatment or coping, as well as the multitude of other health and behavioral problems linked with PTSD that are not always addressed by conventional models.

Further, our society can recognize that this condition is present at a level far beyond the capacity of the health care system alone to address. We are able to look at how other communities, institutions and influencers can become part of the circle of healing and support. We must challenge ourselves to look for solutions free from the constraints of traditional modes and frameworks for delivery of “help.”

As a first step toward developing a new framework for PTSD, The Dawn Collective will engage multiphase research and design principles to better understand the landscape of PTSD interventions across the spectrum of the patient experience. From prevention to diagnosis to treatment to coping to cure, we’ll examine the principles underlying successful strategies, as well as uncover the systemic barriers that may be hindering progress. Our goal is to use the wisdom of solutions that are already gaining traction to help re-define the problem and identify gaps along the continuum that are not well addressed. Our principal question is this: How might we improve and better integrate the support and tools available to all sufferers of PTSD as they move through various stages of diagnosis, treatment, cure, and coping?

OUR PERSPECTIVE: We don't only rely upon "experts.". We also don't rely on metrics, which, as measurements of existing solutions, can provide snapshots only of the past; they cannot build the new frameworks of thinking necessary to invent a different future. Our work has shown that the insights to solve a systemic problem exist within the system itself, inside the people who comprise it. Our methods combine rigorous investigation of a system's story, using anthropology and journalism to build a narrative. We distill that story into underlying patterns that illuminate a new frame for a problem—one that could never be delivered by outside experts, but instead reflects the lived experience of innovators inside the belly of the struggle. We identify the leaders in this system narrative and support them in a collective journey that yields a new vision for change, as well as a deepening of their respective capacities to effectively implement that vision.

OUR APPROACH:

Phase One, Discovery: Our Discovery process uses primary research and qualitative analysis to identify promising opportunities for creating large-scale change within complex systems. The strength of the approach stems from its reliance on the wisdom of those "in the trenches"—individuals and organizations that have directly developed or benefited from innovative solutions to particular challenges. Our approach for understanding the landscape of PTSD would involve extensive interviews with medical professionals, non-profit organizations, health policy experts, and others currently engaged in the design and implementation of models for prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and management of PTSD. We'll also reach out to PTSD sufferers to understand that perspective. The deliverable for Discovery is a new frame for the problem. It reveals:

Where energy is going in the system. Which aspects of a problem have attracted clusters of innovators and which ones are unaddressed? This is a critical insight. Every ecosystem of solutions has holes. Typically, those

opportunities are “stuck points” that, once resolved, amplify the effectiveness of all other existing solutions.

Openings for new solutions. Many investors and philanthropic funders play in the space of ramping existing success. That focus is misguided. No silver bullet solution exists for any complex problem. Efforts to funnel fundable ideas to a winner’s pool of “the best” interventions flies in the face of everything we understand about systems. Solutions are interdependent; deepening ecosystem capacity is a more powerful change than betting on one approach; clinging to the safety of known, proven solutions drives an ecosystem into stagnation. The true need in every system is the difficult work of pioneering new ideas and new ways to knit connective tissue between existing players. Discovery shows us how the system needs to evolve. It is the handbook for inventing the future.

Principles for a new future. Metrics are biased against the future. They can relay only the effectiveness of a subset of past ideas that were both measurable and funded to undergo measurement. Discovery delivers qualitative insights derived from those inventing, testing and refining solutions on the ground. The patterns from those insights can steer innovation in a direction that will serve the system’s deepest needs.

Phase Two, Ethnography: Based on the results of Discovery, our ethnographic research will allow us to walk in the shoes of individual PTSD sufferers by observing them (with their permission) in context as they navigate their search for support and guidance. We might select a stage along the PTSD continuum that our Discovery identified as poorly addressed in order to better understand the specific needs of patients within that stage, or we might focus on sufferers whose PTSD stems from a specific type of trauma. The deliverable for the ethnographic phase is an empathetic lens through which all the future design and innovation will

filter. Ethnography will allow us to create a “user typology” of mindsets among PTSD sufferers and will reveal a set of design principles that can guide the next stage of invention. Our report also will include case studies, profiles of myriad interventions, and the potential for development of more effective support systems and treatment models.

Phase Three, Co-Design: In Co-Design, we work with a select groups of leaders we identified in the system narrative to map new interventions together. These interventions are sometimes wholly new ideas; other times they reflect joint initiatives between existing innovators, or evolutions of approach for individual players. All initiatives will reflect an increased sophistication in strategy and the potential to move the ecosystem of solutions to a new level of effectiveness and impact. We create a safe and trusted container for leaders to collaborate, and we use an interactive process that allows the group to leverage its collective knowledge and breadth of experience while building the relationships with each other that will become the bedrock of their work together.

Phase Four, Pod Development: Once a joint strategy is designed, we invite leaders into 18 months of active work together, during which time they receive:

- Intense individual training based on somatic (embodied) leadership
- Facilitation and coordination of their joint plans
- Supplemental expertise to assist with execution (varies by project)
- Multiple in-person convenings in which leaders come together to refine their work, connect, refresh, and iterate
- Emergent strategy support. The environment and opportunities will change and evolve during their engagement. We help them respond as conditions shift.

Our approach combines the tactical and intuitive. We work on tangible initiatives with real results. But we also engage with leaders psychologically and physiologically. We train them how to surface their mental and emotional patterns so they can avoid defaulting to their habitual, and typically sub-optimal, ways of relating to uncertainty, obstacles and each other. We teach them how to recognize when they fall back into old and familiar tendencies, and then to re-direct. We give them the language and conceptual frameworks to execute this newer relational approach to strategy and leadership at a sophisticated level.

At its root, pod development teaches the participants how to create a new future for themselves and the world that is resilient and abundant. It also trains them to develop the internal capacity required to commit to this future. The result this work is three-fold: 1) The capacity of each leader is deepened 2) The problem-solving capacity of the ecosystem itself is deepened and strengthened as these leaders practice dynamic collaboration 3) New levers of change are tested and their efficacy demonstrated.

OUR EXPERIENCE: We are in service to the solutions that don't yet exist. We uncover the existing thinking in the system, we surface the sub-components, we map where the energy is moving, and we equip hosts of diverse actors in the system to create new futures as entrepreneurs and innovators. We are not typical. In fact, we are at our best working in systems where conventional solutions have failed and systemic disruption is required.

Our approach is grounded in a commitment to guide, lead, facilitate, and organize a wide array of people in diverse and even "competing" parts of the system as they work to create solutions together. We generate solidarity among diverse actors in a system, which is something that silver-bullet thinking can never do.

All of work stems from the underlying question: What does a system need to generate a better future?

With our empathetic and entrepreneurial approach, we can create that better future for those who suffer with PTSD.

