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**Steps to healing childhood trauma as an adult**

When we take emotional, physical or behavioural stab wounds of our childhood into adulthood, they negatively impact our relationships, careers, happiness, health, etc. until we process our emotions and heal by feeling them. Experts share tips and steps for overcoming childhood trauma as an adult



Steps to healing childhood trauma as an adult (Image by Mohamed Hassan from Pixabay )

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By Zarafshan Shiraz, Delhi

Children are usually believed to be extraordinarily resilient and capable of quickly recovering from nearly any difficulty however, there are a few childhood traumas that can have long-lasting and severe repercussions on an adult's life if left unaddressed. Childhood **trauma** can be caused by anything that makes a child feel helpless or unsafe - like sexual, physical or verbal abuse, domestic violence, an unstable or unsafe environment, parental separation, neglect, bullying, a serious illness or invasive medical procedures.

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When we take these emotional, physical or behavioural stab wounds of our childhood into adulthood, they negatively impact our **relationships**, careers, happiness, health, etc. until we process our emotions and heal by feeling them. In an interview with HT Lifestyle, Dr Malini Saba, Psychologist and Chairman of the Anannke Foundation discusses five methods for overcoming childhood trauma as an adult.

**1. Acknowledge the problem and its triggers** - The initial step in overcoming childhood trauma is to conduct a thorough self-examination and accept the existence of a problem. After acknowledging a problem, you must understand it. What causes this? Does it entail eating or playing alone, a specific city, outfit, song, or a family member? We all have triggers that can help us relive our childhood trauma in order to move forward. The healing process is aided by identifying the trigger, and many people can let go of their pasts only by becoming aware and knowing their triggers.

**2. Love the child inside you** - Relive the experience you're recovering from and imagine that a younger you is meeting your adult self in the present. Talk, hug and wipe away the tears to comfort your inner child. If the child is scared, try to calm them down. Give that child the solace it needs. Be the kind of adult that the child didn't have when they were younger. If you can't picture this on your own, try a meditation for healing from childhood traumas but it's not just a one-time thing. This meditation must be done for at least 21 days (or till you feel the release). You've been thinking about this memory for years. Don't be surprised if it takes you a while to really let go of it.

**3. Positive affirmations should be used** - Negative childhood events may impede our brain pathways, preventing us from enjoying life on our terms. We must actively nourish our hearts, brains, and souls with positive affirmations to reverse the effects of years of trauma. We must reassure our inner selves that we are secure and in charge now as we are no longer children. Positive affirmations are necessary to counteract the effects of bad childhood experiences. Take the time to determine which affirmations you will practise. Make a note of the positive affirmations that resonate with you and practise them daily. Even better, record them in your voice and listen to them before and after bedtime.

**4. Put an end to the negative chatter** - As you heal, you'll feel several emotions. You'll remember long-forgotten details from your past. And more than anything else, you are likely to begin engaging in a great deal of negative mental talk, if you do not already do so. Learn to calm your mind and break the cycle of negativity. As you attempt to heal your past, try some relaxation techniques, meditations, music, or podcasts that help you calm down and reduce stress and anxiety. You must know that you are attempting to alter a brain region that has existed for years. It will be challenging, and it will oppose the change in very real and rational ways.

**5. Learn from it** - It's difficult to let go of a traumatic memory when we don't know why it happened. We often struggle to understand why something happened, which in reality, is probably pointless. Imagine you're a third person observing the experience. Make a list of what you've learnt thus far. Make a list and stick it where it's visible daily. Remember that everything happens for a reason. You've learned from it, and now it's time to go on.

Bringing her expertise to the same, Psychologist Dr Ariba Abbasi listed five ways for overcoming trauma and living a healthy life:

**1. Recognise and reclaim authority** - Childhood trauma victims often act as if the event never happened or blame themselves, which can lead to guilt and self-blame. Accepting that a trauma happened and you weren't responsible is necessary to heal. Because of the sentiments of helplessness that you felt as a child, it is possible to carry those feelings into adulthood and make decisions based on those experiences. Being a victim means that your past has a direct impact on your present. After overcoming your pain, the present can be regulated. If you're willing to let go of your childhood barriers and coping methods, you may reclaim control of your life and heal your pain.

**2. Don't isolate yourself; instead, seek out help** - Many trauma sufferers' first instinct is to isolate themselves from people but this will only make the situation worse. Make an effort to preserve your relationships and seek help as part of the healing process. Consider speaking with a trusted family member, friend, or counsellor and joining a support group for childhood trauma survivors.

**3. Ensure that you are taking good care of yourself** - If you're healthy, you'll be better able to handle stress. Plan your day so that you get enough sleep, eat healthfully, work out on a regular basis, and replace poor habits with healthy ones. When emotions become unbearable, bad habits can take many forms, such as negativity and constant suspicion of others, or turning to alcohol or drugs. These may help for a short period of time, but they will just intensify your emotions of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Bad habits can be difficult to kick, especially when they are used as crutches to avoid revisiting childhood grief and trauma. A support group or therapist can teach you the skills you need to break unhealthy behaviours and to replace them with healthy ones.

**4. Learn to accept and let go of the things you can't change** - Accepting anything does not imply that you are embracing your trauma or that you like or agree with it. Acceptance indicates that you have decided what to do with it. It's up to you whether you choose to let it govern your life or let it go. Letting go does not imply that the government has been magically solved. It means no longer letting your unpleasant childhood memories and sentiments keep you from living your best life now.

**5. Be gentle with yourself** - Traumatic childhood injuries can leave you with uncontrollable emotions, feelings of hopelessness, a strong sense of self-defence mechanism, and distorted perspectives that can be difficult to let go of. Getting rid of these feelings will take time and effort. Never give up on yourself, no matter how slow your development may seem. There are small triumphs in your recovery that will help you win the battle of mending your childhood trauma ultimately.

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