

Trauma Resource Cards

From the original "Trauma Resource Cards.pdf" · 7 pages

What this is. The original handout (7 pages) reproduced page for page inside the house frame, unaltered, so that every word, line, table and illustration is exactly as its author set it. It replaces the September 2026 redesign of this file, which re-set the text and chopped it.

WHAT IS PTSD?

PTSD is also known as Posttraumatic stress disorder. This psychiatric disorder may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event that threatened their life or safety or that of others around them. Examples of things that can bring on PTSD include sexual or physical assault, the unexpected death of a loved one, an accident, war, or natural disaster. PTSD can have lasting consequences from traumatic ordeals and cause intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the event. The feelings last longer and interfere with how people cope with everyday life.

PTSD is estimated to affect about 1 in every three people who have a traumatic experience. But it's unclear exactly why some people develop the condition and others don't.

HAVING PTSD IS

NOT

A SIGN OF WEAKNESS

PAUSE FOR PANIC

A MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUE TO CALM YOUR ANXIETY

P

PAUSE

When you recognise your anxiety symptoms. Immediately STOP everything you are doing.

A

ACTIVITY

Engage in some physical activity until you feel out of breath.
Do some star jumps, squats or stomping.

U

UNDERSTAND

Understand that you are safe and that what you are experiencing is a false alarm. There is no immediate danger.

S

SOOTHE

Soothe your body.
Rub both of your hands together quickly, feel the friction between your hands. Can you feel heat? What else can you feel?

E

EXHALE

Trace your finger around each finger on the other hand slowly.
Whilst you are tracing breathe in through your nose and out your mouth.

THE PTSD ICEBERG

WHAT YOU SEE

STRUGGLING TO GET OUT OF BED

LOW MOOD

WEIGHT CHANGE

WITHDRAWAL

CRYING

NUMB

HOPELESS

CONCENTRATION DIFFICULTIES

GRIEF

GUILT

LONELINESS

INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

WHAT YOU DON'T SEE

SHAME

LOW SELF WORTH

CIRCLE OF CONTROL

"Feeling upset about something outside of your control is like sitting on a rocking chair.... It gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere"

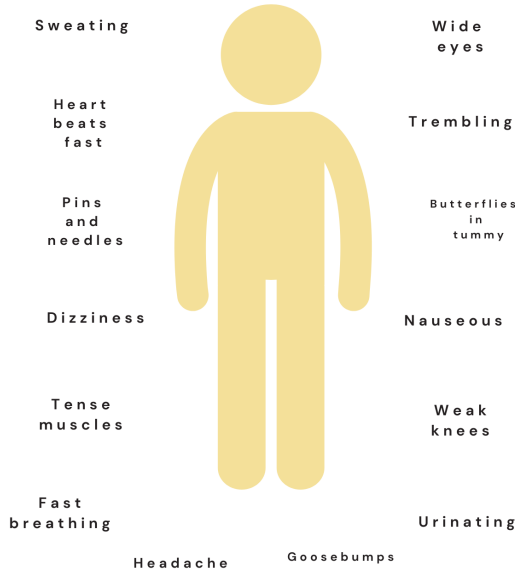
Things I can NOT control

- So I can let Go of these things



IDENTIFYING PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Everybody's body will physically respond to anxiety in many different ways. But some common physical symptoms are shown below. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath through your nose and out through your mouth. Starting with the top of your head, become aware of how your body feels. Slowly move down your body, noticing how each body part feels, down to your toes. Could you note any areas of discomfort on the body below?



TRAUMA TREE



STORMS

(CHALLENGES)

- Stressful events
- Losses
- Lack of resources

BRANCHES

(DREAMS)

- What do I want my future to look like?

GROUND

(PRESENT LIFE)

- Where I live and how I spend my days.

ROOTS

(WHERE I CAME FROM)

- Family and upbringing.

LEAVES

(SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE)

- Who are the people that I trust and I can turn to for support?

FRUIT

(GIFTS)

- My Strengths, kindness, love, giving.

TRUNK

(SKILLS)

- What am I good at?
- Skills I have acquired.

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COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Mental Filter

Only paying attention to some types of evidence. Focusing on your failures while avoiding seeing your success.

Catastrophizing

Only seeing the worst possible outcome of an event or situation. As a result, worries become escalate, and thoughts become exaggerated.

Jumping to conclusions

Assuming that you know what other people are thinking.

Predicting the future.

Overgeneralizing

The process of concluding that just because something happened to you once before, it will occur over and over again. It is negative thinking based on only 1 or 2 experiences.

