

Healing Our Woundedness

Part One: Creating, Perpetuating and Releasing Trauma

Introduction

My view is that trauma is in the cells of our body. Our conscious mind knows of the trauma, though the trauma is held in the cells of our body. Many different terminal diseases have been linked to past trauma in a person's life. The trauma may be sudden, like the death of someone or a one time sexual abuse, or may be ongoing like having abusive parents or an abusive spouse.

What Is Trauma?

Trauma comes from the Greek word that means wound. People who have experienced trauma have been wounded.

Trauma has been defined as psychological or emotional injury caused by a deeply disturbing experience that often leads to lasting psychological or emotional impairment. Trauma's origin can be from psychological, emotional or physical events. 100% of people have been traumatized and 99.99% of people carry dysfunctional effects from previous trauma.

Creating Trauma

Trauma is created any time we go into overwhelm; when something is too much for us to stay centered and grounded as the emotional, psychological or physical occurrence is happening.

We don't acquire trauma from every time we've had some amount of overwhelm, though there are many times in our life that an emotional, psychological or physical event has occurred and some residue, some trauma (woundedness), stays in us from that occurrence.

All emotional, psychological and physical wounds are an energy that was not there before the overwhelming or threatening event happened.

The Effects Of Trauma

Held-in energy is the effect of when we were overwhelmed/threatened; when the event was too much for us to handle at the time. If we “handle” something, there are no bad (or held-in) consequences from what happened.

Examples of handling things are when we have a conversation with someone and we don't carry any negative thoughts, feelings or tension from the conversation. When someone drives poorly and we have to suddenly do something, and then we let that stress go.

An example of acquiring held-in energy from an event is when we have a conversation with someone and we're stressed from it, and this stress keeps active in us. We can think of that conversation days, months or years later and the feeling of stress comes along with our thoughts.

Now here's a catch. It's not just the events that we can remember that hold held-in energy from the past. Woundedness, carrying residue/held-in energy from past events, doesn't have to be remembered to still be affecting us. This is one of the main reasons that we can “blow up with anger or implode in shame” over a minor event.

The High Failure Rate Of Psychology and Psycho-Pharmacology In Treating PTSD

Most soldiers coming back from war have PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). I consider PTSD to be normal for someone coming back from war. The typical treatment for veterans is talk therapy and/or drug therapy. The success rate of veterans using talk therapy and/or drug therapy to heal from the effects of PTSD are dismally low. The suicide rate of male veterans is one and a half times higher than men who did not serve. The suicide rate of women veterans is five times higher than women who did not serve.

PTSD is extremely common in our society. Many people have had abusive parents, siblings, peers, employers or spouses. There seems to be more and more people living with the negative effects of trauma; with more and more people taking medications (anti-depressants, etc.). Talk therapy addresses the mind. Drugs suppress symptoms. Both of these therapies are not adequately helping out the veterans.

Does Time Heal All Wounds?

Some wounds heal quickly, even instantly. Some wounds heal over time. And some people carry their woundedness to the time of their death. I know people who died with anger, hatred, shame, blame, guilt, envy, jealousy or sadness. Their woundedness did not heal before their death.

I'm not going to go into the philosophical question if these wounds are healed by death or after death. What I know for certain is that these people died with their wounds, and that not all wounds are healed while a person is alive.

Perpetuating Trauma

Each time we re-live, feel or think about a traumatic event from our life, one of two outcomes can occur. As we re-live the traumatic (wounding) event, the held-in energy of our emotions, psyche and body related to the trauma can either increase or decrease. There are many times that a person will give more strength to their wound by revisiting their wound. This revisiting without any further release perpetuates and increases the amount of held trauma.

Releasing Trauma

There are times when revisiting/working with the traumatic event can help the held energy-emotions of the trauma to release. This release of held energy, emotion and thought can happen when we're by ourselves, when we're talking with friends or when we're working with a therapist.

If you're reading this article, then you're most likely aware that there are unhealed traumas inside you and that by yourself you're very likely going to continue to carry the trauma. As human beings, we're set-up to need help. No one is meant to go through life without help. Help and support from others is almost always needed to heal the deep traumas/woundedness of the past. The woundedness from trauma is held in the body. The unwinding and the healing of trauma in our body, emotions and mind will be addressed in Part Three of this paper.

