

Trauma and Recovery

*I don't go to therapy to find out if I'm a freak
I go and I find the one and only answer every week
And when I talk about therapy, I know what people think
That it only makes you selfish and in love with your shrink
But, oh how I loved everybody else
When I finally got to talk so much about myself
--Dar Williams*

What is experienced as traumatic is different for different people. At the foundation of what makes an event traumatic is the person's sense of helplessness in the face of significant harm to one's self or a loved one. Whether this experience occurred once or multiple times, was at the hands of another person or a natural disaster, happened during childhood or as an adult, it should be understood that trauma re-organizes a person's central nervous system. It is also true that people adapt to these changes in the brain and body. While such adaptations—such as an inability or unwillingness to trust others—may initially serve to protect, over time, when the actual risk ends, such adaptations can create barriers to a healthy life. Trauma survivors may have troubled relationships with themselves, their bodies, and with others that keep them feeling alone, anxious and in despair.

This understanding, with the full knowledge that recovery IS possible, serves as the foundation for my work with trauma survivors. In the context of a safe and reflective therapeutic relationship, survivors are given information about the cognitive, emotional and somatic (body-oriented) aftermath of trauma and are taught concrete mindfulness and relaxation skills in order to feel more safe in their bodies, minds and relationships. When a survivor has diminished symptoms and feels confident in managing distress, if necessary and helpful, I can work with survivors to help make sense of unspeakable events, integrating fragmented memories into the past, as part of their “story”.



- Survivors are encouraged to supplement therapy with movement therapy including yoga, qi gong, tai chi, etc.