

MARK WALSH

CULTURAL TRAUMA

HOW “WE” BECOME BROKEN, AND
WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT



INFORMATION ABOUT TRAUMA AND ITS
TREATMENTS. A BRIEF BUT COMPREHENSIVE
OVERVIEW, FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN
UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

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What is Trauma?

Trauma had a significant effect on an individual's well-being, cognitive ability, emotional skills, and interpersonal skills. Having experienced trauma, people may well do things that are not seemingly smart, kind, or healthy.

Understanding trauma can be tricky, as different people define it in different ways. However, a key aspect of trauma is the experience of overwhelm, which goes beyond simple stress, and encompasses a sense of life threat, and one's perceived resources not being able to match perceived threat. Powerless is also a key theme.

Trauma can be described in different ways, one of which is that of being stuck in the fight, flight, (and crucially) the freeze response. The fight-flight response, which is familiar to all of us, is triggered by stressors such as loud noises, pain, or unexpected events. It happens daily in small ways, but we quickly return to “rest, digest, and connect” - a non-stressed state.

The fight, flight, and freeze response is a natural mechanism for protecting oneself from danger, but when someone becomes stuck in this response due to trauma, it will have negative effects on daily life.

The fight, flight, and freeze response is a normal mechanism for protecting oneself from danger. It can manifest in physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, dry mouth, tense shoulders, changes in breathing, and butterflies in the stomach.

These changes are due to an increase in blood flow to the muscles and a decrease in the organs, changes in hormones, shifts in brain chemistry, etc. However, in a healthy individual with a healthy nervous system, this response will “spike” and then decrease again. In modern society, this response can be triggered often on a daily basis in small ways leading to burnout, but we are not chronically stuck in it unless traumatised.

Trauma is characterised by an overwhelming sense of stress or threat, resulting in a failure to regulate and return to a normal state of being. This can occur due to an event or series of events that trigger the fight, flight, or freeze response, and leave an individual stuck in that response. It's important to note that regulation and social “co-regulation” play a crucial role in the healing process after a traumatic event.

Trauma can be described in a variety of ways, including by conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). These conditions are clusters of symptoms that can occur after a traumatic event. Symptoms may include acute stress, hyperarousal, and numbing, which can manifest in physical ways such as tension and armouring in the body.

So it might be the veteran with the “thousand-yard stare” where the eyes are tight, or the cultural armouring of East Europeans that have a tight chest or belly in some people, numbing of the sexual organs which interferes with sex life, etc.

The social impact

Trauma is a chronic shutdown or numbing: a non-feeling state. And this can lead to problems with empathy. It can definitely lead to problems with social engagement and social connection. So it's this big connection between numbing, being able to feel ourselves, but also being able to feel others. This is where the embodied peace-building work comes in or interrupts the vicious cycle of trauma and abuse that can happen.

Basically, people who have been hurt are more likely to hurt others. It's important to note, that not all people who have been abused go on to abuse others. However, the percentage of people who abuse who have been abused themselves is high. When we are hurt, we numb ourselves as a way to cope - this is trauma. This can be helpful in the moment, but later on, it can lead to problems with empathy and social engagement. This is why healing in relationships is important, as it can help interrupt any cycles of trauma and abuse.

Many people will experience difficulty connecting with loved ones or enjoying normal relationships as a result of numbing themselves to cope. This is because the social engagement system is incompatible with the fight or flight system. This is why it is important to heal in relationships, as it can help restore the capacity that gets knocked out when the fight or flight system is engaged.

The triune brain model (useful if dated), suggests that when faced with trauma, our reptilian brain takes over, causing the neocortical brain functions to shut down. This can result in a loss of empathy and pro-social behavior. Emotional numbing is also a symptom of trauma, where one may experience a “flat affect” and a lack of desire to connect with others. This disruption to social engagement is a typical result of traumatic events.

Health issues and trauma

A very important aspect of trauma is that our sense of safety is undermined. There is a sense that the world becomes a dangerous place, which can lead to hyperarousal and a need to recreate a sense of safety by numbing the body. This happens unconsciously and manifests as chronic tension in the body, which can also lead to various chronic health problems.