Part Two: Reacting To, Tolerating, Accepting and Welcoming The Uncomfortable Traumatic Emotions, Feelings, Thoughts, And Body Sensations That Are Already Inside Of Us

An unhealed wound is the held-in energy from an event that creates an ongoing dysfunction in our psyche, in our emotions, in our body and in our life. When we have unhealed wounds, we carry the effects of unresolved trauma.

Unresolved trauma is what is in the way of our happiness. If all of the trauma from the past was released, then we'd be free. Many people want inner freedom, which is happiness, joy, love, contentment and creativity, yet unresolved trauma remains in the way of their freedom.

The next part of this article will explore what it means to react to, tolerate, accept and welcome the uncomfortable emotions, thoughts and feelings that are already inside you or that are currently occurring from an overwhelming event.

Reacting To Trauma

We have a built-in way to respond when we're actively being threatened. The threat can be verbal and/or physical. Most of the time the threat is verbal, not physical. To our built-in mechanism, a threat is a threat is a threat, and our built-in mechanism can react-respond with the same intensity whether the threat is verbal or physical.

This built-in response to being threatened is called the fight-flight-freeze response. One or more of these three responses become active without our conscious choosing. Our behavior will be taken over by one or more of these built-in automatic reaction responses.

We attack, blame and/or defend when the fight response comes up. We want to get away when the flight response comes up. This getting away can involve leaving, denying, masking the feelings with activity, drugs, alcohol, sex. When we cannot move, and often cannot say anything, then the freeze response comes up.

The freeze response has two variants. We can be frozen solid with our muscles tense like a deer standing in the middle of the road as the car comes toward the deer. One of the deer's strengths is being fast, and yet, the deer cannot move "to save its life." The other variant of the freeze response is faint; where our body goes limp and the life force feels as though it's drained out of us. We feel utterly weak and unable to do or, usually, say anything.

Many people carry shame throughout their life when the freeze response is activated. They look back and say to themselves: “Why didn’t I do or say anything???” Two examples of being caught in the freeze response is when a person is in combat and when a woman is being raped. They didn’t do or say anything because they absolutely couldn’t do or say anything. They were caught in an automatic response to trauma that is stronger than being able to consciously act.

There are two more built-in responses to being threatened that are a subset of the fight response and the freeze response. To cry for help is another built-in response to being threatened. This is when a person actively yells for help. Yelling for help is within the fight response’s built-in way of action.

Submitting is another built-in response to being threatened. Submitting is within the freeze response’s built-in way of responding to being threatened. Submit is defined as: “to give over or yield to the power or authority of another.” There’s some conscious action in submitting. The other two freeze responses of being frozen stiff and becoming limp/lifeless have no conscious action in them.

When fight, flight, freeze, cry for help or submit are activated, we’re being traumatized; we’re actively acquiring more trauma-woundedness that is in the way of living free.

Tolerating What Is

The previous section of reacting to overwhelm was the first response that I explored. The second response that I’ll explore is to tolerate what we’re experiencing and what we’re feeling.

When we tolerate (put up with) the uncomfortable emotions, thoughts and/or body sensations that are the effects of trauma, we’re having some conscious/willful input. We’re not fully caught in the reaction of the flight-fight-freeze response.

When we tolerate the uncomfortable emotions, thoughts and/or body sensations, we’re teetering on the line of either acquiring more trauma or having some trauma release. The “teetering on the line” when we tolerate is because there’s both some amount of resistance and some amount of acceptance to what we’re feeling. There’s usually not a lot of release of, or addition to, the held trauma when we’re tolerating the uncomfortable emotions, thoughts and/or body sensations of the trauma/woundedness.

Accepting What Is

The third response to overwhelm that I'll explore is accepting what we're feeling and thinking. When we accept the uncomfortable emotions, thoughts and/or body sensations, we're falling deeper, becoming more intimate, with the stored trauma inside ourselves from the past or the feeling of trauma that is happening in the present moment. The more we close down, avoid, resist, fight or push away the uncomfortable emotions, thoughts and/or body sensations, the more they stay. The more they stay, the stronger they can become. Release of the trauma begins to happen when we become more intimate with the uncomfortable emotions, thoughts and/or body sensations through the neutrality of acceptance.

