

Trauma Responses

Based on the book "The Betrayal Bond: Breaking Free of Exploitive Relationships," by Patrick J. Carnes Phd.

"When early trauma/deprivation are present, the circuitry to and within the temporal lobes are profoundly affected, resulting in emotional and cognitive problems. Our primary brain goes into stimulation and is flooded with neurochemicals. When the source of fear goes away, the chemicals go away. The person experiences cravings. They can become attached to trauma."

Trauma Reaction

Definition: Physiological and/or psychological alarm reactions from unresolved trauma experiences.

Examples: Flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, insomnia, triggered associations, troubling dreams, physical symptoms, hypervigilance, living in extremes, bipolar cycles, borderline personality disorder, victims of violent crimes, soldiers, sexual abuse survivors.

1. Recurrent and unwanted (intrusive) recollections of experience
2. Periods of sleeplessness
3. Sudden "real" memories
4. Extremely cautious of surroundings
5. Startled more easily than others
6. Distressing dreams about experiences
7. Flashback episodes - acting or feeling as if the experience is happening in the present
8. Distress when exposed to reminders of experiences like anniversaries, places or symbols
9. Outbursts of anger and irritability
10. Distrustful of others, physical reactions to reminders of experiences

Trauma Arousal

Definition: Seeking/finding pleasure in the presence of extreme danger, violence, risk or shame.

Examples: Sadomasochism, sex offending, prostitution, high-risk experiences, arousal addiction.

- *"Arousal accesses a neuropathway that is very compelling. If your brain adjusts to it, you need the stimulation simply to feel normal"*

When you grow up in a home that is unpredictable or unsafe you learn to be on high alert at all times. You have to make sure that you are safe. You learn to scan your environment for clues

on what will happen next and how to prepare. This is Arousal. Your brain and body is getting flooded with chemicals, such as adrenaline and cortisol, that can be highly addictive with prolonged exposure. Your brain and body start to crave this intensity and these chemicals. Eventually, your emotional baseline is this intensity. In order to feel **Normal** you need that intensity, stress, fear and drama. Without it you can feel depressed or bored and will subconsciously be searching for the next Arousing experience to keep you at that baseline.

1. Engaging in high-risk, thrill-seeking behaviors such as skydiving or race car driving
2. Seeking more risk because the last jolt of excitement was not enough
3. Difficulty being alone, calm or in low-stress environments
4. Using drugs like cocaine or amphetamines to speed things up or to heighten high-risk activities
5. Feeling sexual when frightened or when violence occurs
6. Seeking high-risk sex
7. Loving to gamble on outcomes
8. Difficulty completing sustained, steady tasks
9. Seeking danger
10. Constant searching for all-or-nothing situations
11. Associating with people who are dangerous to you

Trauma Blocking

Definition: Efforts to numb, block out, and overwhelm residual feelings due to trauma

Examples: Compulsive overeating, excessive sleeping, alcoholism, depressant drugs, satiation, addictive responses

- *“Addiction becomes a solution to the trauma...The neurochemical bottom line is anxiety reduction.”*
- *“Addiction therapists use the term **compulsive** to describe repetitive efforts to calm the mind.”*

1. Excessive drinking
2. Use of depressant drugs or “downers”
3. Using TV, reading or hobbies as a way to numb out
4. Compulsive eating
5. Excessive sleeping
6. Compulsive working, especially at unrewarding jobs
7. Compulsive exercise
8. Bingeing (with any of the above) when things are difficult

9. Video games
10. Excessive use of technology and social media
11. Difficulty staying awake
12. Always looking for something to do, uncomfortable being at rest
13. Preoccupied with food and eating
14. Feeling anxious and “behaving” to make feelings go away
15. Using drugs to escape
16. Working so one doesn’t have to feel
17. Wish to “slow down” one’s mind

Trauma Splitting

Definition: Ignoring traumatic realities by splitting off the experience and not integrating into personality or daily life

Examples: Avoiding reality through excessive daydreaming, compartmentalizing parts of self to reduce tension, fantasy addictive responses such as romance addiction or artistic or mystical preoccupation, living a double life, extreme procrastination, dissociative disorders including multiple personality disorder, amnesia.

- *“Addicts will talk of the split in realities by saying they feel like two people: the real person who has values and keeps commitments, and the out-of-control addict whose compulsivity destroys everything important to the “real” person.”*

1. Fantasizing or spacing out during plays and movies that generate intense feelings or are reminders of painful experiences
2. Experiencing confusion, absentmindedness, and forgetfulness because of preoccupation
3. Living in a fantasy world when things get tough
4. Feeling separate from body as a reaction to a flashback
5. Experiencing amnesia about what you are doing or being preoccupied with something other than what needs to be attended to
6. Having a life of “compartments” that others do not know about
7. Living a double life
8. Daydreaming, living in an unreal world
9. Obsessing around addictive behavior
10. Losing yourself in romantic fantasies
11. The use of marijuana or psychedelic drugs
12. Difficulty concentrating
13. Avoiding thoughts or feelings associated with trauma experiences
14. Inability to recall important details of experiences

15. Procrastinating, interfering with life activities
16. Tendency to be accident prone
17. A problem with putting off important tasks

Trauma Abstinence

Definition: Compulsive deprivation, which occurs especially around moments of success, high stress, shame or anxiety.

