

**THE BOOK OF
BIG
EMOTIONAL
TRUTH**

TELL YOUR TRUTH, RECLAIM YOUR POWER,
WIN YOUR EMOTIONAL WAR!

ALISON ROSE



Published in 2023 by I Am Enough Publishing, London

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I Am Enough Publishing exists to help us understand why we are the way we are, do the things we do, and think the way we think. Founder members and contributors have learned their lessons the hard way but have discovered effective, workable, affordable ways to heal, flourish, and find meaning and purpose in their lives. All our videos, books, blogs, gifts, social media posts, and therapies have been tried and evaluated by us; if it doesn't work it doesn't get shared. Our mission is to help everyone feel inspired to create, learn, and share sustainable, affordable ways to transform emotional suffering and live their life with awareness, peace, and inclusion.

One day, or day one? You decide.

This book is for the selfless souls who continue to share so much with me about life and healing. I hope by now you know how much you matter.

It's also for you. It takes a brave soul to admit they're not who or where they want to be and then do something about it. Here's to your courage, your determination, and your limitless potential.



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The Truth

must dazzle gradually or every man be blind.

Emily Dickinson

"When we truly understand how the mind comes from the brain,
we will improve the lives of everyone who will have
a mental illness in their lifetime."

Kay M. Tye

Beneath the layers of emotional debris there's a version of you who's already healed. As you untangle the confusion and shame of your past, this version of you will begin to rise.

It's time to stop punishing yourself for things that happened long ago that you cannot change. It's not your fault, you're not to blame. The people who depressed your spirit and disempowered you no longer control you. Your truth starts there.

From the roots up, you can heal your past.





As you read the emotional truths in this book, please remember the **only** source of your self-doubt and shame are the toxic opinions and criticisms projected on to you by other people - you know who I mean.

If you read something and think 'that might work for other people, but it won't work for me' tune in to who that voice belongs to and ask yourself: what's the real truth?

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

There comes a time in all our lives when we question who we might have become if the past had been any different. We're curious about what we might have achieved if encouragement, connection, and patience had been more abundant in our developing years. As we learned to be wary of the world and the people in it we adapted our behaviour to fit in. Will they like me? Will they judge me? Will they include me? Will I be safe? Our personality develops as we learn to please others before we please ourselves. Our purpose is invalidated, and our potential overlooked as the people entrusted with our care are too preoccupied with their own dramas to meet our needs.

When we spend our younger years swamped with stress and disruption, we grow into adults overwhelmed by life. We're vulnerable to triggers, struggle with anxiety and depression, we're helpless to bullies, and forced to create a persona to survive the harsh realities of life. Addressing the root cause of our emotional suffering allows us to tell our emotional truth. When we stop re-tracing the same destructive pathways deepening the missteps, the mistakes, and regrets, we get to tell a new truth free from the suffocating impact of distressing emotions. Understanding how our emotional history continues to negatively shape and influence us means we can change and re-shape the damaged beliefs we hold about ourselves. When we understand the truth about why we are the way we are and do the things we do, when we're no longer suspicious, guarded, sabotaging our opportunities, or desperately trying to get our needs met, we *finally* get to embrace the undeniable power of emotional freedom.

Healing our emotional history is *the* key to becoming the person we were born to be, not a version of us that suits everybody else, but the true version of who we are *meant* to be. Whatever your age, whatever your history, your emotional truth is waiting to be told.

Within the pages of this book, we shine a bright light on a painful truth: emotional chaos and disruption experienced in our developing years carries long-term consequences for our wellbeing and adult mental health. But there's another truth we must also tell: that whatever's been done to us or said to us, however low the blows and harmful the insults, we can reclaim our lost power and win our emotional war. I've done it, I've witnessed many other people do it, and you can do it too. I know what it feels like to be at the bottom of the heap, to be hurt by people you should be able to trust; those experiences leave deep wounds. But when we begin to untangle the past, we uncover once unreachable truths about ourselves and our potential that will ultimately set us free. Someone else's toxic projections got us here but we're in charge of getting ourselves out; we are in control of our healing.

This book tells the truth about how we got here, how we get out, and how we never, ever go back to struggling and suffering because of unhealed emotional wounds. When we hold the appropriate people accountable for our emotional suffering - without them even knowing what we're doing - we can stop blaming and punishing ourselves. We heal the wounds that have held us back and turned us into someone we never wanted to be. Once we trace our difficulties, defences, and fears back to their source we no longer search in all the wrong places for approval and validation. Instead, with the self-worth and confidence we've reclaimed, we're empowered to validate and approve of ourselves.

It's never too late to be who you might have been.

I wrote *The Book of Big Emotional Truth* to share the knowledge I've gathered both personally and professionally about the truth of why we are the way we are, why we do the things we do and, despite our best efforts, never seem able to turn it around. What you'll find within the pages of this book will put you on a path that leads you to emotional freedom. You'll learn how to heal the **eight key emotional experiences** you had in childhood whose long-term consequences continue to impact your wellbeing and your mental health to this day; you'll learn how to recognise and stop them from **running and ruining** your life. I'll teach you a process that has helped me and countless others to be *underwhelmed* by overwhelm, and how to manage anyone and anything without anxiety or fear.

Self-preservation is the strongest instinct.

You'll learn how to break the disempowering mental and emotional patterns and habits you learned *in childhood* so you could navigate stressful emotional surroundings. You'll unravel the reasons behind your core commitments to self-sabotage and procrastination, and you'll unpick and heal the coping mechanisms you've created within yourself to remain safe and survive. You'll learn how shame has controlled you but doesn't belong to you, that forgiveness is not necessary for peace of mind, that there's no such thing as an inner critic, *and* how you might have misunderstood the true meaning of trust. You'll learn how to meet your own needs, heal your triggers, how to set and keep unbreakable boundaries, how to feel comfortable with confrontation, and how to finally show closure the door. You'll uncover the deeply revealing reasons why your emotional history still rules your decisions, beliefs, and

perspectives, and you'll gain the awareness you need to regulate yourself emotionally, and calm your nervous system when panic and anxiety creep in.

