

THE RESIDUE OF TRAUMA

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS



by
*Gina
Martin*

Find positive change when
the world feels against you.

THE RESIDUE OF TRAUMA

GINA MARTIN

The Residue Of Trauma

Learned Helplessness

To all my past and current clients.

I couldn't have done this without you!



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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 of this book you will have ventured deep into what is holding you back in life, you will have learned tools to use the rest of your life, and will have started taking effective 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. Even if they are not open to reading this book or using the resources on my website www.UnlockingResilience.org.

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 can walk through your subconscious mind (with your permission), accessing your memories and emotions to find the patterns that bind you to a life of rinse and repeat. As a certified magnetic mind coach, and many other certifications. I can help you find, clear, or integrate the fragmented parts of self that are chilling out in the subconscious mind. Releasing the dis-empowering influence it has in life. After helping 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. Past emotional habits and memories prevent forward movement in life. Every emotion you are having in life at this moment is an old, outdated emotion from the past preventing you from being fully present in life. This book and

resources from my website will assist in peeling off the old you to reveal much needed new you. My goal is to set as many people as possible free from the emotions and memories that bind them to a life they don't love. My process is for those that feel held hostage by the past or that need a jump start from feeling stuck.

This book reveals 10 areas that I have had challenges with while smoothing out my own and others subconscious. 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 can be unlearned or 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. I offer a no judgment zone that increasing awareness for those that desire quicker change from a structured process. Healing can be linear. If it was easy we all would have mastered 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. The website has downloadable worksheets for the process. Hint! It works better if you write things down as you go. 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 onetime event. In general, it takes roughly two years of consistent effort 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. It can happen faster for some, yet I want to set a realistic timeline. This is a do-it-yourself project, yet any area you can't get to improve you can bring to me for a one on one session or one of the group calls. 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. Here it is. Resources can be found at; www.UnlockingResilience.org.

Using this book and resources on my website will be an interactive journey to get the subconscious mind moving in a more productive direction. **The body is the subconscious mind.** If your body is struggling, then the subconscious mind has struggles to resolve. Caring for the body helps the mind and caring for the mind helps the body.

It wasn't until I was in my 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 and medium "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 that seemed to mystify the medical field. Diagnosed with mast cell activation syndrome after a run in with long covid. Maybe I will 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 the mind and life to new possibilities. My goal is to speed up your transformation while demystifying how individuals develop learned helplessness and how to gracefully grow out of it. 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 reveal 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 point it out 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.

Talking about, thinking about, complaining about, journaling about emotions is not feeling them. Until the ignored, suppressed, uncomfortable or comfortable emotion is fully felt you are not free of that emotion.

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 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 imprints the inability to succeed is due to an internal, stable, and global factor that can't be controlled. This 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, is called global attribution, leading 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 believe 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 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, avoidant 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 the residue of trauma turns into learned helplessness.

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

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Chapter 2

The first breath of struggle; The impact of violent and neglect

“Child abuse casts a shadow the length of a lifetime.”

Herbert Ward

The environment that a child is born into is more than just a backdrop. It is a formative force that shapes their development, relationships, and self-identity. Being born into a hostile environment, whether it's violence, neglect, poverty, or emotional turbulence, has a profound and lasting effect. These early circumstances develop a child's immediate sense of danger and lack of recourses which will follow them into adulthood.

Unpredictable stress: If a child cannot predict or prevent harm this creates a sense of panic in their nervous system. Not being able to predict when food will come, if intense or long periods of discomfort are not separated by relief the body often starts to shut down or lives on adrenaline to survive.

Lack of nurturing: Neglect deprives children of emotional and physical support that is necessary to develop a healthy identity, self-esteem, and confidence. Lack of nurturing also shows up as poor social skills. Patterns of extreme avoidance or dependency often develop as coping behaviors.

Powerless role models: In abusive households, caregivers may themselves have learned helplessness. Molding passivity by acceptance of harmful situations as a normal way of life. Staying in a relationship and fighting all the time is also a form of passivity (avoiding change).

Punished independence: If a child asserts independence or tries to escape the abusive conditions it is often addressed with punishment, reinforcing the belief that efforts are not worth it.

