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IMPORTANT TRUTHS ABOUT TOXIC STRESS TRAUMA COMPLEX TRAUMA

There are many important truths about toxic stress, trauma, and complex trauma.

Here are five of the most relevant ones if you are **wondering** about whether you might be experiencing toxic stress, trauma or complex trauma or you might be **warming up** to the next step of getting some recovery support.





TOXIC STRESS, TRAUMA AND COMPLEX TRAUMA ARE MORE COMMON THAN MOST PEOPLE REALIZE.

The reality is that there are many potential circumstances, family dysfunctions, social problems and systemic issues that can result in toxic stress, trauma and complex trauma- many more than people realize.

To get a snapshot of the likely prevalence, we can look at three different kinds of incidence reporting. (see visual p. 4)



A good starting point is to look at the **incidence of diagnosed, reported or symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**. The prevalence is reported at between 3.9 and 12% and is recognized as underreported because of social stigma, a lack of recognition of what someone's experiencing and people not understanding that there can be effective support.

Some **good books** that provide the research on the health effects of toxic stress and trauma.

Childhood Disrupted. How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology and How You Can Heal by Donna Jackson Nakazawa. (2016).

The Deepest Well. Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity by Nadine Burke Harris. (2021).

Scared Sick. The Role of Childhood Trauma in Adult Disease. Karen Karr-Morse. (2012)



To broaden our understanding of the probable prevalence of trauma, it is helpful to look at some statistics on the known prevalence of **significant threats / harm to safety, security and survival**.

There are of course, dozens of categories for the types of significant threats to safety, security, and survival that occur. E.g., family violence; poverty; natural disasters; motor vehicle accidents; bullying and harassment; sexual abuse and assaults; sexism; racism and discrimination etc.

A handful of statistics are provided related to childhood maltreatment, specifically because children, due to high susceptibility, are more likely to suffer from toxic stress and develop trauma or complex trauma. They are also likely to grow into adulthood without recognizing the degree to which they have been impacted.

And finally, we can look at the **prevalence of conditions that are linked to potential toxic stress or trauma**. The reality is that individuals seek healthcare support for their symptoms, not recognizing how their symptoms might fit together. Then, the symptoms get treated without exploring or recognizing that toxic stress and trauma may be the underlying cause. Through extensive research we know that heightened and prolonged stress response activation and nervous system dysregulation act like kindling through time for the development of stress and inflammatory related conditions. *(This does not mean that every condition aligns with toxic stress and trauma).*

Gabor Maté and Bessel van der Kolk, among others contend that trauma is a hidden epidemic, meaning there is far more than is recognized.

Reflective Question:

Are there any events or circumstances from your childhood or your adult life that resulted in prolonged stress response activation (toxic stress) or potentially trauma?



Known Prevalence of Toxic Stress and Trauma

Toxic stress and trauma are recognized as being under diagnosed.

- 3.9% of the world population has experienced post traumatic stress disorder at some point in their lives. (25)
- 8% of Canadian adults meet the criteria for probable post-traumatic stress disorder and 5% report having PTSD diagnosed by a health professional. (17)
- 5% to 6% of men and 10% to 12% of women suffer from PTSD (United States).
- Burnout rates range from 31%-47% among various professionals with careers like healthcare, mental health, emergency response and education having even higher rates.
- Health and mental health professionals also have high rates of compassion fatigue ranging from 40%-70%. (9,14)
- Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) research indicates that 69.9% of adults had at least one adverse childhood event, (of those 48.4% had 1-3 events and 21.5% had 4 or more). Updated research using an expanded ACEs listing indicates that 83.2% of adults had at least one adverse childhood event (of those 45.9% had 1-3 events and 37.3% had 4 or more). (1,3,10)

Known Prevalence of Significant Threat/Harm/Risk for Toxic Stress and Trauma

Factors that place people at risk for toxic stress and trauma are unreported and undercounted.

