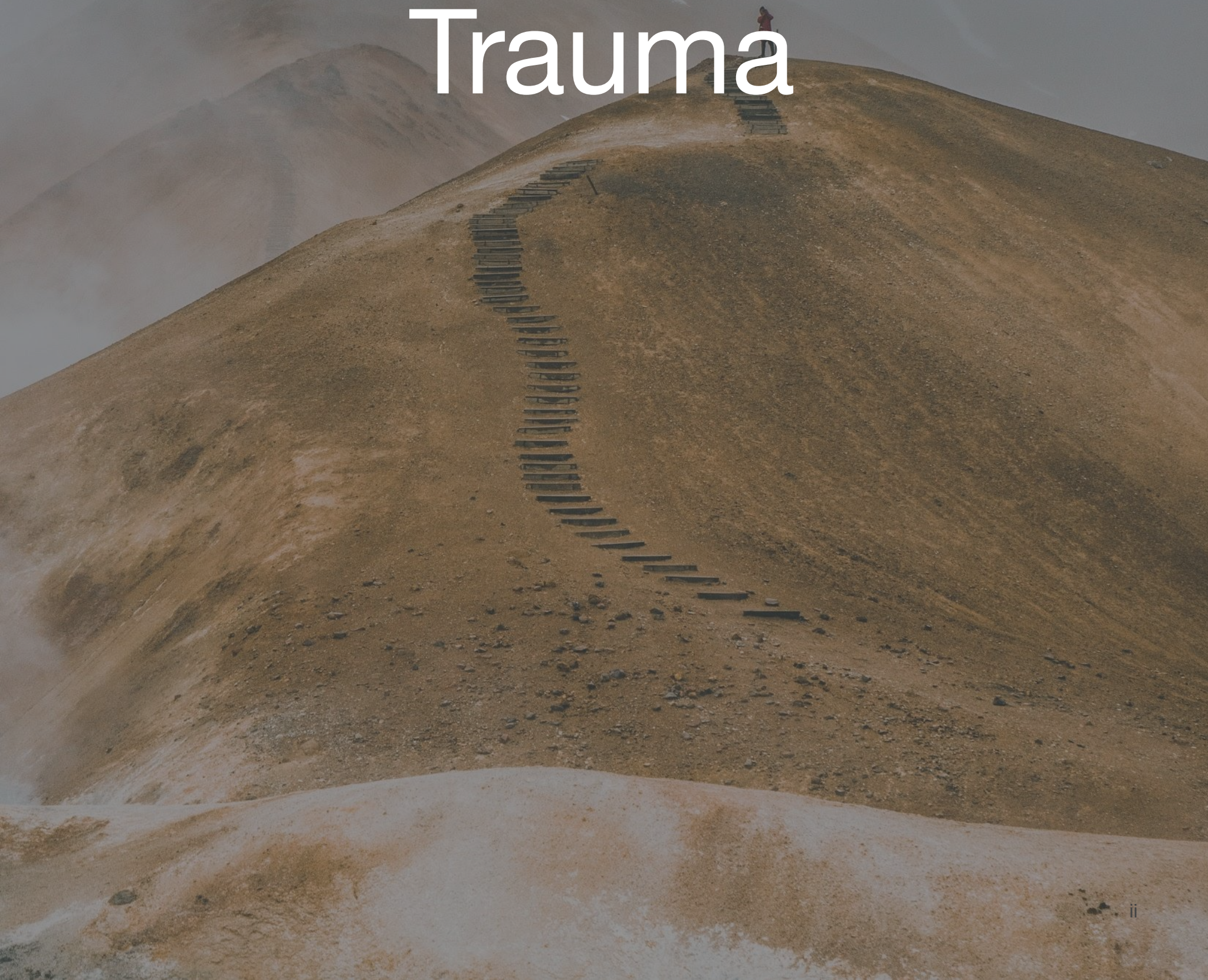


Finding Freedom From Betrayal Trauma





The goal of these exercises is to help you become completely free from betrayal trauma. As you get educated about addiction, trauma, and healing, you will find the peace and strength to move forward and create the kind of life that you want, independent of anyone else.

The strategies in this workbook will help you develop your plan for healing. As you follow through on those actions, you will notice a renewed sense of inner calm, direction, and confidence.