Altered brain development: Persistent exposure to stress and trauma alters a child's brain development in the way it processes fear, critical decision making, and impulse control. This makes it frustrating for individuals to break free from the cycles of LH when they don't have a process to reverse it.

Emotional development: Feelings of inadequacy, guilt, fear, and shame that developed in childhood persist into adulthood. They may come to believe that bad things happen because they deserve them, a hallmark of learned helplessness.

All of this develops a fragile sense of trust. Infants come into the world wired to form secure attachments. However, a hostile environment where caregivers are absent, abusive, emotionally unavailable because of their own issues undermine this natural process.

The inability for caregivers to provide safety and comfort, can develop into an insecure attachment style. Insecure attachment styles in adults creates a struggle to form healthy relationships, as they oscillate between distrust and dependency. Their past experiences can create a distrust of intimacy because of past betrayals or rejection. A growing child learns that relationships are mainly a source of pain. Often an intense fear of abandonment will cause clinging to others. Some individuals may become strikingly independent with a fear of expressing vulnerability and an intense discomfort when asking for help or seeking support. This use to

be me. I still get nervous when asking for support if it is around something I care about.

These maladaptive subconscious imprints are felt has a constant state of distress that the body has adapted to over time. Prioritizing survival, over growth and exploration. These prolonged states of hyper awareness or emotional shut down alters the brain development causing it to stay in a fight(angry), flight(fear), freeze(numb), or fawn(desperate) mode. While the brain stem is constantly firing for survival, from past events, a person is left with a feeling of free-floating dread. Many people that I have helped to overcome learned helplessness have shared that the last thing to go is the feeling of free-floating dread. They don't know exactly where it is coming from, they just know it haunts them. This can cause disassociation as a coping skill. Take note: This is why many people walk into bad situations without knowing it until it is too late. When an individual is disassociated many of their innate physical and emotional alarm systems are shut off. Then, they are traumatized one more time. These people can look like magnets for mayhem. Individuals in a state of desperation look for anything that will make it go away, which results in addictive patterns for relief,

like substance abuse. Disassociated individuals doesn't feel much, when they aren't disassociated, they feel everything WAY more compared to their numbed-out state. Many tell me how jarring it is to flop back and forth between states. During a session with a client that disassociates I often must go "find them' and gently bring them back into their body. Over time they learn the body isn't so bad to be in. We are in the realm of a body, the safest place to be is in your body. I know it sounds counter intuitive.

Having to function in a hostile environment usually discourages emotional expression. A child or adult often learns that showing any emotion invites in punishment, ridicule, and more painful experiences leading to emotional suppression. Where some people develop hyper independence, perfectionism, overachieving, or hyper vigilance to cope or escape the unsupportive environment. Hyper vigilance can create an overreaction to real or perceived threats. Even neutral or positive situations can be interpreted as a threat. This creates difficulty with relaxing and feeling safe even in calm environments. Overtime this develops into hyper or hypo tension, anxiety, digestive disorders, or even autoimmune disorders. I have yet to meet someone

that has an autoimmune issue that doesn't have some form of trauma in their background. Hypervigilance use to be my go-to for solving every problem. Real or perceived.

On the flip side some will develop emotional numbing making it difficult to identify/express one's emotions or needs. Often a level of high impulsivity is developed because they're seeking temporary relief from unprocessed emotions through a substance or risky behaviors. Children and adults left in hostile environments often internalize the chaos that's around them believing it reflects their value. Often consistent neglect will teach a child to view themselves as unworthy of love and respect. In adulthood this leaves them a shadow of self-worth, a constant struggle to believe in their own abilities to succeed. This shadow of self-worth keeps them accepting poor treatment because it feels familiar. Often, they will self-sabotage opportunities because of ingrained beliefs about their own limitations.

Having to survive a hostile world develops the belief that "good feels bad" and "bad feel normal". I often hear individuals say, "I'm just waiting for the other shoe to drop." Or other similar statements

because the pattern of broken promises in the past undermine trusting that good things can happen for them.