We're in closer contact to the trauma when we accept what is; there's no barrier of resistance present. We don't have to like the feeling of our pain and we can be with our pain. It's in this dual state of being with our pain and neither resisting nor embracing the pain when a deeper healing can happen. There's no reactivity as happens in the fight, flight or freeze response. The resistance that happens when we tolerate is not there. We're now in a neutral, and more fully conscious, state.

Welcoming What Is

The fourth, and final, response to overwhelm that I'll explore is welcoming. Welcoming our current emotions, feelings, thoughts and body sensations is a very deep state. From this deep state we can come to recognize that the trauma that we've been carrying can turn from nemesis to teacher. We can recognize that the fire of hell is the same fire that, if consciously welcomed, can burn up the trauma/woundedness.

Another person is vital, and almost always needed, as we begin to learn how to welcome what we're feeling in our emotions, mind and body. Another person can give us additional support to stay with our pain until the pain, like a fire burning, burns itself out. As the fire burns out, the held energy-emotion-thoughts-body sensations of the trauma are being released and reduced.

Just as it may take multiple times of vomiting to completely empty our stomach after food poisoning, we usually have to go through multiple times of releasing before all of the held energy-emotions-thoughts-body sensations of the trauma has been fully released.

In welcoming there's no fight, flight or freeze. There's no resistance that comes with tolerating what is. There's no neutrality that comes with accepting what is. In welcoming there's a full embrace and a welcoming of all of the uncomfortable emotions, thoughts and/or body sensations.

This full embrace allows a larger release of the trauma-woundedness than what reacting, tolerating or accepting can do.

The Fires, Flees and Freezes Of Held-In Trauma-Woundedness

Held-in trauma-woundedness doesn't have just one feeling. Held-in trauma can be experienced as a fire; a scorching pain. Held-in trauma can also be experienced as a fleeing, a panic, wanting to get away from whatever feeling is there. And held-in trauma can be isolating and cold when we're frozen. Whatever version of held-in trauma-woundedness we're experiencing, welcoming, diving in as deep as we can, is what will effectively release the held trauma.

We do not want to create more trauma in our efforts to release trauma. If the emotional, mental or physical pain that you're experiencing is too much, do something else to slow down or stop the feelings, thoughts and body sensations that are becoming too overwhelming. People have, and will, further traumatize themselves by going too far into their pain without enough strength or support to go that far. It may take months or years to come to the point of welcoming your stored trauma.

Many people do not get to the place of tolerating their trauma/stored pain. They spend their entire life either blocking, denying, pushing away, fleeing or numbing their trauma/stored pain. Some people come to accept and work with their trauma/stored pain; gradually lessening the stored trauma. And a very few number of people welcome, embrace, talk with and take as their teacher their trauma/stored pain. *Every person I know that welcomes, embraces and learns from their trauma has had help from another person in being able to do so.*

Part Three: Releasing The Held-In Woundedness

The previous sections of this article have explored what trauma is and what internal states are more conducive (accepting and welcoming) for the held-in energy-emotions-feelings-thoughts-body sensations of the trauma to release.

There are different ways for the held-in trauma to release. I'm going to explore some ways to release the trauma. These ways are not the only ways to release trauma. I've found these ways to be very effective; especially if another person is there to help you as you go deeper and deeper into the held-in woundedness.

Using Our Breath

Abdominal Breathing

I've already written many times about the importance of abdominal breathing to release trauma. (See footnote #1 at the end of this article if you want to read more about abdominal breathing from previous articles.) This is a short section of the article because so much has been previously written.

For decades I've said that abdominal breathing is my primary practice in life. Our nervous system is wired to not breathe abdominally when we think. And we do a whole lot of thinking throughout the day! This means that if we don't consciously direct ourselves to breathe abdominally throughout the day, then we'll do very little abdominal breathing.

With abdominal/diaphragmatic breathing, we're activating the parasympathetic nervous system which is the grounding, calming and centering part of our nervous system. Abdominal breathing facilitates deeper access to the trauma-woundedness that is held within our body.

If we're not breathing into our belly, then we're activating our sympathetic nervous system. Our sympathetic nervous system is responsible for the fight and flight reactions. We slow down the release of the held-in trauma when we're not breathing abdominally.

Abdominal breathing is a core and integral part of releasing trauma. Please do not underestimate the key and core role that abdominal breathing has in releasing trauma.

