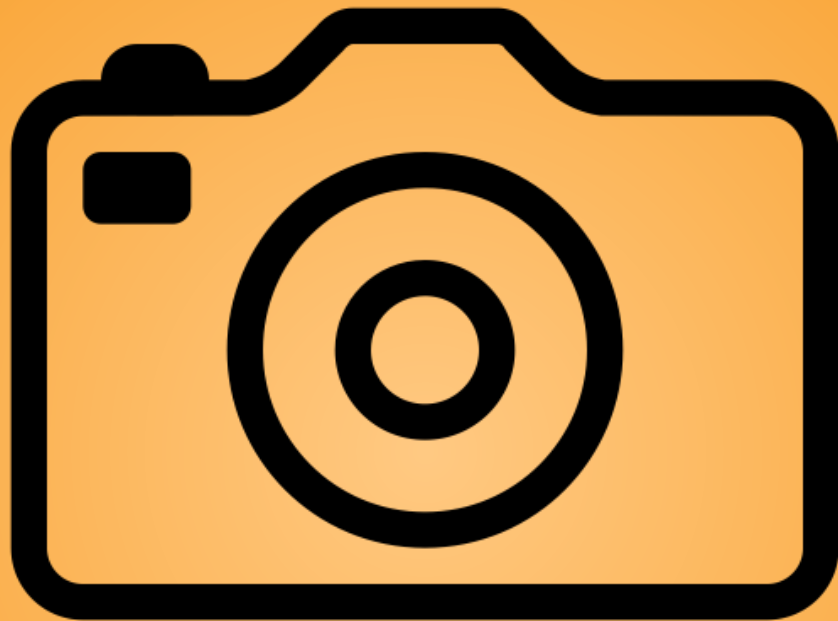


# LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF TRAUMA

Danielle Ratcliff





**IT IS ALL ABOUT THE LENS WE LOOK AT  
OURSELVES, OTHERS & THE WORLD AROUND US**

**YOUR SAFE SPACE**

# TOPICS

- 1. The Lens of Trauma**
- 2. The Connection Between Trauma and Addiction**
- 3. Trauma's Impact on the Brain**
- 4. Responses after Trauma**
- 5. Looking through a Trauma Lens**

# TRAUMA

**Any experience that leaves a person feeling hopeless, helpless, fearing for their life/survival, or their safety. This experience can be REAL or PERCEIVED.**

# **TRAUMA AND ADDICTION**

What is the pain or problem your  
substance use or addictive behaviour is  
trying to “fix”?

It's crucial to grasp two important things when trying to understand the seemingly baffling behaviours of substance use and addiction disorders.

- 1. Knowing how our nervous system is wired helps us better understand our thoughts, feelings, behaviours, body sensations, and automatic reactions. Understanding our nervous system helps us know what makes us human.**
- 2. We need to recognize that difficult or traumatic experiences impact almost every aspect of who a person is.**

# CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND ADDICTION



# **7 NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF MISSING THE LINK BETWEEN TRAUMA AND ADDICTION**

- 1. TOO MUCH OF A FOCUS ON ADDICTION LEAVES THE INITIAL ISSUE OF TRAUMA UNRESOLVED TRAUMA SYMPTOMS DISRUPT EVERYDAY LIFE IN A WIDE VARIETY OF WAYS.**
- 2. ADDICTION PROBLEMS ARE MORE SIGNIFICANT FOR THOSE WITH A TRAUMA HISTORY**
- 3. YOUR RISK OF SEVERE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES INCREASES.**
- 4. ADDICTION TREATMENT PROGRAMS CAN BE LESS HELPFUL.**

# **7 NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF MISSING THE LINK BETWEEN TRAUMA AND ADDICTION**

**4. ADDICTION TREATMENT PROGRAMS CAN BE LESS HELPFUL.**

**5. TRAUMA SYMPTOMS ARE OFTEN MISTAKEN FOR AN UNWILLINGNESS TO PURSUE RECOVERY.**

**6. RELAPSE OCCURS MORE OFTEN FOR THOSE WITH UNRESOLVED TRAUMA.**

**7. IT INCREASES THE HOPELESSNESS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF RECOVERY.**

Trauma reactions are **no different** following non-violent situations such as natural disasters, chronic illness, etc.