Introduction

ACCEPTANCE AND SURRENDER

You can immediately take back control of how you feel, think, and react as soon as you make the decision internally to accept the reality that you cannot control anyone else. The desire for control comes from a natural need for safety, and it's totally normal to feel the way you do.

Instead of trying to control your husband's behavior, make the decision to accept that you cannot change him or make him act in a certain way. That then allows you to direct your energy towards healthy behaviors that **are** in your control so you can create the safety and security that you need for yourself.

You can find relief as you surrender the outcome of any situation that's beyond your control. You can't make your kids' choices for them, you can't make your husband's addiction stop, etc., so releasing yourself from the specific outcome that you might have previously hoped for allows you to be free as you move towards the direction of happiness, peace and confidence, regardless of the outcome of a situation.

You can create the outcome of peace, stability, security and happiness in many different ways. Focusing on things in your control that bring you to your goal will help you get there much more quickly.

ROLES THAT OVERWHELM

In the midst of trauma, our number one priority is safety. Unfortunately, it's easy to take on certain roles with the intention of creating safety, but they don't actually bring us that result. It's important that you begin to identify which roles you might be adopting so you can decide consciously to do something different when a moment of fear or a trigger arises.

In the section below, write how you get stuck in each role (whichever ones apply) and then describe what you want to do instead to create the inner peace and safety that you need.

Remember, you are in control of how you feel and respond, so if you start to feel unsafe, it's your responsibility to create that safety again for yourself. Taking ownership over how we feel brings unparalleled freedom and confidence that you don't have to rely on anyone else in order to feel how you want to feel.

Persecutor (Angry Spouse)

Example:

When I am triggered, I become angry and lash out at my husband. I call him names and make him feel bad about himself, and I sometimes will break things and blame him for it.

How do you want to respond instead?

Example: I want to tell him that what he has done or said is not okay with me and take some space to go on a walk and listen to a song that uplifts me. After I come back, I'll decide how I want to move forward, what boundary I may need to put in place, and I'll call a friend for support

Detective

Example: I often go through my husband's email account to see who he might be talking to, or I check his computer history to see if he's been watching pornography. I found a way to track his phone, so I keep an eye on where he goes so I know where he is at all times.

How do you want to respond instead?

Example: Each time I get the impulse to check his phone, I'll remind myself that I can't control what he watches or where he goes. I'll surrender the situation to my Higher Power and decide to do something that brings me a sense of satisfaction and happiness and trust that I'll be okay.

Obsessed

Example: Throughout the day, I spend the vast majority of my time thinking and worrying about whether my husband is going to change. I stress and have a hard time concentrating on tasks that are necessary for me or the household, and I’m always checking up on him.

How do you want to respond instead?

Example: Each time I find myself going down an old familiar path of worry, I’ll decide to interrupt the pattern by listening to a podcast or reading something that I enjoy, and then I’ll ask myself, “What activity can I do that will have the single greatest contribution to me feeling safe or secure right now?” and then I’ll act on the thoughts that come.

Uncaring

*Example:
I put up a wall of resentment and coldness towards my husband to show him that he can’t treat me the way he does. I pretend that I’m unaffected by his behavior and that I don’t care what he does, but deep down, I do care and it does hurt.*

How do you want to respond instead?

Example: I want to acknowledge my pain and give myself a voice to share it with someone who I feel safe with. I want to release my anger and resentment, while still holding a healthy boundary to protect myself emotionally. That might look like me not being vulnerable with him until he creates safety, me keeping my distance emotionally, or limiting communication with him if he isn't safe.

Controlling

Example: I have lots of ultimatums in place and I try to control my husband's behavior by telling him all the places he can't go, what he can't watch, and who he can't talk to. This is how I try to keep myself safe.

How do you want to respond instead?

Example: I'll tell him what doesn't work for me and what feels uncomfortable in the relationship, which sets up clear boundaries around what creates a lack of safety. If he chooses to do those things, I'll take care of myself and create the safety I need as I think about how / if I want to move forward in the relationship if boundary violations continue to happen.

CREATE A PLAN FOR HEALING

Another important element in becoming free from betrayal trauma is creating a plan for individual healing. Even if your partner does decide to change and work on his addiction, you not focusing on the individual impact that his behavior has had on you, but assuming you'll automatically feel better, is like saying, "Once you stop stomping on the glass that you've already shattered all over the floor, then it'll be whole again." It's absolutely impossible. This is why it's so important to make sure that you are addressing your individual healing independent of him.