- Internationally, 70% of adults report experiencing lifetime traumas with an average of 3.2 traumatic experiences (based on multiple worldwide surveys on exposure to traumatic events, including the World Mental Health Survey Consortium, which derived survey data from 24 countries). (19, 26, 27)
- 59.7% of Canadians experienced at least one type of childhood maltreatment (e.g., physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse; interpersonal aggression; exposure to physical intimate partner violence [IPV]; emotional and physical neglect) before age 15. Approximately one-third (32.3%) of individuals experienced only non-physical types of child maltreatment (e.g., emotional abuse, interpersonal aggression, exposure to physical IPV, emotional and physical neglect), while more than 2 in 10 experienced both non-physical and physical maltreatment. (2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces) (16,17)
- 34% of individuals experienced sexual abuse while they were under the age of 18, including just under one in two girls (44%), and one in four boys (24%) (Alberta Study) (2)

Known Prevalence of Symptoms Associated with Toxic Stress and Trauma

Because of symptom overlap and the possibility of more than one cause, it can be difficult to differentiate which symptoms are the result of unrecognized toxic stress or trauma.

- 4% of the global population (301 million people) experience an anxiety disorder. (21)
- An estimated 3.8% of the population experience depression, including 5% of adults (4% among men and 6% among women), and 5.7% of adults older than 60 years. (20)
- Approximately 1 in 150 adults (40 million people, or 0.53% of the global population) were living with bipolar disorder. (23)
- 400 million people, or 7% of the world's population aged 15 years and older, lived with alcohol use disorders. Of this, 209 million people (3.7% of the adult world population) lived with alcohol dependence. (24)
- 1.2% of the world's adult population had a gambling disorder. Around 5.5% of women and 11.9% of men globally experienced some level of harm from gambling. (22)
- Almost half (45.1%) of adults were living with at least one major chronic disease (15).



TOXIC STRESS, TRAUMA AND COMPLEX TRAUMA CAN BE TRICKY TO RECOGNIZE ESPECIALLY IN OURSELVES.

Some might say there is no issue unless its acknowledged, that ignorance is bliss or that denial is somehow sweet. Sadly, we can spend years dealing with and trying to shift various symptoms (with little effectiveness) without recognizing the underlying toxic stress, trauma or complex trauma. And in the meantime of getting there, the consequences keep piling up.

Recognition of toxic stress, trauma and especially complex trauma is tricky because there are so many things that can contribute to the “**blind spot**”. We have to actively engage with taking our blinders off.

Reasons Recognition is Tricky

Disembodied Culture. The larger culture we live in is disembodied and disconnected. It leans toward performance, productivity and profit at the expense of our felt sense, experience, wholeness, and well-being. This means we are not supported to be in touch with our sensations, feelings, pain, stress, or trauma.

Blaming Ourselves and Thinking Its Our Fault or that we Deserve It. Its pretty common and easy to get stuck blaming ourselves and thinking its our fault. Unfortunately, as we operate from the symptoms of toxic stress and trauma we can behave unhealthy ways which further fuels blaming ourselves. This vortex of self-blame can make it harder to recognize that there is an underlying psychological injury, such as toxic stress or trauma.

What We Can Do In Response

Recognition requires that we unplug from the larger society at least somewhat, reduce or resist the ways we are self-medicating and plug ourselves inward to pay attention and really listen to ourselves.

By practicing some self-compassion we create space to recognize the underlying psychological injury that is not our fault.

Our reaction, including through developing toxic stress and trauma injuries happened automatically, subconsciously, and outside of our control. We are not responsible for being injured, but we are responsible for supporting ourselves to recover.

Reasons Recognition is Tricky

Societal Stigma. While a lot of progress has been made, there is still unfortunately stigma related to mental health issues. Burnout, compassion fatigue, trauma and complex trauma are psychological injuries.

Normalized within our Immediate Systems.

If unhealthy things were normalized to us, around us or were required to survive, it is much harder to recognize the dysfunction and its impacts and/or the ways we have become dysfunctional as a result. Further, the system(s) whether it is our immediate or extended family, culture or community will strongly resist us coming into recognition.

Diminished Prefrontal Capacity. When we are functioning from toxic stress, trauma and complex trauma, we are largely operating from one of the survival defense states in the nervous system (fight or flight, freeze, or flop-shutdown). These states automatically engage more of the limbic and reptilian brain and less of the cortex or higher thinking brain. This means we have less capacity for self-awareness, critical thinking, big picture thinking, integrating new information and connecting the past to the present.

What We Can Do In Response

There are ways to protect ourselves from stigma. We can refuse to absorb the faulty and toxic messages. Therapeutic support is compassionate and confidential. We don't actually need to tell anyone else (unless we choose to) what we are going through or that we have sought professional assistance.

Recognition requires that we develop a pocket of space between ourselves and any potentially unhealthy systems and that we become willing to reconsider what we were conditioned to think was "normal" and "healthy". Developing some ability to withstand pressures to maintain the dysfunctional status quo also provides space for our recognition to unfold.

