

LET & ABLE Newsletter

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Let's talk about trauma for a moment. The trauma that we experienced can have a long lasting impact and continue to be a barrier to fulfilled living. At some point, for all of us, the time comes to accept what happened, move past the blame, and guilt and focus on what is really important in life.

Having serviced traumatized and at-risk populations for a number of years, it is time for us to offer trauma solutions from a spiritual, social emotional, psycho-social, and emotional intelligence approach. Many of us have come to believe that traumatic experiences don't have to haunt and define us forever.

Rather, they can help us achieve in life and enjoy things to the fullest. We know within ourselves, that there is always a way and opportunity to have success beyond what happened to us.

In 2023, I want you to set yourself to overcome additional aspects of your trauma. I want this because you deserve to live a happy and trauma free life. The coming year might just be your year to make meaningful progress and experience substantial personal growth. Yes, you and I can have a wonderful life next year and the years to come.

I want you to be whole and complete. Do you want the same thing? I want you to be at liberty and at ease regarding life. Do you want the same thing? I want you to have peace and hope in your life. Do you want the same thing? I want the best of you to shine and make a difference in the world. Do you want the same thing?

Recco

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Moving Past Our Trauma

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(Parts of this article first appeared in Dr. Recco's Book "Tried By Trauma")

How To Deal With Trauma/PTSD

There are several solutions and answers that help individuals address their trauma and PTSD. Specifically, the availability of social support and pain management are helpful (Sareen, 2014). For survivors of trauma, the presence of social support and social interactions cannot be minimized. Let's be clear here, social support is a critical player in the pursuit of managing trauma.

While much of the research on resilience focuses on individual strengths, it's social support that may matter the most (Suttie, 2017). Why? Because it is thought that positive social interactions facilitate the on-going levels of cognitive/emotional processing required for successful adjustment and support the development of more positive appraisals of the traumatic event and its consequences (Kelly, Scott & Bryan, 2015).

A closer look at social support and other players that help and matter are:

1). Social Support: As humans, we have a need for affiliation and belonging. My early years of studies in sociology exposed me to valuable theories and views regarding how much we need each other. While some of us can thrive alone and in a state of alienation, it doesn't mean that we are safe or whole. I have found that for the most part those of us who have been traumatized do not do well alone. When we are alone, it means we are surrounded. We are not safe when alone. There is only safety in the multitude of other's company and their counsel (Proverbs 11:14).

Individuals that are traumatized tend to lean towards isolating and withdrawing from society and others, which is not the healthiest thing to do. If nothing else, the goal should be to avoid self quarantine or signing up for solitary confinement as a means to adjust and deal with life. The poet John Donne said it best, "No man is an

This Article Discusses

- >Trauma & PTSD
- >Tasks Completion
- >Addressing Agitation
- >Physical Body Healing
- >SEL & EI
- >Emotional Control

island living.” There are certain things in life that we cannot bear or do alone. One of those things is fully addressing our trauma. Engrafted in social support is the idea of utilizing meaningful and trusted relationships that add strength to our lives. Believe it or not, there are still people out in the world that are trustworthy, loving, supportive, genuine, honest, and willing to aid us in our journey back to emotional liberation and wellness.

Our trauma has taught us to not trust and to do it alone. It is as if we want all the credit for possibly coming out of trauma by our own merit. Just as substance abusers and alcoholics cannot overcome their struggles alone, traumatized individuals cannot do it alone either. Gospel recording artist Kirk Franklin said it best “I need you, you need me, we need each other to survive.”

Support systems have a unique role in the addressing of trauma because it requires other humans to be integrally involved. With this involvement comes a sense of responsibility to one another and accountability. I have found that the real benefits of these two concepts is their ability to encourage traumatized individuals to be consistent. It is reported that consistency and a routine can address trauma because they can deposit within us a sense of control, importance, personal resolve, purpose, satisfaction, and empowerment.

“Support systems are more important than we realize” Dr. Recco

Suttie (2017) offered that people who are happier, have a strong purpose in life, or higher levels of self-efficacy—tend to believe that they have control over their situation and seem to have an easier time recovering after disaster.

2). Task Completion: The confidence and personal resolve of accomplishing a task goes a long way towards recovery from negative traumatic experiences. It is as if the human soul, heart, and mind stores various victories and success stories in a vault that not only protects us but also serves as a resource for future endeavors. I have found that consistent tasks completion and moving from small victory to small victory does wonders for our perspective and can ignite our drive to be free.

Regardless of their size and purpose, completing projects helps us to overcome self-imposed restrictions, on-going flashbacks, panic attacks, fear, shortness of breath and stressors. Over the years, I have learned that regular tasks completion requires that I have a level of independence when tackling something. The independence can best be described as moving and acting in spaces and places that allow my creativity, inspiration, and passion to lead me.

Within myself and for myself, I do this because others may not be in a position to sufficiently walk this road with me. As I talk with traumatized people, the subject of tasks completion and their level of independence often becomes the focus.

