

**Understanding  
Complex Trauma**

**&**

**Loving Self**



# What is Complex Trauma?

## AVOIDANCE SYMPTOMS

### *What avoidance symptoms may look & feel like*

- Spacing out; working too much; obsessively cleaning; sleeping too much
- Staying too busy and inability to relax
- Amnesia: inability to recall trauma, events, or periods of time
- Numbness and detachment from self & others
- Inability to feel good
- Being on autopilot; feeling robotic
- Isolation from others and places
- Reluctance to talk about trauma, feelings, and emotions

## INTRUSIVE SYMPTOMS

### *What intrusive symptoms may look & feel like*

- Flashbacks (intrusive: sounds, sensations, images, thoughts, emotions)
- Reliving aspects of traumatic memory (with or without awareness)
- Involves smells, images, sounds, taste, feelings, & physical sensations
- Nightmares, hallucinations, or delusions
- Severe anxiety reactions and physical sensations
- Feeling paralyzed and cannot move or speak

# EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

## Hyper Arousal: Flight/Fight/Freeze

- Persistent tension, muscle tension, agitation, restlessness, & impatience
- Jumpy, easily startled, & hypervigilant
- Irritability, anger, & rage; emotional outbursts
- Insomnia, inability to relax, & restlessness
- Concentration difficulties: ADHD/ADD

## Hypo Arousal: Shut Down/Fright

- Emotional numbness; feeling nothing or very little
- Physical numbness and/or inability to feel pain
- Blank mind; unable to think or concentrate
- Profound detachment from self-and/or others
- Inability to move and/or respond
- Extreme drowsiness; feeling of shutting down

## SOMATIC SYMPTOMS

- Headaches, pain, stomach problems, tension, elimination issues etc
- Often mislabeled hypochondriacs
- Problems are real and are felt deeply
- Unexplained pain and body sensations
- Autoimmune responses and disorders

# What is Dissociation?

The opposite of dissociation is realization!

Dissociation is more common than you think and doesn't mean you're crazy

- Dissociation is about the past
- Comes from attempts at escaping real & perceived threats
- Stems from situations that were too painful to realize & be present with
- It is your mind's way of helping you during crisis, overwhelm, & pain
- Triggers are uncomfortable sensations, emotions, thoughts, & images
- When it continues long past trauma(s), it creates internal stress & conflict

What does it look & feel like?

- Feeling foggy, spacey, fuzzy, or not real
- Losing connection with the present moment
- Being in 'Preoccupied Mind'
- Engulfed in negative images, feelings, & thoughts of the past
- Engulfed in worries of the future
- Being aware of actions without control, as if watching yourself
- Lost time: coming to & realizing time has passed w/out awareness
- Retreating to deep inner fantasy and daydreams

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# Healing from Complex Trauma.

## TIPS FOR HEALING

### TIP#1: *Breath consciously. Breath in. Breathe out.*

Seems too simple, right? Nope - it is the most significant tool you have!!! During trauma you become more unconscious to cope, and your breath becomes faster, slower, erratic, shallow, etc. The most powerful remedy is to stay conscious and bring consciousness into your breath. You do not need to change the breath, just bring consciousness into it, and practice conscious breathing over and over. Say it to yourself in your head or out loud as you do it...

*Breath in. Breath out. Breath in. Breath out. Breath in. Breath out.*

### Tip #2: *Orientate to Here & Now*

When triggered, you are responding as if you are in the past 'trauma-time', and the real threat is not there in the present moment. Use your breath (above), continue breathing and bring in more consciousness, remind parts of you who are stuck in 'trauma-time' or working hard to protect you, that you are safe enough NOW. That they can relax back some, and that you got this. Continue your conscious breathing, it does not need to be perfect, just practice.

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## TIPS FOR HEALING CON'T

### TIP#3: Utilize internal self-compassion and cooperation

- Identify parts that need soothing. Do soothing things
- Understand and validate parts that have hard feelings internally
- Put your hand on your heart and breath with compassion for yourself
- Be curious to what part of you is dissociating or shutting down
- Remind yourself of options you have now that you didn't back then
- Notice what is different about you now versus back in 'trauma-time'
- Reflect on the inner concerns, beliefs, & needs of all parts of you
- Practice not judging yourself; just notice conflict
- Prioritize least to most difficult internal conflict; work on least first
- Move your body consciously to release stuck energy
- Imagine a place where all parts can be free and relaxed
- Talk inwardly to remind parts when you feel safe enough
- Remind all parts that down time is not lazy, but necessary

Breath in. Breath out. Breath in. Breath out. Breath in. Breath out.

# Insights for Complex Trauma Survivors

## INSIGHT FOR HEALING

*Awareness. Reality. Compassion. Breath.*

Overtime, with more conscious and embodied breathing you will begin to see how your actions and beliefs have been shaped by the unprocessed pain.

Connecting with your inner wounded child moves you out of the early pain so you can recognize your ability to be the nurturing, loving, and protective parent, friend, guardian, and companion you always wanted and needed.

Healing comes when you give yourself enough space to truly listen to your own needs. This helps you be with your wholeness and the reality of your life experiences. The pain then becomes a vehicle towards deep healing, freedom, authenticity, and joy.

*Breath in. Breath out. Breath in. Breath out. Breath in. Breath out.*

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