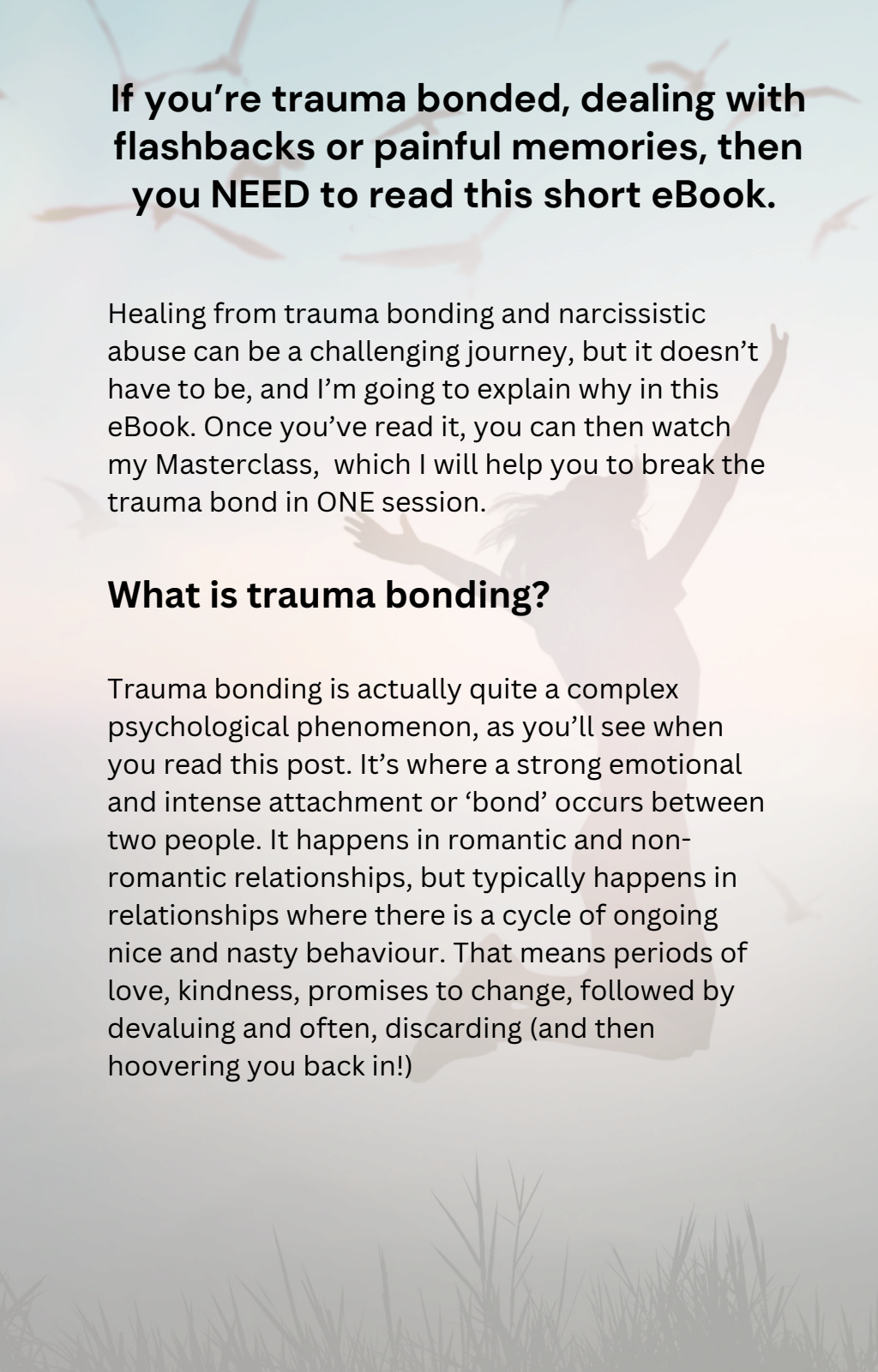


STOP CRAVING THE NARCISSIST...

