

# Anger and Social Fragmentation: The Evil Violence Tunnel

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The Bahamas, like many countries in the region, has undergone a serious social fragmentation process due to the widespread cocaine epidemic of the 1980s and its continuing sequelae, as well as the significant international financial downturn. Manifested by burgeoning murder and violent crime rates, the social fragmentation is associated with widespread angry outbursts and destruction of the family and community. Using a community group process intervention called The Family: People Helping People Project, we have endeavored to counteract social fragmentation and enhance resocialization. In this intervention process, many persons who have experienced violent anger have shared a phenomenon that we describe as the Evil Violence Tunnel. It is associated with intense self-destructiveness (suicide) as well as causation of harm to others (homicide). This article discusses (a) the dynamics of the Evil Violence Tunnel, (b) precursors and triggers of the tunnel, (c) stages of the tunnel, (d) case vignettes, and (e) possible ways to prevent it.

*Keywords:* anger, social fragmentation, rage, shame, perceptual shift

The Bahamas is an archipelagic nation with a population of over 350,000 situated between South Florida and Cuba. Formerly a British territory, the Bahamas has been an independent country for the past 41 years. It has a tourism-based economy with the majority of the population being of African descent and the minority made up of Caucasians descended from the United Kingdom and America. For many years, the country was a collectivist society with strong community bonds supported by a Judeo-Christian spirituality involving many different denominations. Like many countries in South and Central America and the inner cities of the United States, the Bahamas has undergone a serious social fragmentation due to the countrywide cocaine epidemic of the 1980s, and its continuing sequelae (Jekel et al., 1986), as well as the international financial downturn. Involving family and community disintegration, the

social fragmentation is manifested by burgeoning rates of murder (see Figure 1), violent crime, domestic violence, child abuse and the formation of violent youth gangs due to the high rate of youth unemployment. This phenomenon has produced wide-spread traumatization with high rates of violent anger shattering the image of an idyllic collectivist paradise, causing a deep, internal shame associated with feelings of abandonment, isolation and powerlessness. Sadly, the high rate of crime has lowered property values and many residents have moved to safer locations, resulting in unequal distribution of wealth with varying standards of living (Hanna, 2011; U.S. Caucus on International Narcotics Control, 2012). In tandem with the work of Shaw and McKay (1942), this situation is creating zones of transition involving a combination of individual choice and widespread criminality in the community. The family and community disintegration leads to displaced children who tend to be vulnerable to abuse and join violent gangs (Shaw & McKay, 1942). According to Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley (2002), these displaced children form peer groups (gangs), leading to burgeoning rates of violent crime at an early age. In times past, when children were displaced, other adults such as the local shop keeper, neighborhood policemen, and older persons acted as surrogate parents, upholding the authority and structure of the community.

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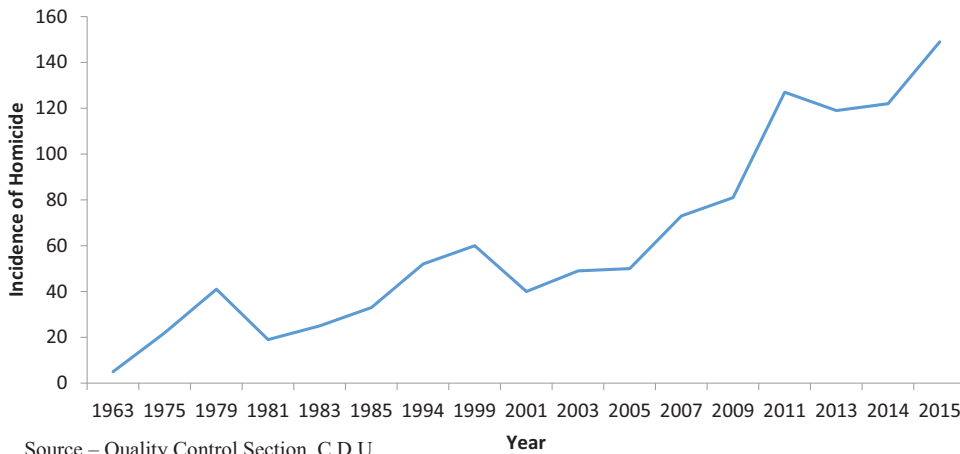


Figure 1. Incidence of homicide in the Bahamas (1963–2015; Quality Control Section, Central Detective Unit, 2015). From “Using a Supportive Community Group Process to Cope with the Trauma of Social Fragmentation and Promote Re-socialization in the Bahamas,” by K. Bethell, D. F. Allen, and M. Allen-Carroll, 2015, *Emergency Medicine: Open Access*, 5, p. 244. Copyright 2015 by the Shalkow J, et al. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