Using Sound

Sound As A Way To Release Held-In Trauma

This small section on the positive, needed and very productive use of sound is very short. From the subtleness of a sigh to the squeal of delight, sound naturally moves energy. I fully encourage people to allow any sounds to come out. When I work with people sounds are encouraged.

Vocal sounds are a powerful and effective way to release the trauma that is stored in our body. At times using sound will be the primary and most direct way to release. Sound is almost always needed to be included when releasing the held-in effects from previous traumatic events.

In the beginning, vocal sounds almost always have an emotional feeling connected to them. As the vocal sounds (and release) continues, the amount of emotional feeling often decreases. The sounds can still be strong, though it now can be more energy moving through without strong emotional feelings. It's also okay for strong emotional feelings to be there as the release happens through sound.

Using sound (that can also include crying) to release the held-in trauma is very important. I now want to address two "sound traps;" where the use of sound is not productive in releasing the held-in trauma.

Sound Trap #1 – Rote Sound

We've all listened as a person can talk on and on and on, and not really be saying much of anything. Many times I've listened as sound is coming through a person during a time of release without any "energy content;" like a person talking on and on without really saying anything. Rote sound (sound without a substantial energy) sounds like something is happening, and it's not.

Sound Trap #2 – Yelling or Screaming

Very loud sound in the form of yelling or screaming may occur. My view is that very loud screaming that continues for minutes is not a deep and effective way to release the held-in trauma. These loud vocal sounds can be described as "screaming your head off." Strong yelling or screaming is energy going up (toward the head) and out (through the vocal cords). I refer to this type of very loud release like a tea kettle that is whistling loudly. There's a lot of pressure in the tea kettle that makes it whistle. As the kettle whistles, very little of the water is being released; even though the sound coming from the kettle is very loud.

Primal Therapy, developed in the 1970s by Arthur Janov, used "primal scream" as the main way of releasing trauma. In primal scream, you were directed to scream as loudly and as long as you could. This "screaming your head off" almost always brings a temporary feeling of relief, though I've seen that it often is only temporary relief without producing deep, long term changes for the person. Within several years of being introduced as a therapy, Primal Therapy was rarely practiced.

My view is that screaming very loudly for minutes doesn't release much of the held-in trauma; even though there can be a noticeable feeling of relief. I've seen people get addicted to the good feeling that comes after screaming their head off, and years later, they're still screaming their heads off without much change in the amount of trauma that is being held inside.

I don't stop a person from yelling or screaming, though I do direct them to feeling more into the emotions and to feel more into their body when they are "screaming their head off." By feeling more into the emotions and into their body, the loudness of their screaming-yelling spontaneously decreases. This decrease of the strong "up and out" of the held-in energy then opens another pathway for the trauma to release. Vocal release through sound can still continue with a greater feeling/being with the emotions. By the over dominance of sound decreasing, the body itself can become more involved in releasing the held-in energy in the form of the body spontaneously moving.

As the flow re-directs from up-and-out to coming back more into the body, there's a greater possibility to have "the water drain from the kettle." This drainage through the body is often in a very specific place in the body. I call this specific place an "anchor point." The drainage-release of the stored trauma can expand from being primarily at the anchor point to include more and more of the body.

Anchor Points

The next sentence holds a major key to effectively releasing the held-in trauma. Every traumatic emotion and thought is held/located at a specific place in our body. I call these specific places that hold the energy of the trauma "anchor points."

I'll continue to address anchor points throughout this article. (See footnote #2 at the end of this article if you want to read more about anchor points from previous articles.)

Feeling The Emotions

Feeling the grief, sadness, shame, jealousy, envy, anger, rage, hate and blame is coming into a more intimate connection with the held-in emotions from the trauma. Feeling the emotions is not the same as releasing the emotions. Feeling the emotions very intimately is a connecting point for release to happen. I encourage people to intimately feel whatever emotions are there.

While intimately feeling the emotions, expression of the emotions is very likely to happen. The four primary emotions to release are mad (anger), fear, sad and frozen. (Glad/happy is a fifth emotion, though it's not in the way of our freedom.)