We can support coming into recognition by intentionally working to connect things and by turning to those who are functioning from their higher thinking brain for perspective.



If your teeth are clenched and your fists are clenched, your lifespan is probably clenched.

Adabella Radici



Reasons Recognition is Tricky

Dysregulation, Distress, and Defense. Toxic stress and trauma injuries involve nervous system dysregulation, emotional distress and survival defenses rooted in the limbic and reptilian brain. These things feel disorienting and intolerable. So, we instinctively guard against coming into recognition because we believe that doing so will increase our dysregulation and distress.

Subconscious Traumatic Memory and Emotional Learning. An aspect of trauma is that traumatic memory is not processed or integrated. It becomes fragmented, encapsulated, and stuck subconsciously within the limbic brain. This happens along with emotional learnings such as “I can’t trust anyone” or “the world is not safe” which are also subconscious. These things continually impact how we are functioning, including through becoming triggered. Unfortunately, because they are located below our conscious awareness it makes recognizing that we are suffering from trauma or complex trauma much harder.

Overwhelm and Inefficacy. By their nature, toxic stress and trauma(s) injuries involve overwhelm. They require all of our energy and resources to cope and handle life and hold up all our defenses and protections. This really limits any spare capacity that might be used for coming into recognition. And because we don’t know how to go about dealing with toxic stress and trauma injuries we keep recognition at bay so we are not further overwhelmed.

What We Can Do In Response

We can support recognition by slowly and gently softening our defenses. While this can be difficult at first, the reality is that coming into recognition about the toxic stress or trauma injury we are likely suffering from helps us make sense of our dysregulation, distress, and defenses, perhaps for the first time.

We can pay special attention to any inconsistencies in our functioning and disproportionate reactions. These things are often an indicator that a deeper (subconscious) emotional learning pattern is overruling our conscious intent.

Of course, we don’t know how to deal with it! These are not routine, everyday kinds of problems. They are significant.

Coming into recognition requires that we appreciate that even the most overwhelming problems can come to be understood, made more manageable through proper process, chunking down and accessing knowledgeable and skilled resource information and supports.

Reasons Recognition is Tricky

Enabling by Others. Without meaning to, others can continue relating with us and tolerating the ways we are functioning from toxic stress, trauma, and complex trauma over the long term.

Misinformation. There is misinformation about the many things that can result in toxic stress, trauma and complex trauma such as social injustices and inequities that we may not realize caused issues. If we have not experienced the commonly recognized events or circumstances it may not occur to us that we are suffering from toxic stress or trauma injuries. We may also encounter well-meaning but uninformed others who disregard or misread symptoms and circumstances. These things tend to result in us not trusting our experience, not acknowledging how much we have been affected and shutting down beginning attempts at recognition.

What We Can Do In Response

We can support our recognition by truly considering any concerns or complaints that others bring to our attention to the best of our ability.

It's important to be aware of potential misdirection and misinformation. It can help to seek information and opinions from enough and multiple sources as we consider if we are experiencing toxic stress injuries or trauma(s).

Reflective Question:

Consider the Barriers to Recognition and Reflect on Which Ones Might Be Contributing to A "Blind Spot."

Then Lean Into the Suggested Response.



Some **good books** that discuss disembodied culture.

Jon Kabat Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses- Healing Ourselves and the World through Mindfulness.* (2005).

Gabor Maté in *the Myth of Normal- Trauma, Illness and Healing in a Toxic Culture.* (2022).





TOXIC STRESS, TRAUMA AND ESPECIALLY COMPLEX TRAUMA HAVE HIGH STAKES.

When we are head down in survival just trying to move through our day and doing the best we can despite toxic stress, trauma or complex trauma, it's easy not to see the full picture of just how big the impact is, and how high the stakes are.

There are **BIG CONSEQUENCES** to not Recognizing Toxic Stress, Trauma or Complex Trauma and then Reaching for Recovery.

