

Ten Tips for Trauma Recovery

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It is helpful to begin by understanding that your body reacted “normally” to an abnormal, frightening event. All of the systems of the body went into fight-flight-freeze mode, and your brain released a cascade of chemicals to help you to survive.

Sometimes when that happens the brain can't do its other jobs, like processing the trauma so that the body knows the event is over. Sometimes the trauma gets “stuck.” Images might stay intense, smells might trigger panic, sounds might also trigger panic — as if things are frozen in time and you aren't safe anywhere.

Research shows that most people (85 percent) will heal by themselves. In other cases, especially if the body was hurt in the trauma, you might need the help of a therapist. Although it will take some time, there are certain things you can do to aid your own recovery.

Here are some ideas to help:

1. Use all of your senses to help you. Play soothing music, light a candle, take a bubble bath, get out in the sunshine. Seek safe physical contact. Hug each other. Talk to your body/mind. Tell it is safe now.
2. Exercise helps to release endorphins in the body. Walk, move the body, swing your arms back and forth.
3. Breathe deeply, sending oxygen all the way to the bottom of the lungs. That brings more oxygen up to the brain, which sends a signal that you are safe again. In the trauma, many people hold their breath without realizing it. Deep breathing restores the feeling of safety.
4. Eat healthy. Your body has been in a shock. It needs help to recover.
5. Sleep may be disturbed. Your brain is trying to process the trauma to help you know that it is over. However, sometimes you wake up having nightmares interrupting the processing. If you sleep through the nightmare and wake up in the morning, that is a good sign — the brain is better able to do its job. If you wake up in the middle of it very afraid, then the processing is interrupted. At that point it might be helpful to use some of the Energy Psychology techniques to calm the body down, and help you to sleep.
6. Avoid alcohol or illegal drugs. While they may initially put you to sleep, they will disturb the processing that the brain can do at night. Use regular medicines under the direction of a physician.
7. Limit how much trauma you watch on TV. Distract yourself with more hopeful things.
8. Be active. Don't sit around. Do something that empowers you, rebuild something, take action in a positive direction.
9. Count your blessings, even though it may be hard at first.
10. Learn some simple Energy Psychology techniques to help the body calm down. Seek the help of a therapist or a trusted friend if needed.

Learn about Energy Psychology techniques at <http://www.energypsych.org/trauma-relief.php>.