

The information contained in these handouts is provided to increase awareness of how hypnosis may help and does not constitute medical expert opinion, diagnosis, or treatment. It is not intended to replace medical care or professional advice from a qualified healthcare provider. If you have any concerns for yourself or loved ones consult with medical and or health providers.

Trauma: Understanding It, Myths, FAQs, and How Hypnotherapy Can Help

What is trauma?

Trauma is an emotional and physical response that happens after a person experiences or witnesses something overwhelming, frightening, or harmful—especially when they feel they have little or no control and no safe way to respond at the time.

Trauma can come from many experiences, such as:

- serious accidents or disasters
- abuse or neglect
- violence or threats
- medical trauma
- bullying or repeated harmful experiences
- witnessing harm to someone else

It's not only about what happened; it's about how the nervous system and mind processed what happened.

How trauma affects people (mind and body)

Trauma can show up in both psychological and physical ways. Responses can vary from person to person, and they may change over time.

Mental and emotional responses

Common patterns include:

- Feeling on edge or “waiting for something bad to happen”
- Intrusive memories (unwanted images, thoughts, or flashbacks)
- Emotional numbness or feeling detached

- Anxiety, irritability, anger, or low mood
- Shame or self-blame (“It was my fault”)
- Fear and avoidance of reminders
- Difficulty concentrating or feeling mentally “stuck”
- Sleep problems and nightmares

Physical and nervous system responses Your body may respond as if danger is still present, even when you’re safe now. This can

include:

- racing heart, chest tightness, shortness of breath
- muscle tension, headaches, stomach upset
- feeling shaky, overwhelmed, or fatigued
- digestive changes
- feeling “frozen,” heavy, or unable to act
- being more sensitive to stress, noise, or sudden movement

A helpful way to think about it: survival responses

Many trauma responses are linked to the body’s survival system. People may show patterns that look like:

- fight (anger, agitation)
- flight (restlessness, avoiding situations)
- freeze (shutdown, numbness, feeling stuck)
- fawn (people-pleasing, trying to keep others calm)

These are understandable responses—not personal flaws.

How trauma can develop or continue

Trauma healing isn’t only about remembering. It’s often about how the nervous system learns “this situation is dangerous,” and how the brain and body continue to react that way afterward.

Trauma may continue to feel present because of:

- reminders that trigger the alarm system

- stress and sleep disruption
- avoidance that reduces relief short-term but keeps fear alive long-term
- unhelpful beliefs formed during the trauma (for example: “I’m not safe,” “I can’t cope”)
- emotional memories stored in body sensations

Myths people often believe about trauma

Myth 1: “Trauma is only big, extreme events.”

Reality: Trauma can result from many experiences—including events that were frightening or harmful, not just “life-or-death” moments.

Myth 2: “If you look fine, you’re not traumatized.”

Reality: Trauma can look like calmness, numbness, high functioning, or people-pleasing. Everyone copes differently.

Myth 3: “You should be able to ‘get over it.’”

Reality: Trauma affects the nervous system. Healing often takes time and supportive work.

Myth 4: “Talking about it is always harmful.”

Reality: Talking can be helpful when done safely and at a pace that supports your nervous system. Forced or rushed processing can be difficult.

Myth 5: “Trauma means you’re weak.”

Reality: Trauma responses are survival responses. They show you adapted to what you faced.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Can trauma responses happen even years later?

Yes. Your brain and body can react to reminders—internal (feelings/sensations) or external (places/people/sounds)—even long after the original event.

Why do I feel numb or disconnected?

Numbness can be a protective response. When emotions feel too intense, the mind and body may “switch off” to help you cope.

Are flashbacks the same as nightmares?

Not always. Flashbacks are often feeling as if the event is happening again in the present, while nightmares are usually intense dream experiences. Both can be part of trauma, but they're not identical.

What if I remember parts clearly but others feel missing?

That can happen. Some people have detailed recall; others remember in fragments. The nervous system may store memories in different ways.

Is it normal to feel angry, irritable, or easily triggered?

Yes. Irritability and heightened reactions are common trauma signs, especially when your nervous system stays on alert.

Will hypnotherapy replace therapy or medical care?

Hypnotherapy is typically a supportive approach. Many people benefit from combining it with other professional care when needed.

How hypnotherapy can help with trauma

Hypnotherapy is a guided process that helps many people access a calmer, more focused state. It can support trauma healing by helping you work with the fear and stress response in a gentle, paced way.

Common areas hypnotherapy may help include:

1) Soothing the nervous system

Hypnotherapy can help reduce hyperarousal ("on guard" feeling) and support relaxation so you feel safer internally.

2) Reducing distressing trauma symptoms

Many people use hypnotherapy to work with:

- intrusive thoughts or images
- sleep difficulties and nightmares
- anxiety and triggers
- feeling emotionally overwhelmed

3) Changing trauma-related beliefs and interpretations

Trauma can create lasting beliefs like "I'm not safe" or "I'm to blame." Hypnotherapy can

help you develop steadier, kinder interpretations that support healing.

4) Building coping skills

Sessions may include guided tools you can practice between sessions—helping you regulate when emotions or body sensations spike.

5) Supporting gradual processing (when appropriate)

For many people, healing works best when it's not rushed. Hypnotherapy can support gradual steps so you don't feel flooded.

Safety and consent (important) A good hypnotherapy approach is collaborative and paced. You should never feel pressured

to relive traumatic experiences. Instead, the goal is usually to help you feel more grounded and in control.

A gentle next step

If trauma has been affecting your sleep, your mood, or your ability to feel safe, it can help to start by identifying:

- what triggers you most (people/places/feelings/situations)
- what your body does when you're triggered (tightness, numbness, panic, shutdown)
- what you want to feel instead (calm, safe, steady, confident)

If you want help getting started

If you'd like support in a tailored, trauma-informed way, you can book a supportive consultation with Brendan Hypnotherapy Online. You can discuss what's been happening, what feels hardest, and what a realistic, supportive plan for healing could look like.