



How the hell do I get out of this?

About the consequences of early childhood trauma and posttraumatic stress

"How did you get through?" I regularly get this question during my 'Around the Table' meetings of people who were traumatized at a young age; who grew up in dysfunctional families with alcoholic or psychiatric parents, were sexually abused or physically and / or emotionally abused. As an adult, they suffer from the physical and mental symptoms of post-traumatic stress, just like me: chronic fatigue or otherwise weak health, physical tension, malfunction, disabling logical thinking ability, dissociating, being somewhere and not knowing why, panic attacks, uncontrollable crying and deep despair.

Time and time again I am touched by the suffering that causes early childhood, chronic trauma in adulthood and by the struggle of those involved to function from day to day, let alone heal. The good news is that the knowledge and expertise of treatment methods is growing, but this is not yet available everywhere in the medical circuit; with the result that a patient often has to find the pieces of the puzzle together. I have been lucky, I realize every time during such a Round Table. I have been able to find my way to the right handlers through my therapeutic training. For those who lack this knowledge, I provide a summary of my journey in this article, as a sort of map, an exploration of the terrain and indications of a possible route.

Trauma, writes Harvard professor Judith Lewis Herman, 'arises when acting against danger does not benefit. If resistance or escape from a dangerous event is not possible, our defense mechanism can not perform its task and it becomes disorganized. A traumatic event therefore causes profound changes in our personality: in our bodies, our feelings and our thinking. "And in our soul, I want to add to that. The daily consciousness survives by breaking down the memories of the traumatic experiences and preserving them in an isolated part of our memory. This is what we call internal splits or fragmentation of the psyche. When the repressed memories come back into the daily consciousness at a later moment, it happens with smell, color and sound, or with physical tension, emotions like fear and sadness, thoughts about suffering and powerlessness and with all kinds of energetic stress.

The latter concept will be unknown to many practitioners and perhaps also unloved. That is the main problem for me in the treatment that Western medicine PTSD patients offer: it leaves out a crucial component, the soul and its energetic field. Strengthened by my knowledge and experience as a healer, I looked for a holistic approach to healing PTSD. Beforehand I had no idea what I started or how long it would take.



Now that I look back some twelve years later, I see that the following steps have contributed to my healing.

1. Recognize the trauma
2. Decide to heal
3. Anchoring in God or the source
4. Treating body, mind and soul
5. Healing larger systems such as family and the collective
6. Give the process the time and follow the natural cycle
7. Understand voices and images as messages from unconscious parts of the soul
8. Happy conditions and good habits
9. Do not give up

1. Recognize the trauma

Healing can only take place after the trauma has been acknowledged. At first glance this may seem like a simple step, but for me it was definitely not. For years I've been struggling with questions like 'is it true?' And 'do not I make it up?' I did not want to be abused and abused, I did not want to have such a father, I did not want my youth to be so different from that of others. Acceptance of what had been, gradually came with every subsequent step of trauma processing and in particular through the confrontation with the trauma of trauma in my body. The body does not lie.

2. Decide to heal

If I had not had children twelve years ago, I would have thrown the towel into the ring. But I had three little girls who needed me. The book 'Trauma and Recovery' by Judith Lewis Herman gave me the insight that my symptoms would not automatically disappear; I had to get started with it. Then I took the most important step in this process: I decided to heal. Without realizing what was needed for that and without knowing how long it would take, I promised myself: "even though I have to go through hell and back, I am coming through this!" From that moment on the universe brought people and possibilities into my path. to that healing.

3. Anchoring in God or the source

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A medium once spoke the immortal words: ask the universe for what you need. I, who had always learned to achieve something by working hard, looked at her speechlessly. But that advice turned out to be worth gold. Certainly in a time of trauma processing, in which all kinds of split parts of soul with accompanying emotions such as fear, anger and sadness raged through my system, my connection with God or the source was of vital importance. It is the energy from which everything springs from and where everything returns, it is the energy from which we create and which brings us into our center. At home I have an altar



where I regularly meditate to relax, to empower my center and, yes, to ask the universe for what I need.

4. Treatment of body, mind and soul

It is an illusion that you can treat your body, mind and soul separately; a treatment of one layer always works on the other two. But therapies do indeed differ in focus and efficacy; by combining different therapies, so is my experience, the effectiveness increases.