Emotional Reasoning

Believing that just because you feel a certain way, then justifying that your thoughts must then be confirmed.

Black and White

Seeing things as either good or bad, right or wrong, or all or nothing. Black-and-white thinking is the tendency to think in extremes. It causes you to think of everything you do in terms of success or failure.

Labelling

Putting labels on yourself and others.

- "I'm unlovable"

- "They are an idiot"

Should Statements

Believing that things should be a certain way. Using 'should,' 'must,' or 'ought' statements directed at yourself. This thinking results in feelings of guilt, shame, and self-loathing.

Blaming

Placing the blame on other people instead of owning up to your mistakes or sharing the responsibility. Taking on the victim mentality.

Personalization

Taking things personally and thinking that what other people do results from your actions. You may blame yourself for things that were totally out of your control.

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THE 4 R'S OF TRAUMA CARE

1

REALIZE

When you recognize your anxiety symptoms, immediately STOP everything you are doing.

2

RECOGNIZE

Engage in some physical activity until you feel out of breath. For example, do some star jumps, squats, or stomping.

3

RESPOND

Understand that you are safe and that what you are experiencing is a false alarm. There is no immediate danger.

4

RESIST

Soothe your body. Rub both of your hands together quickly, feel the friction between your hands. Can you feel heat? What else can you feel?

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GROUNDING TECHNIQUE - ICE CUBE

The ice cube hack is a technique centered around using ice cubes or an ice pack to help calm you down during a panic attack or anxiety.

The ice techniques help jolt your system out of the fight or flight response. They act as grounding exercises to help distract you from the feelings of panic and focus on your body and surroundings.

One such way to do this is by grabbing an ice cube out of your freezer and holding it in the palm of your hand with your fingers around it. Try to keep the ice for as long as you can. You can also try holding a cold compress to your chest, eating ice, or holding it against the roof of your mouth, rubbing ice cubes along your face and arms. There is even a tip about dunking your face in ice water. While doing this, try to focus on the sensation of the cold and how it feels on your body.

PTSD AFFIRMATIONS

I HAVE SURVIVED TOUGH TIMES BEFORE AND I
WIL SURVIVE THIS

I AM STRONG ENOUGH TO GET THROUGH
ANYTHING

THESE FEELINGS ARE REMINDING ME OF MY
PAST TRAUMA. BUT I AM SAFE NOW

YES, THIS FEELING IS UNCOMFORTABLE. BUT
JUST LIKE THE CLOUDS, IT TOO SHALL PASS

WHAT HAPPENED WAS AND NEVER WILL BE MY
FAULT

I AM WORTHY AS A PERSON

I REFUSE TO LET MYSELF BE A VICTIM

MY OVER REACTIVE NERVOUS SYSTEM HAS
KICKED IN, THIS FEELING WILL EVENTUALLY
PASS

PTSD NIGHTMARE PROTOCOL

Living with PTSD can be challenging; unfortunately, nightmares are common.

Below is an exercise that can help you manage your nightmares ahead of time.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Before you go to bed each night, try and practice relaxation techniques. Sleep relaxation techniques aim to achieve physical and mental relaxation, promoting a better night's sleep. Best sleep relaxation techniques and exercises include meditation, colored noise, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and visualization.

REOCCURRING NIGHTMARE

Often individuals with PTSD have the same reoccurring nightmare. Think about yours or what nightmare you would like to work on.

YOUR NEW HAPPY ENDING

Think about your reoccurring nightmare, and before you go to bed, visualize a new happy ending. The recent change should occur before anything traumatic happens in your dream. TIP: The more unusual and out there your difference is, the more effective it will be, such as you giving yourself superpowers.

WRITE IT DOWN

Write down your new dream from start to finish. Include details, names, places, and smells.

VISUALIZE AND PRACTISE

The newly modified script is to be rehearsed daily to remove the fear factor within the nightmares and replace it with something more positive. Image rehearsal has been shown to have a significant reduction in nightmares and PTSD symptoms.

TRIGGER THERMOMETER

Rank your trigger distress level.



Highest level of
distress possible.
Feel out of control.

Quite distressed
and anxious,
interfering with
functioning.

Moderate distress,
feeling
uncomfortable.

Minimal distress
and anxiety.

No distress,
feeling
at peace.