Wholesome good people can struggle to complete things because their sense of self is too intertwined with other people's ideas and beliefs. This fact promotes inadequate personal independence and possibly a co-dependency state. Because of the stated lack, there arises unnecessary fear, low esteem, unhealthy boundaries, and poor decision making on a regular basis when tasks completion is needed. For traumatized individuals, this absolutely cannot continue to happen and go unchecked. Why? Because there is really nothing to fear.

"Co-dependency can promote trauma issues" Dr. Recco

In his 1933 inaugural address Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, "There is nothing to fear but fear itself." As well, there really is nothing to be ashamed of or embarrassed by regarding our trauma. The healthy and consistent addressing of fears, self-esteem, boundaries, and quality decision making can be learned and embraced. These are not difficult or magical occurrences set aside for the elite. They are available to ordinary people like you and I who have been traumatized and want help.

3). Address Agitation: At the core of traumatic experiences is the presence of agitation. I view agitation as the intersection of nerves, excitement, and arousal. Agitation is a natural response to life and comes when meaningful things are attacked right before our eyes. When the actions of others or our own actions cause an inner alarm, it is time to make plans to address things.

The addressing of situations or people that agitate us is an on-going activity. The agitation is not a single act, thus we must develop coping skills. The best way to cope with agitation is to process each situation faster and accurately.

To do the such, our perspective in that moment of agitation or later in the day has to accurately assess the level of harm and trouble at hand. Because we have a quality perspective regarding them, millions of things and people do not agitate us. We pretty much have reduced the situations down to something that is manageable and not worth disrupting our day. I personally have learned to view and address my levels of agitation as something that is fluid.

The agitating and annoying person or idea is fluid, meaning that it is passing by. It will pass by briskly and with less harm if I do not give it life by responding out of character or by responding as if I'm defenseless. I have power over my agitations.

Agitation is one of several weapons and assaults against us that should not work. In fact, Isaiah 54:17 states, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." Agitation does not have power over me. Why? Because agitating ideas and people are just for that moment of the day when we are exposed to them.

When not in our presence, our agitators have no frame of reference or prowess regarding us. Thus, for those brief moments or hours that we are in their presence or have to deal with them, why not make it a habit to let things run their fluid course. To truly address our agitation that is rooted in trauma, we have to set ourselves to not feed or supply the agitation with a life source. Our goal should be to not let a temporal fluid situation become a full blown lake of problems. As we keep our cool and

"Our perspective about situations is important" Dr. Recco

respond appropriately, the agitation should dry up and hopefully wither away.

4). Body Heals Its Self: Our body will heal itself if we take care of it and allow it adequate time. There is research that suggests the body tries to soothe and heal its self after the trauma. The healing is based on natural adaptation taking place and the natural heterogeneity of the human stress response happens (Macedo, Wilhelm, Goncalces, et. al., 2014).

There are many reasons why the body does not adequately heal itself after traumatic experiences. I have found that poor boundaries are one reason. We tend to not set proper boundaries with other people, our diet, and our rest. Thus, we alienate our body from natural healing properties because we do not give it enough distance and time to do so. Unhealthy and toxic people have a way of impacting our physical body and restricting its ability to heal. Healing is a process that can take time. It is not a miracle which is instant in nature.

"If we let it, our body will help heal the trauma" Dr. Recco

I often encourage traumatized individuals to take care of their physical bodies better by getting proper rest, exercising as much as they can, managing their food intake, finding places of relaxation, enjoying a hobby or past time activity, distressing throughout the day, and clearing their mind daily.

The stated might sound basic but it works and helps alleviate the fall out of traumatic experiences and the depths of despair. We actually can learn to de-stress, rest, eat healthier, find places of relaxation within ourselves and in the world, by taking part in mental health counseling. That's right! We all can benefit from participating in individual counseling/mental health counseling. Cognitive Behavior Therapy-Trauma Focused (CBT-TF) is an evidence-based psychotherapy/counseling that aims at addressing the needs of children and adults with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other difficulties related to traumatic life events (Macedo, Wilhelm, Goncalces, et. al., 2014).

CBT-TF helps clients identify and cope with emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). If there is one thing that I'm learning each and every day is the fact that improved emotions, thoughts, and behaviors can impact our physical bodies in a positive way. Why? Because it is believed they help our body to rest and be at ease long enough to heal itself.

5). Trauma Informed Care: Often overlooked in the treatment of trauma is consistent trauma informed care. This approach to helping individuals overcome intrusive life experiences is macro in nature and not micro. As a systematic approach, when delivered with fidelity and intention, this type of care can mitigate the effects of trauma on survivors by addressing head-on the fact it occurred, and that the expectation of is a full recovery (Davis, 2019).

