

Trauma Only Surfaces When The Individual/Mind Feels Safe

Mertha Mo Nyamande*

Mental Health Practitioner with MOD, University of Derby, United Kingdom

Perspective Article

Received date: 13/03/2019

Accepted date: 06/05/2019

Published date: 13/05/2019

Tel: +447774273050

E-mail: mothemaku@gmail.com

*For Correspondence

Mertha Mo Nyamande, Mental Health Practitioner with MOD, University of Derby, United Kingdom.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma is any information, experienced witnessed or imagined that makes the individual/mind to believe that life/survival is threatened.

CAUSES

1. Trauma is caused by one time extreme events like accidents, violence resulting in serious injury or death (Rape and arson included).
2. Prolonged situations like being in a war, in domestic violence, violent neighborhoods, bullying in school, battling life threatening illness.
3. Other overlooked causes like any surgery, especially in early life, sudden death of someone close, Breakup/loss of significant relationships, Watching of horror and other disturbing media:

Some deliberate cruelty can create a traumatic memory that makes one want to avoid similar circumstances. One may want to include serious accusations that are likely to cause severe consequences; i.e., of a sexual nature as traumatic, especially involving minors, or murder. These may have both moral injury and social consequences. A common underlying feature in trauma is the inflated sense of responsibility.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Psychological/Emotional

- Shock, denial or disbelief
- Confusion, worry, stress, anger, aggression, irritability, mood swings, anxiety, fearful, causes distress
- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Feeling disconnected from others, emotionally numb
- Chronic sadness, helpless, hopeless (Depression)
- Nightmares/Phobias
- Sudden change of personality
- Various sleep disorders. OCD in a bid to try and be "in control"

Physical

- Chronic Fatigue easily startled/distracted

- Hypertension
- Agitation, on edge, super alert/Hyper-vigilance
- Muscle tension, often causing unexplained aches and pains - backaches/headaches
- Various sleep disorders
- Violence in various forms

Common unhelpful coping or survival/Safety behaviours

Overreliance on substances: Addictions (alcohol, sex, gambling, social media, etc.) Overreliance on others, highly dependent or childlike, avoiding going to sleep to avoid nightmares, avoiding others, social isolation and withdrawal from others including significant others, this is often linked to emotional numbness.

Avoiding any new or different experiences or information, violence, as a way of trying to express feelings inside.

An individual can engage in safety behaviors to avoid the emotion, thus maintaining the threat perception which maintains the regular pumping of adrenaline as a survival mechanism. It is this adrenaline that maintains the heightened sensory perception as well as the physical blocking of sensory and emotional responses. It is only when this threat perception is removed that the adrenaline stops that the real emotions can start to show.

So if one has been exposed to a threatening situation, and the potential is still around or there is a chance that you could get exposed again, the chances that they will feel safe will remain suppressed. This also explains why soldiers often experience PTSD long after return from operational tours, years or decades can pass.

TIPS FOR RECOVERY

1. Get moving, maintaining physical exercise helps with the production of endorphins as well as constructively utilize some of the adrenaline.
2. Keep in touch with others is a helpful distraction that may help to change the focus from self onto others and stops the rumination.
3. Learn to control emotions with simple techniques like breathing, doing more of the things that bring joy and relaxation; like having a soak.
4. Sleep, eat well. Avoid drugs/alcohol. These can be linked to addictions highlighted earlier.
5. Seek professional help, especially when you start to struggle to do simple everyday things or noticing that symptoms are prolonged beyond a week.
6. Avoid extreme sports or activities as these can be a part of the maintenance factors.

TREATMENT FOR TRAUMA**Somatic quieting or experiencing/mindfulness/Yoga**

By becoming aware the bodily sensations, you can release the trapped energy through various forms of release like crying. Shamanic breathwork and meditation has been reported to help.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

This helps to be more aware and evaluate the thoughts about the trauma, which helps change feelings or behaviours whenever they are triggered. Talking can also help remember the missing pertinent information that may create gaps that cause difficulties.

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)

This combines cognitive and physical rhythmic left-right stimulation to help release trapped traumatic psychological and physical memories in the neural pathways. If there are any distressing feelings or behaviours that are difficult to understand, professionals may be able to help explore these further before they become normalized into personality/identity.

Essentially, every experience teaches us something, therefore get support and guidance to make sense of traumatic experiences.