Unfortunately, I never met a practitioner who oversaw the entire field of body, mind and soul; I have gathered together my treatments myself.

- Breathing therapy

I started with seven sessions of breath therapy (Respicon Desensitisation method) with Professor Defares that helped me to stabilize. During such a session I got headphones and I had to follow a whistle with my breathing while I kept the traumatic images in mind.

Unfortunately, the professor died, but his method is available in the Appstore as a Breathing App: you can load the whistling tones on your phone and use it at home.

- EMDR

I have done this well-known and now widely accepted treatment method for more than a year, all together about 12-14 sessions. Here too I had to keep the traumatic image in mind, while the therapist waved a finger in front of my eyes, which finally brought me more balance through deep waves of fear, sadness and anger.

- Integrative Manual Therapy (IMT)

This type of bodywork in which the therapist relaxes the muscle tension caused by trauma via the autonomic nervous system is quite familiar in the US and Germany and is emerging in the Netherlands. At IMT I was dressed up on the massage table under a blanket, while the therapist treated my body with his hands. The IMT sessions made EMDR bearable. IMT I did the first two years of trauma processing pretty intensively, about ten sessions a year, then I went back to six sessions a year and now I do about three sessions a year as maintenance.

- Somatic Experiencing and Sensori Motor Psychotherapy

Two methods that help the body to discharge the stress of the trauma, bringing the nervous system into balance. In the beginning of my trajectory I avoided these methods, I was so afraid of my body, I just did not dare to. Later I regretted it as hair on my head, as far as I know it are the most effective treatments that the world PTSD patients have to offer at the moment. They helped me to process a layer deeper than I had achieved with breath therapy and EMDR, which improved my grounding. I did about seven sessions, but if I had found the method earlier, it would have been more and I would have done less EMDR. When a new layer of trauma started this summer, I started again with SE / SP sessions.

- Body work (method Niek Brauw) and cranio scaraal therapy



Bodywork too, but a form in which you have to get started with physical exercises to still develop the muscles that you have frozen as a child and the associated psychological function. My therapist also has cranio-sacral therapy in her package and alternates the two in her sessions. This form of therapy I have intensively done for seven years, ten sessions per year combined with a few times a week at home practice.

- Healing

Since the start of my training in 1995, I have received regular healings as part of the training and as a client with colleagues. Healings clear up energetic blockages, increase our frequency and deepen the connection with our higher self. During the trauma treatment I occasionally continued to do healings (three to five times a year) as support for the other therapies.

- Vegetable and energetic medicines

I have avoided regular Western medication; I did not want to suppress anything, I wanted to heal. However, for about two years I have used homeopathic remedies and later a year Medizimm plant medicines for my nervous system regulation. Last year I used herbs from Chinese medicine and from Ayurveda.

- Shamanism / soul retrieval

During a year of shamanism I learned to travel energetically and pick up soul parts or bring them home. During a traumatic experience the personality fragments and disintegrates into different parts. Some of us remain in this earthly reality, other parts withdraw, either here on earth in repressed consciousness or in the spheres. The heavier the trauma, the greater the fragmentation. With soul retraction, I have brought traumatized soul parts back home and left, often bringing back talented, healthy soul parts.

5. Healing larger systems such as family and the collective

- Family setups

I did not want anything for a long time, but when after two years of trauma processing I could function somewhat again, I knew that family constellations were the next step. They helped me to understand the patterns in my family of origin and in my larger family, from my ancestors to my children, and where possible to break through. I did about five setups the first year, later one to two setups per year. I also started a training systemic work, so I can now sort out a lot myself.

- Multidimensional setups

The combination of healing and constellations brought me to multi-dimensional setups that not only play in the earthly domain but also in other energetic realities. I began to look at timelines about the relationship between events in past lives and those in this life and the influence of collective fields on the individual. To heal in this life as a human being, we also have to clean up the miseries that our soul has wrought in previous lives. In this life I was a victim, but in some other lives I was a perpetrator; the movement that my soul has used, has



returned to me in this life in the form of abuse. Furthermore, I have worked with the larger, collective fields behind my individual field, such as the field that directs perpetrators and feeds on the pain of victims, which I was stuck with.