In my own journey as I became increasingly successful, I often worried more and more about losing it. The pattern of sacrificing myself to reach goals that weren't even my own was a pattern. I can still hear a friend of mine saying, "If you are going to go down with a sinking ship it had better be your own." I often had a hard time being able to tell when I needed to jump ship. As I became more focused on my own needs and desires it would bring up the old narrative that I was being selfish for taking care of myself. I still often must remind myself that I am of no use to others if I am unable to take care of myself. Adult children from hostile environments have the challenge that when they're meeting their needs, they will confront the negative narratives that they internalized from the abusers around them. This is why someone will stand and stare at dirty dishes longer than it would take just to wash them. For some it was because they were always forced to do the dishes, so they internalized hating dishes. Dishes don't care how you feel while you wash them. Generally taking care of business got you punished

and not taking care of business got you punished as a child. This can create an odd paralysis to taking action because somewhere in the psyche is an unresolved conflict around self-benefiting action. For others their copying strategy was to care for others in exchange for getting their needs met and to feel valued, yet as an adult these are the individuals just can't stop doing. I can still suffer with this habit. With these individuals stopping causes an avalanche of shame or anxiety to wash over them because they only feel valued by what they produce. In western societies any of us suffer with this in the workforce we are only rewarded when we produce and self-sacrifice. I find the companies that are most guilty of this work environment are the ones that say, "we are all family here", yet I know if I have a flat tire, I can't call them like family to help solve my problem. I find it interesting that companies say, "nobody wants to work anymore", when companies may have inflicted learned helplessness on the employees. I will add a disclaimer here, not all companies are bad, there are good companies out there you must know what to look for.

I have been a freelancer for over 40 years. I have worked within large and small businesses, family-

owned businesses and large corporations. LH is everywhere. An inability to use current resources, find resources, and develop new resources is another symptom of LH.

I placed being raised in a hostile environment at the top of the list because it seems to be one of the most influential areas that need to be addressed when step out of learned helplessness. Learning to function in a hostile environment be it internal or external is a value skill to learn.

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Chapter 3

Catastrophic thinking: Living under the shadow of “what if?”

“The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but your thoughts about it.” Eckhart Tolle,

Catastrophic thinking or catastrophizing is considered a cognitive distortion in which an individual consistently anticipates the worst possible outcomes. It feels like the pebbles in life are received as boulders. Around any corner could be impending disaster. While fleeting catastrophic thoughts are common, for some, this is a way of thinking that becomes deeply ingrained, shaping their worldview and interactions. Catastrophic thinking can be so intense it creates psychological and physiological effects on a person’s mind and body.

In general, it’s believed that catastrophic thinking is not an innate trait but a learned behavior, often rooted in early experiences and environmental factors. I have yet to meet someone with catastrophic thinking that hasn’t survived

catastrophic events or experiences. I grouped them in three areas.

Childhood experiences: Children who have experienced environments of unpredictability or danger often develop this pattern of thinking to help them feel safe and prepared. Living in constant chaos and lack of safety develops a pattern of trying to anticipate the worst-case scenarios as to avoid them. These environments of unpredictable or dangerous people teach children to interpret challenges as insurmountable. When caregivers are over critical, anxious, harsh, and poor problem solvers themselves one is left to fend for them self. This leaves the child with a lot of unresolved loss and failure in life. This unprocessed grief follows them into adulthood. I feel it in a client's chest.

Personality traits and temperament: Individuals with a higher level of neuroticism or a natural predisposition to anxiety may be more prone to catastrophic thinking. It used to be that women were classified as neurotic (experiencing more negative emotions) when often they were responding to the environment. Nowadays both men and women can rank high in neuroticism. A perfectionist mindset,

often from trauma, can amplify fears of failure. This turns into a pattern of catastrophic thinking when faced with uncertainty or unfamiliar experiences. Totally me, I still don't like surprises.

Reinforcement-Negative experiences that align with catastrophic thoughts reinforce the belief that catastrophizing is a valid form of preparation or protection. Beliefs like, "I knew this would go terribly wrong", can cloud a person's perception going into a job interview. Everyone has their own intuition, yet when trauma accentuates one's intuition they often focus in on the most dangerous person or element in the room. This blots out all other more positive options in the room or situation. Only reinforcing anxiety and catastrophizing.