Whether you engage just a little bit or a lot with the truths and the simple practices you'll experience enlightening self-awareness and longed for peace of mind. I'm sharing a method that guarantees you'll retain your emotional power even in the most demanding situations with the most difficult people. By the time you reach the end of the book you'll understand the reasons behind your choices, feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. You'll have discovered eye-opening truths about yourself, your past, your purpose, and your future potential. You'll be less triggered and less afraid. You may see the same faces, interact with the same old negative people but inside you'll be smiling, you'll understand their behaviour, and even have compassion for the person they've become.

I hope this book reassures you that you're not alone on your journey to emotional freedom, and that whatever was done to you or said to you that stole your power and potential, can be healed, and transformed. The truths in this book will stick and stay with you for a long time; they're here for you when you're ready to hear them. Make a note of any you're not ready to hear today and read them again tomorrow. It's a journey of discovery but also of rediscovery as the person you intuitively know yourself to be emerges from the layers of emotional debris left behind by the toxic power of other people's negative projections.

I'm not a celebrity therapist or a social media influencer. I don't speak another language or have any idea how to walk into a party and be the life and soul of it. I'm not proficient in cooking, painting, or planting a

garden. But when it comes to understanding, healing, and transforming the roots of emotional suffering, I know what I'm talking about. I was once a little person who grew up fighting an emotional war on a battleground of unmet needs and self-denial. I buried my light and allowed darkness in. I carried the traumatic impact of those abusive years until, through urgent necessity, I put the pieces of myself back together again and I learned what works when it comes to healing emotional wounds. From 50,000 feet below rock bottom, time after time, I wandered off, got lost, came back, started over, fell again, and climbed back up, again and again. Nowadays, I know enough to stay above ground. No more hiding.

There will always be things that bother us, there will always be sadness, stressful situations, and people who try our patience. In this book you'll discover ways to manage anyone and anything with grace, calm, and humour. You'll learn to swim with your feelings and emotions rather than drown in them. Let yourself off the criticism-hook, stop planning and thinking long term for a while - just long enough to absorb the truths you'll learn and to reclaim your emotional centre. Whatever's been done to you or said to you, or whatever you've done or said to other people, you can emerge from the shadows and live in the light. You *can* reclaim your power and *win* your emotional war.

This book is meant for you. Whether you prefer to read it cover to cover, dip in randomly, or re-read a bit that shouts out to you...it's *your* choice. Whatever you're feeling right now, if you're on the verge of giving up, feeling hopeless, worthless, exhausted, and undone, take a break, sit back, allow the words to wash over you and the questions to either float by or sink in. I wrote this book because I understand what you're going through and how you feel. It's about Big Emotional Truth, so let's tell it!

CHALLENGE IT TO CHANGE IT!

Untangling and healing the root cause of our emotional wounds means we can finally get to know and respect ourselves. We're empowered to self-validate, to give ourselves meaning, and feel like we have a purpose on this planet. People often tell me they don't know where or how to begin healing, whatever they try doesn't 'stick' and their emotional wounds remain open and raw. If this is you, you're not alone.

Healing our emotional wounds doesn't have to be confusing, guilt-inducing, or an impossible uphill struggle. When we ask ourselves the right questions, our healing can happen more quickly than we expected with a lot less upset, struggle or fear of what we may uncover. The **'Challenge It to Change It'** questions in this book offer you a frame that helps you build a picture. You can pass on anything that feels uncomfortable or just let it rest in your mind for a while as you doodle on the page and think about the question. Most of us remember very little about our first few years so not all the experiences that have brought you **here** will suddenly rise to the surface. The Challenge It to Change It questions have been designed so you can revisit them whenever you remember something that may need 'challenging and changing.' These questions are like finding a map when you're lost; when we look at the bigger picture - the map - we can work out how we got here and, more importantly, how we get out. We're shown alternative paths that take us away from cliff edges and dangerous ground. As we become increasingly aware of why and how our past continues to shape and influence our present, our emotional wounds will finally close, and stay closed. Learning the truth about how we got 'here' will feel cleansing and enlightening.

The 'Challenge It to Change It' questions are borne from over 15-years of research that followed my own tumultuous healing experiences. They've been refined by many brave souls who have journeyed through their own emotional challenges and whose humbling transformations have all greatly contributed to the work in this book. Nothing you'll find in these pages is difficult, in fact, it's all 'easy when you know how'. The sooner we see the truth behind what we believe is 'wrong' with us, the sooner we can heal the confusion and the pain of the past.

WHERE DID YOU GO?

Amidst the chaos and disruption of our younger years we definitely 'got lost', but we didn't really go anywhere. We forgot about our needs as we struggled to fit in and please others, and as our mind became clouded by confusion and loss, we began to search outside ourselves for the missing pieces. When we open up and tell our truth we reclaim our lost selves; we create space and energy to take back ownership of our precious life and stop searching outside of ourselves for what's missing. Everything we need to know about our emotional history is revealed by looking at our emotional struggles in the present moment. Who and what is the source of the emotional war you're fighting every day? Haven't you had enough yet?

7 REASONS WHY WE DON'T HEAL

One of the most transformative healing truths we can embrace is the one that says: 'we own our needs, and our healing belongs to us.' We are responsible for our healing; someone else's toxic power may have brought us here, but the resilience, confidence, and empowerment we're reclaiming for ourselves is what will get us out. This moment and the millions of moments ahead will now be shaped by you and you alone, not by anyone else.