- Shamanism / curse doctor

Curses are sabotaging energetic fields that have sometimes been deliberately invoked by shamans or magicians and have been unconsciously created by ordinary people, for example, by regularly repeated prayers. When a swearing bearer (the person who has the curses on his neck) dies, the curses go over to the next generation. I consulted a shaman to transform the curses that rested on my family (inherited from the family lines of myself and my husband). Later on I also cleaned some fields that belong in this category. This clean-up does not contribute to the healing of PTSD itself, but it does ensure that your life improves and that your steps are more effective because you are no longer opposed.

6. Give the process the time and follow the natural cycle

In my search for healing of PTSD I have experienced time as a helping factor. You do not have early childhood and chronic trauma in a day, neither in a week, a month or a year. Sometimes I had the feeling that I would never come out again. At the same time there was always the gift of that next day that gave the opportunity to take another step in the right direction. At least three days of rest and isolation were required to integrate an emotional trauma therapy session; I could 'park' deep fear for a few days and then tackle it in a session and I saw a little improvement from month to month. When we plant a young rose bush in the garden, it is a little stronger every year with good care. So it is also with trauma processing, every year with the seasons of sowing / planting (exploring), growing (processing), harvesting (celebrating small successes) and rest (pause, integrating), makes us stronger for the next cycle. After five years, the rose bush has matured, the bloom more exuberant.

7. Understand voices and images as messages from unconscious parts of the soul

In my spiritual development I have learned to see inner voices and images as forms of extra-sensory perception with the energetic world. At the same time I was aware that regular medical science usually rejects voices and seeing images as madness that needs to be tackled with medication. During the period of trauma treatment, I kept to the spiritual vision, sometimes secretly wondering whether the doctors were not right and I was just crazy. Until I got to know the groundbreaking work of Professor Marius Romme and Dr. Sandra Escher that states that inner voices and images can arise in response to trauma and that it can not be suppressed, but must be used. By working with voices and images, in breathing therapy, in EMDR, in regression, in constellations, in dialogue, in soul retraction, et cetera, I have always been able to take new steps to heal.

8. Happy conditions and good habits

First of all, I have a husband who unconditionally supported me throughout the process of trauma processing, he was and is my rock in the surf. Furthermore, I had sufficient



knowledge and finances to find my way and I found therapists who guided me with great professionalism and love. Under good habits I scissors include the healing power of organic food, vitamins and minerals, detox, liver, kidney and intestinal cleansing, homeopathy, meditation, qiqong and yoga, but also the company of friends or family, long walks with our dogs beautiful music, sauna, massage, a hot bath, writing in my diaries, painting and everything else that helps to find my balance in wobbly moments.

9. Never give up

Sometimes I thought I would never be able to laugh again, I feared that I would never heal and I wanted to bury myself under the covers to never get out of it again. But again and again there were my husband and our children who reminded me that life is worth fighting for. I have taken regular breaks, sometimes between sessions and sometimes longer, weeks, months and even years, because my body hurt too much and I could not manage to go back to the cesspit. But at the same time I insisted on the intention to heal, which I kept repeating in meditation. My soul gave and still indicates when it is time to take a next step.

Could I have taken a different route? Of course, there are several roads leading to Rome. Still, with what I now know, I would mainly change the order. I would immediately look for a Sensorimotor Psychotherapy and / or Somatic Experiencing therapist and I would also directly take the plant resources from the Dutch company Medizimm. I would avoid EMDR and Brainspotting (resulting from EMDR) because I find them too heavy in terms of re-experience. Furthermore, I would look for the same combination of therapies, because that makes it possible to heal. By constantly bringing a broken piece from the unconscious into the light, by bringing the body to relaxation and bringing the nervous system back into balance, there comes a day when the wholeness is greater than the pain, the love is greater than the sadness and the gratitude for life greater than the horror of what ever was. That critical mass of wholeness needs a person to be healthy, to experience his life force and to put his "Self" into the world. It is clear that I do not wish anyone what I have experienced, but I grant everyone what I have found: the love, connection and joy I have come to know are at times greater than I ever thought possible.

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