

# LIFE AFTER TRAUMA

*Healing and Moving Forward*

The emotional toll from a traumatic event can cause intense, confusing, and frightening emotions. And these emotions aren't limited to the people who experienced the event. Repeated exposure can trigger traumatic stress and leave you feeling hopeless and helpless.

Whether you were directly involved in the traumatic event or exposed to it after the fact, there are steps you can take to recover your emotional equilibrium and regain control of your life.



Life can get better.

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## THE SYMPTOMS

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**Avoidance** (Blocking upsetting thoughts, staying away from people places or things that remind you of what happened, markedly changing your routines so you can avoid reminders that trigger negative feelings)

**Hyperarousal** (Constantly on edge, more easily irritable, jumpy, shaky, body being in overdrive, shortness of breath)

**Re-experiencing** (upsetting intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, nightmares)

**Negative Changes to Mood** (low mood, development of negative, self-defeating beliefs, lack of interest or pleasure in previously-enjoyed activities)

\* These symptoms are only relevant if the person has been exposed to a traumatic stressor. If they haven't, then these could be related to depression, or another mental illness.

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## HOW TO HEAL

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\* Using the Triphasic Model of Treatment

### *Phase 1*

**Safety and Stabilization:** Learning how to recognize physical arousal and to use CBT techniques to calm them, putting you back in control (e.g., diaphragmatic breathing, positive self-talk, grounding, visualization, progressive muscle relaxation)

### *Phase 2*

**Remembrance and Mourning:** From a vantage point where you are now SAFE and no longer in danger, you can reflect on the events, reviewing them in detail and conditioning yourself to feel calm throughout your recollections.

This phase is also used to examine the impact the event had on your life; to explore and deconstruct negative or self-defeating beliefs that came out of the event (e.g., personal failure, weakness, unsafe world, etc.).

### *Phase 3*

**Reconnection:** Behavioural activation techniques to force you to get involved with the world again, fighting back against the tendency to isolate by making room for activities that bring you happiness, reinforcing positive social relationships, and getting you focused on the future.