- You'll Continue **experiencing the Symptoms** of Toxic Stress and Trauma and Vicious Cycles of those symptoms. (*see Symptoms Table*)
- You'll Continue **Living What is a Really Hard way to Live**, because Stress Related Conditions and Trauma Use Up a lot of Energy and Effort, just to get through the day with little left for anything else.
- You'll Continue Experiencing the **Far-Reaching Fall Out** of Toxic Stress and Trauma.
- You'll **stay rooted in dysregulation, distress, and defenses** never quite being able to maintain calm, connection and capability.
- You'll Continue **Having Your Growth and Development Thwarted** because Toxic Stress and Trauma Impede the Unfolding of Potential.
- You'll Continue being **Exposed to the Internal Neurobiological Kindling Process of stress activation** that happens with Toxic Stress and Trauma and contributes to Many Health Issues.
- You'll Continue **Living Disconnected from Your SELF** because Toxic Stress and Trauma fragment the self.
- You'll continue to be **Tethered to Painful Experiences from the Past and their Emotional Learning** reliving, repeating and replaying it like an overlay on present-day experiences.
- You'll likely contribute to the **continuation of cycles of trauma either by being victimized or unintentionally victimizing others**.
- You'll continue **being compromised in how you show up for the most important relationships** as a parent, partner, and friend.
- You'll continue experiencing the **collateral consequences in Many Areas of your Life**, whether its issues your health, at work, with finances. This includes being compromised as you try to make a larger impact in your life, or the world.



Symptoms Toxic Stress, PTSD and Complex Trauma

Toxic Stress e.g., chronic fatigue, burnout.

- prolonged and heightened stress response activation e.g., routinely or persistently stressed out.
- arousal and reactivity symptoms e.g., “on guard”, hypervigilant, jumpy, on alert, easily startled, repeating things to help yourself feel better, quick to anger, irritable, outbursts, aggressiveness, extreme worry and anxiety, impulsivity with words, decisions, actions, etc.
- thinking problems e.g., poor memory, focus, concentration, rigid thinking.
- numbing, suppression and shut down symptoms.
- nervous system dysregulation and narrowed window of tolerance e.g., unable to settle or feel calm, quick to anger, easily overwhelmed.
- overwhelm and inability to cope and maintain healthy functioning.
- trouble falling or staying asleep.
- fatigue and exhaustion.
- digestion problems. (bloating, constipation, irritable bowel etc.)

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- intrusive symptoms e.g., distressing memories, flashbacks, triggering, and sudden changes of state, recurring memories of painful experiences, upsetting or disturbing dreams,
- avoidance symptoms e.g., avoiding painful memories, thoughts, feelings, external reminders, dealing with problems and difficult parts of life, difficulty tolerating painful things
- escape, fantasy or addictive tendencies e.g., overworking, substances, food, gambling, gaming, pornography, shopping, sleep, devices/social media, etc.
- dissociative symptoms e.g., feeling out of body, missing time.
- emotional regulation difficulties.
- assessing the “safety” of people/situations differently than most others.
- survival based emotional learning and belief systems e.g., “I’m not safe”, “It’s all my fault”, “No one can be trusted”.
- sadness, unrecognized and unprocessed grief and loss.
- moral and spiritual questioning and distress.
- struggles to acknowledge and or come to terms with betrayals, unfairness and injustice.

Complex Trauma e.g., developmental, attachment, betrayal, intergenerational, relational.

- betrayal blindness around the various kinds of harms one has experienced and their impact.
- survival based trauma adaptations e.g., people pleasing, entitlement, caretaking, aggression, self-abandonment.
- issues with coherent identity, sense of self. feeling fragmented, splitting.
- alterations in attention/consciousness e.g., difficulty concentrating, fantasy seeking, compartmentalizing.
- negative self-concept and/or sense of shame that shows up in self-criticism, perfectionism, self-destructiveness, underachieving, avoiding mistakes or accountability, feeling bad when something good happens.
- stimulation seeking and excessive risk taking.
- compromised mind-body and mind-spirit relationship.
- abstinence and denying self of basic needs e.g., food, heat, as well as play, comfort and occasional luxuries
- impaired attachment compromising the development of healthy, reciprocal relationships e.g., anxious- seeking excessive closeness and reassurance; avoidant of vulnerability, commitment and connection; disorganized between anxious and avoidant; trauma bonding; and stayed committed to harmful others.
- learned helplessness, poor efficacy, and low empowerment.
- self-harm and/or suicidal thoughts, plans, and/or attempts.
- addictions and other means of managing internal distress.
- repeating and reenacting harmful relationships, patterns, and/or behaviors.
- presence of somatic distress/somatization of illness, chronic illnesses and pain conditions e.g., migraines, GI problems, autoimmune disorders, chronic fatigue, obesity, heart disease etc.



