

Trauma Treatment Options
by Darren Gregory
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First things first. I am not a counselor, therefore this is peer-to-peer, survivor-to-survivor information I'm sharing. Many are now asking for treatment options and resources for their journey. I thought it best to put something down for people to access as they might need.

My necessary disclaimer. I need to also say, that if you are in crisis, the best place for crisis help, is through a crisis line. There are two contact numbers on the web-page, that can link you directly with a crisis center: www.traumarecoverybc.com. Volunteers here can assess your situation, any time you might need to seek crisis support.

On the landing page of this web-site, there are links to military, RCMP, and First Responder sites, so if you are from any of these fields, I recommend visiting these sites for a ton of information. Regardless of how trauma came into your life, the action (symptoms etc.) in the human body plays out the same for all of us. So if you've been injured due to other life experiences rather than developed PTSD due to work, these sites will be helpful, very helpful in fact.

On the web-site, through the support of the [Traumatology Institute](#) and [Dr. Anna Baranowsky](#), you will find an online, self-guided, trauma treatment program. The program is generally informative as to the nature of traumatic stress and the bodies reaction to trauma. This self-help approach, provides 7 weeks of guided work for us to complete, plus 30 days of daily inspiration, from Dr. B. It takes time to form new habits to replace the often negative habits we might rely on to cope with PTSD.

Dr. Baranowsky is brilliant. Her work on this program is trusted and respected. I've worked through it personally twice and have no problem whatsoever recommending it. But this approach to treatment, isn't for everyone.

This program is **not intended to replace clinical (therapist) help. A professional who is trauma-informed, can guide you through all you need to address to deal with PTSD**, and we are all so unique as persons, we sometimes need a combination of treatments to get through our recovery. We need to find, for ourselves, the options that fit our needs best. A quality, trauma-informed therapist can help us with this.

The treatments I've used and can comfortably present to you as options are, **[Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing](#)**, **[Self-Regulation Therapy](#)**, **[Trauma Release Exercise](#)** and **[Cognitive Behavioural Therapy](#)**. The best success I've found, personally, is with EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing.

Blessings on your journey, by the way. I'm sorry you are in this [PTSD experience](#). Keep this in mind as you work your personal recovery. There are an estimated 33 Million of us, dealing with PTSD, from a variety of sources of trauma. We think that the traumatic stress response, is a normal bodily response, *fight-or-flight*, that is misfiring inside of us. It's as though the physiological switch we all have for survival (for lack of a better description) gets stuck in open position and remains open. This is our experience called PTSD. When this happens, our 'thinking brain' shuts down. Our [survival brain](#) is overactive which is why, we have so much trouble thinking through the trauma in a natural and productive way on our own sometimes.

All the above mentioned treatment options, help to 'reset' the nervous system and are safe treatments when applied with the help of a clinician. We need to find, safety, security, stabilization of our current state with symptoms. With help, we can then move on to addressing and reprocessing our trauma memories. Following this step, we are then, with the help of the clinician, better able to return to the world, more whole and functional, experiencing again a greater quality of life. This is called a '*tri-phasic* approach' to trauma treatment and care.

These are the guidelines I use, to keep myself on track in personal recovery. There are many approaches to maintaining momentum in recovery. No one treatment plan, fits everyone. We are tasked with developing our

own personal recovery strategy and I encourage you to do so.

If I were in crisis, I call a [crisis line](#) for the immediate help. If negative thoughts are present of harming myself, I choose to seek an Emergency Room at my local hospital. This is the safest place to be, should thoughts of suicide overwhelm me towards thinking in this direction. We deserve life. The choice of suicide, is no solution. We can get through this PTSD experience, with the right people on our side to do so.

These folks, crisis centre volunteers, nurses and emergency physicians, are well trained and will lead us to the appropriate and safest care under these conditions. Trust them. No matter what a depressive state may be trying to convince you otherwise, your life is worth every breath. You deserve, wellness.

For resource support, please take a look at the website and follow all the links kicking around there. It is a developing project, so be sure to visit the military and first responder sites. Try not to overwhelm yourself with information, however: this can be triggering. Once I started studying the subject of trauma, it actually became quite addictive, so be sure to take breaks, often and balance the work, with healthy choices for yourself that bring joy.

My experience is that I wanted help so bad, I then would often overwhelm myself with information and burn out for a time. Dr. Baranowsky suggests, independent and slow, daily, deliberate practice in short sessions, as opposed to a bunch of work all at once. I agree with her, totally on this. We don't need to hurry. Or, as my friend with the [North American Fire-Fighters Veterans](#) network shares, *Festina Lente - Hurry Slowly*.

What we need most in recovery, is access to the knowledge we lacked, prior to our traumatic experiences. I've done my best to gather all the information and resources for us on this website. This is an ongoing and dynamic process of updating. I'll do my best to include new, valuable information as the site develops over time.