### The Family: People Helping People Project

The Family: People Helping People Project is a community-based intervention designed to reduce social fragmentation and promote resocialization by liberating persons from the negativity of shame to experience the positive values of love, compassion and healing community. The program is a dynamic group process involving storytelling, reflection, self-examination, and transformation based on the psychotherapeutic principles in the contemplative discovery pathway theory (CDPT; Allen, Mayo, Allen-Carroll, Manganello, & Allen, 2014). The CDPT is closely related to the psychotherapy integration movement in that it has psychoanalytic psycho dynamic components but is heavily committed to positive social interaction to decrease the social fragmentation of society (Castonguay, 2006). In the program, persons are encouraged to share their stories in a contemplative environment of acceptance, mindfulness and nonjudgmental listening, producing a powerful healing bond, which we define as “Family.” This bond, developed by the empathic sharing and caring leads to community bonding and resocialization. The Family program is currently offered in 25 marginalized Bahamian communities and select populations (e.g., prison, juvenile detention centers, orphanages and a program for teenaged

mothers). The groups are led by trained psychotherapists assisted by facilitators who have graduated from the project’s training program. Quantitative analysis of 776 group therapy sessions indicates that social fragmentation in the Bahamian community is associated with widespread shame manifested by anger, violence, sadness (grief), relationship dysfunction, and abuse (Bethell, Allen, & Allen-Carroll, 2015; see Figure 2). The high incidence of murder and violence appears to be associated with the widespread prevalence of anger (H. B. Lewis, 1971). Providing a space for persons to express and work through their hurt and shame, The Family project reduces destructive behavior (see Figure 3; Bethell et al., 2015) by enhancing anger management and conflict resolution leading to resocialization (Allen, Allen-Carroll, Allen, Bethell, & Manganello, 2015; see Figure 3).

### Shame and the Evil Violence Tunnel

In the Contemplative Discovery Pathway model, the developing hurt trail leads to the deprivation of basic instinctual needs such as survival-security (safety), affection-esteem (connection) and power-control (empowerment) leading to shame (Self-Hatred Aimed at M.E.). Shame (including feelings of abandon-

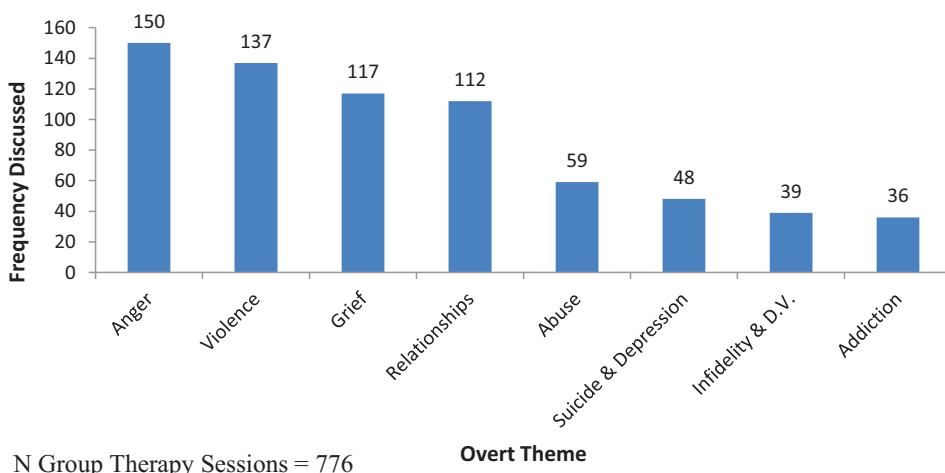


Figure 2. Incidence of overt themes in the family sessions. Numbers of responders varied, depending on questions completed. Participants indicated that after joining The Family, they felt significantly less anger toward others ( $t = -2.83, p = .0142, \text{Cohen's } d = -.756$ ). They also showed significantly decreased desire for vengeance ( $t = -3.32, p = .0061, \text{Cohen's } d = -.922$ ), and experienced significantly fewer thoughts of both violent and nonviolent revenge ( $t = -2.28, p = .0437, \text{Cohen's } d = -.658$ ; Allen et al., 2015). From “Using a Supportive Community Group Process to Cope with the Trauma of Social Fragmentation and Promote Re-socialization in the Bahamas,” by K. Bethell, D. F. Allen, and M. Allen-Carroll, 2015, *Emergency Medicine: Open Access*, 5, p. 244. Copyright 2015 by the Shalkow J, et al. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

ment, rejection and humiliation) is toxic to the human psyche. As a result, the brain, through a series of neuromechanisms, compensates by forming a powerful defensive

shame false self, involving self-absorption, self-gratification and control. Shame is a master emotion with a mixture of negative feelings resulting from the shattering of highly

