

Total Trauma Recovery



How to Help Someone in Emotional Pain



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Dear healer, helper or seeker:

Welcome to this short report for anyone who's ever been with anyone in emotional pain and felt at a loss as to how to help.

The Sudden Share

Have you been here?

You're sitting across from, next to, or nearby to someone dear to you.

It can happen suddenly.

With no preamble, with no readiness.

The conversation is general, normal, about a movie, or what we did last holidays.

Then, suddenly, the room goes still. It becomes pregnant with anticipation.

A silence might fall. Draping over you both.

Then they speak.

It comes out blurted

Or with pauses

Their voice is laden with emotion, pain, suffering

"I think I was abused"

"He hurt me"

"I cut myself"

The words might be different

They might be spoken in a myriad of different ways

But suddenly

There it is

Shared



It's out in the open

They've spoken

They have said the unspeakable

Now their heart seems to be in your hands

Now what do you do?

How do you help?

What do you say?

You care enough to get it right. And that's how I can help you, help someone in pain.

Before we go any further, let's be extremely clear: assisting someone to recover from trauma is a highly skilled and delicate task, like brain surgery. You wouldn't try to perform physical brain surgery on a loved one (unless you happened to be a neurosurgeon!).

Emotional healing requires a similarly trained touch. Don't try to be their healer or therapist if you aren't trained to do so. Your role is different from that of a therapist or healer and that's how it should be. There are things someone recovering from trauma can speak about with a therapist that they may never be able to share with you. And that's okay.

However, if your loved one is opening up, there are some very empowering and supportive things you can do to support them. The techniques listed here work best as ways to temporarily soothe the person who is suffering; to experience deep and permanent release, they will need to seek professional help.

From my years of research and work assisting thousands of clients to heal, it's become clear to me that much of the most common advice, suggestions, and support we tend to offer to others, not only doesn't work, it actually makes others feel worse. Despite being well-meaning and big-hearted, without the proper knowledge, training, and understanding, we can be doing more harm than good. So, the first way you can support someone recovering from past emotional pain is to learn how to avoid some common, un-intentional faux-paux.

What NOT to Do

1. Avoid drama and making a fuss

This one may seem counter-intuitive. For many of us, expressing shock or horror or outrage when someone tells us something shocking, horrifying or outrageous seems like the natural thing to do. We might say, "Oh, no! How awful! Oh my God, what a terrible thing to have happened to you!" Or "That's so upsetting."



Well, what's wrong with that? A lot, as it turns out. When we express our shock or horror, we can amplify existing trauma. Being horrified makes the events horrifying. When we hear something like, "Oh my god! How awful!" we are likely to think, "Wow, this is a much bigger problem than I imagined. It must be a REALLY big deal. I thought it was just a bad situation, but now it's a real tragedy."

A dramatic reaction from someone else tells us how we "should" feel about the situation rather than allowing us to feel whatever we feel, robbing us of our emotions.

It applies MEANING or judgement to a situation that we may not have even processed yet.

When someone has been in an abusive situation, they may have been emotionally numb for years as a way to protect themselves from their abuser. It will take time, months or even years, for someone to begin to feel emotions, positive and negative, again. Until we know how someone feels about their abuse, everything we hear is just information. It's just what happened.

When we get emotional about someone else's emotions, we are diverting the attention back to us; we make it all about us. When our emotions are so big that they take up all the space, there's no space left for our loved one to feel seen and heard, to define and process their own emotions on their terms. This does not serve healing.

2. Avoid judgement, of the victim, the abuser, or the situation



It might seem obvious that we should avoid blaming someone for the trauma they've survived, but we need to be hyper-aware that nothing in our words or actions implies we are judging a loved one for their choices, behaviours, or emotions. Trust me, they're already doing enough of that themselves!

We should also avoid expressing judgement around *what happened*. Ranting about injustice and cruelty and denouncing perpetrators can feel cathartic, but it does not help someone recovering from trauma. It's not our job to condemn or judge on behalf of our loved ones. Until someone has put meaning on the event for *themselves*, it's best to stay quiet and just listen.

Victims will very often protect their abusers. Not because they are stupid or because they liked to be abused. They protect them because they genuinely believe they love and are loved. This is true when they are in the abusive situation and after they have left, sometimes even years later. To protect themselves from the shame of having chosen the situation, they will protect their abuser. Even if your loved one starts to say negative things about their abuser, refrain from joining in. The danger of saying anything negative or judgemental about their abuser is that you might re-ignite their past loyalty and they will stop sharing.