Remember as you go - slow, consistent, daily practice is what Dr. Baranowsky recommends. Slow and steady, a bit every day, provides our best shot at winning the walk to wellness. We don't need to run, in spite of PTSD driving within us a survival-mode reaction that may lead our thinking into a state of rushing to be well. This 'get-it-over-with' approach, my experience suggests, will stall us, time and again. Then we must recover each time we find ourselves in a state of burn-out, due to too much intense effort.

Keep in mind, always: you are not in the situation any longer that developed PTSD. It's over for you, the actual trauma experience. The brain and body don't quite fully understand this yet.

Here are my personal (remember to work towards developing your own) best practice guidelines. Meaning, if I were to enter into recovery again for the first time, these are the steps I would take.

- See your doctor. Our family physician acts as our anchor in pursuing treatment and recovery. The role of your doctor, must be fully honoured. For me, this means: tell him/her the truth and don't allow inner stigma issues to keep you from confidentially disclosing your struggle to the one person who can start you on the road to recovery, your physician.
- With the physicians help, ask for or find a therapist who specializes in trauma issues, who knows PTSD and who practices using Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing or the other treatments profiled on the web-page. EMDR is the best studied treatment. It incorporates all the other treatments in it's design. EMDR is now standardized and is accepted by Military and First Responder communities as the best practice treatment in recovery.
- I'm sure to stay on top of my own thinking. [Mindfulness](#) training has helped significantly in teaching how to do this. Learning to observe (listen-to) our thoughts, helps us in terms of not looking so far back we end up drumming up trauma memories. And, it keeps us from looking too far forward in life. Worry about the future is a means of coping that is really about control. We can't control every aspect of our future. This is not a helpful, healing strategy and is one which, in the end, always proves futile. It is our trauma experience, that creates feelings driving a need to look around every future possibility for danger

- danger, that more often than not, doesn't exist. Mindfulness education can teach us how to stay fully conscious in *the present, moment to moment, which is in reality the only place in life - we ever truly are. Correct?*

- On the website (follow the profiles tab) you will find a connection to EMDR Canada and to a therapist on the west coast who specializes using EMDR, whom I trust. I'm lucky enough, here at home, to now have access to a therapist who provides, not only EMDR, but also Self-Regulation Therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Art Therapy. All such approaches have helped me, in their own way. Again, we need plenty of options to find the best treatment fit, unique to ourselves and to our circumstances.
- If you aren't ready to take the treatment plunge and wish to start with the online program, the links on the web-site will take you to Traumatology Institute to sign-up. Follow the sign-up button and link on the '*Self-Guided Recovery*' tab. Share this decision with your doctor, prior to starting any self-help program you may come across in your journey.

We need to build for ourselves a *care-team*. I've found I need my doctor, therapists, and psychiatrist to assist me in monitoring my progress and my medication. I also rely on the support of my worker's advocate and my retired pastor friend for spiritual support. I also have a PTSD buddy, from Emergency Services, who is just enough ahead of me in treatment to act as a mentor.

There is no substitute for professional care. Consider only using the self-help method to start you off, or to accent your therapy with a clinical helper who uses EMDR and other treatments.

I'm happy to provide this information with the caveat that this is my personal plan for my recovery efforts. However, I'm fully comfortable encouraging you to seek the treatments outlined. You won't regret taking a step like this. It is tough for a time because we do need to *unlearn* some things about ourselves and life that contributed to the PTSD experience. Healing will come - slowly, surely, every day. Doing something daily, however small, can make all the difference in the world in helping us to move forward.

This isn't a life sentence, PTSD. It started as **a normal response to an abnormal set of life circumstances that overwhelmed the nervous system and stuck for us in open position, fight-or-flight**. Choosing treatment, is about getting unstuck and returning to quality living.

In terms of positive affirmations in my own recovery, I work to always think, *Be Well, or I Am Getting Well*.

Staying positive in my self-talk, rather than negative - I know, it's a tough shift. Believe me when I share: If I can get to a place of thinking of myself and life more positively, anyone can. We are all made of the same soup, so to speak. We are all capable of understanding all we need to learn in order to achieve lasting wellness and experience a sense of personal growth through our trauma experience.

Here are a bunch of links. I hope I'M not overwhelming you with information? Please let me know if I am with this writing, and I'll use the feedback to cut it back some. It would help me, should you need further guidance to get you going, to let me know where you are and how you developed PTSD. Should you ask for me to act as your resource, I can do some searching on your behalf, if you need the help, to find professional helpers in your area.

