



Healing from Trauma or Abuse

*"It's not the events of our lives that shape us, but our beliefs as to what those events mean."
- Tony Robbins, Awaken the Giant Within*

Trauma and abuse can come in many forms throughout life, disrupting and impacting our lives in many different ways, leading us to hold distorted realities and beliefs about our value, our rights and the very essence of who we are – often held in our unconscious mind.

There are obvious ways that people experience trauma and abuse - through having lived with anger or violence, obvious neglect and lack of care, receiving or witnessing physical or sexual abuse, being constantly screamed or yelled at, criticized or judged, or just never being good enough no matter what is done.

Life events can also leave us traumatised, such as natural disasters, accidents, sudden death or loss of a loved one, or unexpected changes thrust on our lives that were outside of our control, such as job loss or a partner suddenly leaving us.

Less obvious forms of trauma or abuse can be equally damaging. One of the biggest forms of childhood trauma can be that of emotional neglect – where there just wasn't anyone ever there in the way the child needed there to be. They may have been cared for in the basic needs of food, clothing and a roof over their head. However there was no experience for the child of being seen as they needed to be seen, being heard as they needed to be listened to, or being able to rely on someone to be there for them in the way they needed to be supported.

Another form of trauma can be experienced where children have grown up in an enmeshed, over-caring or fused relationship with a parent or primary caregiver. Enmeshment is the experience in a relationship where there is no room for a child to grow or experience self, where all the needs of another consume all that is in the relationship. People often describe the experience of enmeshment as being 'stuck', or 'sucked in', or wading through a sticky substance. This can cause ongoing problems in relationships throughout life.

Trauma disrupts natural and healthy development and can continue to impact life and relationships on an ongoing basis. All forms of trauma and abuse impact us emotionally and spiritually and affect our ability to maintain a strong sense of self and our feelings of being worth while.

Unrecognised or unresolved trauma or abuse can show up in many ways, and may be contributing factors to addiction or addictive behaviours, traumatic/mood/panic disorders, general and constant anxiety, depression or isolation/withdrawal, or co-dependence.

Further Resources:

Trauma and Recovery - Judith Lewis Herman
Basic Books ISBN 0 86358 430 6

Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway - Susan Jeffers
Random House ISBN 0 7126 7105 6

Homecoming - John Bradshaw
Bantam Books ISBN 0 553 35389 6