# TRAUMA EXPOSURE

**Victim** (abuse, neglect, car accident)

**Witness** (personal witness – domestic violence, police, fire)

**Related to** (peer, siblings – of chronically ill siblings, sibling that completed suicide)

**Listening to details of trauma** (therapists, media exposure, video games, etc.)

# Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (DSM 5)

Re-experiencing (INTRUSION – 1)	Avoidance (NUMBING - 1)	Negative Cognitions and Mood (2)	Arousal (2)
Flashbacks	Detachment	Distorted sense of self	Aggression
Intrusive thoughts -images	Numbing	Estrangement to others	Reckless behavior
Traumatic dreams	OCD like behavior Phobic like behavior	Markedly diminished interest	Self-destructive and Rule-breaking behaviors
Sleep problems	Self Harm	Depression	Hypervigilance
Physical complaints	Substance Abuse	Blames self or others	Irritability
	Eating Disorders		Inattention
	Not wanting to talk about it		Cognitive/Learning problems

Symptom Overlap (Weinstein et al., 2000)	ADHD	PTSD
Hypervigilance	X	X
Inattention	X	X
Detachment	X	X
Irritability	X	X
Anger Outbursts	X	X
Distracted	X	X
Restless	X	X
Impatient	X	X
Impulsive	X	X
Limited sense of future	X	X
Difficulty Concentrating	X	X

# Trauma Focused Mandate

The primary dictate of trauma informed care is:

**“Do No Harm”**

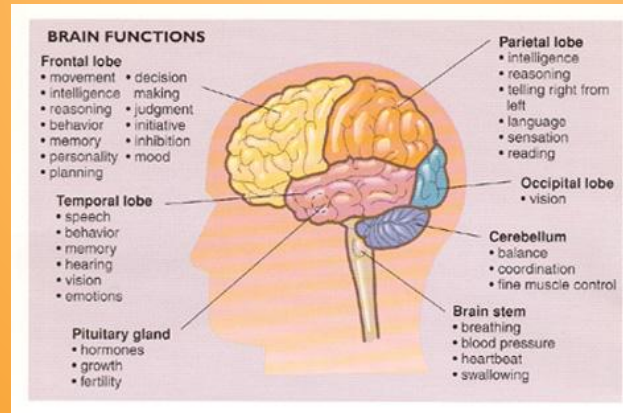
*If you don't think what I think,  
feel what I feel, experience what  
I experience, and see what I see  
when I look at myself, others,  
and the world around me, how  
can you possibly know what is  
best for me?*



Trauma is a  
**sensory experience**  
because of what happens to the  
brain and memory during trauma.

# Functions of the Brain

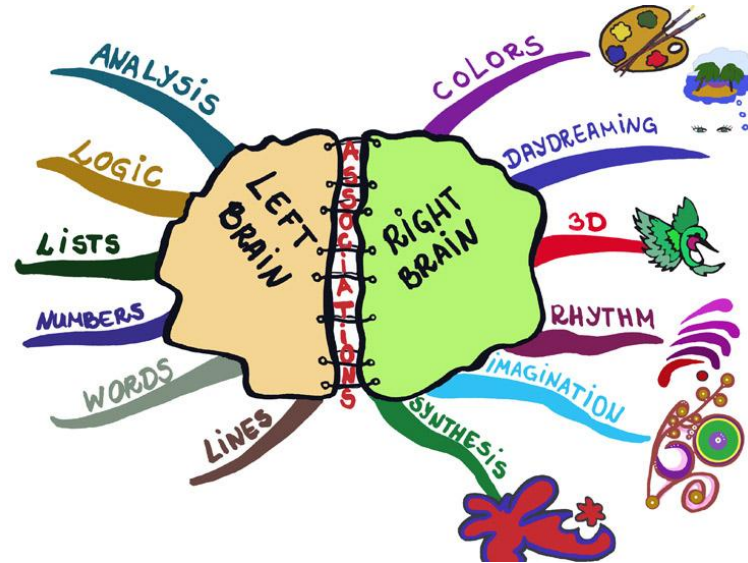
Right Brain (Sensory)	Left Brain (Thinking)
Senses	Language
Memory	Reasoning
Affect	Thinking
Emotional Regulation	Understanding/Processing



# Left Brain and Right Brain

Both brain hemispheres are affected.

