

Day 1 Understanding the Basics of Developmental Trauma

The effect of abuse, hurt and emotional neglect as children is called Developmental Trauma because it affects our developing brain and nervous system. This limits our ability to make and sustain healthy connections and relationships. As we heal, we develop new neural networks for trust and connection.

Trauma causes disconnection. Emotional neglect, that feeling of not really mattering, was only recently recognized as a driver of Developmental Trauma. We are not looking to place blame. It might be that your parents were overwhelmed with work, a sibling with medical issues, their own trauma or addiction. As adults, we now have more capacity to understand our system and to heal.

Children have little control over their environment and parents. Our survival system has one priority - to keep us alive and safe. The primitive brain has a negativity bias and is always on the lookout for danger. Neglect and abuse are experienced as survival level threats by children. When children experience fear or isolation, they develop hypervigilance and are triggered into fight/flight/freeze.

As a child, we experience not feeling loved and believe it is because we are not lovable. We try desperately to connect with the adults we need for survival. We turn against ourselves, believing there is something fundamentally wrong with us. We are unable to relax and enjoy being ourselves.

Strategies we develop with our limited childhood brain carry through into our adult lives. We freeze or numb out through daydreaming, dissociating, binge watching Netflix, gambling, video games, or use food, alcohol and other drugs. People with a stronger fight reflex lash out when they feel threatened, causing hurt and havoc in their relationships.

These are normal responses to abnormal situations. Our survival system's natural responses to threat are not a sign that there is something wrong with us. This is how our defense system works.

Overwhelming experiences from childhood or earlier adult life are stored in our body as feelings, energy and sensations along with associated thoughts and memories. In our attempt to avoid these feelings, we "live in our head" and try to figure out a solution in our mind. We may develop catastrophic and compulsive thinking, entertaining worse-case scenarios. We lose touch with ourselves and our own sense of intrinsic value. Many people internalize a mean inner critic.

The Stillpoint Method of healing trauma is rooted in neuroscience and yoga meditation. Neuroplasticity was discovered in 1998, just over twenty years ago. Prior to that, scientists thought adult brains had little capacity for change and growth. Modern scientific research validates the findings of 5,000 years of internal investigation by Yogi's about the nervous system, powerful healing practices of relaxation and breathing, and how meditation transforms our brain.

People are stressed and suffering. Anxiety and depression are rising. Many people have lost the juiciness and joy of life. It is clear that our strategies from childhood are no longer working. As adults, we have the capacity and skill to change. We had limited agency as children and that is no longer the situation. We can see the tremendous cost of avoidance and lashing out.

Remember the quote from Dr Gabor Maté? We can reverse engineer the path back to wholeness by connecting with ourselves, seeing through false core deficiency beliefs, and becoming interested in and available to ourselves.

In this course, you will learn to stay grounded in the present moment, to stop fearing the energy stored in your body, and to become more emotionally self-regulated. Working with simple practices of breathing and relaxation, as well as mindfulness inquiry, your mind becomes calmer and clearer. We have access to our higher level intuition and wisdom. We begin to know and like ourselves.

Each day features clear trauma education. You learn about your nervous system and fight/ flight/ freeze. You begin to heal and feel safer. The anxiety that drives catastrophic thinking lessens and you develop skills to interrupt these habitual patterns. You no longer helplessly watch worst-case scenarios take over your mind.

We can all develop skills to work effectively with ourselves. Kindness and compassion help us to calm the inner critic and allow more confidence and ease in our daily life.

Let's begin with a simple [two minute practice of relaxing our forehead and eyebrows](#). Allow your eyes to close or your gaze to soften and focus on the subtle muscles of your forehead. As you exhale, let go of tension and let those muscles soften. If worry or thoughts intrude, simply bring your attention back to softening the muscles of your forehead and eyebrows. Breathe and focus on this for the next two minutes.



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