

Moving Past Fear-Filled Trauma to Faith-Filled Healing

Life can be difficult—for you and for me. Bad things happen. Your mind, body and soul cannot be completely closed to hurtful things that happen around you or to you. To some degree you are vulnerable, and when you're vulnerable, you're going to get hurt. Sometimes those wounds are temporary. It's as if your soul gets a cold. It hurts somewhat, but with a little time, things heal, and you go on with your life. At other times, the wounds are deep. Some traumas are so disrupting that even the strongest person would find it difficult to cope.

The passing of time may allow a scar to form over the surface of your trauma wound, but if what's underneath is not addressed and allowed to heal, the pain and injury will continue. You'll still be that 5-year-old little girl hiding under the bed hoping your alcoholic father won't find you. Or you'll still be looking over your shoulder and startling at any strange sound 20 years after your rape. You'll cringe any time another person touches you a certain way, or white-knuckle it to keep from taking that narcotic pill when you feel upset. You'll refuse to go to your high school reunion because your old bully will be there, or still feel as angry about your loved one's death as you did the first month after she passed away. That's not healing.

How to Move From Trauma to Healing

Healing is not passive, and it doesn't just happen to you. Healing is something you actively participate in and here are some ways you can actively participate. These are important regardless of how long it's been since your difficult

experience, or how small or large the trauma was.

Listen to your body and your mind. Acknowledging that you feel afraid, anxious or otherwise distressed is a good starting point. It helps you own something about what is going on with you. It's one part of your truth, and without owning it as your own you can't take the next step. What are the triggers that cause the fear and anxiety?

You can use the things you come to understand about yourself to find safe people and places to get support and discover other activities that help you find healing.

Learn healthy ways of expressing your feelings. If you've struggled with fear and anxiety for a long time, feeling fear and anxiety is the primary way you've expressed your feelings. It will be helpful to you to learn other, more useful ways of expressing those same feelings. What that looks like will depend on your personality and choices.

It's hard to overstate the benefit of talking with safe people about your difficult circumstances. Other survivors of child abuse, domestic violence, or wartime or any other trauma can be an invaluable help to you. Such conversations may help you feel validated. You may feel hopeful as you see others who are further along in their journey, and you will feel stronger as you offer support to others who are not as far along as you. Look for a person who will allow you to be real but also help you find positive ways to express your feelings.

Crying, writing, drawing, painting, singing and yelling (not at someone else) are some ways to express your feelings. All of that is OK—even if you're yelling at God. Remember that He's the only One completely capable of understanding you and who will be with you always. Harming other people or property—or yourself—is never appropriate. If you find yourself struggling with the urge to harm yourself or others, get help right away. If you can't think of anywhere else to

get help, in the United States you can call a national help line: 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK).

Take one step at a time. You can't feel and heal from a trauma in one moment. You feel psychological distress after trauma because your normal coping mechanisms were completely overwhelmed. It's important to take the journey forward in small doses. There are no medals given for speed; what's important is that you continue to take steps in the direction of your healing.

Make choices where you can. One major part of psychological distress is the sense of being out of control—both about what happened and about how it's affecting you now. Every small way you can take back that sense of control will be helpful in your journey to healing. Practicing making choices in unrelated areas will help you, so stretch yourself in small areas.

You can cope through religion. God has an answer for your psychological distress. That belief is powerful. Discovering God's answer for your distress involves more than praying "God, please help me!" and then waiting for him to do something. Your action and cooperation along the way make a great difference. No church is perfect, but being connected to other growing believers will be beneficial in healing whatever trauma has impacted your life.

If you have been hurt, you will also have to face the matter of forgiveness. You won't find freedom and joy until you deal with this head-on. Forgiveness is not saying that what happened to you is OK. It's not OK! That's why forgiveness is the only way you can find freedom from the trauma's hold on you. Forgiveness is giving up the right to continue to be hurt by the person who hurt you. It's making the choice to let God deal with them since you can't do it anyway. If that person is still destructive, you may have to protect yourself from being hurt further. But you can forgive someone whether or not you

choose to continue a relationship with them.

If you struggle with the whole area of forgiveness, you're not alone. Remember that forgiveness is a choice, and it takes time. Give God permission to continue working with you in this area, and He will do so. Total healing is possible in Him.

Adapted from Overcoming Fear & Anxiety Through Spiritual Warfare by Carol Peters-Tanksley, M.D., ., copyright 2017, published by Siloam, Charisma Media/Charisma House Book Group. This book provides you with the tools you need to help you overcome the fear and anxiety that accompany life in this modern-day world, and walk in the freedom God intended. To order your copy, click on this link.

Prayer Power for the Week Beginning July 9, 2017

This week, thank the Lord that He is the source of your peace and that you are secure in Him. Ask Him for continued grace to take one step at a time in your life's journey and for the divine appointments and connections to help you along the way. Pray for worldwide revival, the expansion of God's kingdom, more workers for His harvest field and for those in authority over us. Pray for the protection of our nation and its allies. Pray for our military and their families. Read 2 Timothy 1:7 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23.