The first thing that happens is that the left and right brain don't integrate and work together – There is no cooperation between the two hemispheres.



# How Trauma Impacts Left Brain



- No language.
- No reasoning skills.
- Unable to make sense out of what happened.
- The neurons in the Hippocampus are damaged significantly by the stress hormone release.
- Learning, processing, focusing is impaired.

# Experience becomes Biology

Though it may be difficult to believe, one traumatic event in any one's life, especially a child's, can alter both the structure and the chemistry of the brain.



# NADINE BURKE



# A<sub>DVERSE</sub> C<sub>HILDHOOD</sub> E<sub>XPERIENCES</sub> S<sub>TUDY</sub>

The 3 types of ACEs include

## ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

## NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

## HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Abuse toward Parent



Substance Abuse



Divorce

What color is your life?

**FIGHT, FLIGHT,  
FREEZE & FAWN  
RESPONSES**

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR FIGHT RESPONSE

When threatened, some people's first instinct is to fight back. This could mean becoming angry, confrontational, or trying to take control of the situation. This is an age-old survival mechanism. The idea is to overpower the threat. While it can be effective in some situations, it may also harm relationships or escalate conflicts.

## Signs That FIGHT is Your Response Mode

**AGGRESSION** - Do you feel the need to confront others aggressively when threatened? Is your first instinct to dominate the situation?

**IRRITABILITY** - Do you find yourself getting irritated more quickly than usual ? Is it difficult to keep your emotions in check?

**BLAMING** - Do you often place blame on others when things go wrong? How easily do you take responsibility for your actions?

**OVER CONTROLLING** - Do you feel the need to control situations or people to ensure your safety? How does this affect your relationships?

**SARCASM** - Do you use sarcasm to shield yourself or put others down? Why do you think you resort to this?

# **SIGNS THAT FIGHT IS YOUR RESPONSE MODE**

**DEFENSIVENESS** - Are you quick to defend yourself or your actions, even when not accused? What are you trying to protect?

**CRITICISM** - Do you find yourself frequently criticizing others? Is this a way for you to establish dominance or control?

**INTOLERANCE** - Do you have a low tolerance for frustration or inconvenience? How do you react when things don't go your way?

**IMPULSIVITY** - Do you make rash decisions under stress, often regretting them later? What's the driving force behind these choices?

**COMPETITIVENESS** - Do you engage in behaviors you know aren't healthy but make you feel in control? How do these behaviors serve you?

**INTIMIDATION** - Do you use your physical or emotional presence to intimidate others? What do you think you gain from this?

**VOCAL ESCALATION** - Do you find yourself raising your voice or talking over people when you feel threatened or challenged? What are you trying to achieve?

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR FLIGHT RESPONSE

The flight response is all about escape. If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, you may want to run away, either literally or by avoiding the issue. The goal is to put distance between yourself and the threat. This could be practical in some scenarios, but it might also mean important issues are left unaddressed.

## Signs That FLIGHT is Your Response Mode

**AVOIDANCE** - Do you feel the urge to leave the situation immediately? Does it feel unsafe to be where you are?

**PROCRASTINATION** - Are you postponing tasks or decisions that may be triggering? What's holding you back?

**DISTRACTION** - Do you find yourself engaging in other activities to take your mind off the issue at hand? How effective is this for you?

**ISOLATION** - Do you withdraw from friends and family when faced with stress or conflict? What are you hoping to achieve by doing so?

**WORKAHOLISM** - Do you immerse yourself in work to avoid dealing with emotional issues? How is this affecting your well-being?

# Signs That FLIGHT is Your Response Mode

**ESCAPE FANTASIES** - Do you often find yourself daydreaming about a better life or situation? How does this help you cope?

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE** - Do you resort to substances like alcohol or drugs as an escape mechanism? What feelings are you trying to evade?

**EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT** - Do you distance yourself emotionally from situations or people that trigger you? How does this serve you?