Catastrophic thinking follows a predictable cognitive pattern.

Triggering event: A sizable setback, minor setback, lack of resources, or ambiguous situation is all that it takes to start this mental fire burning. Examples could be your boss sends a vague e-mail, someone has a "look" on their face, or too much unstructured time on their hands.

Exaggeration of consequences: Leaping to extreme interpretations. When a child experiences adult consequences for childhood errors it creates an internal emotional pressure. There's an underlying feeling of panic or guilt when things don't go smoothly or as expected. Constantly having to reevaluate situations is how all this extra energy is spent.

Emotional flooding: When an emotion rushes in too quickly or too intensely it causes a state of panic, overwhelm, or powerlessness to dominate, making rational thought difficult. It feels nearly impossible to get oneself back under control when the emotions are flooding in faster than they can be managed. Often once the event is over no matter what the result, it is often followed by an avalanche of shame. Which leaves them even more paralyzed and stuck in catastrophic thinking.

Reinforcement loop: When nothing catastrophic happens, the individual attributes this to their vigilance and planning, reinforcing the cycle.

Catastrophic thinking thrives on the “what if” scenarios, continuously growing due to overwhelming fears. Overtime, the brain becomes

conditioned to seek out worst case scenarios even when none exists. Creating the cycle of needing to have drama in life to feel alive.

When I released the trauma drama. I went to therapy because I thought I was depressed after my divorce. I was unaware of how damaging being with my first husband was. After about 3 sessions the therapist suggested that I wasn't depressed, but that I had stepped off the adrenaline bus. That after living with such a chaotic unpredictable person for so many years that when I created a life for myself that didn't include their drama it felt flat. I still have times in my life when things are going smoothly and I'm leveling up to the next great thing in life and that flat feeling creeps in. I get out my worksheet and listen to one of the audios from my website, shifting the emotional residue that was still in my subconscious, and I get back to life. I make it a habit to redirect myself away from drama and not solve other people's drama just for the adrenaline rush. This has made my life so much more enjoyable and has brought a sense of peace to my heart. It takes a bit of practice to be relaxed after stepping off the adrenaline bus. I don't remember who shared with me, "You don't have to go to every fight you are

invited to.” I think of things as invitations now. It is so much easier to say no, now.

Catastrophic thinking can affect nearly every aspect of a person’s life, whether it’s mental, physical, or interpersonal relationships. Catastrophic thinking fuels chronic anxiety by keeping the brain in a constant state of alert. Overtime, this depletes an individual’s emotional and nutritional resources. Stressed out brains burn up way more nutrients than a calm brain. Once deep in a catastrophic thought it makes even small decisions feel impossible. A form of decision paralysis or procrastination are often the result. Persistent catastrophizing erodes confidence, causes fatigue, and the individual begins to believe they cannot handle life. Overtime, this chronic stress can cause tension headaches, muscle pain, digestive issues, and sleep disturbances. Which reinforces this pattern even more. Consistent catastrophizing can exhaust friends and family, often feel overwhelmed by the constant rumination. Family and friends get worn out and turn a silent ear after hearing about the same fears and troubles when no action is taken to correct the topic an individual is catastrophizing about. This often leads to avoidant behaviors and loneliness. A lose-lose scenario.

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Chapter 4

The cage without bars: A loss of self-agency

“I can’t change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination.” Jimmy Dean

Imagine a bird, caged for years, suddenly set free. Despite its newfound liberty, it hesitates to fly, its wings weighed down by a lifetime of confinement. This metaphor captures the essence of learned helplessness. A psychological state where individuals conditioned by repeated failure, lack of control, quickly or slowly lose the ability to take independent action. The profound ways that the residue of trauma diminishes self-agency is far reaching. Draining an individual’s ability to generate their own thoughts, beliefs, and self-directed action.