For decades, when I could have been healing my emotional history, I allowed myself to become more deeply wounded by self-blame and self-punishment. Now I know different, I do different - and so can you. Experience - both personal and professional - has shown me seven reasons why we don't heal:

BLAME

DENIAL

FEAR

SELF-PUNISHMENT

UNWORTHINESS

JUDGEMENT

CONDITIONAL HEALING

BLAME

This book is not about blaming others for what they did or didn't do - it's about accountability. Blame means to accuse, condemn, shame, and criticise and we've had enough of that. When we blame it means we're angry, and it tends to be the type of anger that reduces our ability to heal. There's a time and a place for blame but this is not it; we're reclaiming our power, not giving more of it away.

When we blame someone we become powerless to act on our feelings and to transform our struggles. When we correctly identify the source of our struggles and stop punishing, shaming, and blaming *ourselves* we begin a process of accountability that takes us on a healing journey towards emotional freedom. When we make the 'right' people accountable we can genuinely say: 'this was not my fault, this story is not mine, it belongs to someone else.' These authentic statements are the truth, and the truth will set us free.

DENIAL

If we're not seeing the emotional truth about how we got here then we're in denial. We can't help it. When we're scared to talk about our feelings in case we upset someone, or worse, they ignore us and don't validate our suffering, we end up denying our pain so we can cope with it. We know from experience that upsetting the perpetrators of our pain is to be avoided at all costs. We've learned that to stay in someone's 'good books' means we must stay silent and deny our truth. We've learned that upsetting people leads to criticism, rejection, silence, and dismissal. If we venture down *that* path we'll restart the familiar cycle of abandonment we've tried so hard to avoid. This is why the content of this book is designed for you to heal without anyone else knowing what you're doing. When we stop rolling our shame in glitter to block out our emotional pain,

we get to the root cause of our struggles, reclaim our power, and win our emotional war. I promise you, moving out of denial and into the light of your truth will move you forward on your road to emotional freedom like nothing else. And the people you're scared of offending and upsetting, won't even know what you're doing. Talking of other people...be aware that their denial of your pain and your experiences will have added to your feelings of invalidation. You know the truth, you don't need their version of it.

FEAR

Being scared of what we might feel as we heal stops us from looking at the difficult stuff, but the worst may already be over; chances are, nothing again will ever feel as bad as the experiences we've already had. The burdens we've carried, borne from our painful encounters, is the heaviest it may ever get. Speaking our truth to the power of the past will lift the burdens and heal what we feel. There's nothing scary about healing emotional suffering; what *is* scary is *not* healing it. Perhaps you're scared to heal because you believe it benefits you to stay wounded? Does it get you the attention you seek or the financial support you need? There are no greater benefits than emotional freedom and peace of mind; when we truly understand *that* we'll fearlessly begin our healing journey.

What are you really afraid of? Is it the fear of envy or dismissal? Is it guilt? Are you afraid of being shamed and humiliated by the critical people who got you here? Allow me once again to lay your fears to rest; *none* of the work in this book requires you to confront, blame, or question anyone from your past. You're free to heal in your own time, in your own way just as soon as you say so.

SELF-PUNISHMENT

We'll talk more about self-punishment later but for now, from this moment forward, please know that it's no longer necessary to punish *yourself* for anything that's been done to you or said to you that caused you to feel emotional distress and suffering. Sometimes we believe that we deserve to suffer especially if we've been blamed and held responsible for the things that have happened to us. Other people's toxic projections and abuse were not your fault. You are *not* to blame, and you do *not* need to punish yourself anymore.

Within us is the power to heal and transform our past; we just need to be reminded from time to time that we're worth the effort and that we matter enough to try. If you were punished a lot in childhood, if you were denied wonderful things, you'll continue to self-punish and deprive yourself of healing experiences. When we replace self-punishment with self-compassion, our heart opens; we learn to treat ourselves with kindness. You *wholeheartedly* deserve compassion and kindness for the road you've travelled, and for the upsetting and unsettling experiences you've survived.

UNWORTHINESS

I used to feel how you might be feeling right now. But despite everything that had been done to me and said to me, despite everything I'd been blamed for, I eventually found myself in an emotional space where I felt worthy of healing. You may not feel worthy of something better right now, but you can recognise *the value* of change and your ability to make it happen. Put it another way: you're seeking solutions to heal the emotional confusion that's sabotaging your life and stealing your joy. You can **value the chance** to feel something different even if you don't yet feel worthy of it. Not feeling worthy or deserving as an adult is a long-

term consequence of emotional disruption and disturbance in childhood. You may have been told 'you're not worth it' or that 'you don't deserve good things' but as you begin to untangle the lies and the betrayals of your past, you *will* begin to feel worthy of so much more than you do right now.

JUDGEMENT

We judge ourselves when healing doesn't happen quickly enough. Worse, we give up on recovery because we judge that it's hurting too much, requires too much effort, or it's all 'just a load of nonsense.' Judgement stops us but so often the voice that's judging us isn't ours; it belongs to someone from the past whose overwhelming judgements have landed us in the emotional mess that we're in. I'm sure they'd have something to say about you 'pulling yourself together' and 'not being so dramatic' but if their advice was helpful it would have worked by now. The truth is, judging yourself or the speed at which you're healing just holds you back from immersing yourself in the process. Leave 'Judge Mental' at the door and give yourself time to tell your truth and win your emotional war.

CONDITIONAL HEALING

We stay stuck without realising it by putting conditions on our healing. We tell ourselves we'll be happy when...we'll be at peace when. I've lost count of the number of people who have said to me 'if only I could meet...or...if only such and such would happen I'd feel happy/healed/free/complete/at peace.' We're always waiting for someone or something to fill the emotional spaces left by inattentive or invalidating experiences from the past. Who or what are *you* waiting for? *Unconditional* healing says: we can be whole and complete *without* the permission/validation/love/approval that we're still waiting for.