And break the
Trauma Bond in
ONE SESSION!

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A woman in a white dress with her arms raised in a field of tall grass under a blue sky with birds.

If you're trauma bonded, dealing with flashbacks or painful memories, then you NEED to read this short eBook.

Healing from trauma bonding and narcissistic abuse can be a challenging journey, but it doesn't have to be, and I'm going to explain why in this eBook. Once you've read it, you can then watch my Masterclass, which I will help you to break the trauma bond in ONE session.

What is trauma bonding?

Trauma bonding is actually quite a complex psychological phenomenon, as you'll see when you read this post. It's where a strong emotional and intense attachment or 'bond' occurs between two people. It happens in romantic and non-romantic relationships, but typically happens in relationships where there is a cycle of ongoing nice and nasty behaviour. That means periods of love, kindness, promises to change, followed by devaluing and often, discarding (and then hoovering you back in!)

Some signs of how this shows up in a romantic relationship are when you:

- Keep excusing or justifying their abusive behaviour
- Feel responsible for them, try to 'fix' them, or 'caretake' them.
- Lose your sense of self, of personal identity, self-worth and confidence
- Put your own needs aside ALL the time.
- Blame yourself for all the failings in the relationship – even the abuse!
- Believe love is conditional on your doing what they want to keep them happy
- Feel trapped and unable to leave for any number of reasons
- Fear abandonment and being alone so you stay
- Are simply too scared to leave for fear of retaliation or smear campaigns
- Feel constantly miserable in the relationship
- Have heard the promises change and been hoovered back multiple times
- If you do leave, you have that horrible craving to go back.

Some signs of how this shows up in a NON-romantic relationship are when you're:

- Defending and making excuses for their bad behaviour – oh, they're old, they're sick, they're set in their ways, and so on.
- Feeling massively obligated to them because 'they're my parents'. You'll feel like a bad person if you don't take care of them, especially if they are sick or elderly.
- Giving your best, again and again and again, but it's never enough so you keep trying, you keep putting your needs aside, in order to meet theirs.
- Hoping and waiting for them to change... one day, they'll realise how loyal and loving you are.
- Constantly falling for their gaslighting, guilt-tripping you and buying into their story. And it's ultimately, in their eyes, always your shortcomings that are the cause of the issues.
- Blaming yourself – this is childhood conditioning and programming that was instilled in you during your very early years, and it's a big subject on its own!
- Inheritance at stake - they are using money to emotionally blackmail you.

Trauma bonding usually results from the initial 'love bombing' phase, so let's have a look at the 5 key love bombing behaviours that contribute to trauma bonding: (Romantic)

1. Love-bombing itself – it's a manipulative tactic narcissists use to quickly and intensely shower you with excessive affection, attention, and validation. This technique, which most narcissists are adept at, plays a significant role in the formation of trauma bonding by exploiting your emotional vulnerabilities and creating a powerful bond. For you, it's just wonderful being in love, but the narcissist has a very complicated and ultimately devastating agenda.