So a lot of the health problems people have can be linked to trauma. For example, bad backs may be associated with the constant firing of the sympathetic nervous system. Digestion issues can occur because blood is not flowing properly to the digestive system, skin issues are common, and fatigue can also be a chronic stress issue. Simply: we're not set up to be in emergency mode all the time and this runs us down.

I once spent quite a lot of time in Israel and I had the opportunity to speak with a Holocaust survivor. I remember asking them how they were able to maintain a relatively good mood despite the horrific experiences they had gone through. They had tattoos on their arm that were a clear indication of the hard times they had lived through as a result of the Holocaust. They looked at me and said, "All of our friends who didn't learn to smile, laugh, and forgive actually died of cancer". That's what they told me. I was shocked and saddened by this, but it made sense.

They went on to explain that the physical and emotional trauma they had experienced had a profound impact on their overall health and well-being, but that various things had helped.

It's important to note that psychosomatic illnesses can manifest in different ways. They can be small things like lowered immune functioning, but they can also be much more serious. Our immune system is not a priority during times of danger or stress, as our bodies are focused on survival. When we're being chased by a lion or a tiger, all we need to do is get away. Our bodies prioritise the muscles needed for running, kicking, and fighting. The higher brain functions and social functions take a backseat in these situations.

We also see this in the way that some survivors of interpersonal trauma respond to their experiences. They may develop a kind of chronic niceness as a way to try and stop the abuser from hurting them. This can make sense in the moment, but it can lead to problems in the long term. As my friend and colleague Claire May says, "Trauma is toxic to relationships." There are a number of reasons for this, including issues with intimacy, sexuality, and boundaries.

It's crucial for us to acknowledge the impact that trauma can have on our physical and emotional well-being. It's important to address it and take steps toward healing and recovery. Only then can we truly move forward and live a fulfilling and healthy life.

Boundaries

Trauma can also have a significant impact on a person's ability to regulate their emotions and behavior. This can manifest in a variety of ways, such as over or under-defending boundaries. Trauma can also be thought of as a type of memory disorder, in that the traumatic event is not properly processed and stored in the past, but instead remains present in the person's mind, leading to symptoms of reliving the event. Triggers, which are closely associated with the traumatic event and can bring a person back into a traumatic response, are also common symptoms of trauma.

One way to think about trauma is as a historical response. For example, a soldier may hear a car backfire and think it is a gunshot, and respond as if they are back in combat. This can lead to overreactions or underreactions to everyday situations, as the person is responding out of proportion to the current threat. This can manifest in over-defending boundaries, such as screaming at someone or being paranoid that someone is insulting them, or under-defending boundaries, such as being unresponsive to a tap on the shoulder.

It is important to note that trauma can lead to a range of negative consequences, including difficulties in regulating emotions and behavior, bad boundaries, and even abuse. These difficulties can manifest in various forms, such as difficulty with intimacy, sexuality, and emotional regulation. Trauma is toxic to relationships, and it is important for individuals who have experienced trauma to seek

professional help in order to process and heal from their experiences.

It is interesting to note that Israelis and Russians have this reputation of overstepping others' boundaries. Both cultures have experienced trauma and this can manifest in different ways, such as not considering the boundaries and wants of others. For example, I remember being on the beach in Tel Aviv and someone sat very close to me and started playing their music loudly on a ghetto blaster. My Israeli friend explained that the person was not trying to be mean, they just didn't think about how their actions might affect me. This type of behavior can lead to trauma and antisocial behavior.

Another aspect to consider is the tendency of some individuals to overreact or become defensive when dealing with trauma. For example, I have done a lot of work on my own trauma but I still find myself getting defensive in certain situations. On the other hand, some people may react differently and become overly agreeable or constantly smiling.

More on freeze

Another common response to trauma is the freeze response, which can manifest in different ways. Initially, a loud noise may cause a person to stop and look around in shock. However, chronic freezing is when someone has entered a state of chronic tension, shut down, or “learned helplessness”. This can manifest as a “flop” response, where the person's body goes limp, or as a tense freezing response.

