

Trauma Worksheet

Do you feel that a traumatic experience or traumatic experiences are causing some or all of your difficult feelings and reactions? ____ y ____ n

Why or why not?

What signs do you have that might have been caused by trauma?

Are these the same or different from signs you have considered to be caused by a mental health challenge? ____ same ____ different

What kinds of trauma have you experienced?

Essential Components For Treatment to Relieve the Effects of Trauma

Empowerment. You must be in charge of your healing in every way to counteract the effects of the trauma, where all control was taken away from you.

What does empowerment mean to you?

How are you empowered in your life?

Validation. You need others to listen to you, to validate the significance and importance of what happened to you, to bear witness, to understand the role of this trauma in your life.

What does validation mean to you?

Describe times when you have not felt validated.

Describe times when you have felt validated.

Connection. Trauma makes you feel very alone. To heal you need to reconnect with others who treat you well and are supportive of you.

Describe what connection means to you.

Do you have at least one person (and maybe more people) in your life who you really trust? ____ y ____ n If you do, who are they?

Do you belong to a support group? ____ y ____ n

Why or why not?

Do you feel you are ready to join a support group? ____ y ____ n

Why or why not?

Do you feel you have strong connections in your community? ____ y ____ n

Why or why not?

Do you feel you are ready to make stronger connections in your community?

____ y ____ n

Why or why not?

What could you do to increase your feelings of connection with others?

Beginning Your Healing Journey

How would you like to feel?

What could get in the way of your meeting these goals?

What do you plan to do to help yourself feel the way you want to feel?

Check off each of these things as you begin to work on them.

Remember: You must be in charge of your recovery in every way. Programs that allow others to make decisions for you and insist you do things that feel uncomfortable to you are not good treatments.

5 Beginning Steps for Dealing with Trauma

Did you know that bad things that have happened to you in your life can cause or worsen mental health challenges? There is more and more research that is confirming the strong connection between traumatic life events and mental health difficulties. If you feel this is true for you, medications may help you be able to do some work on this issue (you can decide about that) but there are other things you will need to do. Begin with the following.

1. When you are traumatized, you lose control of your life. You may feel like you still don't have any control over your life. You have to take back that control by being in charge of every aspect of your life. Others, including your spouse, family members, friends and health care providers will try to tell you what to do. Before you do it, think about it carefully. Do you feel that it is the best thing for you to do right now? If not, you should not do it. **It is important that you make decisions about your own life.**

2. **Talk to one or more people about what happened to you.** Make sure it is a person or people who understand that what happened to you is serious and that describing it over and over again to another person is part of the healing process. It should not be a person who says something like: "That wasn't so bad." "You should just forget about it." "Forgive and forget." or "You think that's bad, let me tell you what happened to me." You will know

when you have described it enough, because you won't feel like doing it anymore. Writing about it in your journal also helps a lot.

3. You may not feel close to anyone. You may feel like there is no one you can trust. **Begin now to develop close relationships with another person.** Think about the person in your life that you like best. Invite them to do something fun with you. If that feels good, make a plan to do something else together at another time -- maybe the following week. Keep doing this until you feel close to this person. Then, without giving up on that person, start developing a closer relationship with another person. Keep doing this until you have close relationships with at least five people. Support groups and peer support centers are good places to meet people.

4. If you possibly can, **work with a counselor or join a group** for people who have been traumatized.

5. **Develop a Wellness Recovery Action Plan** so you can do what you need to stay well, and so you can effectively respond to difficult feelings whenever they come up.

Suicide: Not a Good Idea

Experiencing strong, difficult emotions can be horrible. Many people who live with these difficult feelings every day feel so discouraged sometimes they want to end their lives. **Suicide is never a good idea.** Why not?

1. You will get better. Sometimes you get better even if you don't do anything to help yourself. But there are many things you can do to help yourself feel better. To feel a little better right now, try the following:

Tell someone how you feel--someone you like and trust. Talk to them until you feel better. Then listen to them while they tell you what is going on in their lives.

Do something you really enjoy -- something you love to do -- like go for a walk, read a good book, play with your pet, draw a picture or sing a song.

Get some exercise – any kind of movement will help you feel better. It doesn't have to be strenuous.

Eat something healthy like a salad, some fruit, a tuna fish sandwich or a baked potato.

Develop and use a monitoring and response plan (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) to help yourself get well and stay well.

2. When you feel better, you will have many wonderful experiences -- warm spring days, snowy winter days, laughs with friends, playing with children, good movies, tasty food, great music, seeing, hearing, feeling. You will miss all these things, and many more, if you are not alive.

3. Your family members and friends will be devastated if you end your life. They will never get over it. They will think about it and miss you every day for the rest of their lives. If you have a box of family photographs, choose

some photos of the people you love and display them around your house to remind yourself that you never want to hurt these people.

At the worst of times, you may have a hard time making good decisions for yourself. To make it hard to make a bad decision, like ending your life, and to keep yourself safe, do the following:

- **Get rid of all the old pills and any firearms you might have around your house.**
- Give away your car keys, credit cards and checkbooks for safekeeping when you are feeling badly (“When Things are Breaking Down”)--before things get worse.
- There are good people who can help you through these hard times. It may be your family members or friends. Set up a system with them so they will stay with you around the clock when your symptoms are severe. If you don’t have family members or friends who could do this, call your local mental health emergency services and ask them what to do.
- Have the phone numbers of your supporters handy. Make sure you are able to find a hotline number if you need it. Do not hesitate to reach out – give people who care about you an opportunity to be helpful.