05

SELF COMPASSION

CHANGE CRITICAL SELF-TALK

- Notice the inner critic...what does it say?
- Change your negative thinking into positive thinking.
- Soften the inner critic with compassion, not self-judgment.
- Try some supportive self-talk
- Say three things that you like about yourself
- Write down your strengths

THE SELF COMPASSION BREAK

- Breathe. Tell yourself... "This is a moment of suffering." Tell yourself... "Others suffer like this, and I'm not alone."
- Hands over heart, tell yourself... "May I be kind to myself? May I live with ease?"
- "I have survived hard times and will survive this too."
- "I am strong enough to get through anything."
- "I am safe and stronger now."

03

BODY AWARENESS

Goal= get to know sensations Paying attention to different parts, gradually, top to bottom. Scanning brings awareness to every detail and feeling. For example, you can identify the points of your body causing you tension.

Sit comfortably and breathe in and out slowly. This exercise aims to notice how each part of your body feels.

Start at the top of your head. Can you feel your hair? What does it feel like? Is it rubbing on your face? have you got a hat on? Can you feel your hair tie?

Start to make your way down to your shoulders. Can you feel any tension in your shoulder area? Do you feel tight? Take a deep breath and try to loosen your shoulders and neck. Next, do a few neck stretches, turn your head to the left and slowly to the right.

Breathe in and out, and repeat until you feel calm again.

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04

VISUALIZATION

GUIDED IMAGERY

- Get comfortable and imagine a peaceful place or experience, such as your favorite place in nature.
- Concentrate on a specific object, sound, or experience in your mind, such as how it feels, what it sounds like, and what it looks like
- Tip: guided imagery videos can also be found on Youtube

THE CONTAINER EXERCISE

- Imagine a container in your mind's eye.
- You can bring things into the container that are distressing.
- Picture those distressing images or ideas and send them into the container, and shut the door.
- Next time that troubling thought arrives, I would like you to imagine sending it here.

02

GROUNDING

MENTAL GROUNDING

- Remind yourself of who you are and where you are
- Describe the current environment in detail
- Describe a favorite place in detail
- Think in categories (i.e., Ice cream flavors)
- Count backward (i.e., 100, 97, 94, 91....)

PHYSICAL GROUNDING: 54321

- Name 5 things that you can see
- Name 4 things you can feel
- Name 3 things you can hear
- Name 2 things you can smell
- Name 1 thing you can taste

MINDFUL WALKING

- Concentrate on your footsteps
- What do you see around you?
- What sounds do you hear?
- What does the climate feel like?

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01

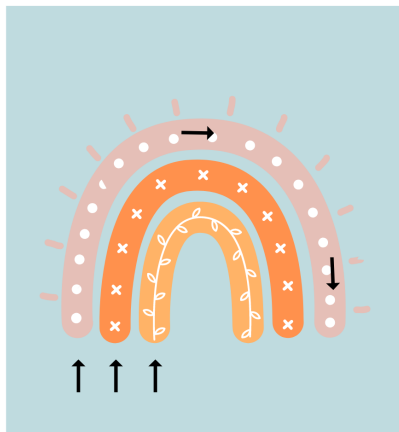
BREATHING

Sit upright Support your arms. Slow breath through the nose (4 secs). Hold your breath (1-2 secs). Slow exhale through the mouth (4 secs). Please wait a few seconds before doing it again.

START
HERE

INHALE FOR 5 SECONDS

INHALE FOR 5 SECONDS



HOLD FOR 5 SECONDS

COPING SKILLS FOR TRAUMATIC STRESS

01

BREATHING

Becoming aware of your breath allows you to slow down, quiet your mind, and calm your body.

02

GROUNDING

Bringing yourself back to the present moment with sensory and cognitive techniques.

03

BODY AWARENESS

Listening and connecting to our bodies by identifying where we are, the sensations in our body, and how our body reacts to stress.

04

VISUALIZATION

Calling on mental images in our imagination to improve the way we feel.

05

SELF COMPASSION

Extending ourselves kindness in how we talk and think about ourselves.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

The Window of Tolerance is referred to as the 'optimal zone' of arousal in which a person can function most effectively, and emotions can be processed in a healthy way.

HYPERAROUSAL

- Feelings of extreme anxiousness with possible panic attacks.
- Feel overwhelmed and out of control.
- Want to fight or run away.



DYSREGULATION

- Feelings of frustration and agitation increase.
- Uncomfortable feelings start to increase but still in control.

Stress
Trauma
triggers
Anxiety
Rejection
Abandonment

↓

THINGS
THAT
SHRINK
YOUR
WINDOW

↑

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

- Feel present, calm and safe.
- In total control.



↑

THINGS
THAT
CAN
EXPAND
YOUR
WINDOW

↓

Mindfulness
Grounding
exercises
Gratitude
Positive self
talk
Deep
breathing

DYSREGULATION

- Getting close to the stage of shutting down.
- Uncomfortable feelings start to increase but still in control.