Look at it this way: when *someone else* supplies the contentment, peace, and love we're waiting for, they can take it away again. When we supply contentment, peace, and love *to ourselves* it can be shared, but never taken. Knowing and experiencing peace is 100% achievable without waiting for someone or something else to supply it.

Conditional healing will be a thing of the past when you drop the conditions you place on your healing. There are few greater rewards on this journey than learning to meet our own needs and renouncing our expectations of others to meet them for us.

MENDING MENTAL HEALTH

Be gentle with yourself during this work, it's important you know when you've had enough and when you need to rest. During the 'Challenge It to Change It' exercises you may feel uncomfortable writing down names of people who you love and care about but with whom you share an emotional tie that has wounded you. Remember what we said about denial and fear? If you need to write down 'she made some really stupid choices' or 'he should have had better values' then write it down; you're not being disloyal or blaming anyone. Writing your truth brings about profound changes in your emotional wellbeing and your mental health. It shifts the blame from you and puts accountability where it belongs.

Helping ourselves recover and heal from the emotional war we're fighting every day can feel like arduous work because our mind has been filled with warnings, fear-based lies, and a barrage of distorted truths. If you're worried about being disloyal then please know that anyone with your best interests at heart would want you to heal your burdens, to stretch your wings and fly. It's a measure of how your past has affected you that

you're still protecting other people's feelings. You're not causing them any harm, or further harm, by uncovering *your* truth to heal *yourself*.

OUR MOTTO IS:

NO SHAME, NO BLAME, ONLY AWARENESS.

**Stab the body and it heals,
but injure the heart and the wound lasts a lifetime.**

Mineko Iwasaki

PART I

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

4 UNDENIABLE TRUTHS

Truth 1: There must be a reason that I am as I am, there must be.

Truth 2: One believes things because one is conditioned to believe them.

Truth 3: All battles are first won or lost in the mind.

Truth 4: You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards.

We didn't just wake up one day and choose to be challenged by our emotions and our mental health; we had experiences that shaped us to become who we are. When we use these '4 Undeniable Truths' as a foundation to decode our past, we can work out why we choose, feel, and think the way we do.

THERE MUST BE A REASON THAT I AM AS I AM

There is. We have no choice as children but to trust that the building blocks of our emotional lives are given to us by emotionally grounded people who want the best for us. In our developing years when our needs are met, when we're encouraged, praised, reassured, and loved, we develop an emotionally stable outlook on life. But if our needs are not met, if we're blamed for problems, if our security and stability are threatened, if we're criticised, bullied, judged, abused, and shamed, made to feel insignificant, unlovable, unwanted, or in the way, then we'll adapt our behaviour to stay safe. We'll lose sight of the empowered little person we're meant to be and become hypervigilant to make sure we

never 'rock the boat'. We learn to survive by staying in the shadows and away from the light. As adults we struggle to recover from failures and hardships because failing as a child or adolescent meant criticism, shame, and humiliation. The embarrassment and dismissal we experienced as a 7-year-old overshadows our efforts decades later. How do we ever forget the emotional pain of exclusion, rejection, and humiliation?

ONE BELIEVES THINGS BECAUSE ONE IS CONDITIONED TO BELIEVE THEM

How we're conditioned as we grow up doesn't just provide us with a superficial layer of learning and influence we can shrug off at a later date. Childhood conditioning is a cell-infusing, life-altering belief system that can take us from **limitless potential** to the darkest corners of **limited ability**. That's a tragic turnaround that without intervention may never again find its correct course. If you had experiences in your childhood that have left you struggling emotionally with feelings of unworthiness and lack of purpose, then you'll have been conditioned to believe things about yourself that are simply not true. The only way to untangle the emotional questions, quandaries, and quarrels you're living with is to become as well-informed and as knowledgeable as possible about what happened to you, and why.

We all need to emerge from our childhood with the belief that we have something to contribute, that we matter, and we're entitled to live in this world taking up space and being seen and heard. For those of us who received the message that we belong we'll learn the emotional language of acceptance, resilience, and confidence. But for those of us conditioned to believe that we don't matter, that we're in the way, that we're not good people capable of good things, we end up floating through life confused and lost. Why am I here? What's the point of me? Someone else's

destructive behaviour filled us with self-loathing, doubt, anxiety, awkwardness, self-punishment, and loneliness. Our fear of failure, rejection, abandonment, confrontation, and loss are all wrapped up in the overwhelming power of other people's toxic conditioning.

ALL BATTLES ARE FIRST WON OR LOST IN THE MIND

What finally begins to untangle the darkness and awkwardness of our **adult experiences** is recognising that **their roots are firmly planted in the humiliation and shame of the past**. Our adult self's inability to live without irrational fears are explained when we look at the failings and weaknesses of the people present during our childhood. When we discover the reasons behind *why* we choose the things we do, feel the way we feel, and think the way we think we unravel and heal the long-term consequences of our emotional history. Our emotions and feelings are understood through new eyes, and not through the distorted perspectives created by our emotional wounds. Why are we messed up, vulnerable, and regretting our choices instead of confidently living life? Working out why and what we're afraid of is an investment that delivers emotional freedom from the pain of the past.

Win the battle **here and you'll win the war.**



Even now you may not realise that the root of your present-day emotional struggles began as you sensed ever-growing tensions in your young life. When we trace our emotional wounds back to the source of our unmet needs, we can finally untangle the bewildering uncertainty our lives have been shaped by. We can learn to be resilient, optimistic, and confident. We can change our habits, unlearn our learned behaviours, and finally fulfil our potential. We can empower our true self to emerge from underneath the layers of emotional debris. With patience and courage, we can look at our past and truthfully appraise how the 'grown-ups' let us down. We get to see the reasons, lapses, gaffes, and horrendous abuses that sharpened our sweet, precious selves. Our emotional war, the battle in our mind, will then be won.

