

Sample Chapter From *“Learning To Re-connect The Pieces Of A Life Shattered By Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)”*

When something traumatic happens to you, or you witness something traumatic, your whole world is turned upside down and you may find yourself questioning everything you ever believed in.

The world feels like a far more dangerous place than you ever envisioned and it is hard to just get by! Even the words "get by" are like hard work.

Questioning yourself, questioning what happened, how and why it happened, questioning those involved and asking how things could have been different are re-lived and re-experienced over and over in your mind.

It spills over into your daily life, and slowly you feel like you are driving yourself insane! Insane with grief, anger, frustration, helplessness, hopelessness, resentment and regrets.

As a result, you are also dealing with a myriad of negative, depressing and frightening emotions that leave you feeling like you are on a roller coaster over which you are struggling to maintain control, hold on, stay safe, stay sane and survive the white knuckled ride to hell and back!

On the good days, you may even ask "What Now?" or consider what does your future hold?

Where will it take you mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually?

Even thinking about the future may seem hazy as you struggle to make it through even today. Maybe the thought of what happens next is too scary to even contemplate as you struggle through the "here and now".

Although the only time you ever have to accomplish something is the present, it is only by working at the present that the future can carry any hope.

So you need to be vigilant about the messages you are hearing inside your head, the images you are seeing, the activities you are doing, the conversations you are having and the way you respond to and interact with the world around you.

A lot to take in I know!

However, it is only by regularly "checking in" with yourself that you can really see "where you are at" in terms of progress.

Sure there will be bad days and often even more bad than good days, but a day is just that-a moment in time so do not put more emphasis on time than you should because the progress is what is relevant not the time-frame.

It is a marathon to the finish not a sprint, so you need to build up your mental, physical, emotional and spiritual muscles and resolve for the long run!

So instead of asking "why me-what next?" say something like, "okay I am here, I don't want to be so I am going to dig, claw or do whatever is within my power to build myself up again and heal as best I can, and what isn't in my power, I'll ask."

Blame

Sometimes even though you try to hold everything together, you may lash out or say or do something to cause hurt and distress to others. Of course you do not mean it and are filled with regret afterwards.

You may then go on to blame yourself for what has happened, and the chances are it will happen again!

When reliving trauma over and over, you may be filled with self-blame for any part you had or were forced to have, even if it was against your beliefs and free will.

It is almost like you got yourself into the situation by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. You keep analyzing things and question what you could have done, if anything, to make things turn out differently, and this is head wrecking stuff.

You may also blame yourself for how everything has turned out and especially if your life seems a mess.

Sometimes blame is directed against you where maybe a long suffering partner or someone close to you, can by their words or actions seem to blame you for not making faster progress, and this only adds to the list of issues you have to deal with to make it through another day.

Overcoming Blame

Blaming yourself and blaming others does not make the situation any better. It just ties you to the past and holds yourself and others in a negative capacity. You are already suffering enough without blaming yourself even more for something that cannot be undone. Blaming others just ties you even more to them and they are not worth this.

“When you forgive, you in no way change the past - but you sure do change the future.”
Bernard Meltzer

When you forgive yourself first for any wrong doings you will then be in a greater position to forgive others. Even if there were no wrong doings on your part, try to let go of the bitterness left by blame as it keeps tying you to what happened and you will never be free.

This is not the same as forgetting the past and the great hurt done but blame will only serve to keep what happened firmly in your mind even when you say you want to move on.

“People can be more forgiving than you can imagine. But you have to forgive yourself. Let go of what's bitter and move on.” Bill Cosby

Sometimes you just have to accept that things do go wrong. No one is perfect so you need to be realistic in how far you are willing to go in blaming yourself or others. Where are the benefits and who benefits? There are none!

If you feel you are to blame just ask for forgiveness or even say to yourself out loud or in your head “I forgive myself for...” and really mean it. Speak to your heart.

“He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven.” Thomas Fuller

If you want forgiveness for all the wrong doings done to you, try to imagine that person or that situation in a different light where they are asking for forgiveness and see them as a vulnerable scarred and scared individual, even as helpless child and not for the horrible person who did this to you. Imagine them reaching out their arms pleading with you for forgiveness.

Grief

Grief differs to regret in that it does not put blame on yourself or anyone else. It often comes soon after or is delayed in time after the death, injury or act of trauma experienced by a loved one, a colleague or friend.

