

# What is Trauma?

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**Trauma is an event or a moment in someone's life that the brain interprets as a threat to one's survival. It can be disruptive if, as a memory, the event or moment is stored as a sensation, and as information.**

**Big T:** A violent, catastrophic, abusive or neglectful experience that the body responds to with a physical fight or flight response.

Ex: War, abusive relationship, car accident, natural disaster

**Little T:** A moment, a statement, or an event that elicits a lack of belonging, an experience of shame, or feeling of not being enough.

Ex: A shame based statement, a break up, a friend falling out, gaslighting, bullying

What have you categorized in your life as a Big T trauma? Do you still struggle with memories from this event?

Trauma can be quite disruptive to sleep, causing insomnia, inability to stay asleep, nightmares, and restlessness. Have you ever struggled with any of these issues? What have you used to cope up until now?

Many **trauma symptoms** can mirror or model an anxious state or a depressed state, sometimes ping-ponging between the two and appearing as Bipolar. As you better understand your body's signals and the states you are in, you may be able to see these feelings as connected to events in the past.

What are some of the times you feel anxious?

What are some of the times you feel depressed?

**Anxiety** can feel like tension, heat, and a pounding heartbeat in our body. It can feel restless and uncomfortable, sometimes like nausea.

**Depression** can feel like a sense of hopelessness and despair, lack of energy, excessive sleepiness and numbness.

A **trauma timeline** can be an effective tool for identifying and naming some of the events that fit this “new” definition of trauma. But this is a strategy I suggest doing with the help of a support team or a support person. This is definitely best done in therapy. Starting your own list can be useful but it may bring up a lot from your past.

*If you decide to map a timeline, start with ages 0-5 and work your way up in 5 year increments. Use stories that have been told to you, as well as bits of memories that stand out. What matters most is how your body feels about this memory now.*

0-5

5-10

10-15

15-20

20-25

25-30

30-35