3. Avoid pity

Our loved ones don't need or want our pity. It doesn't help. Pity is disempowering. It puts you, the one doling out the pity, in the position of having more power. It tells them subtly or overtly that they are weak and worthy of pity, robbing them of the strength they'll need to recover and thrive.



4. Avoid being overly kind / helpful / supportive

Here's another one that may have you raising an eyebrow. Is there such a thing as too much supportiveness? Yes. When we are overly kind or sympathetic, we can create a dangerous emotional feedback loop in another person. The unconscious mind associates kindness with *the need* for kindness and the person on the receiving end of our attentions can end up attaching meaning (the need for kindness) to a situation that might not have previously been associated with such a need (or any need at all!).

Too much supportiveness makes a situation worse in three ways:

- First, we can interpret an overdose of kindness to mean that something is much worse than we had originally thought: “If my friend is being so kind, something must *really* be wrong with me/the situation.”
- Secondly, overloading someone with offers of help and support suggests that someone *needs* support or needs the person offering it. This is disempowering, especially for people who may have been trapped in cycles of co/dependence.
- Likewise, kindness and showing love is part of the abusive cycle, and our seemingly innocent acts of too much kindness may very well cause someone to abreact. In these scenarios, being too kind can be as bad as being unkind.



The best way we can support someone dealing with emotional pain from the past is to be matter of fact with our empathy. If someone asks for support, we are free to give it, but we should avoid suggesting or offering what hasn't been solicited.

5. Avoid physical touch

Under normal circumstances, physical contact with a loved one can be comforting and soothing. But this is not always the case for abuse survivors. Every physical touch, even on the most innocent place on the body, might trigger a muscle and emotional memory of being touched or harmed by their abuser.

We may have no idea where on the body it's safe to touch, so HANDS OFF unless they instigate an embrace.

The reason is that whenever someone is in a heightened emotional state, the nervous system hunts around for a cause. The nervous system will then connect, or anchor,

the input it receives—a touch, a sound, a smell, etc.—to the heightened emotion. This is what happens, neurologically, when our favourite song or a certain smell takes us back to a particular time in our lives. As we've all experienced, these kinaesthetic anchors can trigger both positive and negative memories and emotions.

When someone has experienced abuse or trauma, they may have dozens of kinaesthetic anchors all over their body, making physical touch a minefield of possible triggers for traumatic memories. Unfortunately, it is also possible for us to create new kinaesthetic anchors on someone else's body when our repeated touch becomes associated with emotional pain.

For example, during funerals it's common for people to touch the upper arm of the bereaved, setting an intense kinaesthetic anchor for grief in that part of the body. We can avoid firing or creating harmful associations by avoiding physical touch altogether, or by asking for permission. Before going in for a hug or a touch, we can ask, "Is it okay for me to give you a hug? Is it okay for me to hold your hand?" Don't be offended or take it personally if they say "no." Remember, it's not about you.

6. Advice to avoid: "stay positive!"

Our society encourages us to believe that we can just "positive think" any problem away. Unfortunately, this popular positive thinking movement masks what is, essentially, a form of spiritual and emotional gas lighting.

To use a practical analogy. Imagine you've broken your leg and you're crying in agony on the pavement. How would you feel if a well-meaning passer-by leaned over you, smiling, and said, "Well, just stay positive"? I doubt you'd find it very helpful.

The same is true for emotional pain from the past. Not only does positive thinking not work, it negates the level of pain someone we are trying to help is experiencing. If that person has been in an abusive situation, they will have had their feelings negated on a regular basis by their abuser because abusers often tell others how they should be emotionally. Our well-meaning words can end up sounding like echoes of abuse.

It's not up to us to tell anyone else how they should or should not feel. When someone we want to help admits that they feel sad, miserable, angry, depressed, etc., we can affirm their feelings. We can tell them, "Okay. Okay. Okay. That's what you're feeling. Good."

7. Advice to avoid: “just let it go”

When we tell people that whatever happened in the past is in the past and it's time to “just let it go,” we are implying that releasing pain from the past is as simple as deciding to. But let's think about this.