"SEL & EI are a trauma healing treasure" Dr. Recco

For example, children are far more likely to exhibit resilience to childhood trauma when child-serving programs, institutions, and service systems understand the impact of childhood trauma, share common ways to talk and think about trauma, and thoroughly integrate effective practices and policies to address it—an approach often referred to as trauma-informed care (Bartlett & Stebel, 2014).

Social Emotional Learning & Emotional Intelligence

To better understand trauma, we need to take a good look at social emotional learning and emotional intelligence information. Social competence and emotional intelligence can help move children (and adults) forward as a result of promoting experiences and memories that enhance esteem levels (Richardson, 2017).

Definitions of social emotional learning and emotional intelligence have commonalities. Both include coordination of cognition, affect, and behavior including the awareness and management of one's own emotions and awareness and understanding of others' emotions (Richardson, 2018).

Social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills required to succeed in schooling, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship (Jones, Brush, Bailey, et. al 2017). Social emotional learning programs focus on the development of five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies to include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning, 2005).

The frameworks of social emotional learning theories and ideas provide an understanding of the foundation for maintaining high-quality social relationships and for responding to the challenges of life (Vega, 2017).

"We can learn to cope/live with our trauma" Dr. Recco

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to identify, understand, and use emotions positively to manage anxiety, communicate well, empathize, overcome issues, solve problems, and manage conflicts (Drigas & Papoust, 2018). It is the rudder for feeling, thinking, learning, problemsolving, and decision-making (Drigas & Papoust, 2018). At the root of most trauma is a complex disruption of our social life and emotional life. As a result, it behooves us to better understand social-emotional learning and emotional intelligence and how they can assist healing from traumatic experiences.

Trauma, SEL & EI

The following information can help us better understand trauma and how it can be addressed by socio-emotional learning and emotional intelligence concepts.

1). Effective Practices: There are dozens of concepts and ways to practice and strengthen our social-emotional learning competencies. The most popular are mindful breathing, doing one daily activity with mindfulness, and recognizing yourself in others (Srinivasan, 2018). The ability to see ourselves in others can help us avoid violating social and emotional rules that govern human behavior.

This is not an easy task because most people are not aware of their own issues and inabilities, thus, to be asked to see themselves in others, is a little ambitious. However, what can be asked and expected is the ability to be open-minded and willing to make the necessary adjustments that promote quality social interaction practices that address horrific life experiences.

2). Internalized Beliefs: Over time, mastering socio-emotional learning competencies result in a developmental progression. The progression can lead to a shift from being predominantly controlled by external factors, to acting increasingly in accord with internalized beliefs and values. Internalized beliefs and values such as caring and concern for others, making good decisions, and taking responsibility for one's choices and behavior can make a huge difference in our lives (Richardson, 2018).

"We all can do more to be whole and happier" Dr. Recco

From the cradle to the grave, the stated must be placed at the fore-front of our parenting, educational system, religious education, and society in general because it gives each of us a chance to progress beyond our trauma and make meaningful changes. Trauma demands an adequate response from us. One such response is internalized beliefs.

3). Adjusting, Achievement & Self Esteem: In general, it is held that emotional intelligence promotes the ability to adjust, negotiate life, and avoid emotional trauma (Richardson, 2018). This is thought to be true because emotional intelligence is likely to underlie social competence and mediate the contribution of achievement to self-esteem (Cheung, Cheung & Hue, 2015).

Achieving is able to take place because of necessary adjustments in attitudes, expectations, reasoning and hopes taking place within the mind of traumatized individuals. As a result, there is value in raising emotional intelligence in order to consolidate the basis for the young adult's self-esteem (Cheung, Cheung & Hue, 2015).

The more we address and focus on the esteem level of traumatized individuals, the more likely they will receive quality help. This is true because healthy esteem levels can lead to coping and adjustment to life that off-sets emotional trauma that was never addressed. The last thing we want is something as basic as self-esteem being the wrench that emotional trauma, social stigma, and the lack of guidance use to stymie intellectual development and emotional intelligence (Richardson, 2017).

Kelly, Scott & Bryan (2015) argued similar thoughts. They held that it appears that emotional intelligence may be implicated in coping with trauma and that the relationships need to be empirically explored more in the future.

4). Emotional Control: In general, many people misinterpret their own emotional reactions, fail to control emotional outbursts, or act strangely under various pressures. This can result in harmful consequences to themselves, others, and society (Drigas & Papoust, 2018). However, the fore-mentioned is compounded even the more when trauma is involved. For traumatized people, it is important to be able to manage their emotions and use emotional intelligence so as to be able to read their emotions and those of others.

"Low self-esteem should not hold us back" Dr. Recco

They must also have the ability to understand, label, express, and regulate their emotions (Gabriel, 2018). This is true and critical for the traumatized because the ability to read, understand/respond to their emotions and other people, is a crucial factor in predicting health, happiness, and personal and professional success (Gabriel, 2018).

From the foundation of understanding trauma, social emotional learning, and emotional intelligence, we can now proceed with how to address trauma via resilience.

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