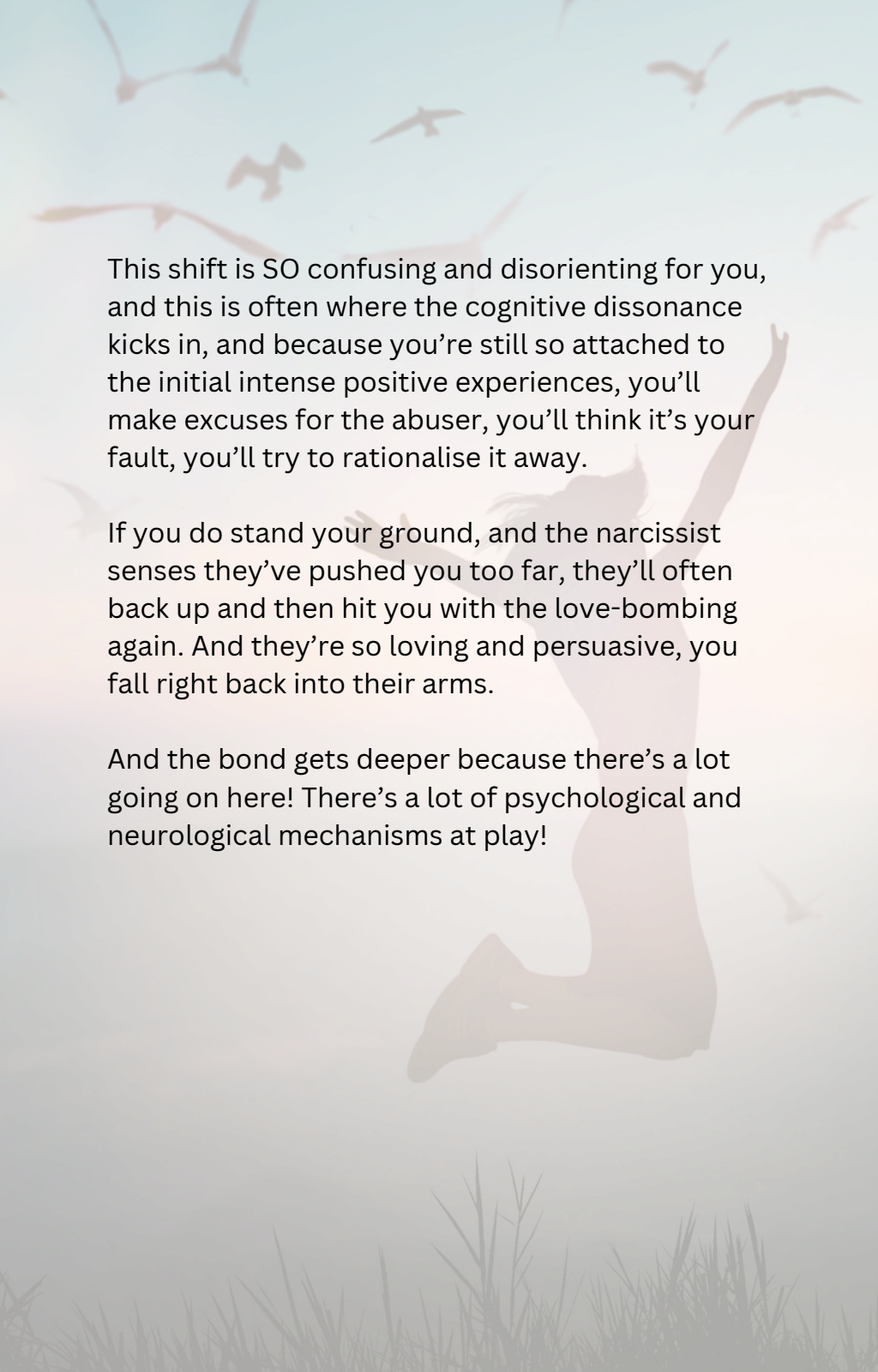
2. Idealization and mirroring: the narcissist portrays you as their perfect partner, mirroring your interests, values, and desires and even body language. They make you out to be their perfect partner, their soulmate. Everything about you is fabulous!

5 Signs continued...

3. Everything is so FAST! Love-bombing often involves rapidly escalating the intensity of the relationship. The narcissist might push for immediate commitment, future plans, moving in together, or even marriage early on. This accelerated pace can and usually does, overwhelm you, leaving you little time to process what's going on, and you have no idea of the depth of the bond forming because – you understand it as - you're falling in love and you think the narcissist is falling in love with you. You have no idea you're being manipulated at this point. It's a horrible deception.

4. Manipulative Control: Love-bombing is a manipulative tactic to gain control over you. By bombarding you with love and attention, the narcissist creates a dependency and emotional reliance on THEM. You just want that good feeling, and you'll put up with the regular abuse because of the dopamine hit you get when the love-bombing comes back for a short visit.

