

TRAUMA & HEALING

TIPS FOR SURVIVORS

The following tips encompass some of the ways that people who have experienced trauma have found relief. Explore what works for you.

- 1. *Empower yourself.***
Look for choices you can make towards greater wellness.¹
- 2. *Partner with a Local Domestic Violence Service Provider.***
Know that your perspective matters – you can learn to appreciate who you were, who you are, and who you are becoming.²
- 3. *Connect yourself.***
You can decide how much you share and with whom.³
- 4. *Appreciate yourself.***
Notice how far you've come. You're worth the effort it takes to improve your well-being.⁴
- 5. *Forgive your brain.***
The deeper regions of the brain controlling emotions or fight or flight might be overactive.⁵
- 6. *Seek healing through silence.***
Nonverbal techniques can be effective because they calm the deep regions of the brain most affected by trauma.⁶
- 7. *Writing can be a safe way to connect with emotions.***
It may help ease stress and physical symptoms of trauma.⁷
- 8. *Music relaxation can help decrease depression.***
It can also improve sleep for survivors of trauma.⁸
- 9. *Yoga can be a useful practice of body/mind awareness.***
It may be effective for people with chronic PTSD symptoms.⁹
- 10. *Progressive Muscle Relaxation targets each muscle group.***
Relaxing each muscle group one by one is an effective way to calm anxiety and combat stress-related pain.¹⁰

11. **Breathing deeply and slowly.**

This can help with the “fight or flight” response.¹¹ Consider a deep breathing app to help.

12. **Exercise.**

Exercise has been shown to reduce PTSD symptoms and depression as well as improve sleep.¹²

¹ Adapted from SAMHSA.gov, Dealing with the Effects of Trauma—A Self-Help Guide, <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA-3717/SMA-3717.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Jennifer Sweeton, PsyD, “How to Heal the Traumatized Brain,” Psychology Today, March 13, 2017.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/workings-well-being/201703/how-heal-the-traumatized-brain>

⁶ Dawn McClelland, PhD, and Chris Gilyard, MA, Calming Trauma - How Understanding the Brain Can Help,” Phoenix-Society.org.

<https://www.phoenix-society.org/resources/entry/calming-trauma-how-understanding-the-brain-can-help>

⁷ Psychosynthesis Trust, “The benefits of writing about trauma,” <https://psychosynthesistrust.org.uk/the-benefits-of-writing-about-trauma/>

⁸ Blanaru, M., Bloch, B., Vadas, L., Arnon, Z., Ziv, N., Kremer, I., & Haimov, I. (2012). “The Effects of Music Relaxation and Muscle Relaxation Techniques on Sleep Quality and Emotional Measures among Individuals with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.” *Mental Illness*, 4(2), e13.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4253375/>

⁹ Mara Santilli, “How Sexual Assault Survivors Are Using Fitness As Part of Their Recovery,” Shape.com, November 10, 2017.

<https://www.shape.com/lifestyle/mind-and-body/how-sexual-assault-survivors-are-using-fitness-recover>

¹⁰ WebMD, “Stress Management: Doing Progressive Muscle Relaxation.”

<https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-doing-progressive-muscle-relaxation>

¹¹ Christopher Bergland, “Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercises and Your Vagus Nerve,” Psychology Today, May 16, 2017.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201705/diaphragmatic-breathing-exercises-and-your-vagus-nerve>

¹² Matthew Tull, “The Benefits of Exercise for People With PTSD,” VeryWellMind, January 6, 2018.

<https://www.verywell.com/exercise-for-ptsd-2797465>