JOINING THE DOTS

When we join the dots between our present-day emotional struggles and the criticisms, exclusions, abandonments, humiliations, and resentments we experienced in our developing years we finally see that there is nothing wrong with us. We didn't deserve what happened, and neither did we 'ask for it.' Younger people are struggling with their mental health but so too are older generations. More of us than ever are realising that we escaped from our first 18 years of life with more than a fair share of emotional wounds. These wounds continue to dictate the rhythm of our lives well into our 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and beyond.

When we surface for air on the other side of our childhood, we expect to move forward and leave behind the unhappiness of the past. But we're leaving home wired for self-sabotage and failure, prepared only for more of the same. We can't wait to leave our emotional cages, but our experiences have left us emotionally fractured, stumbling through a fog of confusion, perplexity, and feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness.

When we understand how we got 'here' we can be less afraid of life and what we're feeling. When we begin to peel back the layers of other people's toxic projections that buried us, we reveal the warrior hidden behind the chaos.

**WE GIVE UP OUR EMOTIONAL FREEDOM
FOR THINGS WE WOULD NEVER TRADE
OUR PHYSICAL FREEDOM FOR**



Thanks for the wisdom!

Truth 1: Robin Williams

Truth 2: Aldous Huxley

Truth 3: Joan of Arc

Truth 4: Steve Jobs

DID I EXPERIENCE TRAUMA?

“Trauma is the lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing event. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person’s sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. Long after the traumatic event occurs, people with trauma can often feel shame, helplessness, powerlessness, and intense fear.”

Source:camh.ca

Without understanding the full range of traumatic experiences we’ll question, ‘did I experience trauma?’ We might say, ‘I didn’t have an easy time, but I wouldn’t call it trauma’. If you look up the word trauma in a thesaurus you get alternative words like shock, upset, ordeal, suffering, pain, disturbance, distress, and damage. We can all remember an experience that caused *those* feelings but few of us would call them ‘trauma.’ Do we avoid labelling our experiences as ‘traumatic’ for fear it sounds too dramatic and indulgent? We get caught up in the definitions of ‘little traumas’ and ‘big traumas’ without considering how unique and individual we are, and how experiences affect different people in different ways. We may even excuse our experiences by saying ‘that’s just how it was’ or ‘it wasn’t that bad’. What we fail to acknowledge in the bones of those statements is how we’ve suffered in silence ever since.

Remember the seven reasons why we don’t heal? Denying our experiences, the fear of our experiences, and the judgements we make *about* our experiences all contribute to the dismissal of our suffering. We overlook how our emotional history has shaped, influenced, and impacted our present-day struggles. We resist applying the word trauma to our experiences because we believe trauma is only suffered by survivors of devastating abuse, war, or extreme neglect. We hear about

or see images of people who have lived through these nightmares and think 'that wasn't me, I didn't experience that so I couldn't have experienced trauma'. This is often the first example of how we overlook those dots that we should be joining between our adult struggles with mental health and the emotional disruption and chaos we experienced in childhood. You may not see yourself as a traumatised child, but if you identify with the definition of trauma from CAMH, and despite trying your best you still struggle to manage your emotional and mental health challenges, then chances are you're living with unresolved trauma.

Unresolved trauma is a greedy bastard. It saps our energy, peace, and focus. It's a fierce and determined opponent but from now on we're fiercer and more determined. It's won the battle so far but we're about to win the bloody war. The trauma from your childhood has shaped every moment of your adult life but you can change the shape to one that you choose and that you like, rather than one that's been chosen for you.

CHALLENGE IT TO CHANGE IT

HOW DO I RECOGNISE TRAUMA?

- | | |
|--|--------|
| Do you feel like you're fighting an emotional war? | YES/NO |
| Are you struggling with your confidence and your self-worth? | YES/NO |
| Do you have addictions (food and shopping count)? | YES/NO |
| Are you socially anxious? | YES/NO |
| Do you have anxiety, depression, OCD, or BPD? | YES/NO |
| Do you sabotage your opportunities? | YES/NO |
| Do you procrastinate? | YES/NO |
| Do you do what you have to do, or what you want to do? | YES/NO |

Does your current mindset reject success, wellbeing, and peace of mind but attract emotional or financial poverty?	YES/NO
Do you keep settling for less?	YES/NO
Were you bullied or excluded?	YES/NO
Did you hear/see your parents' fight?	YES/NO
Did you watch a parent leave and now struggle with abandonment issues?	YES/NO
Do you compensate for the emotional absence of a parent by trying to be 'good' so no one else leaves you?	YES/NO
Do you fight for closure?	YES/NO
Have you built an emotional wall around yourself to stay safe?	YES/NO
Were you humiliated or shamed by someone's constant criticism or rejection?	YES/NO
Were you scapegoated by a narcissistic parent?	YES/NO
Were your emotional needs met?	YES/NO
Did you have a close, protective bond with a parent or caregiver?	YES/NO
Do you have a controlling personality?	YES/NO
Do you close yourself off from people?	YES/NO
Do you struggle to trust others?	YES/NO
Do you forgive yourself?	YES/NO
Do you dumb down rather than shine?	YES/NO
Are you a perfectionist?	YES/NO
Are you a people-pleaser?	YES/NO

Do you come from a family where cultural expectations or religious beliefs harmed your sense of self? YES/NO

Were you abused? YES/NO

Whether you fought in a physical war or hid from a family war, the long-term consequences of traumatic experiences may still have you in their grip. Trauma sabotages potential in truly devastating ways. It delivers tough, unrelenting lessons, it changes how our brain develops and affects our sense of self-worth, our feelings of safety, our ability to trust, to build emotional connections with others, and our ability to regulate our emotions. We've let trauma keep us silent and the fear of speaking up has kept us stuck. We've judged ourselves and our capabilities based on distorted perceptions of who we are and what we're truly capable of achieving. We try and hide it, but trauma is never hidden. It's in everything we do, everything we say, and everything we believe about ourselves.

