



Trauma, and How It Drives Our Lives

By Shawn McAndrew

As we go through life, we most likely experience various incidences of trauma. They can be as minor as falling down and scraping a knee, and as major as losing a loved one or suffering a horrible affront against our selves.



Trauma & Emotions

Trauma, as described by the [American Psychological Association](#), is “an emotional response to a terrible event, like an accident, rape or natural disaster.” The APA goes on to say that shock and denial are typical reactions immediately following the traumatic event. We may even be affected in the longer term with flashbacks, unpredictable emotions, as well as physical symptoms such as nausea, losing sleep or headaches, depending on the severity of the trauma.

A person’s ability to recognize the trauma and subsequently cope with it is one of the areas covered in the Hoffman Process. During the initial exploration of uncovering patterns that run our lives, we also come across events that may have caused us trauma in our childhoods. The long-lasting effect of some of these traumas goes hand-in-hand with the patterns that continue into our adult lives.

Stuffing the Feelings

When I was 21, my mother died. I stood at her funeral and implored my relatives to buck up, stop crying. That is what I had been taught. I steeled myself against feeling the depth of losing my mother at such a young age. But I suffered in the long run for not allowing myself to feel the pain of her death. I tried to talk with my father, but he was very gruff and pushed me away. My siblings could not talk about their loss, either. So I stuffed the idea of trying to talk about it.

For the next 18 years, I had many side effects of not grieving the loss, of not recognizing the trauma it caused in my body, emotional self, and mind. It wasn’t until I did the Process that I started to understand how I held the trauma of losing my mother within me. The anger, shutting people out, distrust – all were part of that huge loss in my early life. They were also fostered in me by my parents as patterns. The simple fact that I wouldn’t even dive into those feelings was evidence of lack of awareness and an unhealthy emotional upbringing.

Healing and Forgiving

Every day we see trauma – in the news, in traffic, relationships – and have reactions that belie the trauma sitting under the surface. During the Process, we have the opportunity to unearth the things that were done to us, or that we witnessed, and exhume them into the light during the Process. We can heal the past transgressions that caused us to be distrustful, shut people out, get mad at the world. We can forgive those who traumatized us. That doesn't mean we forget; it just means that we are able to move on, let our spirit be our guide in getting us through life.

Whatever trauma you may have witnessed or suffered, there is a chance that you have embodied it. There is a plethora of resources available to address trauma. Bookstores and libraries are filled with resources to help you. There are many therapists who specialize in trauma therapy. The [Hoffman Institute](#) offers courses and coaching to assist you. Whatever resource you can find that feels right to you, tap into it.