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THE DISTRESSING LEGACY OF TRAUMA, WHAT TO DO, SUPPORTS, AND MORE!

We hope you've had a great February. Welcome to March, and the beginning of another season. This month's newsletter is once again full : our feature article is about trauma – what it is and what to do, there's also links to supports that could be helpful, and a couple of articles by other authors that you might find interesting.

And don't forget, our last article was about worry and anxiety, and how to work with it more productively.

If you're interested in our previous articles, please click [here](#)

If you've got a suggestion for an article, or there's something more you would like to hear about, please send us an email - click [here](#)

THE DISTRESSING LEGACY OF TRAUMA ... BUT THERE'S GOOD STUFF TOO!

By Amanda Pulford

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Did you know that half to three quarters of us report being exposed to a potentially traumatic event in our lifetime? These events can include sexual assault, car accidents, exposure to war, the unexpected death of a loved one, assault, torture, natural disasters, and other incidents where threat (actual or perceived) occurs to the life or physical safety of the individual, their loved ones, or those around them.

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For most people the effects of being exposed to a potentially traumatic event are short lived. However, did you know that about 10 per cent of people develop symptoms that persist past a month, with these symptoms interfering in their everyday life?

Read on to find out more about the legacy of trauma. But I also need to tell you that it's not all bad ... there can also be positives after a trauma.

What happens after a potentially traumatic event?

After a potentially traumatic event, it is only natural to experience some psychological distress in its aftermath. This can include feeling emotionally upset, having increased anxiety, feeling guilty, feeling sad, feeling angry, or having disturbances in sleep and/or appetite. These symptoms will often be present for days and weeks following the event. However, most people find the symptoms will settle within the first month, and life becomes relatively normal again.

And then what?

Unfortunately, for others, the symptoms do not settle after a month. These people experience psychological injury from the traumatic event, which interferes with important areas of their everyday functioning.

This psychological injury can be diagnosed as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Criteria for PTSD includes:

- having intrusive memories or dreams about the event; feeling as if the event is recurring; experiencing psychological and/or physiological distress when reminded of the trauma
- avoiding thinking or feeling about the event; avoiding reminders of the event; avoiding people, places, conversations, objects or situations

- that trigger memories of the event
- an inability to remember parts of the event; persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs about oneself, others or the world; self-blame; a negative emotional state; lack of interest; feelings of detachment; difficulties experiencing positive emotions
- irritable behaviour; reckless or self-destructive behaviour; hypervigilance; exaggerated startle response; difficulty concentrating; sleep disturbance

Furthermore, some individuals who experience traumas of an interpersonal, prolonged, and repeated nature, can present with additional symptoms.

These can include:

- lack of emotional control
- self-destructive/impulsive behaviour
- impaired relationships with others
- hostility
- social withdrawal
- feeling constantly threatened
- dissociation or disconnection
- somatic complaints
- feelings of ineffectiveness
- shame
- despair or hopelessness
- feeling permanently damaged
- chronic self-harm and/or suicidal ideation

So, who is at risk?

Top risk factors for developing trauma reactions that effect everyday functioning:

- gender
- younger age
- low socio-economic status
- low education
- low intelligence
- race
- psychiatric history
- childhood abuse
- previous trauma
- general childhood adversity
- family psychiatric history

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- trauma severity
- lack of social support
- and other life stressors

What can be done about this legacy?

While this all sounds like doom and gloom, there are effective treatments for individuals who experience trauma – specifically for those who have PTSD. These can include Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprocessing (EMDR), Trauma Focussed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). An experienced Clinical Psychologist who specialises in trauma can talk you through these different options, and help you find the treatment that's for you.

But what's the good stuff?

Trauma isn't all bad. People can experience positive changes in the weeks, months, or years after a traumatic event. Individuals have reported acknowledging a greater inner strength than they ever thought, that they were closer to friends and family members, that life had more meaning, or that they were reorienting their lives towards more fulfilling goals. Trauma doesn't have to be an endpoint. Trauma can be transformative, powerful and enriching. Trauma can propel you towards living a richer, fuller life – towards becoming a better version of you.

Supports

If you, or someone you love, has PTSD or a more complex version of PTSD, the overarching recommendation is to seek professional help. However, you could also investigate the following websites, apps, or activities for further support.



The Blue Knot Foundation

A comprehensive website for people who have experienced childhood trauma.



PTSD Coach : Online

PTSD Coach Online is for anyone who needs help with upsetting feelings. Trauma survivors, their families, or anyone coping with stress can benefit.



PTSD Coach Australia : Mobile App

With you when you need it, PTSD Coach is a free app that can help you learn about and manage symptoms that commonly occur after trauma.



The Mindfulness App

Grounding yourself in the present moment can help you cope better with unpleasant thoughts and emotions. The Mindfulness app will help you do this.



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Dogs and PTSD

Owning a dog can lift your mood or help you feel less stressed. Dogs can help people feel better by providing companionship. All dog owners, including those who have PTSD can experience these benefits.

More ...

Here are two articles I found that are related to trauma. I found them interesting, I hope you do too.

The Art of Resilience

Research on resilience breaks down the myth that a troubled childhood leaves us emotionally crippled as an adult.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200305/the-art-resilience>

Do Psychiatric Service Dogs Really Help Veterans with PTSD?

A new study by researchers at Purdue University offers the first scientific evidence that Veterans with PTSD benefit from having a psychiatric service dog.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/animals-and-us/201802/do-psychiatric-service-dogs-really-help-veterans-ptsd>

As always, if you would like some help, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195,
admin@awakenpsychology.com.au or [click here](#)

Something you may not know about Awaken Psychology is that we work with Corporate's too. Each year, we partner with Leadership Solutions Global to run a 3 Day Mindful Leader Program.

The Mindful Leader Program is a public program designed for senior leaders to enhance their performance and well-being using mindful and self-awareness techniques. The three-day program provides techniques for investigating and developing attention, intention, perspective taking and new ways of being.

Do you know anyone who might be interested? Click [here](#) to find out more.

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