Examples: anorexia nervosa, sexual aversion disorder (sexual anorexia), compulsive saving, agoraphobia, and other phobic responses, poverty obsessions, success avoidance, self-neglect, underachieving, and workaholism.

- *“Wherever addiction is, there will also be deprivation.”*
- *“Neglectful families teach lessons about self-care and self-esteem. The family environment allows children to become comfortable with deprivation. The neglect of children becomes self-neglect in adults. Couple it with high arousal events such as domestic violence or sexual abuse and you have a neurochemical cocktail that is hard to beat. **The antidote to being out of control is to be in supercontrol.** Maybe the only way to control survival is to freeze like a hunted animal. Ask nothing. Do nothing. Attract no attention. Yet fear mobilizes the body. Adrenaline, cortisol, endorphins and norepinephrine pour into the body. In a constant state, it can become addictive.”*

1. Deny themselves basic needs like groceries, shoes, books, medical care, rent or heat
2. Avoid any sexual pleasure or feel extreme remorse over any sexual activity
3. Hoard money and avoid spending money on legitimate needs
4. Perform underachieving jobs compulsively and make consistently extreme or unwarranted sacrifices for work
5. Spoil success opportunities
6. Have periods of no interest in eating and attempt diets repeatedly
7. See comfort, luxuries, and play activities as frivolous
8. Routinely skip vacations because of dedication to an unrewarding task
9. Avoid normal activities because of fears

10. Have difficulty with play
11. Be underemployed
12. Vomit food or use diuretics to avoid weight gain

Trauma Shame

Definition: Profound sense of unworthiness and self-hatred rooted in traumatic experience.

Examples: Shame cycles, self-mutilation, self-destructive behavior, expressing self-hatred through suicidal ideation, shame based personality, depression, codependency personality disorder.

- *“When the victim feels defective, or even worse, at fault, there is a traumatic shame.”*
- *“Shame does not just originate from a perpetrator blaming the victim, although that happens often. Trauma can also leave a feeling of being defective or flawed. Sometimes victims are ashamed of their reactions to trauma - they are no longer like other people.”*
- *“**People who are shame based have core beliefs that they are unlovable, that if people knew what they were really like they would leave.**”*
- *“Shame unravels our connection to others. In fact, I often **refer to shame as the fear of disconnection** - the fear of being perceived as flawed and unworthy of acceptance and belonging.”*
- *“Survivors will try to compensate by driving themselves to meet unreachable standards in order to gain the acceptance of others. When they fail, they add to their existing shame.”*

1. Feeling shame because you believe trauma experiences were your fault
2. Feeling lonely and estranged from others because of trauma experiences
3. Engaging in self-mutilating behaviors (cutting yourself, burning yourself, etc.)
4. Engaging in self-destructive behaviors
5. Enduring physical or emotional pain that most people would not accept
6. Avoiding mistakes at any cost
7. Feeling that you should be punished for the trauma event and being unable to forgive yourself

8. Feeling bad when something good happens
9. Having suicidal thoughts, threats and attempts
10. Possessing no ability to experience normal emotions such as sadness, anger, love, and happiness
11. Having a deep fear of depending on people
12. Feeling unworthy, unlovable, immoral or sinful because of trauma experiences
13. Perceiving others always as better, happier and more competent
14. Having a dim outlook on the future
15. Avoiding experiences that feel good, have no risk, and that are self-nurturing

Trauma Repetition

Definition: Repeating behaviors and/or seeking situations or persons who re-create the trauma experience

Examples: Reenactment, efforts to resolve unresolvable obsessive compulsive disorder, repetition compulsions.

- *"...Victimizing people in the same way that others victimized you."*
 - *"By repeating the experience, the victim tries anew to figure out a way to respond in order to eliminate the fear."*
1. Doing something self-destructive over and over again, usually something that took place in childhood and started with a trauma
 2. Reliving a "story" from the past
 3. Engaging in abusive relationships repeatedly
 4. Repeating painful experiences, including specific behaviors, scenes, persons, and feelings
 5. Doing something to others that you experienced as an early-life trauma
 6. Inability to stop a childhood pattern
 7. A desire to redo an early trauma experience
 8. Reverting to things done as a child
 9. Having thoughts and behaviors that do not feel good repeatedly
 10. Preoccupation with children of a certain age