There are **BIG REWARDS** for Recognizing Toxic Stress, Trauma or Complex Trauma and Reaching for Recovery.

- You'll Learn to **Free Yourself from the Far-Reaching Effects** of Toxic Stress and/or Trauma.
- You'll be **Supported to See and Understand What's Happened, How It Affected You and to Respond** in a way that **Leads to Processing, Integrating and Moving Forward**.
- You'll continually **Free up all of the Extra Energy and Effort** that living with Stress Related Conditions and Trauma takes. You'll have that extra energy and effort for other important things.
- You'll **Reconnect With and Learn to Engage from SELF** more easily and consistently.
- You'll **Restart the Growth and Development** process that moves you toward your **Potential**.
- You'll **Slow Down the Health Impacts of the Internal Neurobiological Kindling Process** of stress activation and Potentially Even Start to Reverse Them.
- You'll **Break the Vicious Symptom Cycles** and start moving forward again.
- You'll **Face and Grieve Pain from the Past and Reconsolidate Outdated Emotional Learnings** so you can move fully into the present and look toward the future.
- You'll **Break the Long-Lasting and often Recurring Patterns** of toxic stress and trauma that repeat over a lifetime and often over generations.
- You'll **Restore your Ability to Engage Appropriately in your Important Relationships** as a parent, partner and friend.
- You'll **Halt the Collateral Consequences** of Toxic Stress and Trauma(s) in the many areas of your life and have the internal resources to bring these areas back to stability and may even start to level up your impact in the world.
- You'll **Gain Post-Traumatic Growth** such as increased compassion, meaning, presence, wisdom, and resilience.



Reflective Question:

When it comes to Recognizing Toxic Stress, Trauma or Complex Trauma, what are your Highest Stakes?



IT IS HEROIC TO CHOOSE RECOVERY IN RESPONSE TO TOXIC STRESS, TRAUMA, OR COMPLEX TRAUMA.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, only we can be the **hero** in our story.

When we are experiencing toxic stress, trauma and especially complex trauma we are stuck in survival. We often feel badly about ourselves and spend time wondering what's wrong with us. We might use all manner of distraction and numbing to deal with life. We might actively deny our pain while turning our attention to gaining external success and validation. We might project our distressing feelings onto others.

We usually feel a long way from being the hero.

And while we survived (and that's important) we know deep down that it's not the same as:

- **Responding to our pain.**
- **Rehabilitating our brain and nervous system.**
- **Reconstructing our internal beliefs.**
- **Rebuilding our sense of self and empowerment.**
- **Reconciling our betrayals.**
- **Repairing our authenticity, vulnerability and capability to relate internally with ourselves and externally with others.**
- **Reorienting ourselves to thrive.**

Being the hero in our own story is not about what we were able to survive, although that certainly shapes us and informs the story. It is about the **transformation** we move through (in the process of recovery) so that we can expand into the best of ourselves, and bring that to our lives, to others, and to the world.



Family pathology rolls from generation to generation like a fire in the woods taking down everything in its path until one person, in one generation, has the courage to turn and face the flames. That person brings peace to his ancestors and spares the children that follow.

Terry Real



Toxic stress, trauma, and complex trauma shrink us and make us smaller and even misshapen. And there is often an injustice to it. It happens to us and is not our fault. And so, we can get confused waiting for someone else to make it right. Even if we are fortunate and someone does take some responsibility, them doing so does not unshrink us, it simply acknowledges their role in how we've been harmed.



**Only we can take responsibility for how we have been impacted.
Only we can be the hero in our story.**

It is heroic to admit something is wrong.
It is heroic to reach for and receive help.
It is heroic to break cycles.
It is heroic to unshrink ourselves.
It is heroic to find our wholeness.

Recovery takes all the things of heroism: a quiet internal heroism with very little external acknowledgement or accolades. It takes courage, willingness, humility, risk, sacrifice, conviction, fortitude, honour, strength and faith to set ourselves ablaze in the fire of recovery and transformation.

Recovery **brings forth and births the hero** so that toxic stress, trauma and even complex trauma are not the end of the story.



Reflective Question:
*If you listen closely, what
is your hero whispering?*



TOXIC STRESS, TRAUMA AND COMPLEX TRAUMA ARE RECOVERABLE WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORTS.

Recovery is more effective than ever because of **SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGHS** in our understanding:



We know the brain is plastic and how to use the principles of **neuroplasticity** to change how it is functioning.