There are different theories about the cause of this response, including the work of Steven Porges, who has studied the vagus nerve and its evolutionary roots. For example, when a gazelle is caught by a tiger, it will stop moving in order to survive. Similarly, when a human being is attacked by a big cat, they may feel numb and almost like an endorphin high.

There's a certain way in which you can get an endorphin high from certain activities, even if you haven't done a lot of martial arts. For example, getting choked out can elicit a similar response. There's a feeling of surrender and then a subsequent high, which is one reason why some people in BDSM communities may become addicted to it.

However, this chronic freezing can also lead to health problems. The most severe numbing symptom is caused by the vagus nerve, specifically the part of it that is not associated with the social system: the dorsal vagal nerve. Trauma symptoms can manifest on an individual level, but they can also be passed down culturally. It's important to

consider the cultural context when examining trauma.

I was recently reading David Treleaven's excellent book on trauma-sensitive mindfulness, and he discusses how issues such as racism and systems of inequality can have a profound impact on our background and social systems.

For example, when I was in the United States, I couldn't help but notice that many people had access to guns and the healthcare system and prison system were both inadequate. This is a vastly different situation compared to say, if I were in Sweden or The Netherlands.

The social situation we are in and our personal and familial backgrounds can also play a role in how we process and respond to trauma. During a therapy session, my therapist pointed out that I had a bit of an "Irish rebel" tendency, which may have been a response to past traumas. Very little has been written about Irish trauma interestingly (despite us being a nation of writers).

Other groups are better examined such as black North Americans (see Resmaa Menakem for example), while others such as Latinos only somewhat, and I have seen almost nothing written about Indians or Poles in this regard. Currently, much intergenerational cultural trauma is ignored or even denied sadly.

Thomas Huebl is a respected writer in this field.

More examples

You can see the relationship between trauma and power (and therefore safety) in countries like Russia, where individuals may have a fear of authority due to past traumas. Trauma can lead to people keeping a low profile, or the need to have a huge one!

Often we see both “hypo” and “hyper” patterns in different cultures. All are attempts at safety, which is the key thing. Sometimes these may be driven by historical reasons - eg Jews were only allowed certain kinds of power in Europe - other times it seems more random.

Trauma potentially impacts people’s relationships with money and food in give two more examples. In fact, every time I visit countries like Israel or Russia, I tend to gain about five kilos because food is seen as a symbol of love and caring! There is a history of famine in these countries, and others such as Ireland, Poland, and Ukraine (where my wife is from).

There has been a lot of famine in the past, particularly in certain areas of the world. This has had a lasting impact on the culture and society of these places, leading to an obsession with food and a constant concern for having enough to eat. This is something that I have personally witnessed while visiting my mother-in-law in Ukraine. Even if I arrive at her house at midnight, she always has food laid out for me and the first question she asks me in the morning is "what do you want to eat?". My Irish grandmother was the same, while I write this in Switzerland

where I am not treated this way.

Cultural trauma is something that is passed down through generations simply as a behavioral pattern. It will often feel “forced” and not really a choice, and it has a certain neurotic “charge” attached to it.

Cultural trauma is ingrained in norms and rituals, and can be seen in the way people think, relate, and behave. It may be justified in many ways and have a positive side (I never went hungry in Tel Aviv!).

Nervous system health

I also want to mention that while certain experiences themselves, be classified as traumatic in a psychological diagnostic manual, people are beginning to question this. Instead, we can look at trauma in terms of nervous system health and how people regulate and have become dysregulated. A lot of the behaviors we see in ourselves and others are related to regulation and how to cope with past traumatic experiences. I personally drink decaf coffee as someone with hyperarousal symptoms, as it helps me regulate my nervous system for example.

In this way, we can ask “what is the nervous system?” of any culture that you visit. One can taste it even. Is it up or down? Hyper or hypo? Agitated or shutdown? Aroused or numb?

Noticing the impact of any culture on you is one way to have a sense of it, but remember you can only feel it through yourself. Some humility is also needed here before jumping to conclusions, and I have deliberately limited examples here to cultures that I know fairly well.

