

The background of the entire page is an abstract composition of thick, expressive brushstrokes. The color palette is primarily purple and blue, with some white and light lavender tones. The strokes vary in direction and intensity, creating a textured, layered effect. A white rectangular box with a thin black border is positioned in the upper half of the page, containing the title text.

trauma processing.

A white rectangular box with a thin black border is located at the bottom center of the page. It contains the author's name in a lowercase, sans-serif font.

thais gibson

HELLO!



My name is Thais Gibson, and I want to begin by congratulating you on taking your first steps towards knowing yourself, and towards bettering yourself.

This condensed E-Book contains a few articles that I have written explaining what trauma is, how it affects us, and some tips & tricks for coping. This volume also contains some information about what suffering is, and how we can begin to transform it. It is designed to set you on a path of self-inquiry, and can be further supplemented by other material that I have on my website and in my courses.

Thank you for taking the time to read these articles, and I hope that you enjoy them!





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CHAPTER

ONE

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TRAUMA



AN IMPORTANT NOTE ON TRAUMA

While reading this chapter, keep in mind that we all go through some form of trauma at some point in our lives. Whether that trauma is relatively large or small, does not matter. It is an individualistic experience, and is real and valid in any scenario. Therefore, if you are experiencing negative behavioural patterns, yet criticize yourself for behaving in a certain way despite having a "normal" upbringing, just remember that - small or large - we all experience challenges. Therefore, do not judge yourself for behaving the way you do - rather, *inquire* and learn about what steps you must take to break that cycle, regardless of the cause.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

A common misconception about trauma is that it is event-based. Trauma is less about the event itself than it is **how you interpret the event, and how your nervous system organizes its response to the event.**

In my experience, there are roughly twenty core wounds created by the mind surrounding trauma. People will experience one or more of these core wounds in any traumatic situation. The wounds, or the meaning assigned to the situation, can include beliefs like: "I am unsafe", "I have been abandoned", "I am alone", or "I don't matter". These wounds are essentially the meaning or interpretation that your mind is giving to the event. For example, imagine a child who comes from an abusive household: they may, when witnessing one parent abusing the other, run to their room and feel "alone" in this terrible experience. However, another child may feel "unsafe".

These core wounds tend to then become quite repetitive in daily life, and are carried into adulthood. For example, if someone were to come from an abusive household, which triggered a core feeling of being "unsafe", their subconscious would then become hypersensitive to situations where they felt "unsafe". Since the subconscious is programmed to survive, and theirs has become hypervigilant around potentially threatening situations, they then project their stored childhood trauma into their environment to avoid scenarios where they could feel "unsafe". This can then manifest into feelings of nervousness, anxiety, or detachment - as mentioned, this is how the nervous system responds to the meaning assigned to the traumatic situation.

So - what does this mean? If you have a core belief that you, for example, are "unsafe" as a result of trauma that you experienced in childhood, it means that your subconscious is projecting this belief into your daily life as an outdated means of protection. This also means that the suffering from trauma - meaning the long-term emotional distress originating from painful event - is created by the meaning you're giving to the situation, rather than the event itself.

However, once you understand the underlying meaning you are giving to your trauma, you are then empowered to heal it.

Keep in mind that this article is the first step in a larger process of trauma healing. It's intention is to help you understand that you don't have to be a victim to your trauma - whether you have experienced a tremendously painful event, or a series of smaller challenges, by understanding the meaning you are assigned to your trauma, you can begin transforming it. An interesting quote by Gabor Maté draws on this idea: "It's not why the *addiction* - it is why the *pain*".

TIPS & TRICKS FOR EXPLORING YOUR TRAUMA

(1) Write Down Outstanding Negative Experiences

The memories that come to mind that cause a strong and negative emotional response are ones that your subconscious has created an automated reaction to. Therefore, they are events that need resolution. So, ask yourself: what did I make this event mean about me? Is it, for example: I feel unsafe, or I feel alone? Keep digging until you find an answer in the form of a judgment that you made about yourself - your answer must be framed in a way that expresses how you feel. Keeping the same household example in mind, an answer that is too surface-level would be "I had bad parents". Although they may have not been good parents, you need to come to an answer that helps you heal your trauma - in other words, you need to find what meaning you assigned to the situation about yourself. This would then potentially bring you to something like: "I believed that I was unsafe".