We know a lot more about the **different types of situations and circumstances that can result in toxic stress, trauma and complex trauma** including at different developmental ages, in different types of relationships and settings and as part of the systemic social issues in society. So, recovery is more informed and aware.



We know how the **nervous system and its survival hierarchy** works and how to resolve distress and dysregulation.



We know the ways that trauma results in **various alterations in the brain** in terms of the prefrontal cortex, a larger amygdala, attentional bias to threat and danger and the default mode network that connects past, present and future. This knowing allows for understanding and learning to recognize the alterations, counteract and rewire them.



We know how toxic stress and trauma can lead to **dysregulation of various neurotransmitters in the brain**. This knowing supports responsiveness.

Potentially affected neurotransmitters include:

- gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA);
- serotonin, the overall calming neurotransmitter;
- norepinephrine, the primary neurotransmitter in the stress response with a key role in such things as blood pressure, mood, and sleep-wake cycles is increased with trauma;
- dopamine, the overall excitatory neurotransmitter with a key role in reward and motivation, movement, learning, sleep and arousal; and
- glutamate the main excitatory neurotransmitter in the brain with key role in brain function and metabolism.



We know that many of the **ways people cope** that seem unhealthy are often **attempts to solve or manage the internal distress** that comes from toxic stress, trauma and complex trauma. So, we can compassionately assist them to find different, more effective solutions.



We know how and where **traumatic memory and subconscious emotional learning is encapsulated and stored** in the brain and how to **gently process** them.



We know how **regulation and attachment are disrupted** in childhood by toxic stress, trauma and complex trauma and how to slowly support their repair allowing for healthy relationship with SELF and others.



We know how the **SELF** can **lose efficacy, esteem and worthiness** and can become fragmented into different parts or replaced with shame in an effort to survive.



We know that **moral distress, unfairness, betrayal, and/or grief** are very often part of toxic stress, trauma and complex trauma and need to be attended to.



We know toxic stress, trauma and complex trauma become **stored in the body** and require somatic attending and release.



We know a lot about the different kinds of **roles and adaptations humans take on to survive** as part of toxic stress, trauma and especially complex trauma such as people pleasing, compulsive caretaking, irresponsibility and overdone self-reliance. We also know how to help them recognize these and shift into more balanced ways of being.



These breakthroughs give us a
RECOVERY ROADMAP.
(see next page)

Recovery of complex trauma typically occurs in layers over time, with each round of counselling addressing one or two affected areas.



