

THE RESIDUE OF TRAUMA

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS



by
*Gina
Martin*

Find positive change when
the world feels against you.

Introduction

“Denial is like oil. A little goes a long way, and if you aren’t careful it gets on everything.” Gina Martin

Anyone reading this book and consuming any of the provided resources in full or in part agrees to take full responsibility for their own mental health choices and actions.

This book is an accumulation of 40+ years of experience. My own journey of releasing learned helplessness (LH) was a long and slow process. I wish to speed up your progress so you can arrive where you want to be at in life as soon as possible. I didn’t even know what LH was or how much LH was affecting my health and slowing down my success. When you have completed this book you will have ventured deep into what is holding you back in life and be able to take action to create a life you love. This book will reveal LH and all the subtle and not so subtle ways it effects an individual’s life. Not you? Maybe it is a loved one that is steeped in LH. This book will also help you to guide them in an effective way. Especially if they are not open to reading this book or using the resources on my website www.UnlockingResilience.com.

I am not a doctor or a psychologist and this book doesn’t replace the care of a licensed mental health professional or medical health professional. I do have a secret gift that many do not. Ready? I have the ability to walk through your subconscious mind (with your permission), accessing your memories and emotions to find the patterns that bind you to a life of misery. As a certified magnetic mind coach, I can then clear or integrate the fragmented parts of self that are chilling out in the subconscious mind, releasing its dis-empowering influence. After working with people all over the globe I find we humans suffer from the same issues no matter where we live, how we live, who we love, or how much money we make. My goal is to set as many people as possible free from the emotions and memories that bind them to a miserable life.

This book reveals 10 areas that I have had challenges with. Hint! Maybe you may have some of these challenges too? They fall into the huge category of learned helplessness (LH). A group of traits conditioned into us causing negative reflexes that we can learn to let go of. Shifting them allows an individual to build a life they enjoy. These 10 aspects or constructs of learned helplessness will appear obvious after reading this book. No judgment here, just increasing the awareness for those that desire quicker changes and are willing to do the work to get there. If it was easy we all would have done it already. Stick with me on the journey. It gets a little dark before the light starts to shine. If you have an aggressive mental illness or are easily triggered this may not be the book for you. Reach out

to the appropriate medical, family, or therapy support when you need it. Anyone reading this book in full or in part agrees to take full responsibility for their own mental health choices and actions.

I will review one construct in each chapter. At the end of the chapter there will be a link to an audio that you can use to start your healing and integration process. More is not better with this kind of work. Doing this process too fast without good sleep, emotional support, and staying hydrated can make you feel flat or agitated. No one needs that. This is a process and not a one-time event. In general, it takes roughly two years to get your life back on track when you have been in a downward spiral for a while. I don't want to hear the complaints about it being too long or too hard. This is a do-it-yourself project. Progress at your own speed. There will be a learning curve, and then you will be up and running. As I get better organized, I will be able to offer more resources. I hope to do live calls or webinars soon after this book is published. A learning curve for me. I am writing this book as a 7 day challenge so it will be sloppy but no less effective. I give full credit to all my clients that have supported me and my life's work. They have been telling me for years to write a book so here it is. Resources can be found at;

www.UnlockingResilience.com

Between this book and resources on my website this will be an interactive journey. So let's get the subconscious mind a moving.

It wasn't until I was in my late 50s that I could finally wrap my brain and heart around the level of trauma that I had experienced in my life from birth to adulthood. Not the big "T" trauma that some have experienced in life, mine were more thousands of little "t" traumas that could easily get swept aside or ignored. My mom suffers from an aggressive mental illness that I believe is from big "T" trauma. I suffered from various aggressive health issues myself. Finally diagnosed with mast cell activation syndrome after a run in with long covid. Maybe I'll write a book about my journeys through all of that, but that's not the focus with this book. I want this book to be a guide that helps open your mind and life to new possibilities. My goal is to speed up your transformation while demystifying how individuals develop learned helplessness. Giving examples of how LH shows up in life, and how to get LH out of our body/mind complex for a more satisfying life.

I will be covering 10 different flavors of learned helplessness. LH is one of those psychological concepts that once understood can be both eye opening and unsettling. I was a bit slow to the take because I didn't have anyone that could tell it to me directly and how to fix it. I found it unsettling and frustrating until I found the modalities that shift LH

quickly and permanently. I hate doing things twice. Maybe you do to. The construct of LH provides explanations of how individuals, after experiencing prolonged stress in certain situations, come to believe they are powerless to change their circumstances, even when opportunities for change are within reach. I will explore origins, mechanisms, and impact of learned helplessness. I'm hoping to shed light on its pervasive influence over our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

Chapter 1

Ignorance is not bliss: The origins of learned helplessness

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.

"I hope I can make your horse thirsty." Gina Martin

The term "learned helplessness" was first coined by psychologist Martin Seligman and Steven Maier in 1967 after a series of experiments with animals. In their initial studies, they discovered a phenomenon in which dogs, subjected to uncontrollable stress (they used electric shocks), eventually stopped trying to escape the discomfort. These dogs had learned that their actions—no matter what they did—would have no effect on the outcome. Over time, they became passive and resigned, even when they were later given the opportunity to escape. They have learned that nothing they did could alter their situation, so they stopped trying altogether. These studies have also been replicated with mice. While these discoveries were made in animals, Seligman and Maier quickly recognized that a similar phenomenon occurred in humans. This is no longer just about dogs being shocked (which is bad enough all on its own). It is about the universal nature of learned helplessness and how we, as humans, can become conditioned to give up when we feel that our efforts will always be fruitless.