HYPOAROUSAL

- Feel physically numb and frozen.
- Feel disconnected and zoned out.
- Lethargic and no energy

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EMOTIONAL NUMBING

Emotional numbness is when you are not feeling or expressing emotions.

- The symptoms of emotional numbness include:
- Experiencing an inability to participate in life fully
 - Failing to access your feelings
 - Feeling distant or detached from others
 - Feeling flat, both physically and emotionally
 - Having difficulty with experiencing positive emotions such as happiness
 - Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
 - Preferring isolation rather than being with others

You can help increase your positive emotions by:

Practising gratitude:

Expressing gratitude is an instant mood lifter. The science is simple. When we focus on the good things in our life, especially at a deep level, and appreciate even the most minor things we often take for granted, our brain releases serotonin and dopamine, the two feel-good neurotransmitters within the emotional part of our brain.

Savour the good stuff:

Savoring means fully feeling, enjoying, and extending our positive experiences. Savoring is a great way to develop a stable stream of positive thoughts and emotions.

Smile more - even if you don't feel like it

Smiling can trick your brain into happiness — and boost your health. Science has shown that smiling can lift your mood, lower stress, boost your immune system and possibly even prolong your life.

Remember positive memories

Recalling happy memories elicits positive feelings and enhances one's well-being, suggesting a potential adaptive function in using this strategy for coping with stress. Retrieving positive memories induced greater emotional intensity and more positive feelings than neutral memories

Physical activity

When you're feeling emotionally numb, the last thing you may want to do is get up and move, but it's one of the best things you can do. Running, swimming, yoga, and kickboxing classes are great for stress relief, but even walking around the neighborhood can help flood your brain with endorphins.

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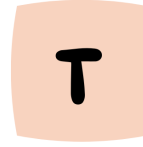
COPING SKILLS

UNHEALTHY		HEALTHY
SUBSTANCE ABUSE	→	EXERCISE
SELF INJURY	→	JOURNALLING
OVER EATING	→	MEDITATION
AVOIDANCE	→	SEEKING PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT
AGGRESSION	→	LISTENING TO MUSIC
GAMBLING	→	GROUNDING EXERCISES
EXCESSIVE USE OF ELECTRONICS	→	GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

**STOP**

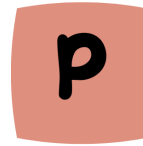
Interrupt your negative thinking with the command 'STOP!' and pause your actions.

**TAKE A BREATH**

Practice some deep breathing techniques to slow your heart rate down.

**OBSERVE**

What thoughts are going through your mind right now? Where is the focus of your attention? What are you reacting to? What sensations do you notice in your body?

**PULL BACK**

Put in some perspective. What is another way of looking at this situation? Is this a thought or an opinion? What would a trusted friend say to me right now?

**PROCEED**

Purposefully and mindfully proceed with your next activity, one step at a time.

TRAUMA TRIGGERS

Sounds Hearing certain music or sounds that remind you of past trauma.	People Being around people that are linked to or have similarities related to your trauma.	Thoughts Certain memories or thoughts can bring back old trauma.
Situations Being in a situation that makes you feel unsafe.	Feelings Just feeling pain unrelated to your trauma can be enough to re-trigger your trauma.	Smells Certain smells are strongly linked to our memories.
Places Places that have similarities to where the trauma took place.	Death The death of anyone involved in the trauma can re-trigger pain.	Media Seeing something on social media, movie scenes or news reports that are similar to your trauma.

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COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

Everybody has a basic biological system - the limbic system, or the "fight or flight." This system has one goal: to ensure your survival at all times; our brains are wired to respond to threats. Unfortunately, our brains can over-generalize to ensure it catches all possible threats, meaning that they will react to a perceived threat (our brains need help distinguishing between an actual physical threat and a threat caused by worry or fear). Activation of our limbic system may include: an increased heart rate and breathing, muscle tension, and adrenaline surge, thus, getting ready to fight or flight.

FEAR AND ANXIETY

When a person's view of the world and sense of safety changes and becomes harmful as a result of their traumatic experience.

RE-EXPERIENCING THE TRAUMA

Replaying traumatic memories may be an attempt to integrate the experience and make more sense of what happened.

INCREASED AROUSAL

Feeling jumpy, jittery, and shaky; being easily startled; and having trouble concentrating or sleeping. They may see the world as dangerous, so their bodies are constantly alert, ready to respond immediately to any attack.