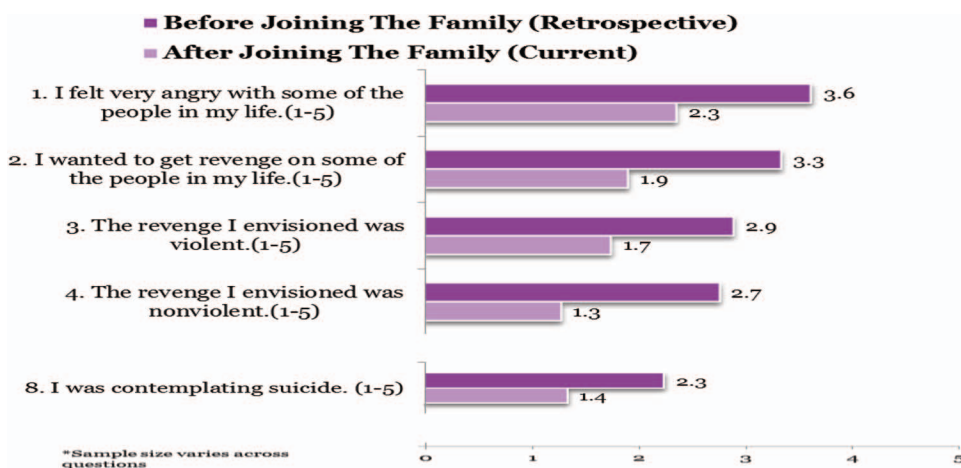


Figure 3. Changes in anger and vengeful thoughts. From “Community Resocialization via Instillation of Family Values Through a Novel Group Therapy Approach: A Pilot Study,” by D. F. Allen, M. Allen Carroll, V. S. Allen, K. Y. Bethell, and J. A. Manganello, 2015. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 25, pp. 289–298. Copyright 2015 by the American Psychological Association.

valued wishes, dreams or expectations. Hidden in nature and attached to our family secrets, shame is manifested in society by many forms of social fragmentation such as anger, violence, addiction, family disintegration and revenge (Allen, 2010). According to James Gilligan, criminal violence can be understood as a desperate attempt to ward off shame (Gilligan, 1996). This is further validated by Robert Brennehan in his book, *Homies and Hermanos*. Brennehan (2012) stated that

Although the experience of shame is a deeply personal experience, the sources of shame can be traced to the institutions and policies that perpetuate endemic poverty, weak schools and precarious family systems. . . . In effect, the concept of shame represents the intervening variable between these negative social phenomena and a small army of youth who have chosen to abandon traditional pathways to economic stability and respect in favor of the dangerous and frequently violent shortcuts offered by the gang. (p. 107)

If deeply hurt persons have the opportunity to share their stories of shame in an empathic environment, it leads to healing and the development of their authentic self involving the positive emotions of love, humility, forgiveness and gratitude. However, if the deeply shamed person is confronted by more hurt, a powerful murderous rage develops, transcending the defensive ability of the shame false self resulting

in the Evil Violence Tunnel (see Figure 4). The internalized murderous rage splits off the shamed or inadequate part of the person and either (a) introjects it to act out against the self, leading to self-injury or suicide (see Figure 5) or (b) is projected onto another person, leading to the hurting of others or homicide (see Figure 1). Regardless, the end result of the Evil Violence Tunnel is catastrophic with devastating consequences.

### Methodology

The conceptual framework of the Evil Violence Tunnel was developed as a result of a pilot study carried out in 2012 in which a baseline questionnaire along with a test battery of nine international psychological scales were used to examine the effects of social fragmentation and the possible resocialization through a communitywide group process intervention called The Family: People Helping People Project.

The test battery included the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961), the Buss-Durkee Hostility-Guilt Inventory (Buss & Durkee, 1957), the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6; Wood, Maltby, Stewart, & Joseph, 2008), the Hope Scale (Pattengale, 2002), the Self-

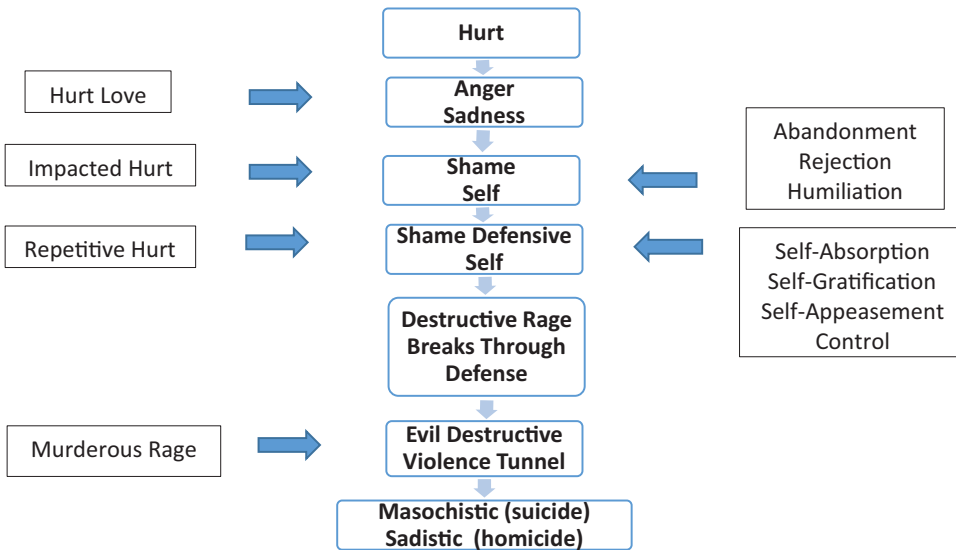
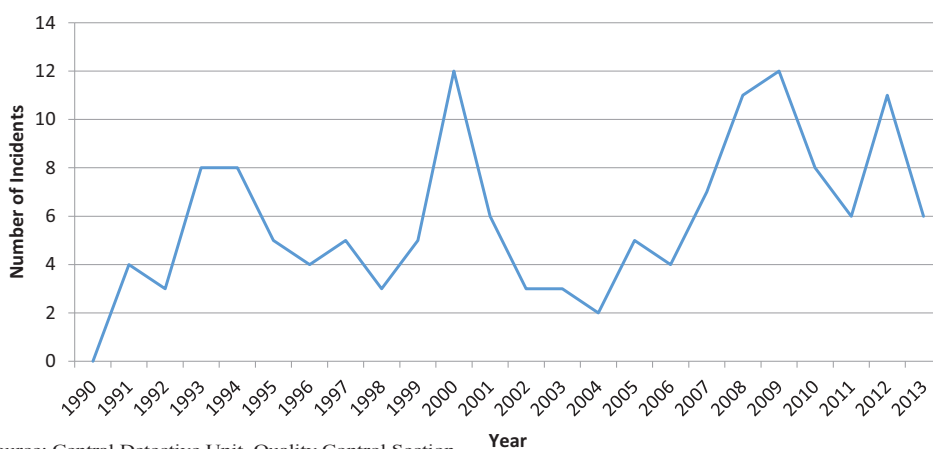