Deeper into cultural trauma

Famine and cultural trauma have had a lasting impact on the way people think and behave, particularly when it comes to controlling, power, food, and survival. As we discuss these topics, it's important to take care of ourselves and be mindful of our own mental and physical well-being. We should also consider the broader definition of trauma and how it relates to nervous system health and regulation.

When we experience trauma or are in a state of chronic stress, it can be difficult to self-regulate our emotions and behaviors. One way that people may try to cope with this is through addiction, whether it be to substances like alcohol or drugs, or to behaviors like overeating or engaging in promiscuous sex. In refugee camps and aid camps, I have observed that many humanitarian aid workers struggle with addiction as a way to regulate their emotions and cope with the trauma they are exposed to on a daily basis.

Addiction and trauma often go hand in hand, as people who have experienced trauma may have a lower "window of tolerance" for stress and be more easily triggered into a fight or flight response. Trauma work can help to increase this window of tolerance and improve self-regulation, but it is important to understand that addiction is often an attempt to fix an internal problem with an external solution.

One way to explore our own patterns of self-regulation is to examine how we use different forms of self-care, such as fasting or giving up alcohol. It can also be helpful to look at how we are affected by the people and environments around us, as social animals are highly influenced by the moods and energy of those around us. This is especially important to consider when living in a culture that is itself traumatised, as the collective stress can have a significant impact on our individual well-being.

Recently, while visiting Ukraine, I observed a high level of agitation among the people in the airport in Odesa (before the war), even non-Ukrainians. This is an example of how the culture's trauma can be contagious. In Eastern Europe, there's a numbing effect in the population (which had been through a lot over the years), as seen in the lack of smiling and warmth towards strangers in many places. It is important to be aware of these cultural factors and how they can affect our own well-being, and to find healthy ways to cope and regulate our emotions. Of course, not everyone in a culture will be equally impacted, and talking about cultures involves generalisations, so care is needed.

While individuals vary, there are many patterns one can easily see that are hard to ignore. In Russia, people often display a lack of expression known jokingly as the "Russian smile" for example. Despite this, Russians are known to be fantastic friends and take care of their own, but may not show the same hospitality towards outsiders. This "us and them", in-group vs out-group mentality can also be seen in Israel and other places with lots of trauma. Russia has a history of invasions by violent conquerors such as Genghis Khan, Napoleon, and Hitler, leading to a cultural mistrust of

strangers.

Trust issues are a major result of trauma and can result in cynicism, or a general lack of trust. Trauma can also lead to scarcity, boundary issues, and difficulties in empathy and connection. Embodied peace-building work is important to break the cycles of numbness, hurt, trauma, and violence. Healing and peace-building must go hand in hand to achieve this. As stated in the Bible, the sins of the father will be visited upon the son for five generations. By breaking these cycles, we can move towards a more peaceful world.

The idea that trauma can be passed down through generations and have a lasting impact is widely recognised. Research in modern epigenetics has shown that stress can have lasting effects on our biology and well-being.

One example of this is the impact of trauma on sexual function and desire. We see cultural patterns in this impacted by trauma. The Japanese are one case study here should anyone want to go down that rabbit hole!

Numbness can interfere with sexual desire, and people may use sex as a way to self-regulate. In some cases, the trauma may manifest as a fetish or kink related to the excitement and danger of the traumatic experience. One sees cultural patterns here, and porn sites have gathered interesting data like Russian porn being more violent than average.

Returning to normal life after a traumatic experience can be challenging, and for some individuals, the high of being in a traumatic situation can be addictive. For example, soldiers who have been deployed in war zones may

struggle to adjust to normal life and seek out another tour of duty to recreate that level of stimulation.

Trauma can also have a profound impact on a person's sense of meaning and purpose. For example, people may lose their faith or sense of purpose after experiencing a traumatic event such as the Holocaust. This sense of meaninglessness can be compounded by feelings of isolation and disconnection, leading to a feeling of being disconnected from the world around them.

Overall, it's important to recognise that trauma can have lasting effects that reach far beyond the individual and can impact multiple aspects of a person's life.