AVOIDANCE

The most common way is to avoid situations that serve as a reminder of the trauma. Another way to reduce distress is to try to push away painful thoughts and feelings, as are pleasant and loving feelings.

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COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

ANGER

Feelings of anger, irritability, and annoyance. Sometimes people feel angry at the people they love the most, which can be very confusing for everybody.

GUILT AND SHAME

Many blame themselves for things they did or did not do to survive. You may feel ashamed because you acted in ways you would not otherwise have done during the trauma.

DEPRESSION & GUILT

You may lose interest in people and activities you used to enjoy. You may feel that your plans for the future don't seem to matter anymore or that life isn't worth living.

SELF IMAGE

Many people become self-critical and pessimistic after the trauma ("I am a terrible person and deserved this.") It is common to see others more negatively and feel that you can't trust anyone.

RELATIONSHIPS

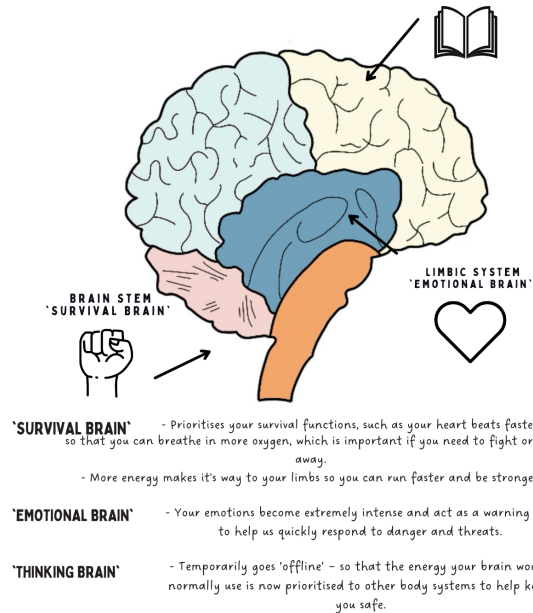
Relationships can be challenging and tense, and it may be difficult to become intimate with people as your trust decreases.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse can become a dangerous and addictive coping mechanism.

WHY DOES PTSD OCCUR?

Everybody has a basic biological system - the limbic system or the "fight or flight." This system has one goal: to ensure your survival at all times; our brains are wired to respond to threats. Unfortunately, our brains can over-generalize to ensure it catches all possible threats, meaning that they will react to a perceived threat (our brains need help distinguishing between an actual physical threat and a threat caused by worry or fear). Activation of our limbic system may include: an increased heart rate and breathing, muscle tension, and adrenaline surge, thus, getting ready to fight or flight.



FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE

Your nervous system has three automatic or reflexive ways of responding to highly stressful events. The fight or flight response is a natural response designed to help keep us safe from danger. However, if your response remains switched on when there is no real danger, or if it gets switched on too quickly and makes you feel nervous all the time again when there is no danger, then the response will turn into panic or PTSD. It will start to interrupt your daily functioning.

FIGHT

Fight occurs when you need to defend yourself.
- Heart pounds faster, blood pressure rises, and muscles tighten, increasing your strength and reaction speed.

FLIGHT

Flight occurs when you escape the danger of a traumatic event by fleeing. - Anxiety, fear, escape, run away or avoid.

FREEZE

A person may freeze briefly to orient to the situation to decide what to do, or they may be associated with tonic immobility and dissociation.

FAWN

A person develops people-pleasing behaviors to avoid conflict and to establish a sense of safety - Avoid conflict, give in easily, difficulty saying 'no.'

PTSD SYMPTOMS

Generalized

- Re-experiencing the trauma
- Repetitive memories (or flashbacks) that are hard to control and intrude into everyday life
- Nightmares
- Extreme distress caused by reminders of the trauma
- Memories or disturbing thoughts that can be prompted by smells, sounds, words, or other triggers

Avoidance

- Staying away from places, people, or objects that may trigger memories of the traumatic event
- Changing a regular routine to avoid triggering memories
- Not wanting to talk about or think about the event
- Feeling numb

Negative thoughts and mood

- Feeling a sense of hopelessness about the future
- Negative beliefs about yourself or the world
- Blaming yourself or others unreasonably
- Intense worry, depression, anger, or guilt
- No longer enjoying favorite activities
- Becoming emotionally detached from others
- Not being able to experience positive emotions

Increased arousal

- Constant, excessive alertness
- Scanning the environment for signs of danger
- Being easily startled
- Irritable or aggressive behavior
- Difficulty sleeping
- Poor concentration