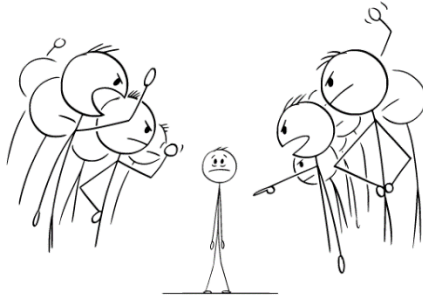
Our experiences will all be different, but they have remarkably similar outcomes. When experience teaches us that it's not safe to express our true self we gloss over the cold hard facts of why we are the way we are because we believe it's less painful than looking at the truth.

Remember: trauma is the lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing event. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. Long after the traumatic event occurs, people with trauma can often feel shame, helplessness, powerlessness, and intense fear.



One thing I know for sure:

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT



What has past trauma made you do that you want to stop doing?

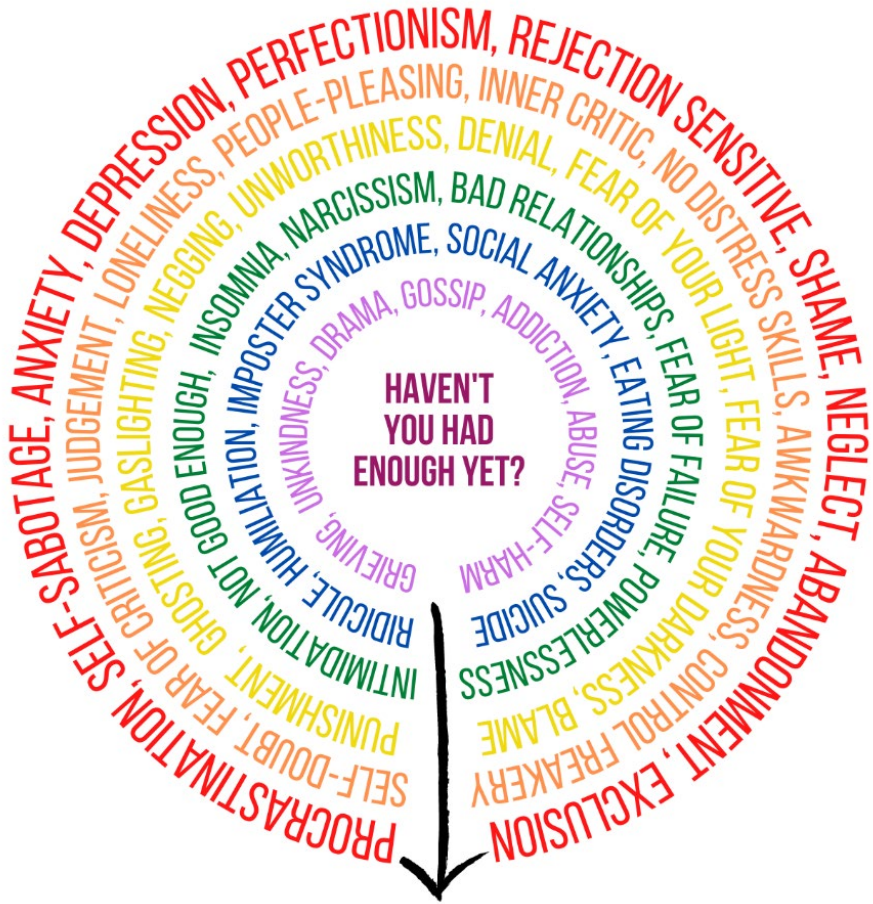
Trauma doesn't discriminate, it can happen to anyone at any time, but it's especially damaging to our emotional and mental development when it occurs during our childhood and adolescence. So much of what's been said to us or done to us is an echo of what's been said and done to the generations who have come before us.

It's time to be a voice, not an echo.

WHEEL OF TRAUMA

THE LONG-TERM EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF TRAUMA

SHOW UP IN WAYS WE DON'T EVEN REALISE



THERE IS A WAY OUT

**UNTIL YOU MAKE THE UNCONSCIOUS CONSCIOUS, IT WILL
DIRECT YOUR LIFE AND YOU WILL CALL IT FATE**

CARL JUNG



HOW WE GOT 'HERE'

If you've questioned 'what went wrong' and how you've ended up feeling emotionally exhausted and forever wired for catastrophe, then let me explain. From birth and throughout our developing years, until about the age of seventeen, we're picking up sensory signals in our environment that let us know if we're safe, protected, nurtured, and loved. These signals have an impact on how our brain develops. If our parents and caregivers positively meet our needs, we'll feel that it's safe for us to be ourselves. When our needs to feel safe, nurtured, loved, validated, and reassured are met we feel that we matter, that we'll be supported and looked after, fed, and kept warm, that we can make a mistake or take a risk and even if we fail, we'll be OK. We become familiar with feelings of kindness, resilience, encouragement, protection, and nurturing.

We grow up to be people who feel emotionally safe, who take measured risks, try new things, make friends, socialise, and can have fun. We value ourselves. We know when to walk away, when to apologise, when to say yes, no, or let me think about it. We can feel empathetic and sensitive but not be overwhelmed by other people's suffering. We can still be triggered, but we have rational, regulated responses. We're not indignant or easily offended. We prioritise self-care because we were taught by someone who nurtured us that we're worthy of being looked after and loved. All these loving feelings programme our brains to respond to life in '**Emotionally Regulated**' ways. Even in challenging

times, we feel secure enough to be kind, loving, calm, and capable of finding solutions. We cope well with adversity because we've learned how to be resilient.

But what happens when we experience the opposite?