Trauma symptoms should be considered through biological, psychosocial, and spiritual lenses. Spiritually, trauma can result in a lack of meaning or faith. Psychologically, symptoms can range from racing thoughts to depression and anxiety, with anxiety potentially becoming a long-term trauma symptom. Physically, emotionally, and interpersonally, trauma can impact health in many ways.

Trauma is a complex set of symptoms that can range from sleep disturbances to psychosomatic issues. While these symptoms can be difficult, education and understanding can be helpful. Before my wedding in Ukraine, I sat down with a group of soldiers and talked about these topics for an hour.

What helps?

Trauma symptoms can be understood through a bio, psychosocial, and spiritual lens. Education about trauma symptoms can be helpful in understanding and managing them. There are many resources available, including books by experts in the field such as Peter Levine, Bessel van der Kolk, and Babette Rothschild. Trauma has become more popular and is now seen as more relevant to modern life. In the past, trauma symptoms were referred to as shell shock, combat fatigue, or PTSD, but were often forgotten between wars. In recent years, with America and Israel's continuous involvement in war, there is a growing recognition and understanding of trauma. Israel has a modern infrastructure with universities and therapists available, making it a good place to seek help for trauma. So again, I'm gonna go through this from the point of view, my own personal story and I'll add in a few that I've also heard have been good. So let's start with some of the classics.

THERAPY

Can talking help? Not necessarily. Long-term relational therapy can be beneficial, but trauma is a complex issue that involves both emotions and physical sensations. According to Bazel Van Der Kolk, author of "The Body Keeps the Score," trauma is stored in the nervous system and cannot be fully resolved through talking therapy alone. The focus on the role of the body in therapy has increased in recent years. So, while talk therapy may help, it may not provide a complete solution.

EMDR (EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITISATION AND REPROCESSING)

EMDR is a therapy that aims to help people process and overcome traumatic experiences. It involves talking about a traumatic event while the therapist guides the individual to track their eyes left and right, usually following a finger or looking at a light. This is the most common method, but there are other ways to perform EMDR.

In my personal experience, I have found EMDR to be effective in reducing the distress associated with traumatic events. This is especially true for individuals who have experienced a small number of traumatic events. For example, a person I know, Roger Mills, is a therapist who specialises in using EMDR to help individuals cope with single traumatic incidents, such as a bank robbery.

Although the exact mechanism behind EMDR is still not completely understood, it is believed to involve the reprocessing of traumatic memories in the brain. Despite this, the results from EMDR have been positive and it is considered to be a promising therapy for individuals who have experienced trauma.

However, it is important to note that EMDR may be more difficult for individuals who have experienced multiple traumatic events over a prolonged period of time, often referred to as Complex B trauma. Nonetheless, EMDR is still worth a try for those who have experienced a few serious and intense traumatic incidents.

Overall, EMDR is a unique and innovative approach to therapy that has shown positive results for individuals struggling with trauma. If you are looking for a way to

process and overcome traumatic experiences, consider seeking out an EMDR therapist.

EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUE (EFT)

EFT involves tapping on specific points on the body while thinking about a traumatic memory or issue. This is believed to help release the emotional charge associated with the experience and bring balance to the body's energy system.

I have tried the EFT for dealing with trauma and I haven't seen much progress in my case. However, I know individuals who believe in it wholeheartedly and have found it to be very effective for them. For instance, my colleague Shannon Garfield uses EFT as part of her therapy practice.

From my observation, it seems to be a technique that works for some people, but not for others. Everyone's experience with trauma and healing is unique and it's important to find what works best for you. Despite my personal experience, I still consider EFT to be worth trying as it might work for you, especially if you have not found success with other methods.

TRE (TRAUMA RELEASING EXERCISE)

I've been familiar with TRE for about 10 years now, thanks to David Berceci. He was even a guest on my podcast, which became one of my most popular episodes. I had the opportunity to meet him and he is a lovely person.

Recently, I participated in a training course to refresh my knowledge and skills in TRE. This technique involves doing certain physical exercises that trigger neurogenic tremors, which help to release some of the accumulated stress or

trauma stored in our body.

This release can be described in terms of energetic terms or simply as a way to improve nervous system health. I personally find TRE to be very helpful, and it has the added benefit of being able to be taught to large groups of people.