There are four different areas in which we are impacted by trauma: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. Creating action items in each of these categories will help ensure that you find stability and long-term healing regardless of what's happening externally.

It's important to emphasize your need to take responsibility for your individual healing. Even though you didn't cause this problem in the first place, you are the only person who can get yourself into a better spot.

Take advantage of the influence and power that you have over your own emotional well-being and in the following sections, you can outline a plan for your healing. The implementation of the plan, especially when things are hard, is going to ultimately bring you the freedom that you want.

MENTAL

Power Reframe

It's crucial to learn how to challenge and reframe the disempowering stories or negative beliefs that you might have as a result of your own life experiences and also your husband's actions.

Power Reframes are an important way to separate yourself from the situation, thus challenging the shame and negative beliefs. Below is the 3 steps to the Power Reframe with an example for each:

1. Identify the observable facts of a situation.

Example – My husband relapsed.

2. What story are you telling yourself about the situation?

What meaning are you making out of the event?

I'm not pretty enough, that's why he is turning to something other than me.

3. Challenge the story and the meaning you are making and find a different, empowering meaning to give it.

My husband needs to find the tools and or use them in order to avoid relapses. His choices don't have anything to do with my looks or my worth, and I can't control what he does.

(con't)

Take each negative belief and story that you have connected to his addiction, then reframe it by changing the meaning and challenging the disempowering perception.

1. Observable facts of a situation

2. What story are you telling yourself about the situation?
What meaning are you making out of the event?

3. Challenge what you are making that mean, the story,
and find another empowering meaning to give it.

EMOTIONAL

90 Second Rule

Dr. Jill Bolt Taylor, Harvard neuroanatomist, described how when we are triggered, the chemical released in our brain that surges through our body and then dissipates within 90 seconds. If we continue to feel the feeling beyond that period of time, it's because we are choosing to let the circuit continue to run. We keep this circuit open by replaying thoughts, images, and scenes in our mind, which releases more of the same chemical from the brain into our body.

Cultivating a practice of being mindful, present, and aware of your emotions and thoughts (and not getting sucked into them) is one of the most important skills you can develop! Research study after study confirms the validity and power of mindfulness meditation, which teaches you how to prevent the emotional circuit inside of you from running unchecked.

Mindfulness increases happiness, decreases stress and aggression, improves focus, and increases kindness. Download the app [Headspace](#) and spend just 10 short minutes and start seeing benefits quickly.

Remember, in the eye of a hurricane there is quiet. It doesn't take pushing, fighting, and efforting to get there. Rather, it's all about relaxing, releasing, and centering your attention on what is going on inside of you. The calm is there inherently, we just need to plug into it.

Once you're in a calm, centered state, you can approach a problem or situation with far more clarity and find solutions.

EMOTIONAL

Pattern Interrupt

Our brain can only consciously focus on one thing at a time. The more we follow a particular line of thinking that creates a negative internal experience, the worse we feel. The more we think about and focus on certain thought patterns, the easier it is for us to fall into them. We become so conditioned over time and through repetition that nearly anything can trigger the same unproductive pattern, which leaves us in a negative state consistently.

When we are stuck in a negative state, it becomes very difficult to access tools that would otherwise help us. One of the first things that we need to do is what's called a pattern interrupt, which is when we break those negative thought patterns and create a different emotional state for ourselves.

In order to interrupt your pattern, one of the fastest ways to do this is to do an activity that you find joy in, whether that's a book, podcast, exercise, calling a friend, watching a show, etc. This will allow you to interrupt the disempowering thoughts, which leads to a low-energy state.

The goal is not to break your state and then avoid or distract yourself from solving the problem. Rather, the goal is to break your state so you can enter a new positive, uplifting state in which you can find more solutions and effectively handle any situation because of the higher level on which you'll be operating.

List 10 things you can do to interrupt negative thought patterns:

PHYSICAL

Health, Clarity, and Wellness

In trauma, we often become overwhelmed by, forget about, or lack the motivation to take care of the basic functions and necessities of life. Some of the most essential elements for our physical health can also slip to the back burner, so in order to find stability and start to heal, it's necessary to include in your healing plan exercise, sleep, proper nutrition, meditation, going outdoors, being present, and any other action that helps you to take care of yourself.

Stress affects us and causes lots of mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, and personality disorders, cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks, and stroke. We need to re-imprint a new experience with safety in our bodies and one of the most effective ways you can do that is through yoga.

