

WAYS TRAUMA CAN IMPACT US

Trauma, it is what happens inside of you in response to something that happened to you (Mate). The impact of a traumatic experience is unique to each individual, therefore courageous compassionate conversations and self exploration are invited to inform understanding and support.

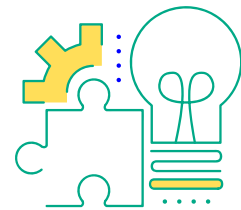
INTIMACY



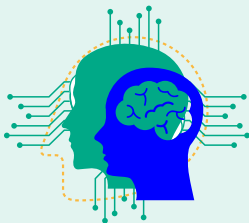
People who have been sexually abused often navigate challenges when engaged in sexual relationships. Some people move to avoid and some may enter into sexual behaviour as a form of approval (* this has particular significance for people who were sexually abused as children, as they may have learned that sex is a way to be accepted or get attention) and may even be labelled as promiscuous.

Re-enactment is recreating an abuse dynamic, despite having a sense of knowing that the same outcome will result, while maintaining a veil of hope for a different one. This strategy ultimately fails, as the unmet needs of the past will continue to repeat itself until the unmet need is reconciled and integrated to make room for choices that align. Ex.: A child who was silenced and verbally abused by their mother commits to a partner in adulthood with similar attributes, and continues the cycle of silence and non-assertion. This dynamic is often seen with persons caught in the web of an abusive intimate partnership, as the cycle of abuse can be an intoxicating wheel of highs and lows. Although abusive, people opt for the familiar as the known is often less scary for many than the unknown that comes with change.

RE-ENACTMENT



DISSOCIATION



Dissociation is the conscious disconnection from what is happening around us. Dissociation often occurs during physical or sexual abuses, allowing the person who is being abused to mentally check out of their body. This is an adaptive and protective coping mechanism, however, becomes maladaptive later in life. Ex.: A child who experienced sexual abuse dissociates during the abuse, however, finds themselves doing the same later in life during sexual activity with a caring partner. This is an example of an adaptive strategy for survival purposes turn maladaptive later in life.

Our internal voice, that guides us when something is amiss or there is danger, is often derailed when we endure abuse by someone we trust. Shaped by this experience many people who have been abused miss cues from the behaviour of others and/or the risks in their environment as a result. Conversely, abusive/traumatic experiences can also reinforce hyper-vigilance in interactions, where one is perceiving risk or danger where there is none or minimal chance for concern.

DANGER CUES

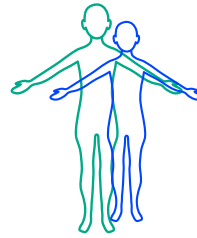


SELF WORTH

Persons impacted by trauma can experience a spectrum of emotions that can meander between grandiose beliefs about oneself to feeling unworthy, dirty or bad. These exaggerations are defence mechanisms that keep us from connecting and reconciling our trauma responses, inadvertently dis-inviting what aligns.



CONNECTION TO BODY



Many persons who experienced physical or sexual abuse often find it challenging to be in their body. This disconnection makes trauma therapies more challenging to work through. Some persons experience such a heightened disconnection from their body they may be perceived to have a high threshold for pain or may not notice when they are physically hurt.

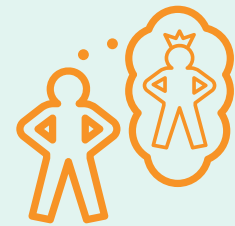
SAFETY



There is often a loss of safety across all environments after a traumatic experience. The world becomes a place where anything can happen anywhere, and state of hyperarousal or hypoarousal often accompanies. This can be an adaptive coping mechanism and make you a diligent protector to persons whom you care about, and it can become maladaptive when this diligence to protect becomes smothering or overbearing.

SENSE OF SELF

Parents, caregivers and caring adults during childhood serve to help us learn who we are as individuals, through exploration, play and reflection.



If a parent/caregiver was our abuser our sense of self may be underdeveloped leaving us without a sense of who we are and feeling like an imposter. Adults, who had a strong sense of self, will also undergo a weakening of their self concept in the context of abusive relationships.

TRUST

In our childhood and adult relationships abusers are often a person we know, trust and sometimes love. When abuse occurs trust is fractured as the person who is meant to care for you is the source of what harms you. This dynamic can create maladaptive coping mechanisms to protect oneself from future harm by not trusting others or not allowing true intimacy into our lives.



SHAME

Children and adults alike often carry shame, that is palpable, embodied and at times debilitating. Simple life learning experiences, such as getting a question wrong can trigger immense shame. Children and adults may retreat or act out in response to feeling shame. As a person matures, they can masterfully curate their lives in a way to avoid shame triggers (i.e. not take risks, not open to feedback).



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