We don't suggest to people that they should just cure all the world of all known diseases, rid the world of cancer, solve world hunger, and the energy crisis, do we? We don't expect even the most highly trained engineers, scientists, and philosophers to “just solve this really complex thing – just like that, please. Oh, and whilst you're about it – a colony on Mars would be nice too!” Of course not. Because it's not that simple. And neither is emotional recovery.

Implied in the “just let it go” imperative is the idea that someone is actively choosing to hold onto pain and that when they are told to “just let it go,” all their problems will float away by themselves. And then they will say to us, gratefully, “Oh, silly me. There I was not letting it go all this time! Thank you so much for just telling me to let it go – now my life has healed and you're my hero for telling me to let it go!”

Let's face it – if it was so easy to “just let it go,” we would all be pain and trauma-free. None of us would experience emotional pain from the past. However, there are many neurological, energetic and psycho-spiritual reasons why we can't just “let it go”. Emotional pain is complex, because it is installed at a neurological level deep in the unconscious mind. The emotional and energetic signature is locked in and it needs a process and a system to unlock and release it. Without a process, healing is like a fly banging its head against the windowpane. That is a pain.

8. Advice to avoid: “Well at least...”

At least you have your health...

At least you have a job...

At least you have a home...

At least you're out...

At least you're with a nice person now...

At least you have friends...

At least, at least, at least...

Similar to positive thinking, affirmations like these negate pain. They suggest someone's feelings aren't valid, and that because they have some good things, they have no right to feel bad. Removing a person's divine right to feel what they feel is a form of emotional gas lighting. The truth is, they already know what they have, and they *are* already grateful for it.

Yet all kinds of limiting beliefs might be making them feel unworthy or guilty for having these good things. Saying “at least” will likely only make others feel *less* worthy and ungrateful.

At its worst, “at least”-ing someone we want to help demonstrates a lack of empathy, as if having a few “good” things cancels out years of abuse and trauma. We wouldn’t say, “Oh, one of your children died, but at least you’ve got another.”

9. Don’t make it about you

There are several ways that we can unintentionally turn someone else’s story into our own tale of woe. We do this when we react to others’ pain by attempting to relate through a shared experience. We might say something like, “that’s just like what happened to me.”

Now imagine you are right on the cusp of sharing an incredibly painful story and suddenly someone interjects—“Oh my God, the same thing happened to me. I had that as well, but I was abused earlier and worse, or not as badly... Let me tell you about my experience.” That wouldn’t feel so great, right?

When we interrupt others, we move the energy and attention from them to us, even if we mean well and are trying to show solidarity. Maybe we want to reassure someone that they’re not alone. But, in practice, we can unintentionally make others feel unheard and unimportant.

We also divert the attention to ourselves when someone’s trauma triggers us—and we let the other person know it. We do this because we’ve let our own stuff become more important than our loved ones’ stuff.

In both situations, in the process of making someone's pain about *us*, we make others feel invalidated and confused about who's supporting who. They might feel burdened with the job of supporting *us* when they were asking for *our* support. They needed the space to open up, and we've just stepped in and moved them out of it.

If our stuff and our past are still upsetting us, we aren't in the ideal place to help others. If we find ourselves confusing our pain with someone else's, it's time to get help for ourselves first, before helping someone else.

Finally, we should avoid sharing someone else's story or mentioning the role we've played in their healing journey. Maybe we feel we are justified in using someone's else trauma as a cautionary tale for others. Maybe we want to show someone what a good friend/family member we are — "Look at me, helping, Lisa." Maybe we want to prove to *ourselves* that we're a good person. Or maybe we're just a crisis-junkie who can't escape the thrill of having front-row seats to drama.

Whatever our reason may be, our commitment to caring for and loving someone else is never—ever—for our own glory.

10. Never suggest that recovery is impossible

The belief that it's impossible to recover from trauma is pervasive in our culture. However, science, specifically neuroplasticity, has proven that the brain can reshape itself. If our brains can be trained, through trauma and abuse, to be suboptimal, they can also be positively reshaped with assistance and the right process.

When we tell someone that they'll "just have to learn to live with" their trauma, we are telling them that they will never recover, which is an extremely limiting way to live.

We end up worsening someone's emotional state when we say things like, "Well, you'll just have to accept what happened to you and learn to cope because it's with you forever. It's always going to be there, a part of you. Those emotions will never go away. You'll have to learn to live with it"—all the variations of that sentiment. Not only are those words factually incorrect, they are disempowering.

