



## Your PTSD Challenge - Change your mind

Know that emotion happens! It is a part of human nature - expressions of your life experiences. Your body's Fight, Flight, Submit, and Freeze responses are natural, instinctual, and involuntary reactions to extreme life events. Your body automatically reacts when exposed to high-stress or overwhelming events. Posttraumatic stress (PTS) is a common reaction to traumatic events and has characteristic features of intrusive recollections and intense distress over a past event. Numbing or hyperarousal, along with finding you have difficulty concentrating or processing thoughts, may also occur concurrently.

Often, you will hear that you must change lifestyle factors such as eating a nutritious diet and getting regular exercise, but that is not enough. You cannot just “get over it” or “push through it.” Healing from trauma is hard work and Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) can help you process upsetting memories, thoughts, and feelings.

Here are some basics from your EMDR treatment to keep in mind:

- Learn to identify your triggers and become mindful of them.
- You have a choice in how to regulate events.
- Use your response and soothing techniques developed and practiced in therapy sessions.
- Remember that your initial conclusion is only one possible explanation and that you are safe!
- Reframe your response from reactive to a curious, thought-provoking inquiring mind.
- Practice - practice – practice!

## Fight the good fight

You must have a plan when you find yourself in an overwhelming reaction or flashback! Steps to take are:

1. Remove and ground yourself by moving to a quiet place
2. Stop, take the pause, take in the cause of the situation
3. Have your “ah-ha” awareness and come to terms in the moment you become conscious of it
4. Recognition that you are safe
  - Reassure yourself that you are okay
  - Remember to relax and Soothe yourself
  - Realize the feeling is uncomfortable but not dangerous
  - Remind yourself that you can get through this
5. Acknowledge that you were triggered.
6. Appreciate the fact that your body reacted and have compassion for yourself
7. Cultivate your mind to recognize your triggers and emotionally uncontrollable feelings.
8. Breathe and increase your body awareness by incorporating physical touch, mental focus, and body-sensing. Use meditation techniques if they help you.
9. Build curiosity = What does this represent? Why are you feeling it? What do you see, smell, taste, hear?
10. Talk with yourself about what it feels like & where tension is held in the body.
  - Develop the ability to feel and look inward into your body and know where the stressor lies within you.
  - Can you look at your experience without feeling it?
11. Stretch immediately to discharge tension in your body – use gentle movement to put yourself at ease!

❖ Repeat step 1 - Quiet the Mind again/ Soothe again / Breathe again / Move again

❖ Next steps take you forward in learning how to feel the emotions that arise within and use methods to stop or alter the impulse reaction and begin to change your mind!

“Let go of the ghosts from your past and reach for a more positive future.” (White, 2008)

## Goal is Emotional Competence/Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence is the ability of individuals to recognize their feelings and those of others for motivation and management of emotions for themselves and their relationship with others. See Daniel Goleman's definition of EI <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7m9eNoB3NU>

1. Reduce the Negative – Learn new techniques to reduce the pain
2. Understand your capacity to feel your emotions, so that you become aware when you are experiencing stress.
3. Grow what is good within. Find what helps your ability to express your emotions effectively, assert your needs, and maintain the integrity of your emotional boundaries
4. Get healthy needs met safely through new resources and new outlooks
5. Shift your relationship to your internal thoughts and feelings. This includes learning how to halt your patterns that contribute to risky, unhealthy, or unsafe behaviors, or things that get in the way of feeling safer
6. Have trauma-based thoughts become trained toward healing-focused thinking
7. Surrender to a cause – true healing results in getting out and helping others somehow – Find your passion!

## Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation techniques can help with soothing negative responses when life experiences seem to overwhelm you. They generally can be eased by refocusing attention (for example, noticing areas of tension) and exercises (such as meditation) to relax the body and mind. There are several techniques to examine and find the one that best fits your style. *\*This list is not intended to be exhaustive or one size fits all, but rather a starting point for your journey. Find what works for you!*

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm>

Strengthen your brain – [Focus for PTSD](#) - Stay in the present mind

- [Relaxation](#)
- [Let Go and trust God](#)
- [Focused Attention](#)
- [Relax your nervous system](#)
- [Calming – Be Present](#)
- [This will pass – You are enough](#)
- [Positive affirmations](#)
- [Picture your happy place](#)

Physically address the emotional response – [Mindfulness](#) - Be with your body

- [Trauma Hold](#)
- [Calming Your Nervous System](#)
- [Butterfly hug](#)
- [Simple stretches](#)
- [Tapping technique](#)
- [Progressive muscle relaxation](#)
- [Open and Close hands meditation](#)
- [Box breathing](#)
- [Tactical Combat breathing](#)
- [Touch breathing](#)
- [Body Sensing](#)

- ❖ Learn to have compassion for the person(s)/situation(s) that caused an emotional response within you as your reactions may overwhelm them causing an emotional spiral.



## Resources – For lifelong learners

*DISCLAIMER: The information provided does not, and is not intended to, constitute advice; instead, all information, content, and materials made available are for general informational purposes only. Information may not constitute the most up-to-date mental health, legal, or other information. These links direct you to other third-party websites and these links are only for the convenience of the reader.*

### Online - industry expert resources

Dr. Rick Hansen – is a psychologist who has written and taught about essential inner skills of personal well-being, psychological growth, and contemplative practice – as well as about relationships, family life, and raising children. <https://rickhanson.com/podcasts/>

Dr. Peter Levine - developer of a body-awareness approach to healing trauma, and he was a stress consultant for NASA on the development of the space shuttle project.

<https://www.somaticexperiencing.com>

Dr. Gabor Maté – is highly sought after for his expertise on addiction, trauma, childhood development, and the relationship between stress and illness. <https://drgabormate.com/trauma/>

Dr. Ron Siegel – is an expert in mind-body medicine and the application of mindfulness and compassion practices in psychotherapy and other fields.

<https://drronsiegel.com/recorded-meditations/>

Linda Thai – a trauma therapist and educator who specializes in brain and body-based therapies for addressing complex trauma.

<https://www.linda-thai.com/resources/resource-center/therapeutic-approaches-resource-center>

Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk – is a Psychiatrist who was a member of the first neuroimaging team to investigate how trauma changes brain processes and did the first research linking Bipolar Disorder and deliberate self-injury to trauma and neglect. <https://traumaresearchfoundation.org/resources/blog/>

### Good Reads:

[Dispenza, Joe. Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself: How to Lose Your Mind and Create a New One.](#) United States: Hay House, 2012.

[Goleman, Daniel. Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ.](#) United Kingdom: Random House Publishing Group, 2012.

[Levine, Peter A., Frederick, Ann. Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma: The Innate Capacity to Transform Overwhelming Experiences.](#) United States: North Atlantic Books, 1997.

[Maté, Gabor. The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, and Healing in a Toxic Culture.](#) United Kingdom: Penguin Publishing Group, 2022.

[Tolle, Eckhart. The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment.](#) United States: New World Library, 2010.

[Van der Kolk, Bessel A. The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma.](#) United Kingdom: Penguin Publishing Group, 2015.

[White, Jerry. I Will Not Be Broken: Five Steps to Overcoming a Life Crisis.](#) United States: St. Martin's Press, 2008.