**OVER PLANNING** - Do you create detailed plans or lists as a way to avoid unpredictability? Does this give you a sense of control?

**FREQUENT RELOCATION** - Do you have the tendency to move homes, jobs, or even cities to escape problems? What are you trying to leave behind?

**PERFECTIONISM** - Do you strive for perfection as a way to avoid criticism or judgment? How does this impact your self-esteem?

**INFORMATION HOARDING** - Do you obsessively collect information as a way to feel prepared and avoid potential threats? How is this helpful or harmful?

**EXCESSIVE EXERCISE** - Do you use physical activity as a way to run from emotional distress? What are you trying to outrun?

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR FREEZE RESPONSE

Sometimes people just freeze when they're threatened or stressed. They find themselves unable to move or make decisions. The freeze response is another survival mechanism, often kicking in when we feel that fighting or fleeing might make things worse. It's like playing dead when a predator is near; the idea is to go unnoticed.

## Signs That FREEZE is Your Response Mode

**EMOTIONAL NUMBNESS** - Do you find it hard to feel any emotion, even the good ones? Do you feel disconnected?

**INACTION** - When something distressing happens, do you find it difficult to make any decisions or take action? What thoughts go through your mind during these times?

**HYPERVIGILANCE** - Do you feel constantly on edge, watching for signs of danger even in safe situations? How does this impact your daily life?

**DISSOCIATION** - Do you sometimes feel disconnected from your body or reality when stressed? What triggers this for you?

**DAYDREAMING** - Do you often retreat into your thoughts, losing track of time and ignoring your surroundings? What are you escaping from?

## Signs That FREEZE is Your Response Mode

**COMPULSIVE EATING** - Do you find comfort in eating and often eat even when you're not hungry? How does this make you feel afterward?

**RUMINATING** - Do you obsess over past mistakes or future worries, finding it hard to concentrate on the present? How does this affect your day-to-day life?

**STONEWALLING** - Do you shut down in conversations, becoming unresponsive when you feel threatened? What are you trying to avoid?

**SELECTIVE MUTISM** - Do you find it hard to speak or express yourself in high- stress situations? What fears are associated with this?

**AVOIDANT BEHAVIOR** - Do you actively avoid confronting problems or difficult emotions? How does this serve you in the short term? And in the long term?

**SELF SABOTAGE** - Do you undermine your own success or happiness as a way to stay in your comfort zone? What are you protecting yourself from?

**EXCESSIVE SLEEPING** - Do you sleep more than usual when faced with stress or emotional turmoil? How does this impact your well-being?

**WITHDRAWAL** - Do you retreat from social situations or commitments when you're feeling overwhelmed? How does this isolation affect you?

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR FAWN RESPONSE

Fawning means trying to please or placate others as a way to diffuse tension or conflict. People who fawn may go out of their way to be helpful, compliant, or overly friendly. The idea is that if you make the "threat" happy or content, it won't be a threat anymore. However, this often comes at the expense of neglecting your own needs and boundaries.

## Signs That Fawn is Your Response Mode

**PEOPLE PLEASING** = Do you go to great lengths to make others happy, even at your own expense? How does this affect you?

**AVOIDING CONFLICT** - Do you tend to agree with others to keep the peace, even when it goes against your beliefs? What are you sacrificing in these moments?

**SEEKING VALIDATION** - Are you always seeking approval from others? How does their validation make you feel?

**OVER APOLOGIZING** - Do you find yourself apologizing excessively, even for things that are not your fault? What are you trying to achieve with this?

**CAREGIVING** - Do you feel compelled to take care of others, even when it means neglecting your own needs? How does this make you feel?

# Signs That FAWN is Your Response Mode

**OVER-LISTENING** - Do you let others dominate conversations, rarely voicing your own thoughts and feelings? What holds you back?

**CODEPENDENCY** - Do you form relationships where you feel needed but not necessarily valued? How does this impact your self-worth?

**MARTYRDOM** - Do you sacrifice your own well-being for the sake of others, feeling like a martyr? What does this bring you?

**MIRRORING** - Do you tend to mirror people's opinions or behaviors to fit in or be liked? How authentic does this make you feel?

