

Trauma & Resilience

Understanding trauma and building the capacity to recover

Trauma is not what happened to you. It's what happened inside you as a result. Resilience is not the absence of difficulty — it is the capacity to return to yourself after it.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma is any experience that overwhelmed your capacity to cope and left behind a lasting imprint on your nervous system, beliefs, and sense of self. It doesn't require a dramatic single event — chronic emotional neglect, persistent relational ruptures, and developmental wounds are all traumatic in their effects.

Trauma shows up as hypervigilance, emotional reactivity, numbness, difficulty trusting, perfectionism, people-pleasing, and disconnection from self. These are not character flaws — they are adaptations. They were intelligent responses to overwhelming experiences.

THE TRAUMA RESPONSE SPECTRUM

The nervous system responds to threat with:

- FIGHT: anger, defensiveness, urge to confront
- FLIGHT: anxiety, avoidance, overthinking, busyness
- FREEZE: shutdown, numbness, dissociation, inability to act
- FAWN: people-pleasing, self-abandonment, agreeing to keep the peace

Most people-pleasers live in 'fawn'. Recognising your pattern is the first step to choosing differently.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Resilience is not a personality trait you either have or don't — it's built through experience, relationships, and intentional practice:

1. Regulation Skills

The ability to bring yourself back from activation using breath, movement, and sensation. (See Vagus Nerve and Somatic Practices resources.)

2. Safe Relationships

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Trauma happens in relationship. Healing happens in relationship. One person who sees you clearly and accepts you fully changes everything.

3. Narrative

Making meaning of what happened — not to excuse it, but to integrate it. 'This happened. Here is what it cost me. Here is who I became because of it.'

4. Somatic Release

The body stores what the mind hasn't processed. Somatic practices and safe movement create channels for release.

5. Post-Traumatic Growth

Many people who experience significant adversity develop greater strength, deeper relationships, and renewed purpose through the process of integrating it.

Healing is not linear. Be patient with yourself. The fact that you're here, doing this work, is itself evidence of resilience already present.