Figure 4. The contemplative discovery pathway and the evil violence tunnel. See the online article for the color version of this figure.



Source: Central Detective Unit, Quality Control Section

Figure 5. Suicide in the Bahamas (1990–2013). See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Deception Questionnaire (Gur & Sackeim, 1979), the Internalized Shame Scale (ISS; Rybak & Brown, 1996), the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003), and the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-18-Item Version

(TRIM-18; McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006). The pilot study consisted of 37 participants from Phase 1 and 32 participants from Phase 2 (14 participants completed both phases). Sixty-nine percent (69%) of those tested were female and 31% were male, with the majority being between the ages of 30–50 years (see Figure 6; Allen et al., 2015). This

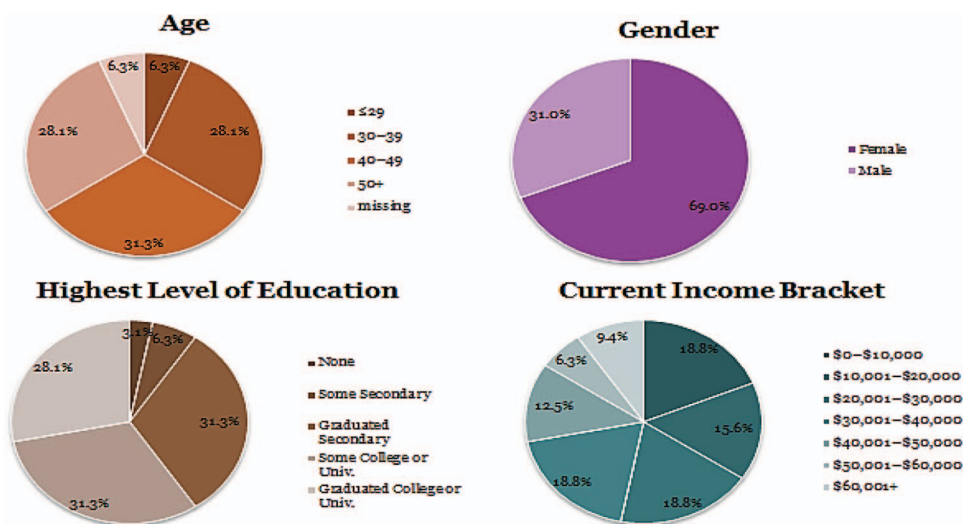


Figure 6. Baseline characteristics of family participants in the pilot study. From “Community Resocialization via Instillation of Family Values Through a Novel Group Therapy Approach: A Pilot Study,” by D. F. Allen, M. Allen Carroll, V. S. Allen, K. Y. Bethell, and J. A. Manganello, 2015. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 25, pp. 289–298. Copyright 2015 by the American Psychological Association.

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study was then followed up with a grant from the Templeton World Charity Foundation to further examine the findings, testing the effectiveness of The Family: People Helping People Project over time.

Although this work came out of the pilot study and the ensuing 3-year study, the major thrust of understanding the Evil Violence Tunnel syndrome evolved out of the qualitative analysis of the praxes reports of individual Family groups in marginalized areas, the adult prison and juvenile detention facilities. Particularly helpful in understanding the syndrome were the comments and analysis of persons serving time for murder and other violent crimes. As a theoretical model, the concept of the Evil Violence Tunnel requires further research in wider populations. We are in the process of developing a specific questionnaire related to the Evil Violence Tunnel to further our understanding. In light of the high prevalence and destructive nature of violent anger in our study of social fragmentation, this article is written to discuss the conceptual model in an academic forum for peer review.

### Dynamics of the Evil Violence Tunnel

The nervous system is driven by survival, and is primed to respond to threat and pursue reward. Nerve connections between the cortex (the cognitive portion of the brain) and the amygdala (early warning portion of the brain) process sensory information, and interpret stimuli such as potential threats. At the amygdala, the situation is compounded because the destructive stimuli are met with stored memories and knowledge from the hippocampus. The periaqueductal gray (PAG), a small structure located deep in the brain, serves as the final common pathway where emotions and behaviors come together to promote survival. A specialized group of neurons, gives rise to different emotions and behaviors when activated (see George, 2013).

When a person moves toward the Evil Violence Tunnel, they experience changes in appearance, voice, and attitude. If occurring acutely, it may result in different types of violence (i.e., road rage or murder). If chronic, it is manifested by bullying and controlling behaviors, resulting in hostile relationships.

