

## When healing trauma Information Sheet

When healing trauma we are often asking a few key questions. When we look at the traumatic events, or just the way the responses are showing up now, what do they tell us about:

1. What was missing?  
What was missing is often to be found in a lack of: protection, support, understanding and caring (enough) others. We often were not seen: our distress, our unique self. And in the not seeing we were also not given that caring attention that would allow experiences and emotions, to become integrated and the distress digested.
2. What happened that was harmful?  
What happened that was harmful are experiences like boundary violations: either physical as in attack or being put in unsafe situations by others and/or psychological violations as in being shamed for who we were or how we responded.
3. What didn't get to happen?  
What didn't get to happen is often: not having our voice heard or respected; our fight or flight responses thwarted; our bids for freedom or selfhood frustrated; making sense of what happened and allowing that to be a part of your life story that is now in the past. This often results in us feeling afraid or angry when we don't need to or not picking up on cues that would let us know that we are in danger and having the ability to respond effectively.

Part of the key to healing trauma then is understanding each of these and repairing: allowing the needs that were missed to be met.

This means:

1. Providing what was missing. In the case of the therapeutic relationship this is an integral part of the healing. The therapist is here to understand and help you make sense of your experiences. They are here to provide some of the care, belief in you that was missing and the support and validation to help you find your way. They also help you find the strategies, skills, practices and supports to help you feel more empowered in your life.
2. Understanding what was harmful is a process of: clarifying the nature of the harm and how it may still be present; grieving or feeling the pain of that in ways that are manageable and allow you to digest those feelings and experiences; unsticking guilt, shame, and responsibility that isn't yours while helping you find what choices you can make now to protect and care for yourself or others in the future.

3. Allowing you to do what you didn't get to at the time includes: finding your voice (eg. Saying aloud what you wanted to say or hear from others); coming out of freeze states and restoring thwarted fight and flight and orienting responses through embodied exercises and imagination; exploring what lets you know now that those times are over so that you can read when you are safe or under threat in more accurate ways.

All of this is in service of no longer carrying the past around with you in ways that adversely affect your now. This is also in service of allowing you to have post-traumatic growth; there are always gifts to be gained from awful life experiences. Life is never all wonderful, but with help we can become stronger from what hurt us.