(2) Ask Yourself: Where do I Project These Beliefs Today?

Keep in mind that this exercise is about self-awareness and exploring your trauma more so than it is an in-depth solution to healing your trauma. However, it will shed some light on the suffering you may be experiencing. So, the second step is to ask yourself where the belief you found in Step (1) appears today. Keeping the same example in mind, it may be that, today, you feel unsafe in your job security. It may potentially be that you feel unsafe walking home at night.

By doing this exercise, you'll notice that the core wounds that you have from your traumatic experience are manifested in a variety of areas in your life.

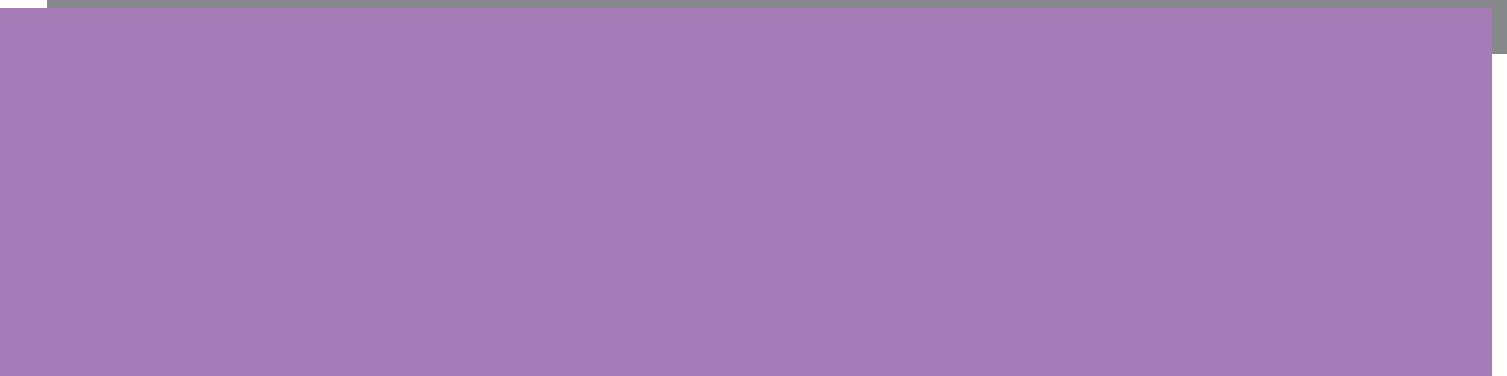
(3) Are these Assumptions Completely True?

Now question the validity of these beliefs. Are they true, or am I projecting outdated beliefs into my present? Maybe your neighbourhood *is* unsafe and it *is* justified to be concerned about walking home at night. However, you may concurrently be a wonderful employee who does have job security and you are projecting your fears from childhood into your present.

Summatively, begin by validating your trauma - do not judge yourself for behaving the way you do. We all experience trauma in our lives. Then, inquire into what meaning you are giving your trauma, and understand the bodily response that consequently results (such as anxiety, nervousness, e.t.c.). Then, ask yourself: where are these beliefs projected into my life today? And lastly: are these assumptions completely true?

By bringing your subconscious patterns up to a conscious level, you will be able to take a clear look at what is governing you in your daily life.

CHAPTER TWO



ENMESHMENT TRAUMA



WHAT IS ENMESHMENT TRAUMA?

Enmeshment trauma occurs when two or more people in a family dynamic have unclear boundaries between one another. Consequently, individual feelings, needs, and expectations become unclear. Although this may seem harmless, someone with enmeshment trauma loses their sense of identity, sense of purpose, and tends to have repressed feelings of guilt and helplessness in their adult life.

Moreover, people tend to rebel against enmeshment trauma in adulthood. Often, rebellion comes in the form of rage or anger, and creates a very challenging family or relationship dynamics.