If our needs are not met, if we're ignored, if we're reprimanded for making mistakes when we try new things, if we're neglected and abused or witness someone else being neglected and abused, then we'll internalise feelings of shame, exclusion, abandonment, and rejection. We'll feel criticised, humiliated, unwanted, defensive, and dismissed. We grow up to be people who are easily triggered, suspicious and a bit paranoid, often detached, dissociated, and sensitive to rejection. We walk around with open wounds vulnerable to re-infection by people who are just as wounded as we are. We see the world through distorted lenses, and we spend our time struggling emotionally. We don't keep ours or other people's boundaries. We can be controlling, possessive, insecure. We become people-pleasers, perfectionists, self-saboteurs, and procrastinators. We may suffer from depression, anxiety, addictions, be diagnosed with a personality disorder like BPD, or develop narcissism or narcissistic traits. We're easily influenced, we struggle financially, socially, and with friendships and relationships. We're not prepared for life's challenges. When stressed and overwhelmed we react in **'Emotionally Dysregulated'** ways. We're easily triggered, we don't cope well with adversity. We're more likely to become unwell, divorce, and become socially isolated. We're told to 'get over it' or stop feeling sorry for ourselves...we've never been shown compassion so how would we know how to show it to ourselves? With willingness, understanding, awareness, and acceptance we can overcome and transform our dysregulated behaviours. We can heal our emotional triggers and

uncover the truth of who we are. We can finally live our lives as the emotionally regulated people we were born to be.

THREE THINGS CANNOT LONG BE HIDDEN:

THE SUN THE MOON AND THE TRUTH

CONFUCIOUS

GIVE BACK THE LIES, RECLAIM THE TRUTH

How long have you believed the stories you've been told about yourself? When we're children and someone tells us something, we believe it. We label it 'true' and store it away in our memories. These memories shape our beliefs, our behaviour, and become habits. When someone tells us we're bad, unkind, stupid, that nobody likes us or that we're not wanted we believe it and remember it. Children believe it when someone says they're a pain, in the way, not wanted, or that they're ugly, fat, or stupid. They believe it when they're told they're no good at something, don't fit in, or that they're not as pretty or as clever as other kids. It's not only other people's made-up stories that betray the truth of who we are; physical punishment, dismissive looks, weaponised silence, and our needs not being met all create false beliefs within us that we're not good enough to be protected, valued, heard, and seen.

SO THAT'S WHY I DO THAT!

The disempowering stories **we tell ourselves about ourselves** are borne from the toxic stories other people projected on to us in our developing years. These stories turn us into people-pleasers, perfectionists, procrastinators, and self-saboteurs. They keep us disconnected from good people and push us towards people who trap us in a cycle of false beliefs and betrayals. So that's why I do that! isn't just a throw-away line; it's an aha! moment, an epiphany that illuminates and

clarifies why we choose, feel, and think the way we do. It liberates our trapped potential and puts us back in control. When we question why we choose the things we choose and feel the way we feel we become aware that the stories we've been told about ourselves, and our potential, are simply not true. They've been created to serve the purpose of everyone else, but us.

We've been involuntarily hurt, we had control taken from us and we were left without choice or voice, but we're the only ones who can take back what belongs to us - and give back what doesn't. Once we trace our difficulties, short-comings, defences, and fears back to their source we can live a fear-free uncomplicated life - whatever our starting point. When the emotional wounds of our childhood are closed, we no longer seek permission or approval. When we live **our** truth, we do **our** thing, and find **our** tribe. Imagine how peaceful you'll feel when you live authentically, shaping yourself and your life according to your own beliefs and values. What will *you* create?

**I'M NOT UPSET THAT YOU LIED TO ME,
I'M UPSET THAT FROM NOW ON I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU.**

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D

During fifteen-plus years of supporting people to heal the source of their emotional pain I've realised that there are eight dominant emotional weapons used against us in our childhood to control us. The use of these emotional weapons, whether deliberate or not, has long-term consequences for our adult wellbeing and mental health.

The eight emotional weapons are:

SHAME
EXCLUSION
ABANDONMENT
REJECTION
CRITICISM
HUMILIATION
EXPLOITATION
DISSISSAL

These experiences make us feel like we've been shut down and cut off from love, connection, validation, safety, and nurturing. Our fear of repeating the debilitating emotional pain of these S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D experiences stops us every time we think about doing something new and exciting that sits outside our 'comfort zone'.

Having been S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D throughout our lives we've stored away enough emotional pain to deeply affect and negatively influence *everything* we do. From our decisions to our moods, these excruciating experiences influence everything we choose, feel, and think.

CHALLENGE IT TO CHANGE IT

How do experiences of being S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D show up in your life?

Do you chase love? YES/NO

Do you seek approval? YES/NO

Are you highly agreeable? YES/NO

Do you fear confrontation? YES/NO

Are you scared of setting boundaries? YES/NO

Do you keep quiet rather than speak up? YES/NO

Are you scared of being left? YES/NO

Are you a people pleaser or enabler? YES/NO

Do you run from connection and commitment? YES/NO

Do you struggle with trust? YES/NO

Do you test people? YES/NO

Do you never finish what you start? YES/NO

Do you struggle financially? YES/NO

Do you feel depressed and hopeless? YES/NO

Do you have panic attacks? YES/NO

Are you socially anxious? YES/NO

Do you feel resentful? YES/NO

HOW WE SUFFER WHEN WE'RE S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D

Tick any that apply to you:

We:

- Don't feel good enough
- Betray & blame ourselves
- Detach/Zone out
- Compare ourselves
- Gloss over our pain
- Fake who we are/how we feel
- Procrastinate
- Sabotage ourselves
- Play small
- Can't rest or sleep
- Withdraw & isolate
- Lie to ourselves
- Feel resentful
- Feel empty and hopeless
- Think we're broken, worthless
- Are moody and snappy
- Feel restricted and trapped

It's why we become:

