



# TRAUMA AND THE ADULT BRAIN



Understanding the Impact. Building Awareness. Supporting Healing.

Trauma is an experience that overwhelms a person's ability to cope, leaving a lasting impact on the brain, body, emotions, and relationships. The brain is not broken—it is adapting and trying to survive. With understanding, safety, and support, the brain can heal.

### 1. WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma can result from many types of experiences. Circle or check the ones that are examples of trauma.

Car accident <input type="radio"/>	Childhood neglect or abuse <input type="radio"/>
Loss of a loved one <input type="radio"/>	Natural disaster <input type="radio"/>
Job loss <input type="radio"/>	Emotional abuse <input type="radio"/>
Excessive stress or pressure <input type="radio"/>	Physical or sexual violence <input type="radio"/>

Can you think of other experiences that might be traumatic?

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\_\_\_\_\_

### 2. THE ADULT BRAIN: BEFORE AND AFTER TRAUMA

Trauma changes how the brain works. It does not mean the brain is damaged beyond repair. It means the brain is adapting to protect you.

#### A. TYPICAL (REGULATED) BRAIN

When the brain is regulated, you may:

- Think clearly
- Manage emotions
- Feel in control
- Connect with others
- Feel safe in the present

#### B. TRAUMA-AFFECTED BRAIN (IN SURVIVAL MODE)

When the brain is in survival mode, you may:

- Feel overwhelmed
- Have strong emotional reactions
- Struggle to focus or make decisions
- Feel unsafe, even when not in danger
- React before thinking

### 3. HOW TRAUMA CAN AFFECT ADULTS

Trauma can show up in many ways. Check any that you have experienced.

<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety or panic	<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble concentrating
<input type="checkbox"/> Depression or sadness	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty trusting others
<input type="checkbox"/> Irritability or anger	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical pain or tension
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling numb or disconnected	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding certain people, places, or situations
<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble sleeping	<input type="checkbox"/> Substance use
<input type="checkbox"/> Flashbacks or intrusive memories	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationship difficulties
<input type="checkbox"/> Easily startled	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem or self-blame	

How has trauma affected your daily life?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 4. THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF TRAUMA

Match each area of the brain or body with the possible long-term impact.

BRAIN / BODY AREA	POSSIBLE LONG-TERM IMPACT
1. Prefrontal Cortex (thinking, planning) <input type="radio"/>	A. Trouble with memory and learning <input type="radio"/>
2. Amygdala (fear center) <input type="radio"/>	B. Chronic stress, fatigue, or health problems <input type="radio"/>
3. Hippocampus (memory) <input type="radio"/>	C. Always on alert, anxiety, hypervigilance <input type="radio"/>
4. Nervous System (fight, flight, freeze) <input type="radio"/>	D. Trouble focusing, making decisions, or planning <input type="radio"/>
5. Body (physical health) <input type="radio"/>	E. Difficulty regulating emotions and strong reactions <input type="radio"/>

### 5. WHAT HELPS THE BRAIN HEAL?

The brain has an amazing ability to heal and grow—especially with safety, support, and time. Check the strategies that can help.

<input type="checkbox"/> Safe and supportive relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative expression (art, music, writing)
<input type="checkbox"/> Therapy or counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Spending time in nature
<input type="checkbox"/> Mindfulness and meditation	<input type="checkbox"/> Setting boundaries
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Practicing self-compassion
<input type="checkbox"/> Healthy sleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Balanced nutrition	

### 6. SELF-REFLECTION

Take a few moments to reflect on your own healing and growth.

1. What helps me feel safe and calm? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What are some strengths I have developed through hard times? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is one small step I can take today to support my healing? \_\_\_\_\_

### 7. SUPPORT AND COMPASSION

What are some people, communities, or resources that support you? List them below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

*You are not alone.*

### 8. FINAL THOUGHT

Write a kind and encouraging message to yourself.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Healing is not about "getting over" what happened. It is about learning to live a meaningful life with what happened. Your brain can heal. You are worthy of support, peace, and hope.