The key to learned helplessness lies in the "perception" around the idea of control. When individuals or animals perceive that they have no control over a negative outcome, they eventually stop trying to exert effort, even in situations where change may be possible. This learned passivity can result in a cycle of failure and despair that deeply impacts mental health and behavior.

Three pillars of learned helplessness

To understand the full depth of the residue of trauma that creates learned helplessness, it is essential to examine the three psychological components that underpin this condition:

Contingency—(the relation between actions and the environmental response)—The belief that actions do not lead to desirable outcomes when individuals experience repeated failure/negative outcome despite their efforts. They come to perceive that there is no meaningful/positive relationship between their actions and the results. Individuals who experience repeated setbacks often begin to believe that their actions are futile. This

causes them to stop trying in future situations. This leaves a *subconscious imprint* that action steps are painful and useless. Especially for men, it is a primordial waste of energy and could cause a loss of resources/death.

Cognition- (mental action/process of acquiring knowledge and understanding) How individuals think about failure and control is subjective and deeply personal. Learned helplessness isn't simply about experiencing repeated failure but also about how we interpret failures. The subconscious imprint that the inability to succeed is due to an internal, stable, and global factor they can't control creates the slippery slope of learned helplessness. Examples of this sound like, "I am not good enough", "this always happens to me", "I can't do anything right", and so on. This cognitive pattern, called global attribution, leads to a pervasive sense of powerlessness that permeates all areas of life. If someone fails at work, they might believe they are a failure as a person, rather than recognizing that one setback does not define their entire identity or potential.

Hint! We can also use this global attribution mechanism to reprogram our brain and emotions in a positive direction also! Remember this important fact as I continue through the heavy stuff.

Behavior- This passive resignation that follows the developed perception of helplessness is sneaky. Once a person believes that efforts do not affect the outcome, they become "convinced" "nothing" will change it. They even start to look for proof or evidence that all of this is true. This often results in depression, anxiety, procrastination, through an increased decline of happiness and success. The behavior of giving up is reinforced over time by the absence of reward or success, deepening the cycle.

It's interesting to know that learned helplessness manifests easily in everyday life because it doesn't always present itself in a dramatic, life or death fashion. It often unfolds in subtle, everyday ways that are easy to overlook. Consider a student who struggles with math. After several failed tests, they may come to believe that they are simply "bad at math" and begin avoiding math-related tasks altogether, even when opportunities to improve are available. When avoiding math-related subjects feels better, because they can avoid feeling stupid or embarrassed, the cycle continues. They may resign themselves to believe they will never succeed in math, "it's too hard", which then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. I found this true for myself around the subject of math as a child. It wasn't until I was in college that I realized it's not that I can't do math, it's that I don't enjoy it. Kind of like some people can eat broccoli, but they don't enjoy it.

In a relationship, learned helplessness can emerge when one partner feels that their needs or concerns are consistently ignored or dismissed. Over time, they may stop expressing their feelings altogether, then resign themselves to the idea that they cannot change the relationship dynamic. They often begin to believe that no matter what they say or do, it won't matter, increasing the emotional distance and frustration. I want to add a disclaimer here. It is true for some people in a relationship that no matter what they do the situation will not change because the other person isn't open to it or is unable to. It should be noted, in a healthy relationship, as one person changes their behavior the other will change in behavior in some way. Another scenario, where one person in a relationship does try everything within their power to provoke healthy change and the other person stays exactly the same. One or both parties are usually dealing with a mental health challenge.

In the workplace, employees who face repeated setbacks or experience unresponsive management may develop learned helplessness. Soon after a sudden or gradual disengaging from work will follow. They often stop suggesting new ideas, lack the motivation to improve performance, or just withdraw emotionally from the job. Which results in decreased productivity, lack of advancement which reinforces the perception that nothing they do will make a difference.

The most well-known frameworks for understanding the cognitive process behind learned helplessness is the cognitive triad. A concept developed by Aaron Beck, one of the pioneers of cognitive therapy. In general, it consists of three types of negative thinking.

1. Negative thoughts about oneself. ("I'm a failure," "I'm not good enough")
2. Negative thoughts about the world. ("The world is unfair," "people are out to get me")
3. Negative thoughts about the future. ("This will never end, "it will only get worse")

These 3 types of thoughts are central to the experience of learned helplessness because they reinforce the belief that the individual is powerless to change their circumstances. LH develops from experiencing negative experiences without relief. This develops the interpretation that every setback is evidence of the inability to affect the world around them. The negative thought pattern creates a feedback loop that strengthens the sense of helplessness. This has far reaching effects and a profound impact on all areas of life. It often shows up in low self-esteem, avoided behavior, defensiveness, overwhelmed, or passive coping skills such as procrastination, denial, and often substance abuse. With a

basic understanding of how learned helplessness develops and its general effects we can move into a deeper discovery around how trauma turns into learned helplessness.

<https://www.unlockingresilience.com/ch1hostileenvironment>

1) click the above link to fill out your journal page and

2) listen to the healing audio to start releasing old disempowering beliefs