The Trauma Recovery Blog: Our Website: www.traumarecoverybc.com. At the bottom of this first page, you'll find links to the Military, RCMP and First Responder help. The online treatment program can be linked to traumatology institute from the "**Trauma Treatment Online Coach**" header and footer on the landing page. Be sure to follow all the tabs, to resources and links that may be of help to you.

The North American Fire-Fighter Veterans page, www.firefighterveteran.com, is a valuable resource, geared to provide information to First Responders (Police, Fire, Ambulance Personnel). This is a trusted resources, with quality information.

EMDR Canada, has full information on Eye-Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. There is a tab, as

well, to assist in 'Finding a Therapist'. On the profiles page of our website, there is link to an individual in the Vancouver area. However, contacting this service, regardless of where you might live in BC, might serve you towards a referral to a therapist closer to home. www.emdrCanada.org/find-a-therapist/.

The Canadian Foundation for Trauma Research and Education, provides information on Self-Regulation Therapy, with a tab to help find a therapist specializing in this treatment modality. My experience with SRT, is that it is dramatic in educating our nervous system for us. We need to learn again, what it feels like to be calm. SRT, teaches us just that, with therapist monitoring and guidance to ensure we are safe going into and out of again, traumatic memories. www.cftre.com/courses-seminars.

Dr. David Beceli, has pioneered a trauma treatment approach, also appropriate in helping us to manage daily stress, call *Tension Trauma Release Exercise*. With TRE, we learn a set of yoga exercises, that trigger neurogenic tremour in the body, releasing the stuck energy held due to our experience. The science behind TRE, is that as mammals, we hold an innate ability to '**shake off**' traumatic experiences, a process that happens in all other mammals when they experience too much fright. If you have a pet, ours, for instance, tremours with the fright of thunder.

Another somatic (in the body) approach, *Somatic Experiencing*, pioneered by Dr. Peter Levine, works on the same understanding of the bodies innate capacity to deal with trauma. Both say, that this ability is socialized out of us, for whatever reason as humans. Lets face it, we hold back much in reaction to emotion to avoid embarrassing ourselves as adults with even the balm of tears. Here are the links, to both Dr. Bercelli's work and to Dr. Levine:

- www.traumaprevention.com/
- www.traumahealing.com/somatic-experiencing/peter-levine.html

I found that once I found concise treatment, the shift in recovery was dramatic. Know going in, it isn't easy work, there is much to undo. The gift of treatment, such as EMDR, comes with the brilliance that we need not necessarily go over and over our trauma story. We do enough of this on our own, due to the intrusive ruminating our trauma memories cause us.

I found the process incredible and the release of the pain, connected to specific traumas, is now completely gone. I still have work to do on other experiences. But the work I did complete, is now that - finished. The memories no longer haunt me. Should I choose to raise the memory myself, my body no longer reacts (triggers) a traumatic stress response.

This is the greatest struggle I had with PTSD - repeated trauma, due to this overactive stress-response, repeatedly triggered by even the slightest amount of even normal, every-day stressors in life. I'll admit, I remained too independent, for too long and the timing of my own injury in 1989, with a real lack of available resources, set-up a scenario in which I felt I'd never heal. So little information was available during my initial efforts to recover. An appropriate diagnosis didn't come for me until 2005.

With my work-life then destroyed, I no longer could cope at all, and with zero consistent cash available to me in terms of compensation, I was lost in a world of dark pain, far too long. I share this out of concern for those reading: there is good help available now. So, please consider not making the mistake of avoiding treatment. This is, an illness. There is NO shame necessary in simply getting sick. Trauma-is-trauma, with a set symptomatic process, that we ALL experience under these circumstances.

Self-Help is so necessary. It's much easier when we find the right fit of a specialist in trauma to guide us. The longer we wait and the more negatively we choose to cope, the more rooted PTSD can become. However many at the U.S. Veterans site are sharing stories of recent healing, coming to those who were soldiers and who have struggled for 40 years after Vietnam.

So, it would seem, it doesn't matter *WHEN* we choose treatment. We will recover regardless in most cases, depending on the complexity of the illness within us. So we can claim much hope for a more positive outcome than we may have experienced up until now.

Recovery and Treatment, is a courageous move. Treat yourself well. Honour and bless your journey, every step you take. If I can guide any further, please don't hesitate to reach out.

There is a [contact form](#) on the web-site which I prefer using. I can then keep better track of who you are and how I guided you along the way. All personal information you share with me, is held in complete confidence. Any personal information will be kept in a document, outside of my computer system. Those few basic questions, **where are you and how did trauma strike you**, is really all I need to identify you for future discussions as necessary.

People are starting to reach out. This is a very good thing for us to do. We need one another. Recovery from trauma and PTSD, can be such a lonely road.

As always, Be Well. Blessings on your Recovery Journey.

Darren Gregory
The Trauma Recovery Blog