A leading trauma researcher, Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk said, "We saw all these abnormalities in people's heart rate, their breathing patterns, the way they relate to their bodies. It was very clear that their bodies were on fire, their bodies felt deeply unsafe, so the enemy that was once living outside was now living within. And you need to befriend your body, you need to calm your body down. *Yoga was more effective than any [depression or anxiety] medication.*"

Develop a list of activities that you want to incorporate into your daily routine. You don't have to do each activity every single day, but creating some more structure or having specific actions you'll do every day will give you momentum and the growth you want.

SPIRITUAL

Spirituality is an important component that many people overlook, but by focusing on this aspect of healing, you'll find a greater sense of peace and inner calm.

In this section, as we speak about spirituality, it's referring to the sense of inner calm, balance, and feeling of being centered. For some people, spirituality is connected to God or a Higher Power, the Universe, Source, etc., and for other people it's completely separate. Whatever it looks like for you, ensuring you create this peace is crucial since there is so often inner turmoil and stress due to the chaos of the addiction.

Meditation

Being in nature

Getting sunlight on our skin and away from the distractions of daily living provides important opportunities to center again and carve out time for ourselves in stillness.

Unplugging from electronics

Unplugging from electronics give your brain the needed time to be idle and rest. Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, a professor of neuroscience at the University of Southern California said, "If you're stuck in this feed-me stimulation loop, we know that this is associated with the feeling of being out of control," she says. "It's associated with anxiety and disconnectedness, and a feeling of, what's really real?"

Taking time throughout the day to completely unplug allows your brain to recharge, and it allows you to evaluate where you are emotionally and what you might need.

SPIRITUAL

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not something you do for your partner, it's something that you do for yourself. It doesn't involve giving permission or acceptance of bad behavior, forgiveness is simply releasing anger and resentment, allowing you to clear your heart and body of these emotions that build up and erode away internal peace and happiness.

Prayer

Journaling

Taking the time to journal and identify and process through the thoughts and emotions of the day or a particular event helps you to identify how you experience things. The more clarity you have regarding your internal experience and how you might have been impacted by something, the more feedback you'll get regarding what you need and how to resolve struggles. Journaling gives people a chance to reflect and slow down, which helps to increase our control and emotional well being.

Yoga

Creative expression

Creativity, whether that's in the form of art, music, painting, building, etc., has significant benefits. It's shown to reduce stress and anxiety, promotes problem solving and critical thinking, improves our ability to focus, and increases happiness.

Now that you have a set of tools you can use for each category of life, decide which category you'll focus on and which tool you'll implement this week by focusing on what needs the most attention at this point in your life.

SUPPORT

Reaching Out to Someone Safe

Dr. Van Der Kolk said, “Restoring relationships and community is central to restoring well-being.” At our core, we need a significant person in our life who can offer support, comfort, understanding, and love. Since we all have the same attachment needs of acceptance, belonging, comfort, and safety, when the bond within our marriage is broken, it causes deep pain.

This is why it’s so important to create emotional bonds with other people so you can get those attachment needs met, even if your partner isn’t currently meeting them.

Finding a safe person with whom you can share your struggles, pain, and situation will help you to feel more at ease, supported and confident. We are stronger in pairs, so take some time to think about who you might feel safe enough to share with. It only takes one person if your support group is limited.

If there isn’t anyone that you can think of, don’t give up on the idea of reaching out. It’s crucial that you then spend time considering who you might be able to further develop a relationship with to the point of *being able* to share.

Finding a person who isn’t committed to a particular outcome for the relationship, but who is instead committed to supporting and helping you in whatever goal *you* have.

Who can you share with? Or, who can you work towards developing the kind of relationship with where you can share your situation?

TRUST YOURSELF

When you deepen the sense of trust in yourself, you'll feel empowered to create the kind of life that you want independent of any external factors. Below are some of the areas in which you can develop or strengthen the trust in yourself and your abilities:

What do you need to do or let go of to strengthen trust in yourself and capacity to heal?

What do you need to do or remember in order to trust your own individual strength?

How can you remind yourself that you have the ability to respond exactly how *you* want to and to trust that you have the capability to create the kind of life that you want?

How can you increase trust in yourself that you can overcome hard things? What experiences in the past do you need to remind yourself of that will help you remember that you have the strength inside of you that you need to be successful?