Recovery Roadmap Toxic Stress, PTSD and Complex Trauma

STABILIZATION

PROCESSING

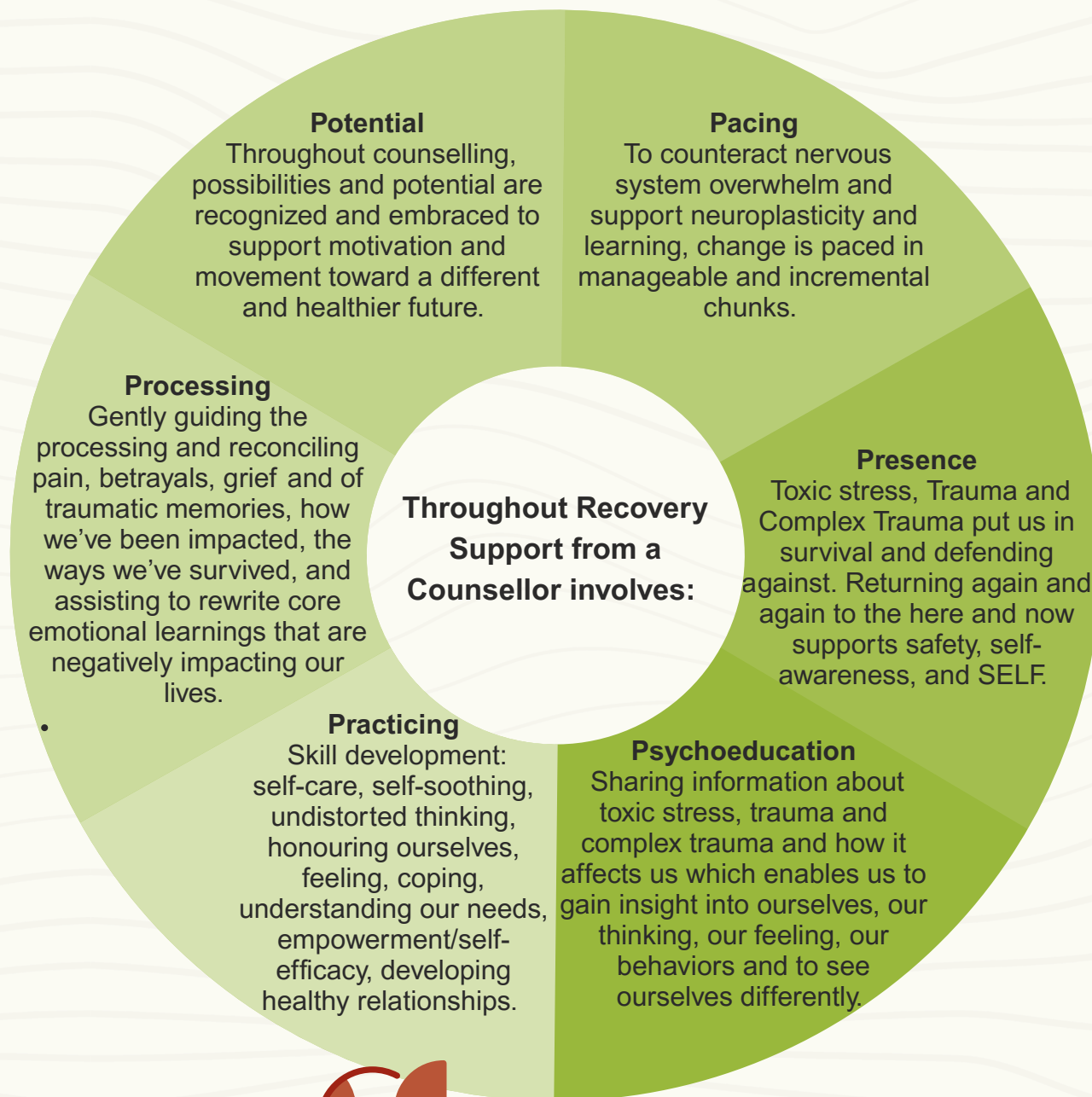
DEVELOPMENT

MOVING FORWARD

	Accessing Safety	Realness and Response	Story Integration	SELF-Leadership	Supportive Lifestyle	Life Engagement
Toxic Stress e.g., chronic fatigue, burnout.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognize/ reduce your toxic stressors understand nervous system hierarchy learn to regulate your nervous system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop your awareness learn to acknowledge what's difficult embrace your discomfort challenge any unnecessary suffering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognize source(s) of distress/toxic stress, including moral distress process pain and experiences move through any losses and grief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> practice self-compassion and acceptance examine any self-responsibility improve your rest and self-care with limits and boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop more coping tools/ resources expand support system ensure healthy lifestyle factors rewiden your window of tolerance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manage aspects of life within personal needs and limits engage in leisure, creativity and play
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> decrease your arousal/ reactivity develop helpful responses to intrusions & triggers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> address your avoidance expand your distress tolerance soften your unhelpful thinking soften your numbing and suppression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand how you've been impacted process your traumatic experiences shift thinking stuck points come to terms, resolve and repair what's jagged gain meaning in the present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> address any guilt or shifts in responsibility develop sense of SELF beyond victim or trauma survivor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase your coping tools/ resources expand areas of resiliency improve personal safety skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> choose meaningful activities learn to flourish apply wisdom and therapeutic gains
Complex Trauma e.g., developmental, attachment, betrayal, intergenerational, relational.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> safety planning shift any self-harming behaviors update your interoception and neuroception find ease in your own body move toward supportive/ affirming environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop your ability for self-soothing improve your emotional awareness/ literacy understand and rewire your vicious cycles shift any alterations in your attention lower your dissociative symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> process your encapsulated memories heal harm/core wounds including betrayals understand and recondition survival adaptations, learning, trauma bonding and reenactments resolve shame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop coherent SELF develop self-attunement learn and meet needs body-mind-spirit mind-integration address helplessness develop self-efficacy-empowerment gain attachment security repair harm caused to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> address any risky-harming behaviors ensure positive social supports/ support system address somatic or other illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> learn to tolerate and develop pleasure, hope, joy, and meaning learn to be and require healthy others and reciprocal relationships act in alignment with values pursue purposeful goals

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When we choose recovery, **we change the trajectory of our story.**



Reflective Question:

How would you most want recovery to change the trajectory of your story?

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