

What is Trauma Response: The Effects of Trauma

When threatened the oldest part of our brain and nervous system goes into survival mode. This is trauma response.

When a threat is perceived, the limbic system – which, includes the primitive parts of the brain – triggers chemicals, including adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol to shoot through our body.



This hyperadrenalized state prepared us to run from or fight off the danger. It increases our blood pressure, heart rate and breathing so we have the force or speed in limbs to survive. It shuts down digestion and decreases activity to the prefrontal cortex (the higher thought, or logical part of the brain) to conserve energy. This is fight or flight. As a last resort, if we sense that we can't win by fighting or running, we go into a freeze state. This is where we numb out. It can slow or paralyze our movement, reduce the sensation of pain, and blur or black out completely the memory of the event.

These responses are critical to our survival. They are not a disorder. But, sometimes it can show up in a way that disturbs our life experiences when the natural trauma processing is disrupted. In other words, if we can't run, fight, or otherwise respond in a positive, empowered way, we will develop unconscious, sometimes automatic, coping mechanisms that may include disturbances, habits and potentially disorders.

Common responses to trauma are:

- Hypervigilance
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Avoidance
- Dissociation
- Anger
- Reactive
- Guilt & shame
- Grief
- Depression
- Cynical
- Loss of libido
- Use of substances to numb

When we are processing trauma, we might experience:

- Feeling used
- Feelings of abuse
- Feelings of being taken advantage of
- Treated like an object
- Feeling violated
- Disregarded or trashed
- Feeling vulnerable
- Feeling powerless

And since we all respond to traumatic events differently, post-traumatic response can show up several weeks after the event and in many areas our life and manifest in several ways, including trauma-related disorders and disturbances.

Trauma response can also induce:

- Complex PTSD
- One of the Personality Disorders (PDs)
- Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID...formerly referred to as multiple-personality disorder)
- Depression
- Mood change
- Anxiety
- Spasms, jerks and twitches
- Addictions
- Over-eating, upset stomach, irritable bowel syndrome
- Allergies
- Body pain and aches (especially back and neck), migraines
- Exhaustion
- Fibromyalgia

Steps to Healing:

To begin healing, we must adjust our natural way to process trauma to our modern life. In the wild, animals seldom hold onto their trauma. They run it off or they fight. They may continue to circle until all the trauma is released. If they are caged, even to aid them, their natural way to process trauma is interrupted. They've lost their autonomy over their own lives and they can begin to show signs of PTSD.

The same goes for us. Except we don't have a physical cage...we have learned psychological cages programmed in us from early childhood...In other words, what we learned from our family, our community and society in general.

To heal, we may need to return to a somatic or movement response in our bodies. We must slowly wake up to the actual control we have over our own lives through the decisions and actions we take, large and small. We need to feel empowered and we need to trust our instincts again. We may also need to unwind some conscious or subconscious coping mechanisms, overwriting powerful habits our subconscious created to keep us safe but simply don't work for us any more.

And that is what we will be introducing through this program.

Recognizing how and where you have control of your life (and your body), learning to trust your gut, and to be present, and to create healthy new habits...and to finally take your power back!

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