How to Help

If all those “don’t” have left you feeling like there’s nothing you can do to help, I’ve got another “don’t” ... don’t despair! If you recognised yourself or some actions or behaviours you’ve taken in the past to someone else, don’t despair. I don't believe that anyone sets out to help people with the intention of doing more damage. If you've done any of “don’ts,” know that you are forgiven and please forgive yourself.

There are just as many ways to healthfully and mindfully support someone recovering from emotional pain.

Here's how you can help:

1. Ask

Instead of assuming we know best, or jumping in with advice and sympathy when we haven't been asked, we can ask: “What do you need? How can I help?” Make it okay for someone to ask for help, and also be prepared to accept that they might not yet be ready or able to accept it.

2. Hold a safe space

When we are fully present for someone, without distractions or interruptions, we offer them a safe space for healing. Make time, privacy, and space. Set boundaries on that time and space by telling others not to interrupt you. If you have small children, find a way for them not to be a distraction while you are trying to help someone.

Ensure the safety of the space by saying that you are okay with hearing anything someone may want to tell you. Be comfortable to say, "I'm okay to hear anything you want to tell me, and whatever you do want to tell me, I will share with no one."

Confidentiality is key—we should always reassure that anything being shared in a safe space goes no further.

Be curious and open-minded and ask some gentle opening questions to give them permission to share. For example, "Would you like to talk more about that?" Or "Is there anything else you want to share?"

Be comfortable with sitting in silence, together, if that's what someone needs.

Whatever we do, when we create a safe space for another, we need to commit to being there 100%.

3. Say thank you

Thanking them for sharing and trusting you makes them feel honoured and respected. It lets them know how much you appreciate them and their willingness to share. A simple statement like, "Thank you for trusting me to share this."



4. Honour the changes they've already made

The very fact that they are sharing with you means they have already made changes. The courage it takes to share and open up about an experience is a huge step forward for anyone. It can be very helpful for them if you recognise this and acknowledge this and any other changes they have made.

5. Show respect

Show how much you respect them for any and all they have achieved and do. If they have managed to leave an abusive situation, this is something to congratulate them for. If they are holding down a job, taking care of their family—heck, if they're just managing to get up, shower and dress most days, for some people this is an achievement. You can be as specific or vague as you like. Just congratulate them and share how much you respect them. A great way to phrase this is to say something like:

"In light of all you've experienced, I have the greatest respect for you." You could add...
"and how you have.... [*include some observed behaviour that is empowering for them*]."

6. Tell them they have a support team. And you're on it.

Just knowing that people are on their side is a powerful way to support someone without disempowering them.

Some good ways to express this are:

"I want you to know that you've got a big support team and I'm on it!"

"I know that you will have a lot of people who are here to support you, who would love and be honoured to support you through this. I want you to know that I'm on that team!"

"I'm here for you."

7. Believe in them and let them know it

Right now, they probably don't have much belief in themselves. But you can let them know that *you* believe in them. This is as simple as saying:



"I believe in you."

"I know you're strong and can change what you need to."

"I see your light."

8. Know your role

Are you a friend or a therapist? Hint: you can't easily be both. If you feel like you're out of your league, ask: "Is this something you might like to get help with? Would you like me to try and find some routes where you can get help?" It's likely that



the person we want to help won't know where to look and they'll almost be ashamed of seeking out professional assistance.

A certified CET Practitioner knows how to create a bond and vessel within, and their client will feel completely safe to explore the sacred depths of their issues. Unless

you've been trained to do this, no matter how well-meaning you are, it is best left to the professionals.

So, the best thing we can do as a friend is to direct them to a certified CET Practitioner who is trained to find and release trauma, negative emotions and enable total trauma recovery. www.cetfreedom.com



9. Consider training to become a certified CET Practitioner

If you've read this far, one thing is clear — you are big, open-hearted, caring individual.

You want to help. You are passionate about people's happiness and emotional well-being. Whether it's for yourself, a loved one, or because you would love to be there for others' loved ones in the same way you want someone to be there for yours, training to be a certified CET Practitioner enables you to completely release all trauma, pain and negative emotions from the past.

Curious if CET is right for you?

**Click here to book a CET Information
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