Early life traumas are catastrophic, “As it is often said footprints on fresh cement last a long time.” These traumas inhibit or disconnect the pathway between the higher centers of the brain (cortex) and the feeling part of the brain (amygdala), making the individual more vigilant and anxious. As a result, individuals become prone to the fight-flight or shut-down aspect of the brain to enhance interaction with the environment and ensure survival. It may be hypothesized that persons vulnerable to entering the Evil Violence Tunnel experience this disconnection between the cortex and the amygdala. Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may be a powerful precursor or trigger to the Evil Violence Tunnel.

Angry people have hair-trigger tempers and become involved in destructive acts to people and property. Persons with serious anger problems have overwhelming emotions resulting in impulsive actions. Lacking insight into their mental state, they rationalize their behavior and blame others. Anger is a personal warning signal to address our internal dynamics. Studies of violent anger have indicated persons with specific traits, including: (a) a genetic component (Coccaro, Kavoussi, Berman, & Lish, 1998), (b) different levels of neurotransmitters in the brains (George et al., 2001), and (c) differences in brain structures such as volume, glucose metabolism and communication signals in critical areas (Schiffer et al., 2011). The Evil Violence Tunnel is associated with murder, domestic violence, revenge attacks, bullying, road rage, emotional battery and so forth. Men and women have similar prevalences of anger, but men tend to be more destructive. This has been validated by a report from the National Violent Death Reporting System, where in 2004, there were 144 incidents of homicide-suicide. More than half of the victims (74.6%) were females and most of the perpetrators (91.9%) were males. Moreover, in 2005 in Canada, 1 in 10 homicide cases were homicide-suicide. Almost all of the incidents (97%) were cases in which female victims were murdered by their male spouse (van Wormer, 2008).

The phenomenon of the Evil Violence Tunnel has some similarities to the well-known murder-suicide phenomenon relating to romantic relationships. However, in our experience,

the Evil Violence Tunnel may occur in persons who are not romantically involved or closely interrelated. Our impression is that the experience of the Evil Violence Tunnel Syndrome is equally distributed between males and females. However, in the Bahamas, males tend to be more severely destructive in committing suicides and homicides. In fact, according to a report by Bethell and Allen, the rate of suicide among males (3.7) was more than seven times higher than the rate of suicide among females (0.5; see Table 1; Bethell & Allen, 2014).

**Precursors and Triggers of the Evil Violence Tunnel**

In our experience, the Evil Violence Tunnel has a number of precursors and triggers that are poorly understood and provides fertile ground for research, as listed below.

1. Early childhood trauma leads to impacted hurt, resulting in shame, which is a powerful precursor to violence and the Evil Violence Tunnel. Scheff (1988) described violence as a form of avoiding shame. Dorothy Lewis and associates at the Yale Child Study Center made a powerful connection between severe childhood abuse and vicious murders in late teenage years (Lewis, 1998). Persons who have experienced serious early trauma tend to develop PTSD in later life and may experience epigenetic changes, which could be transmitted to the next generation. Persons with PTSD may be more susceptible to the Evil Violence Tunnel.

2. Mental dysrhythmias (e.g., bipolar disorder, major depression, partial complex seizures) may trigger violent outbursts.
3. Persons vulnerable to destructive anger and the development of the Evil Violence Tunnel feel out of control and use alcohol and drugs to modulate their feeling. But the more they use, the more they need to calm their internal chaos by decreasing tolerance and preventing withdrawal. Alcohol and drugs depress cortical pathways accentuating murderous rage and the Evil Violence Tunnel (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).
4. Provocation, involving such issues as intense criticism, contempt, demeaning speech and behavior, acts as a trigger of the Evil Violence Tunnel.
5. Loss and grief unexpectedly may explode into the Evil Violence Tunnel. Losing someone is sad, but the parallel feeling of anger at the loss may be destructive.
6. Fatigue—HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired) is accepted as a trigger for relapse in addiction. Fatigue particularly is a powerful trigger for the Evil Violence Tunnel, especially if alcohol is involved.
7. Persons with borderline and narcissistic personality disorders may be more prone to enter the Evil Violence Tunnel.
8. Intermittent explosive disorder triggers the Evil Violence Tunnel, especially in domestic violence, which is always complex because of the denial and resistance of the perpetrator and the victims (Coccaro et al., 1998).

**Stages of the Evil Violence Tunnel**

Interviews with persons with serious suicide attempts or who were involved in destructive or homicidal acts have enabled us to categorize the six stages of the Evil Violence Tunnel. Inmates in our Family project at the prison have validated the stages of the tunnel as true to their experience in real life (see the section “Additional Note—Prison Inmates’ Description of the Evil Violence Tunnel”).

**1. Cognitive Restriction**

In this state, persons claim that their mind is fixated on the hated person. As a result, they are

Table 1  
*Crude Suicide Rates in the Bahamas by Gender (2000–2013)*

Gender	Population	No. of suicides	Rate of suicides
Male	2,260,800	83	3.7
Female	2,382,400	13	.5
Total	4,643,200	96	2.1

*Note.* All data presented represents the statistics collected for all 14 years (2000–2013), combined. Data abstracted from cases compiled by the Central Detective Unit. From “Suicide in the Bahamas (2000–2013),” by K. Bethell and D. Allen, 2014. *Global Journal of Human Social Sciences*, 14, pp. 26–34. Copyright 2014 by the Global Journals Inc.