- Perfectionists
- People-Pleasers
- Peacekeepers
- Critical & Judgemental
- Risk averse
- Narcissistic
- Co-dependent
- Self-destructive
- Intolerant
- Bulimic/Anorexic
- Hypervigilant
- Lonely
- Anti-social
- Disempowered
- Reckless
- Needy
- Obsessive

It's why we:

- Are Easily distracted
- Repeat toxic patterns
- Over-apologise
- Over-compensate
- Seek attention
- Don't rely on ourselves

It's why we have:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- BPD
- Intrusive thoughts
- Addictions
- Anger issues

Feel suicidal	■	Imposter syndrome	■
Gossip	■	C/P.T.S.D	■
Overspend	■	Problems with trust	■
Settle for less than we should	■	No ambition	■
Underestimate our abilities	■	Fatigue	■
Can't forgive ourselves	■	Rejection Sensitive	■
Punish ourselves	■	Dysphoria (RSD)	
Can't cope with change	■	Dissociative Disorders	■
Struggle to relax	■	Separation issues	■
Neglect ourselves	■	Flashbacks	■
Feel irritable	■	Difficulty controlling	■
Can't focus	■	our emotions	
Deny our feelings	■	Overwhelming guilt	■
Keep busy	■	Overwhelming shame	■
Feel emotionally numb	■	Difficulty remembering	■
Avoid intimacy	■	Financial difficulties	■
Feel like a misfit	■	No self-control	■
Feel misunderstood	■	Physical symptoms:	
'Choose' not to have friends	■	Stomach aches	■
Ruminate	■	Headaches	■
Feel overwhelmed	■	Chest pain	■

These are some of the symptoms of our traumatic experiences.

After so many years of misunderstanding and 'playing down' the catastrophic symptoms of my trauma, I felt validated when I was eventually diagnosed with C.P.T.S.D. However, the severity of my childhood trauma needed to be spelt out to me. I was typical of someone who was oblivious about how other people's abusive behaviour had

significantly affected me. Growing up I'd been blamed and shamed to such an extent that I continued to blame myself entirely for the abuse I'd experienced. It was a long time before I emerged from the rage and denial and had the courage to face the source of my emotional suffering.

Although PTSD was my *diagnosis*, I was only given support for my *symptoms* **not** their *cause*. I was told I needed to 'put down' the emotional pain I was carrying. But how? In what other circumstances do you have a victim without a villain? Like a crime that's solved but never proved the people responsible for my trauma weren't called to account. As the absence of accountability continued, the shame I felt about my past persisted. If my emotional agony was not my fault, then whose was it? The truth was, if I was to 'put down' the pain and confusion I carried, then I needed to 'put it down' with purpose in a way that made sense and changed how I was feeling about myself. In other words **I needed to join the dots** so I had a complete picture of how my emotional suffering had unfolded.

That truth was where my healing really began.

YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME

I pondered for a long time about who I'd become because of my S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D experiences. I'd been so focussed on being accepted and approved of that I became a people-pleaser and a perfectionist. I was so ashamed of who I was that I didn't socialise or make friends, and I settled for mundane jobs preferring to dumb down and hide my abilities. I'd been overwhelmed by the toxic influences of my dysfunctional parents, resentful and abusive siblings, and bullies at both school and then work. As a lost and vulnerable young woman without resilience or confidence I was easy prey for manipulative people who repeated the

cycle of using and abusing I'd become used to. I learned not to shine. My only interest was avoiding the pain of being S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D but my misguided attempts landed me in dangerous situations that severely damaged my mental health. When we're living our lives scared to be assertive and opinionated because we've learned it's not safe, then we'll be vulnerable to the manipulations of some truly awful people and the coercively controlling situations they present.

THE TRAUMA SURVIVAL ZONE

Our anticipation of being S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D makes us defensive; it stops us every time we think about stepping out of the 'comfort zone' we've created for ourselves. But a 'comfort zone' is a place where we feel safe not comfortable. I call it a 'trauma-survival zone' and as our fears get bigger so does the zone. As we find more ways to avoid being S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D we also find more ways to avoid living life. When we realise that our T.S Zone is just a temporary stop on our way to emotional freedom we can safely begin to heal everything that exists there. Our T.S Zone is a coping mechanism.

CHALLENGE IT TO CHANGE IT
TRAUMA-SURVIVAL ZONE

Remember: everyone and everything in our trauma-survival zone is there because they pose a risk to our emotional safety. When our fear of being S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D no longer runs our life we can begin to step outside our T.S Zone.

What and who lives with you in *your* trauma-survival zone? What ambitions, desires, dreams, and achievements are you sacrificing to stay there?

If you imagine stepping outside your trauma-survival zone with 100% reassurance that you wouldn't be or feel S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D in any way, what would you change and do?

Think about a project or task that you'd love to complete that's currently living in your Trauma Survival Zone.

My project/task is:

What are you scared of feeling or experiencing if you begin?

Shame



Exclusion



Abandonment



Rejection



Criticism



Humiliation



Exploitation



Dismissal



Anyone or anything that's taking up space in our T.S Zone is sabotaging us in some way. We're crying out for someone to say, 'it's OK, I see you, you're not in any danger now, you're safe'. Our past experiences hold us hostage and **the ransom we pay every single day** is our wellbeing, our creativity, our energy, and our truth.



Think about who S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D you - do you have a theory about why this happened? If you're not sure why, then write down what you think. Were they jealous? Did they have their own struggles? Was there someone in their life who S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D them? Making these experiences conscious makes them less powerful. When we bring something out into the light and make it real, we can transform it. This exercise will help you begin to dilute the fear of being S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D that's holding you back from your truth and your potential.

Be gentle with yourself and remember: no shame or blame, only awareness.

WHO S.E.A.R.C.H.E.D YOU AND WHY?

Person

Why?

Person

Why?

