

Day 10 Healing Trauma and Resilience



“The effect of trauma is that we disconnect from ourselves, our sense of value, and the present moment.” Dr Gabor Maté

We need a basic understanding of the trauma response and nervous system and of the particular way we have managed - numbing out, addiction, lashing out, rage response. We don't need to go back through every single traumatic memory in order to heal.

We need to find a way to become friendly and supportive with ourselves, to defuse the inner critic and to be patient, compassionate and kind.

We also need to nurture and build our resilience and strength.

The effect of trauma in the primitive brain and nervous system drive a lot of suffering in our daily life. Hypervigilance, dissociation, shutting down, addiction, catastrophic thinking, tension in the body, stress, and illness are the result of a nervous system stuck on red alert.

“Our brain is like Teflon for positive and Velcro for negative.” Neuropsychologist Dr Rick Hanson
This is how our system works. We may be in an adversarial relationship with our body and mind but actually they are always trying to do the best for us. Hypervigilance is about protection and keeping us safe.

The recently discovered neuroplasticity gives us hope that we can release the effects of trauma and build new neural networks for trust and connection.

We need an absence of threat plus connection to feel safe. We need to be connected within ourselves and with others.

We can learn about the inner critic. Why is it we give ourselves such a hard time? Shaming and driving ourselves have a reason. It might be something that got us through when we were children, but it's not helpful now.

The new science of positive psychology works to build strength, resilience and happiness. The 5,000 year old yoga tradition knows about healing our nervous system through relaxation and breathing. We build resilience right into our body.

“Focus on your strengths, and your weaknesses will take care of themselves.” Swami Veda Bharati

Mindfulness inquiry on using our strengths and resilience. [Listen here.](#)

Stay in touch with your body and breath, and watch thoughts as they come and go through the mind. This helps us remember we are doing a mindfulness inquiry. Notice your response to the questions.

Bring to mind one of your strengths, like curiosity, optimism, steadfastness, loyalty, or love of learning. Remember a time you used that strength and imagine it vividly using all your senses. Who was there? What was going on? What were the sounds?

What's going on in the energy in your body? Do the inquiry on something you're dreading or that would be difficult for you, like getting on an airplane, or going to a family dinner.

What is it that makes you feel uneasy? We'll work in stages. Look at the images that come up and we'll bring in your strengths as you go along. Run the tape in your head from before you leave home, when you arrive, whatever is applicable for this situation. At what point are you starting to feel anxious? You might notice your breath getting shallow or you're starting to get catastrophic thoughts.

Remain mindful of your body and breath. This is an inquiry. You're not actually in the situation. Look at the images and words that come up when you feel uncomfortable. See their colors and shapes. They

are either still pictures or video clips. Maybe it is the look on someone's face that is familiar from childhood, or you've had previous experiences where they ridiculed you.

Put a frame around images and notice the space around it. Hear the words or see them as though they are written out. Notice your feet on the floor. Hold your own hand and feel the warmth. Do tapping or tracing then look again. Take as long as you like with this until the images have lost their intensity and there is not much response.

Now switch over to using your strengths. What have you already brought to situations like this that got you through it in the past? What could you bring to the situation now? Bring that vividly to life. See yourself moving through the situation with your body language strong and confident. Slow, even, relaxed breath. It might be difficult but you are steady and managing well. Focus on what it feels like to make it through managing okay. Let that come to rest. It doesn't have to be a perfect resolution.

Now move on to the next step and let that come vividly to mind. We have more and new skills and strengths now that will make the outcome very different from it might have been in the past. Visualize yourself moving through this in a different way, seeing the confidence in your face. You're using your strengths to make it through and maybe even triumph, to do better than you thought you could.

Instead of the usual catastrophic thinking that could take over the mind when we have something we're dreading, we're doing two different steps. Running the scenario and tapping or tracing on the distressing images and words, then switching over to visualizing a positive experience. In the past we may have made it through by dissociating, shutting down or getting angry.

This time we are doing it with mindfulness. We cultivate kindness towards ourselves and curiosity. Why is this happening in this way? What would motivate someone to act the way they are?

If your inner critic is having a field day, see if you could hold that with kindness. Staying grounded in our body being open to kindness helps us to feel more patient and understanding.

We're doing a dress rehearsal. It isn't actually happening now. This inquiry allows us to see what might trigger us and what we might find most difficult in the situation. We can use tools like tapping or tracing on images and words. We can notice the energy and the space around the energy.

When the intensity is reduced, we look at the strengths we bring to the situation. Put yourself in the movie, see your body language as you feel more confident. You can do this. Take your time and bring all of the elements together - what you hear, smell, touch, and see. Vividly imagine this experience of managing a difficult situation by using your strengths.

We all have the capacity to heal. The fact you are reading this indicates you are interested and that you have hope.

I used to be so stressed and tight and my shoulders were always up around my ears. My mind was absorbed in catastrophic thinking. What if this happens? How will I handle that?

I was so shut down that I didn't know I was anxious. I felt calm but in reality I was numb. Twenty five years ago I found meditation and started on this healing journey. The last eight years working directly with healing trauma brought me the rest of the way.

I know healing can happen for you too. Our systems and responses to trauma are relatively easy to understand. We need connection to feel like we matter, that someone cares about us, that we will be protected. If there is fear from abuse or neglect, no matter why it happened, our body responds and we form beliefs based on our experiences.

We can form new beliefs based on new experiences. I haven't found a magic pill that will instantly heal trauma. What I have found is a reliable time-release process.

We look at our own system and build resilience and strength. We update our system from when we were children and pretty helpless. We are adults now, using our intelligence, adult brain development, cognitive function, and our willingness to transform a relationship of aggression into one of patience and compassion for ourselves.

This opens up the world for us. Listen again to the recordings. Do the practices and inquiries, especially the breathing and relaxation ones, where you build resilience and strength in your mind. You don't actually have to follow catastrophic thinking. Through mindfulness practices, we can recognize it as a fear response.

We know new ways that are more effective in calming our system, down-regulating our emotions and providing the stability and steadiness, the emotional maturity that we need in life.

There is definitely a way to heal our past trauma. I'm thankful to be on this journey. I am thankful you are on this journey too.

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