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unaware of other perspectives, creating a sense of being in a tunnel. At this time, there is an outpouring of the sympathetic neurotransmitters, nor-adrenaline, adrenaline and so forth and the person is unable to benefit from helpful interventions. This severe tunnel vision inhibits the person from taking advantage of other options and projects them into a downward destructive spiral.

For example, a father reported that he was shocked after his daughter drowned herself with her two young children. She left a note claiming she had no place to stay. The father said that this surprised him because he had space available in his home that he would have gladly shared with her and her children.

## 2. The Physiological Arousal

The person is in a very hyper aroused state, with increased heart rate and blood pressure and is usually sweating profusely. As the anger increases, the arousal blocks the input from the higher thought centers of the brain, lowering the IQ, and making them act differently than when in a relaxed state. Persons who attempted suicide, claimed that in this stage, they were resistant to any type of intervention. It is interesting to note that a number of persons who failed to carry out a serious suicidal attempt claimed they were interrupted by a still small voice, encouraging them not to do it. The question is, Why would some people hear this voice and others not?

## 3. Emotional Numbness

With cognitive restriction and in the hyper aroused state, the person experiences emotional numbness. Losing all sense of fear, they throw caution to the wind and become a danger to themselves or other people. Persons in the Evil Violence Tunnel have alexithymia, where they repress their deep hurt feelings and shift directly from the thought of being hurt to destructive behavior. This phenomenon contributes to emotional numbness, making them even more destructive.

For example, a young man stabbed his girlfriend multiple times because of alleged unfaithfulness. When asked why he kept stabbing her, he replied, "I wanted her to feel what I was feeling." When asked what he was feeling, he replied, "I do not know."

## 4. Intense Negative Energy

In repeated interviews, numerous persons shared that in the state of murderous rage, they felt influenced by powerful negative energy, propelling them to destruction. An inmate, in speaking about the Tunnel, stressed that while in the Tunnel, "There's nothing positive towards the person/thing in our thoughts at all."

In one case, a group of law enforcement officers shared that while investigating a murder scene, the accused confessed that before the murder, he felt overtaken by negative energy empowering him to be destructive. Another person who had killed three times shared that on each occasion, he was influenced to make the negative rather than positive choice. During his rehabilitation, his mother's love and influence intervened in his life, enabling him to receive forgiveness and change his behavior. He shared that when threatened now, he finds it easier to make the positive choice rather than to give in to the negative or destructive alternative.

## 5. Ethical Fragmentation

As the person goes further into the dark tunnel, they experience the fragmentation of their values and ethical formation. As a result, the constitutive principles of noninjury, truth-telling, and caring become nonexistent. Another way of describing this is that the pathways to the higher centers in the brain, dealing with thought and positive decision making, are blocked and the person is more open to their lower or animalistic instincts. Numerous persons claimed that after committing the destructive act, they have an intense awareness that they have done something that was ego-dystonic or not in keeping with their value system. The question is whether the ethical fragmentation in the Evil Violence Tunnel is a fragmentation of values or the repression of them during the murderous rage.

## 6. Repetitive Destructive Behavior

At this point in the Tunnel, persons said that they found themselves being repeatedly destructive by stabbing, shooting or hurting themselves or others. During the interview, sometimes the person became very sad and wondered why they could not refrain from the destruction directed at the self or projected onto others. The Evil Violence



lence Tunnel is like a wave that rises slowly, accelerates toward the peak and then collapses in destruction. After the destructive act, some individuals claim they felt a powerful release, leaving them exhausted, to such extent where they lie down to rest or fall asleep. However, later on, when their pathways to their higher cortical centers of thought and understanding are opened, they become agitated and remorseful when they realize what had occurred. The repetitive destructive behavior appears to occur when a person enters a zone where they lose control.

For example, a young lady shot her husband because she was constantly provoked by his refusal to come home at an appropriate time. Shocked, she said, "I'm not a murderer. I did not mean to kill him. But I couldn't stop myself, and now, how do I forgive myself for what I've done?"

#### **Additional Note—Prison Inmates' Description of the Evil Violence Tunnel**

The prison inmates preferred describing the Evil Violence Tunnel in their own language rather than the psychological language of the authors. The following is what a group of inmates came up with after studying the Evil Violence Tunnel.

1. Fixation on the person who they wish to harm.
2. Physical and chemical reactions in their body destroy any kind of rational thinking.
3. The loss of feeling, especially fear.
4. They become overwhelmed by negativity and destruction and lose all sense of positive or compassionate feelings.
5. The breakdown of their value system where they do not consider or care about right and wrong regarding harming the person.
6. A continual push (pressure) to stab, shoot or strike the person without any awareness of the consequences.

In a study carried out by [van Wormer \(2008\)](#), it was found that the intense impulse to kill is associated with a powerful sense of self-destruction, as well as the desire to hurt those once loved.