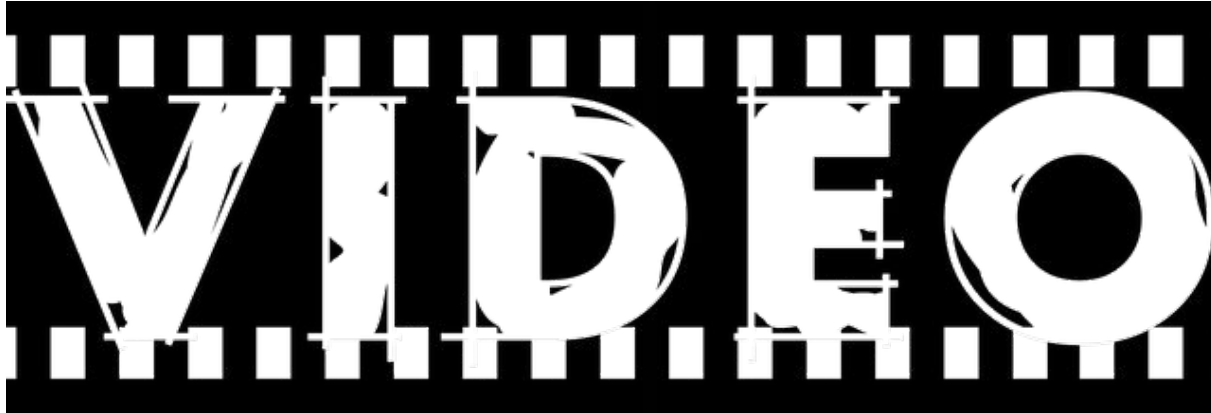
**OVER COMMITTING** - Do you take on more responsibilities than you can handle, just to make others happy? What's the toll on your well-being?

**INGRATIATION** - Do you try to win people over by flattery or doing favors even when it's not reciprocated? How does this make you feel?

**AVOIDING BOUNDARIES** - Do you find it difficult to set boundaries, fearing it will upset others? What are the consequences of this?

**LOW SELF ESTEEM** - Do you place little value on your own needs and desires in favor of serving others? How does this affect your self-image?

# Remembering Trauma



<https://vimeo.com/296650100/47a5c9e152>

# 1. ACKNOWLEDGE

To Acknowledge The Impact Of Trauma On An Individual - We First Need To Acknowledge That Trauma Is Real And How It Affects Us.

## **2. RECOGNIZE THE IMPACT**

**Recognize the impact Adverse Experiences have on us and how those experiences can have the ripple effect on our health, social skills and mental health.**

### 3. PERSPECTIVE SHIFT

Our perspective needs to shift. We need to see the people around us through the lens of trauma, not asking “What is wrong with you?” But “ What happened to you or what is happening to you?”

## 4. ON GOING SELF CARE

### THE B'S OF A HEALTHY YOU

1. BE AWARE - of what is happening to you.
2. BOUNDARIES - are for you too.
3. BODY-MIND-SPIRIT it takes all three.
4. BE HAPPY - you deserve it

WHAT COMES NEXT?

# LOOKING THROUGH A TRAUMA LENS



[www.reachfortomorrowohio.org/looking-through-a-til.html](http://www.reachfortomorrowohio.org/looking-through-a-til.html)



# REFERENCES

<http://www.reachfortomorrowohio.org/mat712-toolbox.html>

<https://www.starr.org/training/tlc/courses-training>

<https://www.gci.org/disc/23-functions> - purpose of the church

<http://www.ictg.org/blog/seven-key-traits-of-a-trauma-informed-congregation> - 7 traits/characteristics

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/blog/trauma-informed-congregations> - 4 R's of a trauma informed congregation

<http://www.acesconnection.com/g/faith-based-connection/search/tag/442378480397913552>

<https://vimeo.com/137282528> - resilience film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7stze3645s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0iVTQS8ft><http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0iVTQS8ft>

[www.goodtherapy.org/blog/134-activities-to-add-to-your-self-care-plan/](http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/134-activities-to-add-to-your-self-care-plan/)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYv4Fs7nzlY>