ROOT CAUSES OF ENMESHMENT TRAUMA

One way that enmeshment trauma can be caused is by caregivers who had incredibly high expectations for their children. When a parent does not hold space for their child's individual needs or positively reinforce their emotions, it becomes unclear to the child where their ambitions begin and their parents' end. Moreover, since the child is punished if they do not perform in accordance to their parents' expectations, they sacrifice their needs to satisfy their caregivers'. Ultimately, the child ends up believing that they are who their parents want them to be, rather than who they truly are.

Enmeshment trauma can also occur when a caregiver is personally struggling, and their child watches it. The most important thing to understand about this

form of enmeshment trauma is that, as children, we are hardwired to rely on our caregivers for survival. Therefore, when a parent is struggling, the child will often become hypervigilant towards their parent, and sacrifice their needs to help their parent. They will essentially feel as though if their parent is not okay, they will not be okay. Therefore, if a child notices emotional fragility in their caregiver, they will consciously or subconsciously go out of their way to attempt to fix the problem as a means of survival. As a result, the child will lose their sense of self as they overcompensate to support their parents' needs.

The last common trigger of enmeshment trauma occurs when a parent is highly self-involved or narcissistic. This form of enmeshment trauma is similar to the parent who has high expectations for their child in that they project their needs onto their child. The net result of these three forms of parenting styles is a child who has abandoned their sense of self to satisfy their caregivers demands. Consequently, the child will be highly self-sacrificing, and will experience volatility in their adult relationships.

HOW TO REPROGRAM ENMESHMENT TRAUMA

(1) Learn How to Reconnect with Yourself

The first step to healing enmeshment trauma is recognizing your needs and boundaries - particularly where other people are involved. Ask yourself how you truly feel in certain situations, regardless of the expectations of those around you. For example, if a friend of yours is making a joke at your expense - ask yourself if you find it funny, or if you feel hurt by it. If you feel hurt by it, express that you prefer your friend does not make jokes like that in the future. By doing this, you can begin to get in better touch with yourself, and help to, over time, develop a better sense of self.

(2) Treat Your Needs Equally to the Needs of Others

Often, those who suffer from enmeshment trauma continuously people-please. This is because, on a deeper level, you are fearful of being rejected or abandoned if you cannot meet the expectations of others. This is where you must remember: your needs are equal to the needs of others.

(3) Actively Avoid Self-Abandonment

Ask yourself what matters to you. For example, if you value alone time or sports, do not give those things up to manage your relationships. Yes, you must have balance in the relationships around you, but you must avoid abandoning what matters to you in order to satisfy the expectations others. Keep in mind that there is a massive difference between compromise and sacrifice in relationships. Compromise is finding a balance between two different needs, whereas sacrifice is completely abandoning your needs for an indefinite period of time. Be clear ahead of time about what gives you a sense of self, what you enjoy, and what you should actively give your energy to.

(4) Learn How to Get Your Needs Met

Once you recognize what your needs may be, connect with yourself to find how to get them met. If you realize you need comfort, ask yourself: what does comfort look like to me? How can I express that I need comfort from someone else? Ask yourself what the need is, and how specifically you will get that need met. Make sure that your thoughts are framed in a strategic, and action-oriented way.

(5) Express This!

Whether it is your need or boundary, you need to express and communicate in your relationships. If you realize you need comfort, tell your partner.

This will enable you to begin building your personal boundaries - it will allow you to be atune with your partners needs, while eliminating your tendency to self-abandon. Once you have recognized, strategized, and communicated your true needs and feelings, you will begin to find the sense of identity that may have been lost in your childhood.

CHAPTER

THREE

4 WAYS YOU CREATE YOUR OWN SUFFERING AND HOW TO HEAL



OUR PERCEPTIONS & SUBCONSCIOUS BELIEFS

Our perceptions of the world are what create our reality. However, sometimes our perceptions can cause us pain, and sometimes they can even be untrue in the process. The following list describes ways that we create our own suffering, and how we can actually heal ourselves.