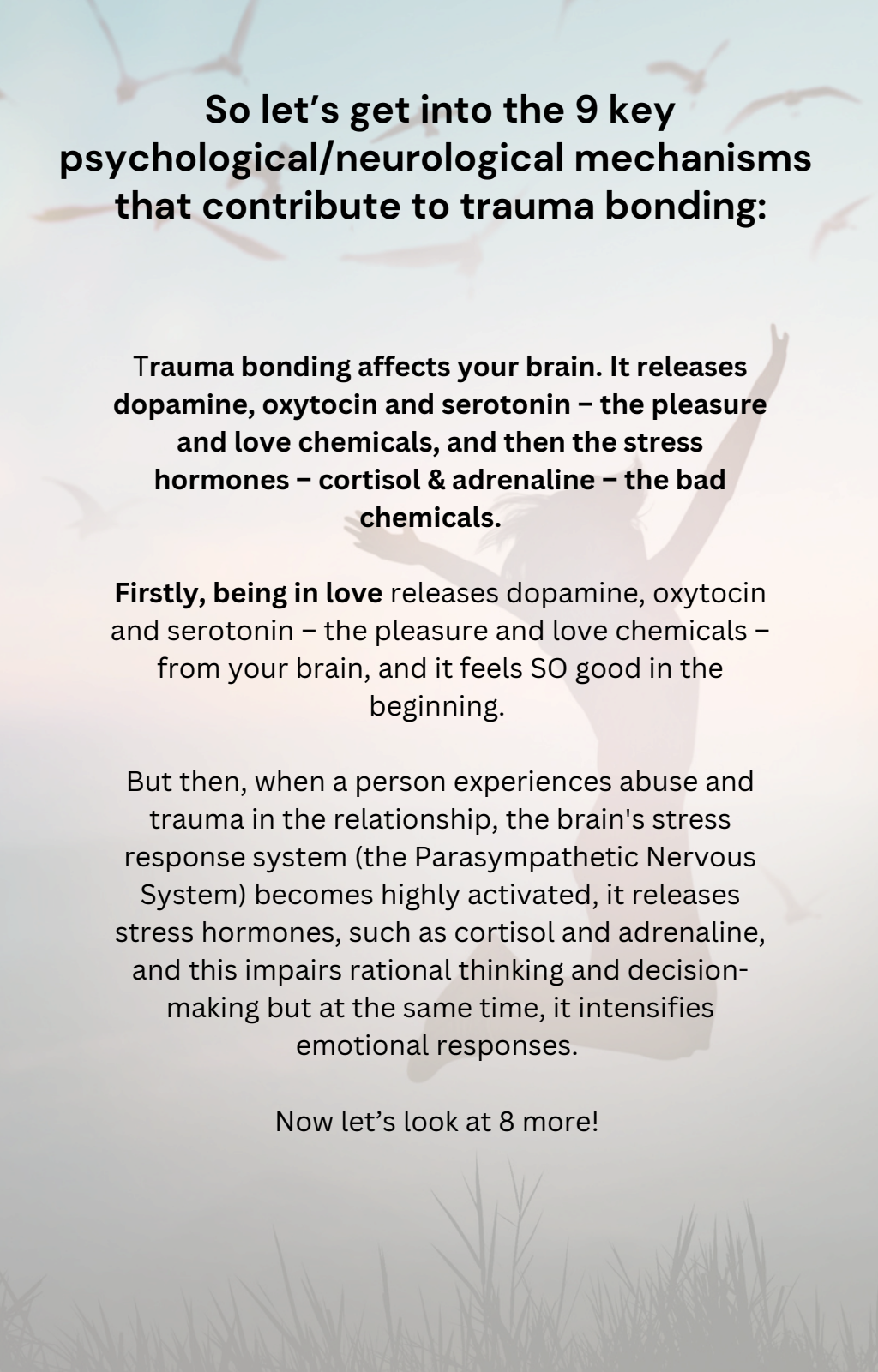
5. Setting up the cycle of abuse: Love-bombing is often followed by a gradual or sudden shift in behaviour, where the narcissist starts devaluing, belittling and degrading you.