#### **Intervening With the Evil Violence Tunnel**

This phenomenon of the Evil Violence Tunnel has been encountered repeatedly in our work. The question is, What can be done to prevent it? When questioned, persons who experienced the tunnel reported that they could not envisage what type of intervention would help. The Evil Violence Tunnel is like a wave, and our only hope of intervention is at the onset of the entrance into the tunnel. This means when people become aware of their anger or threatening thoughts, they must learn to walk away, not only once, but repeatedly. According to [D. T. George et al. \(2011\)](#), when a person is very angry and particularly under the influence of alcohol, the amygdala processes stimuli at 30 milliseconds outside of our conscious awareness. As a result, by the time a person thinks about it, they have already reacted. This makes walking away sometimes unrealistic. In some cases, Prozac, a serotonergic reuptake inhibitor may be helpful by (a) making persons less angry, that is, mellow and (b) giving them an extra second to think, which may enable them to walk away. It must be stressed however, if the person is under the influence of alcohol, the Prozac is ineffective ([George et al., 2011](#)).

In our experience, at a certain point, the tunnel is addictive and has a seductive quality. It's hard to move away from the hated object or person when the wave is at its peak. In light of the prevalence of this phenomenon, we developed a technique called the Family Perceptual Shift, which has proved helpful to numerous persons with serious anger problems. The stages of the Family Perceptual Shift are listed below.

1. **Walk away, take time out.** Recognize when the provocation is producing shame and rage in us. At that point, we have to change our activity and walk away. We call this "taking time out." A number of people who have experienced the Evil Violence Tunnel, either in suicidal or homicidal attempts, shared with us that if they had taken time out or moved away from the situation, it would have prevented the destructive act.
2. **Process the hurt and shame.** In reference to our theory (the CDPT), impacted hurt and anger produces shame, involving

abandonment, rejection and humiliation. After taking time out, if we could process the hurt and shame by reflection, writing, or telling our story to an empathic, nonjudgmental audience, the shame can be reduced. According to Hariri, Bookheimer, and Mazziotta (2000), groups help people to label their feelings, which activates the cortex and serves as a top down control to calm the amygdala. This has been our experience in The Family: People Helping People project, where a number of persons have shared their stories of either being close to or in the tunnel and have learned to manage their anger. Shame is diminished when shared or expressed. Conversely, if repressed or withheld, it leads to destructive consequences (Allen, 2010).

3. **Deep breathing.** Deep breathing, with gaps between inspiration and expiration, relaxes the body. In breathing with our eyes closed, the brain secretes alpha waves, which produces a deeper relaxation. This relaxation and slowing down militates against the development of anger and shame (Tolle, 2005).
4. **Silence.** Silence, a fast disappearing entity in modern culture, is one of the best antidotes of hurt and shame. In silence, as we allow our thoughts to sail through our mind, we become present to ourselves. As a result, new perspectives develop and what we perceived to be a serious issue may be just a passing thought. Emotions are feelings in motion, so if we can let them pass through, they will not have a deleterious effect on us. Sadly, because of our shame core, we become addicted to our negative thoughts, compounding our shame, pushing us toward murderous rage and the Evil Violence Tunnel (Allen, 2004).
5. **A prayer or pledge.** The brain works by substitution. Instead of saying, “do not be afraid or angry,” we seek to replace the fear with a simple pledge stating,

I pledge that in times of darkness, fear and anger, I will choose to **love** and be **kind**. I will choose to be **humble** (that is, accept myself and circumstances as I am). I will choose to **forgive** those who have hurt me and also forgive myself for the wrongs I have done. Most of all, I will choose to be **grateful** for all that I have been given.

6. **Opening to the streams of love in our life.** When we cannot reach the source of love, we can open to the streams of love in our life. All love is interconnected. In times of deep hurt and anger, if we focus on persons who loved us unconditionally as a child, (e.g., mother, father, grandparent, priest), the streams of love flowing from them soothes us. The person may be dead, but the stream of love continues to flow because love is stronger than death (Allen, 1993).
7. **Open to thin spaces.** opening to thin spaces in our lives means reflecting on memories of places where we felt truly loved and at peace. In the Bahamas, this is often the beach, where the beautiful aquamarine waters transcend imprisonment in time and open us to the eternal mystery. The intersection between chronological time (Chronos) and the fullness of time (Kairos), is the still point where we experience the interconnectedness of all things accompanied by peace, love and gratitude.
8. **Gratitude.** Gratitude is the most effective neutralizer of anger and shame. In gratitude, we open to love and recognize that life itself is a grace. The highest evolution of being human is to express love and gratitude. We encourage persons to write down three things for which they are grateful. This completes the shift from fear and shame to love and gratitude (Emmons, 2007).

### Case Vignettes

1. A young lady with her little boy was waiting for her husband to pick her up after work. On arrival she noticed that her husband smelled of alcohol, making her apprehensive. On the way home, the little boy asked his father for the toy that was promised to him. When the father replied that he had forgotten, the little boy became angry and shouted at him. Intervening, the mother told the son she would get the toy for him. But her intervention was too late because the father was enraged. Slamming on the brakes, he shouted obscenities at the little boy and scolded him for speaking so disrespectfully. Shocked by the tone of the father’s voice, the mother and child

were terrified as the father drove recklessly home. At home, the mother and the son quickly left the car as the father drove away in a rage, screaming violent threats. The mother and child were afraid, not knowing what would happen. Arriving home that night, the father went to bed but was unable to sleep. The next morning, he was despondent and said he was ashamed and remorseful for his behavior. He said he deeply loved his son but was shocked that something came over him, making him feel numb and out of control. He eventually asked his son to forgive him and promised it would never happen again.

