



Understanding Trauma Responses

Traumatic experiences can have a profound impact on how we think, feel, and respond to the world around us. Trauma can result from a single distressing event or from ongoing experiences that leave us feeling overwhelmed, unsafe, powerless, or unable to cope.

Many people assume that trauma only affects those who have experienced major life-threatening events. In reality, trauma can arise from a wide range of experiences, including accidents, abuse, neglect, bullying, relationship difficulties, loss, medical experiences, childhood adversity, or other situations that overwhelm a person's ability to cope.

What Is a Trauma Response?

When we experience something traumatic, our mind and body are designed to protect us. The nervous system automatically responds to perceived danger through survival mechanisms that help keep us safe. While these responses are natural and adaptive during a threatening situation, they can sometimes continue long after the danger has passed.

Trauma responses are not signs of weakness or personal failure. They are often the mind and body's way of adapting to difficult experiences.

Common Trauma Responses

Fight

Some people respond to trauma by becoming more reactive, defensive, or easily angered. They may feel constantly on guard and ready to protect themselves from perceived threats.

Flight

Others may cope by staying busy, avoiding difficult emotions, overworking, or constantly seeking distractions. This response is often driven by a need to escape uncomfortable feelings or situations.

Freeze

A freeze response can leave a person feeling stuck, disconnected, unable to make decisions, or emotionally numb. Individuals may find themselves struggling to take action even when they want to move forward.

Fawn

Some people cope by prioritising the needs of others, avoiding conflict, and seeking approval in order to feel safe or accepted. This pattern is sometimes referred to as the "fawn" response.

Signs Trauma May Still Be Affecting You

Trauma can impact emotional, physical, and psychological wellbeing. Common signs include:

- Feeling constantly anxious, on edge, or hypervigilant
- Difficulty trusting others or feeling safe
- Emotional numbness or disconnection
- Intrusive memories or unwanted thoughts
- Sleep difficulties or nightmares
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Low self-esteem or feelings of shame
- Avoiding people, places, or situations that feel triggering
- Challenges in relationships and communication

Not everyone experiences trauma in the same way, and symptoms can vary greatly from person to person.

How Counselling Can Help

Counselling offers a safe and supportive environment to explore the impact of trauma at a pace that feels comfortable for you. Therapy is not about reliving painful experiences before you are ready. Instead, it focuses on building safety, understanding your responses, and developing tools to help you feel more grounded and in control.

Together, we can:

- Explore how past experiences may be affecting your present life
- Understand your emotional and physical responses to stress
- Develop coping strategies and grounding techniques

- Strengthen emotional regulation and resilience
- Rebuild self-confidence and self-compassion
- Create a greater sense of safety and connection

Healing Is Possible

Trauma can leave lasting effects, but it does not have to define your future. With understanding, support, and the right therapeutic approach, it is possible to process difficult experiences, reduce distress, and move towards a greater sense of wellbeing.

Healing is not about forgetting what happened. It is about understanding your experiences, developing new ways of coping, and reclaiming a sense of safety, choice, and control in your life.