

# Trauma Anonymous Traditions

- The welfare of individual members takes priority and depends on the functioning of the group.
- For guiding the group we rely on the power of recovery as expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
- The only requirement for membership is ongoing distress resulting from a traumatic experience or experiences and the desire to heal from them.
- Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting another group or Trauma Anonymous as a whole.
- Each Trauma Anonymous group has the objectives of promoting the healing and growth of its members and, when appropriate, reaching out to others still suffering.
- A Trauma Anonymous group should never endorse, finance or lend the its name to any other facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, ego, property or prestige divert us from our primary aims.
- Trauma Anonymous strives to be fully self-supporting and will not accept contributions that compromise its autonomy or goals.
- Trauma Anonymous work should remain forever non-professional but our service centers may employ special workers.
- Trauma Anonymous as such ought never be organized but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- Trauma Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues \*as an organization\* lest the group's name be drawn into public controversy.
- Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, film, television and the Internet.
- Anonymity is the psychospiritual foundation behind all our traditions not only for purposes of confidentiality but to prioritize principles of recovery over individual egos.

# Trauma Anonymous Steps

The following stages of recovery are sometimes known as the “Steps” in Twelve Step groups. For our purposes we have only eleven; they need not occur in strictly linear fashion:

- We recognized we couldn't control our trauma-related distress.
- Came to believe that someone or something outside ourselves could help us heal and achieve greater sanity and wellness.
- Relinquished a degree of control over our lives as we felt it was safe to do so.
  
- Made an honest and gentle exploration of our thoughts, feelings and experiences.
- Acknowledged our struggle to ourselves and when safe to do so, others.
- Prepared ourselves to work through our distress with safety and made a commitment, however small, to do so.
  
- Rejected the notion, if we had a perpetrator, that we had to forgive them under any and all circumstances.
- If we chose to do so, made a list of people we may have hurt in our distress and made amends to them unless to do so would cause further injury. This list may include ourselves.
- Recognized our points of progress and allowed ourselves to integrate improvements.
  
- Sought emotional, mental, and social stability through daily reflective inventories.
- We've become mindful of how we feel, what's making us feel that way, and how we are affecting others, always.
  
- Having experienced healing and growth as a result of our efforts, we shared our story with others and continued to practice the principles.

# Trauma Anonymous Promises

We can expect to see these transformational changes occur in our lives, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, as we work the Steps and follow the Traditions of Trauma Anonymous:

- Our nightmares, flashbacks, and/or intrusive thoughts and memories will begin to fade.
- Our defensive nature will decrease and we will feel less threatened by our surroundings.
- Our irritability, discontentment, anxiety, and restlessness will decrease.
- We will no longer feel the need to numb ourselves with things like drugs, alcohol, sex/pornography, food, work and other unhealthy addictions..
- We will experience a more restful sleep and have more energy during the day.
- Our quick anger as a response will be transformed into a healthy assertiveness and self-protectiveness.
- Love for our self and self-confidence and will return or develop for the first time.
- We will no longer feel the need to be avoidant socially, physically, and emotionally.
- We will learn to trust others appropriately and be less bothered by others' anger, irritation and/or disapproval.
- We will no longer be held hostage psychologically with guilt, shame, regret and remorse because of our traumatic experience or experiences.
- Our ability to tolerate both frustrations and excitement will increase.
- We will be able to talk about our experiences with increasing ease, and without having to minimize our trauma..
- We will regain a sense of hope for the future as well as the desire to plan for it.
- We will regain the capacity to experience joy and take pleasure in the mystery of life.
- We will reassert our right to exist and thrive while standing strong in our new found way of life.

# Symptoms

The following is a list of symptoms from which people may be suffering. It is not meant to be comprehensive nor will anyone necessarily have all of them:

## ***Category 1: Re-experiencing the traumatic event***

- Intrusive, upsetting memories of the event
- Flashbacks (acting or feeling like the event is happening again)
- Nightmares (either of the event or of other frightening things)
- Feelings of intense distress when reminded of the trauma
- Intense physical reactions to reminders of the event (e.g. pounding heart, rapid breathing, nausea, muscle tension, sweating)

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## ***Category 2: Avoidance and numbing***

- Avoiding activities, places, thoughts, or feelings that remind you of the trauma
- Inability to remember important aspects of the trauma
- Loss of interest in activities and life in general
- Feeling detached from others and emotionally numb
- Sense of a limited future (you don't expect to live a normal life span, get married, have a career)

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## ***Category 3: Increased anxiety and emotional arousal***

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hypervigilance (on constant "red alert")
- Feeling jumpy and easily startled

# Trauma Anonymous Preamble

Trauma Anonymous is a program for anyone affected by an traumatic experience or experiences they believe causes them continuing distress. It encompasses histories like military combat, rape/sexual abuse and childhood trauma but is not limited to them; we welcome those who feel their experience may sound trivial or “not traumatic enough”. We have no required minimum for what qualifies as traumatic enough for one to be here. Nor is formal diagnosis from a mental health professional required. The only requirement for TA membership is the desire to recover from an event or events perceived as traumatic to the individual.

We recognize simple, partial, and chronic or complex PTSD. We try not to use the word “survivor” in our groups (although it is ok for members to self-identify as such) because some of us may feel that a *part* of us did not survive the trauma. We welcome friends and family of those with PTSD but we ask that they not share until all others have had a chance to do so.

Unlike most Twelve Step groups we do not refer to a higher power. This is because for some of us our traumatic history occurred in the context of someone misusing power over us, making the very idea of a higher power potentially triggering. We also do not use the disease model of addiction as done in Alcoholics Anonymous—while many of us may feel unwell, sometimes radically so, and also have physiological symptoms, we recognize that these are normal responses to highly abnormal stressors.

We encourage members to create a recovery network beyond just this group. For some of us this may include but not be limited to psychotherapy; if this path is pursued we advise finding someone with trauma-specific training. For those who have misgivings about how a Twelve-Step model gets applied to PTSD we have some printed literature on this and other topics available from the literature person

for a small fee, but most the readings are also available online at no charge.