When expressing mad emotions, anger sounds can come and more fitful (jerky) or shaking body movements can come. When expressing sad emotions, crying and shaking or trembling can often come. When the emotion is frozen, then we can greatly benefit

from another person's help. (A deer "caught in the headlights" is a common example of being frozen. One of the deer's strong points is being very fast, and yet the deer is frozen; the deer cannot move.)

De-thawing frozen into the active emotions of mad or sad is almost always very difficult on our own. As the de-thawing of frozen happens, the held-in energy from the trauma can then actively release through breath, voice, emotional expression and spontaneous body movement.

Emotional Expression

The movement of the held-in traumatic energy can go in two very different directions. The first direction is to discharge-release the held-in trauma. The other direction is to "loop" the held-in trauma and not discharge the traumatic energy.

A discharge of the held-in traumatic energy can happen when a person's emotions become active through expressing sadness (crying), fear or anger. These expressions of emotions along with breathing and spontaneous movement of the body helps the traumatic energy to release.

The sad, mad and fear expressions of emotion can also, at times, perpetuate or increase the amount of the held-in trauma. People can sometimes be "in a loop" of expressing their emotions (sadness, fear or anger); where the emotions are strongly felt and expressed, but there is no release of the held-in trauma.

If we include spontaneous movement, abdominal breathing and awareness of our body, especially awareness of the anchor point, while feeling and expressing the emotions, then we're much more likely to discharge-release, and not loop, the held-in traumatic energy.

The Role Of The Mind When Releasing

Non-useful thinking while release is happening is an interference to the release and helps to keep the trauma held in. The mind has a very useful function as the held-in energy of the trauma releases. The mind's job is to keep attention at the anchor point while also allowing (not blocking) vocal release, allowing (not blocking) our connection to our emotions/feelings, and allowing (not blocking) spontaneous body movements.

It's okay for thoughts to come up while the energy of the trauma is releasing from the body, though too much thinking slows down the release of the energy. If we don't let the mind go into problem solving or analyzing, then we'll greatly increase the release of the trauma. There's

nothing for the mind to solve or figure out as the held-in energy of the trauma releases. The mind will have plenty of time after the release has completed to think about the trauma and to think about what happened during the release of the trauma.

The Role Of The Body When Releasing

The held-in energy from trauma is in our body. If our body moves itself (rather than us consciously moving in specific ways) as the energy releases, then the energy will leave at a faster rate. If we're "stiff as a board" as the energy of the trauma is wanting to release, then the release is inhibited.

My view is that, in general, spontaneous body movements are the most effective way to release the held-in energy from trauma. If you try to manipulate or create body movement, then very little energy is actually released.

Animals naturally do spontaneous body movements (often trembling or shaking) to release trauma after a confrontation with another animal. Their body is releasing the trauma-woundedness from the very strong threat that just happened. We can then see that shortly after the shaking stops, they'll re-engage in their life in a natural way.

Humans have lost touch with this natural discharge of the traumatic energy from the body. After trauma, most likely our mind is racing and our emotions are very active, and our body stays relatively still as our mind and emotions take charge. This dominance of the mind talking to us and the emotions being strong along with the exclusion of the body releasing the energy of the trauma is how the energy from a trauma builds up in us and stays in us.

Most people, as they more deeply release the held-in trauma, have a natural shift where more and more attention comes to the discharge/release of energy through the body, and a natural lessening of emotional feelings and mental thoughts. Release becomes an interweaving of the body moving, of the emotions flowing, of spontaneous sounds arising, and of the mind settling down as the physical, emotional and mental pain becomes less and as the release of trauma increases through the spontaneous movement of the body and the welcoming of all of the feelings. With this spontaneous moving of the body and the welcoming of all of the feelings, the mind will naturally quiet.

Caveat/warning: You can have enough awareness during release to know when you're putting your body in harm. Do not get so "out of control" that your body can become injured. This amount of "out of control" body movement is detrimental and potentially harmful, and is totally not needed for the release of trauma to happen.

Combining Parasympathetic Breathing, Attention At The Anchor Point, Sound and Spontaneous Movement

I've found that a very effective way to release the held-in energy, emotions, thoughts and body sensations from trauma is to keep attention at the anchor point, use parasympathetic breathing, spontaneous body movement and not inhibit sound as a way to release the held energy. This combination of breath, attention, spontaneous movement and not inhibiting sound is like turning a key in a lock. As the key turns, the lock will open.

