

RECOVER ARRIVE BECOME

CLINICAL THERAPY PRACTICE

WHEN THE PAST FEELS PRESENT

TRAUMA REMINDERS & COMMON MIND-BODY RESPONSES

The alarm system may react to reminders of past danger even when the present moment is safer.

TRAUMA REMINDER

- A trauma reminder is a cue linked with past trauma, such as a smell, sound, person, place, date, thought, emotion, or body sensation.
- A reminder can activate the mind-body alarm response, sometimes before a person knows why.
- Not every trauma reaction means PTSD.

COGNITIVE RESPONSES

- Unwanted memories, images, or nightmares.
- Racing, looping, or worst-case thoughts.
- Trouble focusing, remembering, or deciding.
- Self-blame or thoughts such as 'I am not safe.'
- Feeling confused, unreal, distant, or mentally foggy.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

- Fear, panic, worry, or helplessness.
- Anger, irritability, or feeling easily upset.
- Sadness, grief, loneliness, or hopelessness.
- Shame, guilt, embarrassment, or self-doubt.
- Numbness or difficulty feeling joy or connection.

BODY RESPONSES

- Racing heart or rapid, shallow breathing.
- Sweating, shaking, dizziness, or feeling hot or cold.
- Tight muscles, headache, pain, or jaw tension.
- Nausea, stomach distress, or appetite changes.
- Feeling jumpy, exhausted, restless, or unable to sleep.

BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES

- Avoiding people, places, topics, or activities.
- Freezing, shutting down, leaving, or escaping.
- Withdrawing, isolating, or losing interest.
- Arguing, checking, controlling, or staying on guard.
- Overworking, appeasing, or using substances to numb.

NOTICE • ORIENT • SETTLE • CHOOSE

- **NOTICE:** Name what may be happening: 'This may be a trauma reminder.'
- **ORIENT:** Look around. Name the date, place, and what is different now.
- **SETTLE:** Press your feet down, lengthen the exhale, sip water, or move gently.
- **CHOOSE:** Pause, step away, set a boundary, or contact a trusted person.
- Reach out if reactions feel intense, continue, or disrupt daily life.

A response is information - not failure.

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