A woman is shown in silhouette, jumping joyfully with her arms raised high. She is in the center of the frame. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with a light blue sky and several birds in flight. The bottom of the image shows a field of tall grass. The overall mood is one of freedom and happiness.

This shift is SO confusing and disorienting for you, and this is often where the cognitive dissonance kicks in, and because you're still so attached to the initial intense positive experiences, you'll make excuses for the abuser, you'll think it's your fault, you'll try to rationalise it away.

If you do stand your ground, and the narcissist senses they've pushed you too far, they'll often back up and then hit you with the love-bombing again. And they're so loving and persuasive, you fall right back into their arms.

And the bond gets deeper because there's a lot going on here! There's a lot of psychological and neurological mechanisms at play!



So let's get into the 9 key psychological/neurological mechanisms that contribute to trauma bonding:

Trauma bonding affects your brain. It releases dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin – the pleasure and love chemicals, and then the stress hormones – cortisol & adrenaline – the bad chemicals.

Firstly, being in love releases dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin – the pleasure and love chemicals – from your brain, and it feels SO good in the beginning.

But then, when a person experiences abuse and trauma in the relationship, the brain's stress response system (the Parasympathetic Nervous System) becomes highly activated, it releases stress hormones, such as cortisol and adrenaline, and this impairs rational thinking and decision-making but at the same time, it intensifies emotional responses.

Now let's look at 8 more!

Intermittent Reinforcement



Intermittent reinforcement: The narcissist alternates between love bombing and devaluing, and this creates a cycle of hope and disappointment. You're so desperate for the lovely golden period to be back, when everything felt so good, that even a small glimpse of it gives you that hope that maybe things will go back to the way they were. And you keep holding on.

But then the punishment starts again... your emotions are yo-yoing back and forth and it causes a huge amount of confusion. Hence the chemical cocktail in your brain that I just mentioned.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is the uncomfortable feeling of having conflicting thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes in your head at one time. This is really common in narcissistic relationships, and it means basically that you hold conflicting beliefs about the narcissist and the abusive situation. So for example, you're sure they love you, because of the love-bombing, which can still be happening, but then they become nasty and you feel confused and conflicted. It's like pulling petals off a flower – he – or she – loves me – she loves me not!

When you're experiencing cognitive dissonance, your mind tries to make sense of it – so you try to rationalize or minimize the abuser's actions to reduce cognitive dissonance, and often blame yourself or you think you must have got it wrong. This internal conflict can strengthen the bond with the abuser. And of course the next one here is very closely interlinked with cognitive dissonance, and that's...

Gaslighting

The background of the page features a faint, semi-transparent image of a person in a dark suit with their arms raised, appearing to be gaslighting another person whose silhouette is visible behind them. The scene is set against a light, hazy sky with several birds in flight. At the bottom of the page, there is a silhouette of tall grass.

Gaslighting: Narcissists are notorious for twisting the truth, saying one thing and meaning another, denying they said or did this, that or whatever, and twisting everything you've said or done into something else. They also project their warped logic onto you, and create massive mental and emotional confusion. This all comes under the gaslighting banner. When you're frequently gaslighted, it creates cognitive dissonance. If you often find yourself with foggy thinking, confusion, it's often a result of this ongoing state of cognitive dissonance you find yourself in. You just don't know it.

Cognitive Distortion

A person is shown in silhouette, jumping joyfully in a field. The background is a bright, hazy sky with several birds in flight. The overall mood is one of freedom and hope.

·Cognitive distortion: Victims of trauma bonding often have distorted beliefs about themselves, the abuser, and the relationship. They may blame themselves for the abuse or believe that the narcissist is the only one who can meet their needs. These cognitive distortions can create a sense of dependency and make it very challenging to break free.

Isolation

A person is shown in silhouette, jumping joyfully with arms raised in the air. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with tall grass at the bottom and a sky filled with many birds in flight. The overall tone is bright and hopeful, contrasting with the text about isolation.

