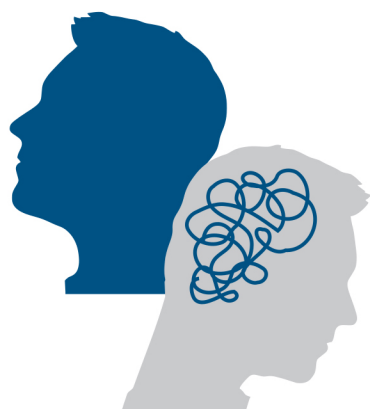




WHAT IS TRAUMA?

A Concise Look At Psychological Injury Sustained Through Widowhood



"Suddenly there's no place to stand. It's as if the world has broken its promise, revealing itself to be capable of devastating chaos and cruelty", explains Belleruth Naparstek, psychotherapist and author of **Invisible Heroes: Survivors of Trauma and How They Heal**. "The trauma carves a painful dividing line in the survivor's personal narrative, a line that splices our life in two: there's the person we were before, and the person we've become since. Profoundly undermined, we are lonely, fearful, disoriented, and unnerved by the certainty that we are not who we thought we were, and indeed the world is no longer amenable to past interpretation."

Trauma is "a metaphor for life-events that tear at the psychological skin that protects us, leaving us emotionally wounded," describes Dr. Stephen Joseph, psychologist and author of **What Doesn't Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth**. "When we experience trauma, our bodies go into shock and our minds are overwhelmed. Imagine a Christmas snow globe. Shake it and the snow flurries; over time, it settles. How long the snow remains unsettled depends on how vigorously the globe was shaken in the first place. So it is with the trauma that shakes up our mental world."



"Trauma is the most avoided, ignored, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering," says Dr. Peter Levine, psychologist and author of **Healing Trauma**. "People often ask me to define trauma. After thirty years, this is still a challenge. What I do know is that we become traumatized when our ability to respond to a perceived threat is in some way overwhelmed."

Additional Resources About Trauma & Widowhood

SCAN ME



NAVIGATING TRAUMA
IN WIDOWHOOD

SCAN ME



THE WIDOWED
RESILIENCE SCALE

10 WAYS TO EASE TRAUMA

- 1) Breathwork:** Deep, slow, regulated breathing from the abdomen can help calm the mind, relax the body and reduce anxiety. Try: Yoga, Meditation, Straw Breathing, Phone Breathing Apps, Biofeedback.
- 2) Counseling:** Therapists have specialized skills and training to assist in healing the emotional & psychological effects of grief and trauma. Try: Eye-Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Somatic Experiencing (SE), Art Therapy, Sandtray Therapy, Hypnotherapy.
- 3) Energy Therapy:** Many noninvasive techniques focus on physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually restoring and rebalancing the human energy system. Try: Reiki, Healing Touch, Somatic Experiencing (SE), EFT or "Tapping" at www.thetappingsolution.com.
- 4) Imagery & Visualization:** Imagery is a powerful practice for reducing anxiety, sleeplessness, nightmares, abrupt mood swings, hypervigilance, and intrusive flashbacks. Try: www.healthjourneys.com and www.soundstrue.com for guided imagery audio and CDs.
- 5) Use the Right-Side of Your Brain:** Access psychological healing through nonverbal means by going to where images, emotions, and body sensations are stored. Try: Movement, Music (www.musictherapy.org), Art (www.arttherapy.org), Soul Collage (www.soulcollage.com).
- 6) Exercise:** Body-based movement helps alleviate trauma symptoms such as sleep disruption, appetite change, muscle tension, and fatigue. Try: Walking, Swimming, Stationary Bike (solo); Dancing, Hiking, Kayaking (with a partner); or Soccer, Cycling, Yoga class (with a group).
- 7) Touch:** Touch strengthens the immune system and eases symptoms of anxiety. Touch can be increased by the help of friends, family, pets, licensed body workers, and certified massage therapists. Try: Pedicures, Manicures, Massages, Playing with Animals, Holding Children.
- 8) Nature:** Interacting with trees, sun, sand, water, and fresh air is healing. Studies in "Earthing" show that just standing barefoot on the soil, sand or grass is therapeutic for the body. Try: Joining a nature group at www.meetup.com, walking outside, taking lunch breaks outside.
- 9) A Combination of Eastern & Western Medicine:** Both Eastern & Western practices, therapies and medications can help alleviate severe post-traumatic symptoms. Try: Acupuncture, Reiki, Physical Therapy, Counseling and Dr. Andrew Weil at www.drweil.com.
- 10) Self-Care:** What are some things that have helped YOU ease trauma?

Notes: