

## Trauma Chat Episode 3

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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** [00:00:00] Trauma Chat podcast, episode 3.

[00:00:04] Hi, welcome to Trauma Chat. I'm Laura Reagan, LCSW-C. Today, as a follow-up to last week's episode, we are going to talk about some of the ways that trauma can show up in our lives.

[00:00:20] And I'm going to go into all of this in more depth in future episodes. So this is more of an overview today, but as I've mentioned before, what's really important to me about this podcast is that it will help more people learn to identify whether or not they've been impacted by trauma. And if so, how it's impacting you. So one of the most common reasons that people go to therapy is persistent issues with anxiety or depression.

[00:01:01] [00:01:00] And yes, we can be just a nervous person or I've always been depressed my whole life, but it definitely started somehow. I could say we don't come out of the womb, anxious and depressed, but that's not really true. We can come out of the womb, anxious and depressed though we wouldn't ever be able to describe that in words as a baby, but being in the womb can be stressful.

[00:01:37] And so we can be born that way, but there's still a reason and it can still heal. So I'm just going to list a whole bunch of mental health symptoms that can be related to trauma. And maybe, [00:02:00] if there's something in here that you're going through, it'll make you reflect on whether or not these symptoms could be related to a traumatic experience that you've been through.

[00:02:12] So I already mentioned feeling anxious, feeling depressed. Uh, it's common for people to just be sad all the time or angry all the time. A sense of isolation, which is really feeling alone in the world, feeling like you have no one, even though you may have friends and family, a feeling that no one cares about you, no one really wants to hear about your problems, and no one will help you, that's isolation. Fears, phobias, issues with panic, panic [00:03:00] attacks, waking up in the middle of the night with a sense of panic, and other sleep issues, trouble falling asleep, or staying asleep, nightmares, can also see in children, sleepwalking, night terrors. And of course, these can happen with adults too.

[00:03:31] Physical symptoms: general aches and pains, muscle tension. Especially when we get into middle age, we tend to feel the effects of holding our feelings in through muscle tension, aches and pains, headaches, shoulder, and back pain, lower back pain, hip pain. All of those are common for people who've experienced [00:04:00] trauma, chronic illness, chronic pain issues, autoimmune disorders. These are common in people who've experienced childhood trauma. Migraines can be caused by trauma, flashbacks as well. A flashback is when you are remembering something that you went through that was painful, emotionally painful, and you're watching it like it was a movie or you're hearing it like you can hear what everyone was saying or you're thinking about it and it's playing like it's rolling and you can't really make it stop. It just goes and you might be like, oh no, I don't want to

think about that, but it's just going. That's also an [00:05:00] example of what re-experiencing symptoms can be like, basically intrusive thoughts, intrusive memories, things that you don't want to think about, but they're coming to mind.

[00:05:12] Anyway, those are common in people who've experienced trauma, feeling like you're unreal or not in your body, which we call depersonalization and derealization, I'll go into those in more depth in the future. A very common symptom is issues with memory, sense of dread, feeling like you're always waiting for the other shoe to drop, feeling like you're on edge, hyper-alert, watchful, on guard, can't relax, having trouble with attention and focus or feeling preoccupied, [00:06:00] zoning out, losing time. Those can all be common experiences for people who've been through trauma and trauma can also be a root cause of suicidal thoughts. Most people who've experienced trauma will say 'I don't want to kill myself, but I often think that I wish I were dead or I wish I were never born.' That's common for people who have experienced trauma. Eating disorders are very common in people who've been through trauma, people pleasing behavior, being focused on trying to keep everyone happy, feeling like you're responsible for making everyone happy, and if everyone's not happy that you're not okay. [00:07:00] Self harming behaviors, like cutting, burning, all also body focused, repetitive disorders, like skin picking, trichotillomania, which is pulling one's hair out.

[00:07:23] Symptoms of obsessive compulsive disorder, OCD can be common for people who have experienced trauma. Trust issues in relationships are very common for people who have experienced trauma because the bond between humans and the connection is broken. When one human harms another, it's a common type of trauma that many of us experience, unhealthy relationship patterns, finding that you tend to choose partners who don't treat you as well as you deserve to be treated. And you are like, how does [00:08:00] this keep happening? How should I change this? Feelings of worthlessness, very common for people who have trauma, especially childhood trauma. And one of the things that I hear most often from people who come to work with me who may not identify themselves as having trauma when they first reach out for support. But when I asked them about their family history and what their relationships are, like, they mentioned several experiences that could be considered traumatic. So the most common thing people say is, I think there's just something wrong with me. Or they'll ask, am I just crazy? Am I too messed up for help? Now these are fears that are common for people who have trauma. And of course, none of this is true. You [00:09:00] are not broken. You're not messed up. And healing is possible, but it's about finding the right kind of help, which is why I created this podcast.

[00:09:11] So you can have the words to ask for the kind of help that fits what you need, if trauma is in your story. So the other thing that people say after mentioning that they feel that they are somehow flawed, broken, too much. The other thing people say is, so you mean to tell me that I feel this way because of what I went through when I was younger, but I'm now 62 years old.

[00:09:48] How is it possible that something that happened when I was five, 10, 12, 17 is still impacting me now. But that's how trauma works, [00:10:00] we're protected from feeling the overwhelming feelings at the moment when the incident happens. And then that trauma is

just there. It's held in our bodies and it's just stuck there and it's in our unconscious, it affects us, but we don't know why we're feeling the way we do. That's one of the reasons why it's so tricky to get help when you have experienced traumas, because if you don't feel the effect, you don't think the event really impacted you, then you don't know that it was traumatic.

[00:10:50] But it can be helpful just to learn that certain types of situations, as I mentioned in the last episode, um, [00:11:00] are considered typically common examples of, of traumatic experiences for most people. And once you know that, then if you find that you have symptoms that seem to align with trauma symptoms that I'm describing, you may say, 'oh, maybe that's why I feel the way I do. And maybe all I need to do is find a trauma therapist and then I can actually start feeling better.'

[00:11:32] The third thing that people often say, and these three things usually go together. I think there's just something wrong with me. I can't believe that something that happened so long ago could be affecting me now. And the third thing is really, 'but so many other people have been through so much worse,' and the truth is there's no [00:12:00] comparing traumatic experiences. In fact, since, everyone I meet with pretty much says that statement that so many other people have been through so much worse. That to me, reinforces that trauma makes us feel as if what we've been through isn't that important. And that's part of the way that we are detached from ourselves when we go through traumatic experiences. So, if you're thinking any of these thoughts that I just mentioned, or you're having any of these symptoms that I listed or anything similar to that, hopefully this episode will let you know that you're not alone.

[00:12:52] And as I've said before, there's hope. Healing is possible. It's just a [00:13:00] matter of getting connected with the resources that can help you. So check the show notes for some resources to help you learn more, including links to the last couple of episodes. So you can, um, have some context in case you missed them.

[00:13:27] I appreciate you listening. And if you find this podcast to be helpful and informative, please go to iTunes and leave a rating and review that will help more people find the show. And eventually I'm hoping that we will have, a better world as more people heal their traumatic experiences and we have less [00:14:00] violence and more kindness and more compassion for one another. And we realize that we're all connected.

[00:14:07] All right. Until next time, be well.