Isolation: Abusers often isolate their victims from friends, family, and support systems. This isolation intensifies your dependence on the narcissist and of course, it limits your access to alternative perspectives or sources of support. You only have the narcissist to turn to, and they can manipulate you every which way. And they do.

Trauma Cycle

Trauma Cycle: Leaving or being discarded by the narcissist doesn't mean that it's all over now and you can get some sleep! People go back voluntarily because they can't stand the pain of not being with the abuser.

Or they are 'hoovered' back and utterly powerless to resist when the trauma bond is so strong. Everything is rosy in the garden for 5 minutes, and then the cycle of abuse starts again. And most people who leave go back, an average of 7 times before they finally say 'enough is enough' and seek help to break the cycle.

History of abuse/dysfunctional families

The background of the slide features a soft, light-colored sky with several birds in flight, their silhouettes appearing as faint, dark shapes. In the lower half of the image, a person is captured in a joyful jump, their arms raised and legs bent, suggesting a sense of freedom and happiness. The overall aesthetic is bright and airy, with a focus on natural elements and human emotion.

History of abuse/dysfunctional families – which is also hugely prevalent in toxic relationships and also connected to trauma repetition. If you have been raised in a toxic family, that will be an area you need to learn about and start healing because you will have been set up to subconsciously attract toxic people. It's one of the most common things I see with the clients I work with and with people in my groups. This brings us to the next one...

History of people-pleasing / codependency

THIS ONE IS HUGE!

Codependency – in so many cases, codependency is a huge issue in narcissistic relationships.

If you're codependent (and you may not even realise you are), this will make it even more difficult to leave your primary relationship. You see, codependency means you **HAVE** to have someone to be the focus of your life. You can't be alone, you need need someone there because you get your sense of yourself by doing and being for others.

You might be a people-pleaser, a caretaker, desperate to make other people happy all the time, and codependency is a learned behaviour, usually learned in childhood, in toxic families, and it's also a big subject!

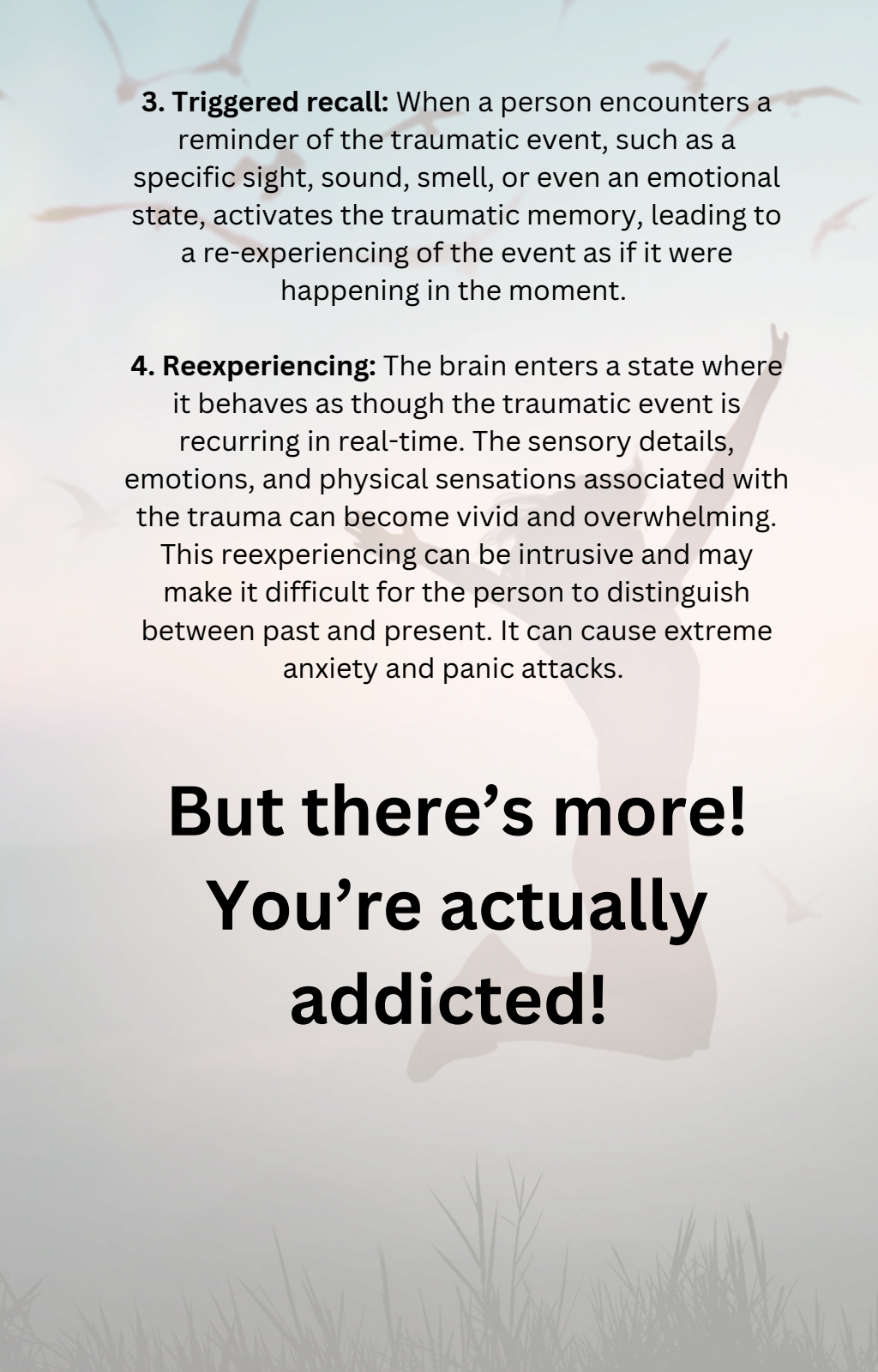
In addition to all this, your brain is involved!