This release can be described in terms of energetic terms or simply as a way to improve nervous system health. I personally find TRE to be very helpful, and it has the added benefit of being able to be taught to large groups of people.

However, it's important to note that TRE may not work for everyone, and in some cases, it could even make things worse. So, if you are considering TRE, I would advise you to seek the advice of a therapist who has experience with it.

One of the advantages of TRE is that it's accessible. Unlike many other treatments, it doesn't require one-on-one sessions which can be expensive. There is an app available, or you can even learn it from a book and do it yourself.

I have a lot of respect for David for creating such a valuable and accessible tool for people to use in their healing journey.

PAUL LINDEN'S APPROACH

The Paul Linden approach to dealing with trauma is based on a combination of somatics and empowerment. In this approach, the therapist works with the individual to help them build physical and mental strength and resilience.

For example, someone who has been the victim of rape or attack may be taught self-defense moves, or to throw their attacker, so that they can actually be safe.

Paul Linden's approach emphasizes the importance of feeling safe, not just in a general sense, but in a practical, physical sense. This can be achieved through martial arts training or other forms of physical exercise. Linden's approach is unique and has been seen to be highly effective in helping people overcome trauma.

There are free resources available online, including free eBooks, that individuals can use to learn more about Paul Linden's approach. Some people may find that creative practices such as art are helpful in expressing themselves, but it is important to remember that everyone's journey to healing is unique and what works for one person may not work for another. It is recommended to work with a therapist and find a method that is right for the individual.

Culturally certain modalities may also be a better fit. Paul, for example, uses a lot of stories and jokes and is in his words “very Jewish”.

BODYWORK

I personally found bodywork to be very beneficial in my healing journey. There are a variety of bodywork techniques that can be helpful for trauma, but some of the ones that I have personally found to be most effective include craniosacral therapy and Rosen Method Bodywork.

Craniosacral therapy is a gentle form of bodywork that is designed to soothe the nervous system. It involves the practitioner using light touches to help release any tension

or stress that may be stored in the body and to promote relaxation and a sense of peace. This type of therapy has been incredibly helpful for me in reducing my stress levels and promoting feelings of calm and relaxation.

Rosen Method Bodywork is another form of bodywork that I have recently started exploring. This type of therapy uses gentle touch to help release tension and stress from the body and to promote a deeper sense of connection with one's physical self. I have found this form of bodywork to be incredibly effective in helping me to become more aware of my body and to learn how to release any lingering tension or discomfort that may be present.

One of the things that I love about bodywork is that it can be performed by a skilled practitioner, which can make it a much more effective form of therapy for those who are dealing with trauma. A skilled bodywork practitioner can help you to identify areas of tension or discomfort in your body and can help you to release them in a safe and nurturing way.

Cross-culturally touch may be encouraged or discouraged so this is a factor.

YOGA AND MARTIAL ARTS FOR TRAUMA HEALING

These practices can be very effective in promoting healing from trauma, but it's important to make sure they are empowering and trauma-sensitive. Traditional Asian approaches simply are not. Some may balk at this, but I'm sorry it's just true. Happily, there are now alternatives.

Trauma-sensitive yoga, for example, is an approach that prioritises respect for personal boundaries and the choice

to participate in physical movements. Teachers in this approach avoid violating participants' boundaries by adjusting them without touching and instead focus on empowering participants to have control over their own bodies. This helps people learn to avoid pushing their bodies too far in either direction and to find a balance in their movements. It's worth noting that there are several well-known practitioners of trauma-sensitive yoga, such as Sarah Holmes de Castro in Canada and David Emerson, who may offer resources and guidance on this approach.

DANCING

I have a deep love for dancing, especially with fire rhythms. I find that incorporating dance into my pre and post-conflict rituals helps me to cope with the challenges and experiences I face. One such ritual is to dance fire rhythms in a thousand-year-old church, which serves as a form of conscious dance and a prayer for safety. I shake off any residual chaos through the fire rhythms, which is a technique to release pent-up energy and emotions. People have been practicing this dance ritual in the church for centuries, and it remains a significant part of my personal healing journey.