(1) We Create Suffering by being in Resistance to the Past

Imagine you are driving down the road, and your tire is flat. The moment that you realize your tire is flat, it is the past - although it is the immediate past, it is still in the past. When you agonize and feel frustration over the flat tire, you are in resistance to the *past*. You are arguing with something that has already happened, and you are giving your energy to nothing. It is essentially a form of insanity.

So - how do you remove your suffering in that moment? First, recognize and validate your emotions. Yes, it is a frustrating situation, and it is okay to feel that way. However, now you must pair that emotional acceptance with the attempt to create a positively-oriented solution. For example: "this is a frustrating situation, but I can call a tow company and resolve this scenario". By investing your energy into a solution, it is being properly expended, rather than fighting with an event that has already occurred. Keep in mind that you can be in resistance to the short-term and long-term past. If you are ruminating about

something in the past, ask yourself two key questions: **(1) If I am ruminating about this, what is the need it is trying to meet for me?** For example, in the case of the flat tire, you may be over analyzing the scenario to exert a form of control that you had lost in the moment that it happened. Once you can identify that you're looking for a sense of control, realize how you can meet that need in the moment. You may be able to regain control by calling a mechanic, and by doing so, you are sending your energy in a positive direction. Keep in mind that looking for control is the need that may arise in the flat tire scenario, specifically. Other needs may arise in other scenarios. The next key question you must ask yourself is: **(2) How can I learn or grow from this experience?** By asking yourself this question, you are essentially improving your post-traumatic growth, which is your overall ability to bounce back from challenges. Studies have shown that those who tend to be more successful are able to take challenges and turn them into opportunities. By asking yourself this small question and taking a moment to seize an opportunity to grow, you will make a big - and positive - cumulative impact in your life.

(2) We Create Suffering by being in Resistance to the Choices that we are Currently Making

By resisting what you're currently doing, you are using your energy in an inefficient way. Considering every decision that a person makes is because they believe consciously + subconsciously that that decision has more benefits than drawbacks, you will realize that by resisting current decisions, energy is wasted. For example, if you are resisting going to work in the morning but you *do* go to work, it is because you perceive going to work as having more benefits than drawbacks. These benefits could include paying your bills and having a house to live in, even if the drawback is that you dislike your job.

Therefore, if you commit to that decision because there are, in fact, more benefits than drawbacks, the resistance to that choice is simply creating meaningless suffering.

Mentally explore different areas of your life, and ask yourself where you are creating meaningless suffering for yourself. At the end of the day, to remove your suffering, you must be on board with the choices that you make - rather than suffering without a purpose. To make the most of these scenarios, ask yourself: (1) How can I make the most of this situation, and (2) How can I not be in resistance to it?

By simply reflecting upon your choices and searching for positive steps to reach acceptance, you will minimize the suffering you create for yourself surrounding your present-day decisions.

(3) We Create Suffering by Giving Meaning to Our External Environment Based on Past Events

This may seem like a more complicated form of suffering. To better illustrate what this means, consider a man has a female partner that cheats on him. He then believes that all women will cheat on him, and that he can't trust women. As you can see, this man projects this belief into the external environment based on this past event that he experienced.

Therefore, you must ask yourself: How does this belief affect your life? Is it more painful to live life never again trusting a woman and avoiding a rich relationship, or is it more painful to be vulnerable again and risk a small chance of that event occurring again?

Overall, you need to look at the beliefs you are upholding, and what the potential downside cost of overturning that belief would be. Once you have done this, you have the opportunity to reprogram these beliefs, and move forward with your life. A good analogy for this kind of suffering is: you cannot drive a car only looking in the rearview mirror. We cannot assume that our past experiences will equal our present, since it is actually what will project the past into our present and future. In other words, if you avoid relationships entirely to avoid being cheated on and ending up alone, you will still end up alone by avoiding those relationships.