2. A 27-year-old male shared that he was enraged when he found out that his girlfriend cheated on him. After a few alcoholic drinks, he rushed over to her apartment, where an argument ensued. Extremely angry, he took a knife and stabbed her repeatedly. Falling to the floor, he thought she was dead and panicked. Fortunately, the next-door neighbor heard the screams for help and called the police and the ambulance. Taken to hospital, the young lady was treated and was eventually discharged. During the interview, the perpetrator was calm and puzzled that he could be so cruel to someone he loved so deeply.
3. A young lady shared that her husband was repeatedly unfaithful and eventually, she could not take it anymore. Angry and hyperventilating, she put her three children in the car (ages 4 years, 2 years, and 9 months) and drove rapidly toward a high pier overlooking a deep part of the ocean. Approaching the pier, she called her husband, saying "I'm giving you what you really want . . . goodbye." Accelerating the car, she drove toward the edge of the pier. Just before reaching the edge, to her surprise, the 9-month-old child, who could not talk, shouted "mummy, mummy, stop!" Surprised and shocked, she slammed on the brakes, stopping about six feet from the precipice. Calming down, she reversed and drove to a friend's house where they stayed for a week. Discussing the incident with her, she was able to identify all the stages of the Evil Violence

Tunnel. Sadly, she said that in her hyperactive, destructive state, she was not aware of any type of successful intervention. A homicide-suicide study conducted in the United Kingdom indicated that women who killed themselves would often kill their children as well (van Wormer, 2008).

4. A young lady rushed into one of the Family sessions shouting "They killed my brother and I want revenge! I'm going to kill somebody today!" She said she had a machete in the car and came to the Family because someone told her to visit the group before she did something destructive. As the young lady screamed profusely, the Family group was shocked and silent. After about 10 minutes, an older lady approached her and said

I understand how you feel. They killed my son a year ago. Like you, I was deeply hurt, and I wanted revenge. But as time went on, the feelings of revenge poisoned my whole being and I found myself being destroyed. I realized that if I didn't get help, I would either do something destructive to myself or someone else. In the Family, I've been able to express and release my feelings of hurt and revenge.

Hugging the young lady, the older lady said, "I cannot tell you what to do. But, if you do not let your feelings of revenge go, you will have two murders to deal with: your brother who was killed and the psychological murder of yourself."

Holding her, they continued to cry together as the Family group listened. Finally, the group ended and people left quietly. Walking out together, the two ladies exchanged telephone numbers. A few days later, I received a letter from the young lady saying that the Family group, especially the older lady, had prevented her from committing murder. Looking back, she said she recognized that she was in an uncontrollable state and realizes now that she had to let the feelings of revenge go. She said she is still deeply traumatized at the loss of her brother and fears for the future.

5. Grief is a powerful precursor of anger. When we lose someone, we feel sad, but we are angry that they're gone. A gentleman described that when his mother died, he and his sister went to the funeral home

to pick out a casket. Bullying him, the sister told him to make the undertaker change the casket they had chosen. Overwhelmed with grief, he refused. Enraged, the sister pushed him and viciously slapped him. Even though he was grieving deeply, the gentleman said that he could feel a powerful wave of anger coming over him. Deeply shaken, he was about to lose control and attack his sister. To counteract this, he sat down immediately and started to cry for his mother, praying not to lose control and hurt his sister. After a while, he calmed down. On reflection, he said he knew he was entering a powerful destructive state (the Evil Violence Tunnel). He was surprised that at this most sacred and sad time of his life, he could feel so violent.

6. An older brother was jealous of his younger brother because he was more successful in attracting young ladies. One evening, after picking up his younger brother from a party, he felt discouraged. The younger brother teased him and told him he needed to find a girl. The older brother became angry, took out a knife and repeatedly stabbed the younger brother. Arriving home, the family took the younger brother to the hospital, leaving the older brother terrified about what had occurred. Describing the incident, the older brother said he felt that when his younger brother teased him about not being able to attract girls, a powerful rage came over him. He did not remember stabbing his brother and was surprised to see the blood in the car.

### Conclusion

Greek mythology reminds us “whom the gods will destroy, they first make mad.” Anger can be creative, but beyond a certain point, it is one of the most destructive forces in the universe. According to [Frederick Buechner \(1973\)](#),

Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still come, to savor the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you. (p. 2)

On the other hand, if we could work through the anger and shame in our heart, we release the hurt and pain and make space for love. Each person’s life is a challenging journey from being a victim of their shame and false self based in fear and anger to surrender to the discovery of their authentic true self based in love and gratitude.

In *The Family: People Helping People Project*, we have seen many persons recover from the perils of the Evil Violence Tunnel and learn to appropriately manage their anger and move on to positive self-development (i.e., resocialization). However, there are many unanswered questions and the concept of the Evil Violence Tunnel requires more research, especially as it relates to murder, domestic violence, road rage, bullying and other destructive behaviors.

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