4 key areas of the brain are affected!

Here's a very simplified explanation of 4 key things that happens in the brain during a flashback, and when you're trauma bonded, you are constantly getting flashbacks of the 'good times' and craving the narcissist, and it's compelling you to go back:

1. Amygdala activation: The amygdala in the brain is involved in processing emotions and fear responses, and plays a crucial role in the experience of a flashback. When a traumatic event occurs, the amygdala becomes highly activated, encoding the emotional memory associated with the trauma.

2. Hippocampal malfunction: The hippocampus, the brain region involved in memory formation and retrieval, normally helps to consolidate memories and place them in the context of time and space. However, during a traumatic experience, the extreme stress and emotional arousal can impair the functioning of the hippocampus. So the memory becomes stuck there and it's connected in your brain with the traumatic event.



3. Triggered recall: When a person encounters a reminder of the traumatic event, such as a specific sight, sound, smell, or even an emotional state, activates the traumatic memory, leading to a re-experiencing of the event as if it were happening in the moment.

4. Reexperiencing: The brain enters a state where it behaves as though the traumatic event is recurring in real-time. The sensory details, emotions, and physical sensations associated with the trauma can become vivid and overwhelming. This reexperiencing can be intrusive and may make it difficult for the person to distinguish between past and present. It can cause extreme anxiety and panic attacks.

**But there's more!
You're actually
addicted!**

3 reasons why the trauma bond is similar to alcohol or drug addiction

1. Craving and withdrawal: Like substance addiction, trauma bonding can create a strong craving for the narcissist because you need the fix, just like an addict does. You might experience withdrawal-like symptoms, such as anxiety, shaking, depression, and obsessive thoughts about the abuser. Even though you know this person is toxic, and they've abused you horribly, you still crave them.

2. Dopamine release: Certain drugs and alcohol release dopamine into the system too. Trauma bonding trigger the release of dopamine in the brain. The intermittent reinforcement of positive experiences from the narcissist can create a reward pathway, leading to a cycle of seeking out and longing for those positive experiences so that you can feel good about yourself again.