(4) We Create Suffering by Making Our External Reality About Our Internal Self

This may be the most complicated way in which we create our own suffering. To help illustrate what this means, imagine this scenario: a woman is extremely angry about her husband leaving his laundry on the floor - more angry than someone should be about such an event. As she becomes more furious, her husband becomes more sad and withdrawn, to the point of being in despair. It is clear that this scenario isn't actually about the laundry on the floor. What creates the intense emotion in this situation is *the meaning that the man and the woman are assigning to the clothing on the floor.*

Although pain is inevitable in life, suffering is the meaning that we assign to the pain. However, suffering is always transformable because it is perception-based. In the case of the laundry, the wife may believe that she is not respected by her husband, and the husband may perceive that he is unloved because she is so upset about laundry on the floor when he tries so hard in other areas of the relationship.

In this case, there are two human beings fighting about clothing on the floor, but what they are really discussing, are feeling disrespected and unloved. These wounds, moreover, may have been created subconsciously in childhood.

Therefore, we must source the meaning that we are giving to certain situations, and find evidence of the opposite. By looking for evidence, in this scenario, of occasions where her husband respected her and his wife loved him, the unconscious beliefs that we associate to external events can be uprooted and disproven.

Overall, by questioning what meaning you are assigning to certain events and analysing the way in which you spend your energy, we can eliminate multiple sources of suffering on a daily basis, and work towards a happier and more authentic life.

CHAPTER

FOUR

PROCESSING YOUR SUFFERING



Imagine this scenario: you have had a difficult day, and you reach out to a friend to ask them to come over for some support. You are hoping to sit down and chat through the challenges you had faced that day. Then, as you begin to share, your friend starts scrolling through social media. Or, they get up and get a glass of wine. Essentially, your friend is only partially paying attention to what you are trying to tell them.

Ironically, this is something we do to ourselves every day. When we come home from a tough day at work, for example, we do not take the time to inquire about why it was so challenging for us, and put on the TV instead. This is not a way to process your emotions - it is an attempt to dissociate from what you are feeling.

Eventually, the emotions that you are neglecting will come out in another form - whether it is through poor coping mechanisms, arguments with your partner, or other forms that will create suffering.

TIPS & TRICKS TO RELIEVE SUFFERING

(1) Write Things Down

By writing things down, you will be able to find greater clarity about what is truly causing emotional distress. For example, imagine you are fired from work - the suffering that coincides with that event originates in the meaning that you assign to it. It may be that you lose the feeling of security, you may feel

not good enough, or you may feel embarrassed or ashamed about telling your family you were fired. By identifying the pieces of meaning that you assign to the situation - such as feeling not good enough - you put yourself in a position to heal, rather than suffer helplessly.

(2) Question The Validity of These Beliefs

Did you truly lose your job because you weren't "good enough"? Maybe the company had to restructure because of external circumstances entirely out of your control. By questioning the meaning that you are assigning to a situation, you can begin to relieve yourself of the thoughts you're having that are causing your suffering - especially if they are invalid.

(3) For Thoughts that are Valid - Strategize

In this scenario, you'll likely think that you'll need to find a new job. This will most likely be true. Therefore, use the energy you were using to stress over invalid beliefs to, instead, find a strategy for the scenarios that *are* true. This may include reaching out to old friends in your industry, organizing your finances, and putting together a new resume. Make sure you also define how and when you will execute these strategies.

As you write down what is causing you distress, what challenges you will face, and how you will face them, you will begin to bring back security to your situation. You will more clearly see what you need to do, and will move through this challenge more quickly and easily than you would have otherwise.

(4) Reflect on The Experience

Lastly, wisdom can often be found in challenges. Take a moment to ask yourself: is there an opportunity to learn something about myself throughout

this experience? Perhaps it is an opportunity to begin exploring a dream that you've had to enter a different industry that, historically, you've repressed. Although challenges arise in different magnitudes throughout our lives, there is always value in taking a moment to reflect on what lessons may be learned throughout that challenge.

Overarchingly, by taking a moment to write down what you're feeling, which of those feelings may be true or exaggerated, and looking for solutions to the problem, you will find that your suffering will be greatly eased. As you reflect, you may also learn something invaluable about yourself throughout this process that you wouldn't have without the hardship you're experiencing!