Another person supporting and guiding you during this time of breathing, attention to the anchor point, and using sound and spontaneous movement of your body can incredibly deepen the release of the held-in traumatic energy. I've always experienced the most release of trauma (the held-in energy of our woundedness) with the help of a person facilitating the release; not when I've been by myself.

The Later Stages Of Release

The shaking, trembling and more jerky/active spontaneous movements that occur as the body releases are an effective way to release trauma. Vocal sounds, emotional feelings and emotional expression (through sound or crying) almost always accompany the body's spontaneous movement-release. It takes experience over time to become more connected to, and to more actively help, the body to release the held-in trauma.

As the release continues, every aspect (emotions, thoughts and spontaneous body movements) begins to lessen. The vocal sounds, the emotional feelings, the emotional expression, the thoughts and the spontaneous body movement all lessen. It then becomes more movement of energy than awareness of emotions, awareness of thoughts or movement of the body. At this point a person may be more aware of an energy coming in and filling them rather than an energy releasing. This energy coming in is a new integration. This new integration is incredibly healing and incredibly helpful in healing our woundedness.

Do Not Formulate Too Much

It can be easy for some people to read this article and then have a conscious plan of how they want to release. They may think: "Okay, I'll make some sounds, feel the emotions more and not inhibit any body movement that wants to spontaneously occur."

This amount of formulation can be helpful. Having any plan or timetable beyond "if I make sounds, feel the emotions more and not inhibit any body movement that wants to spontaneously occur" is where we can get in the way, slow down, or even block the release.

Each release has its own uniqueness, its own timetable and its own amount of vocal sounds, emotional feelings, thoughts and body movement; and its own sequencing, it's own phasing in and phasing out of the four aspects of vocal sounds, emotional feelings, thoughts and body movement.

The Wisdom Within

The wisdom that keeps our body alive knows how to release the held-in trauma. The inner wisdom often needs our conscious intention of wanting to release the held-in trauma for a deep release of the trauma to happen. If the inner wisdom didn't need our conscious involvement, then it would have already released the trauma. Held-in trauma is a primary reason that stops us from living with ever increasing happiness and with ever increasing freedom.

Once the release flow is activated, it's our job to stay out of the way of the release; not to plan or direct the release. As previously written, we can help (and at the same time not interfere) the release by breathing abdominally, by not inhibiting spontaneous movement of our body, by having awareness of our body, especially awareness of the anchor point, while feeling and/or expressing the emotions. Then much more of the held-in traumatic energy can release.

Getting Help To Release Trauma

There's a term in psychology called co-regulation; where another person helps us to come to a more balanced place inside ourselves. When we're releasing the held-in energy of a past trauma, another person's support and help (co-regulation) can greatly aid us in releasing more of the trauma.

I did not learn this way of release through books or videos. I learned this way of release through working with, and being helped by, other people for decades. The best way to learn this natural way to release trauma is to receive help from the people who are experienced in this way of releasing.

This article can give you guidance to release held-in trauma, though the article cannot substitute for the direct experience of working with others. I hope this article does point you toward a way of releasing the held trauma and helps you to live your life with more freedom, joy and enjoyment.

May all beings find Help and live fully.

Footnotes:

- 1 Previous articles about abdominal-diaphragmatic breathing are:
[Click here](#) to read a seven page article titled the article [Breathe and Relax](#).
Other previous articles, with the specific pages referring to abdominal breathing, are [Morning Anxiety](#) (pg. 4), [A Better Quality Of Life](#) (briefly on pg. 3), [Processing](#) (pg. 4), [Being Triggered](#) (pg. 5) and [Moving Forward When We're In Reaction](#) (pg. 4).
- 2 The following are links to previous articles that address anchor points in the body. You can read the entire article [Releasing](#). There are links to five other articles with specific page numbers about physical anchor points at the end of the [Releasing](#) article.
These five links with the specific page numbers are: [Anger Revisited](#); pages 2-3, [Moving Forward When We're In Reaction](#); pages 4-7. Also pages 4-5 in the article [Letting Go](#) has a section on anchor points. [Beyond The Thinking Mind](#) on page 2 briefly addresses physical anchor points. [Living A Life Without Armor](#); especially pages 2-4.
You can also read the article [The Protective Shell](#) to learn more about anchor points.