3. Psychological dependence: Both addiction and trauma bonding involve psychological dependence. In trauma bonding, you become emotionally reliant on the narcissist for validation, self-worth, and a sense of identity. Breaking the bond can cause distress and a sense of loss, longing and craving to go back.

Why Trauma Bonding is NOT a choice.

Does everything I've shared here make it clear to you why trauma bonding is not simply a matter of choice? It does NOT imply consent or willingness to participate in an abusive relationship.

There is a complex cocktail of cognitive, emotional and autonomic nervous system activity going on with trauma bonding, and your mind/brain work in complicated ways to create and keep these strong connections, because it thinks it's keeping you SAFE.

Let me just explain that in very simple terms – when you were love-bombed in the beginning, it created a great feeling in you. You felt wonderful, happy, loved. That feeling was so powerful it's been stamped in your brain, and your brain wants you to have that feeling back. Because then, you feel good, you feel safe. And we all want to feel safe.

Which makes it really hard for people who are trauma bonded to leave those situations because your brain is working to keep you stuck there. It's making you go back so you can feel safe. Even though when you are back with the narcissist, it's anything BUT safe for you. It's an emotional minefield that just keeps on adding more layers of trauma to your psyche.

The Parent Trap...

With the parent situation, that wiring happened really early on and as an adult, you don't have any of the lovely love-bombing parts to feel good about – your brain is stuck in that age where 'my parents are all I've got to keep me safe'!

If you're trauma bonded to a parent, it's even more difficult because of that parental connection. You might decide a thousand times, I'm done, but then you find yourself going back and taking care of them again, because you can't handle the guilt of not doing that.

When you leave a narcissist, or are discarded, then you go back, or you're hoovered back, you'll often find people berate you for doing that, and they'll say 'well, it was your choice to go back!'. You even berate yourself, I've had countless people ask me 'Why am I – or was I – so stupid?'

And you'll often hear things like 'But it's your MOTHER/FATHER! How can you cut them out of your life?'

BUT THEY JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITY OF WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH, and you often don't understand it yourself either.

And the reason why it's so hard to break the trauma bond is because of ALL of those reasons.

But stick with me, because I'm going to explain to you, how it's actually NOT that hard at all, to break the trauma bond, when you know how!



So how do you break the bond? How do you stop those debilitating flashbacks? The Million \$ question!

If you look up 'how to break the trauma bond', every article you'll find will tell you it's SOOOOOO hard. And you'll get a whole list of tips to help you break the bond... tips like some I've even shared myself...

Going No Contact, getting out and about, going for walks, to the gym, hooking up with friends, getting support in groups, self-care, meditation, journaling, staying positive, knowing it was not your fault, and so on and so forth.

Now whilst all of those can help, and I'm not knocking any of them, there's actually a MUCH BETTER WAY OF BREAKING THE TRAUMA BOND that doesn't involve any of that, and I am going to take you through the process on Break The Trauma Bond in ONE Session Masterclass.

Maria McMahon

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria McMahon, BSc. (Psych Hons), Dip. H.E. NLP, aka 'The Speedy Trauma Healer' is a

- Certified Clinical NLP/Hypnotherapist
- CPD Accredited Narcissistic Abuse Specialist
- Coach & Author
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Unleash Your Healing Potential: Tap into my 30+ Years of Expertise for Super-Speedy Results

She specialises in helping stressed out, busy professional women who are struggling with the emotional fallout of narcissistic abuse after divorce or separation from a narcissist. They are struggling to overcome the abuse on their own, and really want help to heal, get their life-balance back, and be happy.

With NLP, Hypnotherapy, Inner Child Healing, Life Coaching & more, Maria provide's unique, laser-focused and trauma-informed therapy to help her clients rapidly recover from narcissistic abuse and the resultant C-PTSD, trauma bonding, nightmares, insomnia, anxiety & other problems caused by abuse. To learn more, visit www.mariamcmahon.com and www.zenzenden.com