In many cultures dance was used for trauma healing traditionally, and perhaps ritualistically with co-regulation benign given special weight by community and religion. Sadly we have lost this in most of The West.

HEALING IN RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships can be the most healing thing for people who have experienced trauma. For some, the first relationship

they need to heal from trauma is with a therapist or a pet, such as a cat, dog, or horse. Equine-assisted therapy or therapy with dogs can be effective in helping individuals regulate their nervous system and reconnect with another being. In my experience, my past girlfriends who were empathetic and caring listeners were helping me work through my trauma.

However, talking about trauma can also lead to re-traumatisation. If someone does choose to talk about their trauma, it is important for them to have a dedicated and empathetic listener who won't be overwhelmed and for the story to have a safe and meaningful structure. The story should start from a safe place, move through the traumatic instance, and end in safety again. This helps the individual make meaning from their experience and process it effectively.

It is important to note that there is mixed evidence on the effectiveness of debriefing after a traumatic event. While some emergency service workers have found it helpful, there is also evidence that it can make things worse.

NATURE

Nature can have a calming effect on the nervous system and help with self-regulation skills. There is something inherently soothing about being in nature that can help release trauma. This can be seen in various tribal societies where post-war rituals involve giving back to the earth. For some, nature can also have a shamanic or pagan effect that helps in letting go of stress and tension.

Culturally some nations have a natural affinity for nature -

eg the Japanese or British - and this may be helpful in healing.

HUMOR

Humor can be a powerful tool for healing from trauma, but it's important to understand the difference between humor that distances us from our experiences and humor that empowers us. Humor can be disarming and can help us gain perspective and a sense of control over difficult experiences. You talk about traumatic experiences in a way that is both poignant and empowering. This type of humor allows us to have distance from our experiences, while also laughing at them, which can empower us and help us overcome the disempowering effects of trauma.

Sadly, much modern trauma work comes from the somewhat humorless US therapy world, and this is both a loss and culturally inappropriate to places like Ireland and Australia where humor is integral to life (and therefore healing).

SERVICE WORK

Brind of service to others for trauma healing can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience for many people. In some cases, helping others who are struggling with similar traumas can serve as a form of personal healing and growth. This has certainly been the case for me, as my own journey of healing led me to want to support others in similar circumstances. Through my experiences, I have come to understand the importance of community and support in the healing process, and I feel honored to be able to offer that to others." Again, this may be culturally supported or hindered.

MEDICATION

While medication may be necessary for some individuals, I personally prefer to weigh the cost and benefits of each option. In my own journey, I have found that certain drugs like magic mushrooms can be helpful. Ibogaine can provide profound insights and contribute to healing in also told. Additionally, I have heard positive things about MDMA-assisted trauma healing. However, it is important to approach these options with caution and guidance, such as through guided trips.

INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY SYSTEMS AND FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS

I've had mixed experiences with it myself, but some people really swear by it. It's a therapeutic approach that aims to address and resolve issues related to family dynamics and relationships that may have originated from trauma. It involves representing a person's family members in a physical space and exploring the relationships between them to uncover and address unconscious patterns. Some individuals have found this method to be effective in exploring intergenerational trauma and resolving related issues, although individual experiences may vary. In addition to family constellations, some individuals also find that addressing their gender identity and exploring related issues, especially if there has been sexual trauma, is a critical component of their healing journey.

Done well, such approaches are one of the main ways to “get at” inter-generational and cultural trauma.

BOOKS

There are various self-help resources available such as books and apps that can provide support in managing and healing from trauma. However, it is important to note that simply reading these resources may not completely eliminate the traumatic experience.

It is best to actively work on one's own healing and seek help in any form that is affordable and accessible. This can involve therapy, support groups, or other forms of professional assistance. Additionally, surrounding oneself with a supportive network and finding healthy coping mechanisms can also aid in the healing process.

For those who may be struggling to make ends meet, my heart goes out to you. I understand that it can be a difficult journey, but there are ways to get more involved and give back to others, which can bring a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Whether it be volunteering, supporting a cause, or simply reaching out to others in need, taking action to help others can be a powerful form of healing for oneself as well.