

Types of Trauma

Information courtesy of Pia Mellody

Best wishes on your journey to healing! Let me know if you have any questions. BW

First idea: We must accept that we experienced trauma in our childhood. Many people will, at first, deny this truth, therefore it is important to understand the different types of abuse children face, then figure out where the trauma/abuse occurred in your life. If you cannot recall details from your childhood, don't give up, just read-on ...

Family of Origin – we will explore aspects of child abuse and/or childhood trauma. In this area, it is important for us to confront denial regarding our childhood trauma.

- 1. Defense mechanisms children use to protect themselves.** These mechanisms serve to eradicate knowledge about the family of origin.
 - Suppression
 - Repression
 - Dissociation

Note: Adults use minimization, denial, and delusion to distort their family history so that the nature of the history of the family of origin remains unclear. Therapists who ask about childhood trauma will hear clients deny abuse, when after a further exploration and understanding of what abuse actually is, it will be found.

- 2. The nature of the body, feeling memories and spontaneous regressions.** These will serve to help us retrieve the data lost in repression and dissociation. Getting one's history straight *literally digs up the roots* of the disease and gives one specific guidelines to follow in regard to blame, intent, comparisons, and parenting, as one examines their history.

3. Child abuse.

Remember, though some people can easily recall verbal, emotional or physical abuse in their family, many others don't recall any, and many more will vehemently deny abuse. Take a look at the categories of abuse and relational trauma:

- A. Physical Trauma. Includes abject abuse, use of implements, face slapping, shaking the child, hair pulling, head banging, tickling a child into hysteria, lack of appropriate physical nurturing, and intrusive procedures.
- B. Physical-Sexual Trauma. Includes sexual intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, masturbation of a child, having a child masturbate an adult, sexual touch and/or fondling, sexual kissing and sexual hugging.
- C. Overt-explicit sexual trauma. Includes voyeurism, exhibitionism, and verbal sexual trauma.
- D. Emotional-sexual trauma. Involves emotional enmeshment by the parent or caregiver.
- E. Covert-sexual trauma. Occurs when a parent or caregiver does not set appropriate sexual boundaries for a child. It also occurs when a child witnesses sexual trauma.
- F. Intellectual Trauma. Includes attacks to a child's thinking process, not validating a child's thoughts or feelings, over-control of the expression of a child's thought and failure on the part of a major caregiver to teach logical thinking and problem solving.
- G. Emotional Trauma. A parent or caregiver refuses to allow a child to express feelings, shames a child for his/her feelings or demonstrates improper expression of his/her feelings in front of a child. Wrongful punishment. Strict discipline, neglect.
- H. Spiritual Trauma. Includes a parent or caregiver being disrespectful of the child's reality, demanding to be a child's higher power, demanding perfection, overcontrolling, ignoring, neglecting, abandoning, or indulging a child. The parent or major caregiver may be a religious addict, or the child maybe traumatized by a religious leader. Spiritual trauma also occurs when a parent or major caregiver does not follow the established family rules or values as though he or she is above those rules and values. All relational trauma is spiritual trauma because it teaches the child to be one up or one down. "One-up or one-down" means in the *better-than*, or *less-than* position in a conversation. Many parents "talk down" to their children, especially when angry, and this would be an example of that.
- I. Other types of trauma. Other types of trauma include peer or social trauma for reasons of race, religion, sexuality, and or physical appearance.
 - *Overt and covert abuse.*
 - *Passive v active trauma*
 - *Disempowering v. falsely empowering abuse.*
 - *Enmeshment v. abandonment.*

"Trauma occurs from any experience in childhood that is *dysfunctional* or less than nurturing."

-Pia Mellody, in *Facing Codependence*

Summary: “Many of us were raised in homes where this kind of behavior (the abuse) was common, and grew up under the delusion that what happened to us was *normal* and *appropriate*. Our caregivers encouraged us to believe that our problems arose because *we* didn’t respond appropriately to what happened to *us*, or because something was wrong with *us*. Because of this, many of us arrived in adulthood with baffling feelings, and with a distorted way of looking at what happened in our family of origin. We got the idea that the way our families behaved toward us was correct, and our caregivers were good. This meant, by unconscious deduction, that since we weren’t happy or comfortable with some of the things that went on, it still was *we, ourselves*, who were not good. Also, the message was, we couldn’t please our parents by being who and what we were, naturally. This delusion, that the abuse was *normal*, and we were wrong, locks us into the disease of codependence with no way out.”
– from Facing Codependence, by Pia Mellody.