It also comes about when you find yourself in a situation where your very survival is threatened and you need to make decisions which may come back to haunt you just as the trauma haunts you.

Grief also comes with the loss of a life you once knew, that was familiar and safe.

Grief is so personal and unique to each person and the extent and depth of grieving depends on a number of factors. This includes the type of loss or experience that brought about the grief, your personality, and faith, current strategies you use for coping with problems and upsets, existing support systems in place in your life including family and friends and the closeness of your relationships.

Overcoming Grief

“There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.” Washington Irving

There are so many things to grieve for depending on your personal circumstances and experiences. Maybe it's a life left horribly scarred, seeing the worst in someone by the acts they commit, witnessing and/or experiencing horror and trauma at an enormous level which involves, death, suffering and destruction.

Regardless of what happened your body and mind are in mourning and to grieve is normal. The key is to not let the mourning process extend so far that depression sets in.

There is a time for letting go and allowing yourself the time and space to heal because holding onto old wounds will cut you off from really living your life in a way you are meant to live.

Maybe you lost friends, colleagues and loved ones and grieve their sudden and devastating loss. They will forever be in your memory and in your heart but they would also not want you to suffer any more. Their suffering is now over and they would want you to be at peace.

“The greatness comes not when things always go good for you. But the greatness comes when you're really tested, when you take some knocks, some disappointments when sadness comes. Because only if you've been in the deepest valley can you ever know how magnificent it is to be on the highest mountain.” Richard Nixon

Sometimes it is only when you reach rock bottom will you finally make a breakthrough and your life begins to turn around. Having come from a place of deep grieving you will be able to see life differently and find peace and joy again and when it comes it will be worth the wait.

Avail of whatever support systems are available to you. This includes family and friends, a support group, therapist or your faith to turn to. Be open and transparent and communicate your needs so you will be given the support you need to get through the grieving process. Remember you are not a burden.

Learn to read the signals your body is giving you that send you into grief. By doing this you will get a “heads up” so you can implement some coping strategies. Be kind to yourself also during these times. The depth and duration of your grief is personal and is a process you need to work through.

Try to express yourself in ways other than grief if you can. This will serve to introduce more constructive ways of dealing with sadness. Channeling your energy into a physical or creative activity will help reprogram your brain away from grief and give you a more positive outlet for expressing yourself.

Regret

With regret you may find yourself asking over and over what you could have done differently. You may regret decisions you made at the time, regret how you reacted, regret the things you did or didn't do, and this tends to linger indefinitely, leaving you in a state of hopelessness and misery.

Your thoughts come to taunt and torment you, and you find yourself questioning yourself and re-living the situation over and over.

Regret over what has happened has its place in time but when you find yourself living on an ongoing basis with regrets, they serve no purpose but to hold you to a past which cannot be reclaimed.

Overcoming Regrets

“If you aren't in the moment, you are either looking forward to uncertainty, or back to pain and regret.” Jim Carrey

Living a life of regret is one of deep pain and sadness and it will never allow you to move forward with your life. You need to work on replacing regrets with positive memories and building new memories by living in the present moment. That is the only thing we have any control over.

The past has its place. Now is the time to put some space between what happened then and what is happening in this present moment. Make the moments count so your future isn't filled with the regrets of what you didn't do today.

“We should regret our mistakes and learn from them, but never carry them forward into the future with us.” Lucy Maud Montgomery

To ensure regrets do not become part of who we permanently are, it is important not to carry them into the future. There are a number of things you can do to ensure this.

Really work out where your regret lies. What is the main focus that holds you in regret for what did or didn't happen? Evaluate it and ask of yourself how things could have been different. What were your weaknesses? How did others mess up? Everyone makes mistakes. Be open to forgive yourself and others. Be open to accept any force of nature or accident that left you with regrets. Some things are simply and unfortunately beyond your control and all you can do is accept what happened or you will drive yourself crazy.

By holding on to regrets, you will never find true happiness so do what it takes to accept and make and find peace. It doesn't undo any wrong but will make it easier to live.

Grieve for your regrets but do so in the understanding it is part of a process to move you forward with your life and not backwards. Look back and see if there is any positive learning experience you can take from what happened. Even if it seems there is none, try to find something positive you have learned. How can you help others with this new insight?

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