Healthy parenting emphasizes the inherent right to self-govern and develop autonomy. This develops a broader sense of control over one’s life and the creation of personal boundaries. Knowing where “I” begin and end, and knowing where others begin and

end, creates a clear sense of self. Self-agency is specifically the ability to make decisions and to take actions in a way that provokes change. I have found too much social media robs people of their self-agency without them even noticing. They fall prey to regurgitating what they have seen on social media and have less and less original ideas, thoughts, and plans. In extreme cases they don't know what to do with themselves if their phone or computer was taken away. They lose their sense of self when they are stuck being alone with just themselves. To coregulate emotions in a human brain takes another human brain because we have mirror neurons and energetic resonance to help us. I am sure someone smarter than me has written a book about this already. Back to the topic of LH.

To overcome learned helplessness an individual's past perceptions and emotions, associated to and with an event, need to be addressed. This is why 20 people can watch the same movie and have 20 different interpretation and reaction to the same movie. Understanding what a person is focusing on and putting energy into will often reveal the traumas that need to be integrated.

Self-agency is a cornerstone of personal autonomy. It develops into the capacity to make decisions, act and create a life with individual desires. The areas to explore:

Inspiration vs motivation- When an individual's efforts have been met with failure many stop trying altogether. Beliefs of, "Why bother", "it's too hard", "I don't care" (my personal go to when I feel challenged). Which usually means they care too much, become the driving force in life. There is no amount of external motivation that will shift these beliefs. Shifting this is an inside job of integrating the negative load carried in the subconscious mind. When working with these clients I help them develop and find their inspiration, not motivation, in creating a life they love. Overtime a lack of effort reinforces the perception of inability and creates a disempowering cycle of inaction. As a person develops their own sense of inspiration it becomes easier to act on their own behalf.

Fragmented identity- We're all fragmented. Everyone. I have not met anyone yet, that isn't. Each flavor of trauma creates its own struggles and fragmentation. Life can be compared to mountain

climbing; no two journeys are the same. Bigger mountains often need more tools to master the climb. As an individual releases harmful beliefs and patterns that they internalized from others the true self emerges. The psyche is very direct in the ways it protects the body from death and perceived harm. It can get super fragmented, but if your heart is still beating it has done its job well, even if an individual's life seems otherwise.

It's important to make sure if you're going to climb a mountain that it's your mountain to climb. As my grandmother used to say, "Life is hard, but you get to pick your hard." I didn't really understand the deeper meaning of this until I was in my forties. She used to say, "If they didn't ask, then you are meddling.' It took me years to break the habit of being a meddler.

Cognitive paralysis- LH can foster a pattern of indecision causing reliance on external guidance. This could also be referred to as codependency. The paralysis arises because decision making feels overwhelming or futile. Leading an individual to defer to others or avoid choices altogether in the hope of avoiding consequences and responsibility.

Not because they are a slacker, consequences and responsibility mean more decisions. The very thing that is hard to do.

Disempowering beliefs- Over time as an individual internalized their failures or the failures of others, as a reflection of their inherent worth/capabilities. Disempowering beliefs can make independence feel risky. This creates an over reliance on real or perceived authority figures for external validation to navigate their lives. When others stoke the fires of fear around making choices, which further paralyzes a person with learned helplessness, it isn't helpful. Disempowering beliefs lead to avoidance of responsibility. Tasks and challenges are sidestepped because acting feels overwhelming or pointless. Resources and possibilities seem out of one's reach. No one thought a 4 min mile was possible until Roger Bannister did it, and then others followed.

Taking ownership- Practice taking ownership of choices and actions, an individual can shift out of the passive observer, to an active participant in their life. The world will still present challenges, but these challenges no longer feel insurmountable. An individual can learn to trust their capabilities, to

navigate uncertainty, and reclaiming the freedom to shape their own destiny. My goal is to empower individuals, so they develop a stronger sense of self-agency, resilience, and break free from the conflicts within.

Make use of the resources I have included at www.UnlockingResilience.org. For those who want to rewire faulty parts of the subconscious mind from disempowering beliefs to self-empowering beliefs, emotions, and coping mechanisms. One of the hardest things to watch is an individual struggle when they are so close to the finish line. In the process of making unfamiliar behaviors and beliefs familiar it can be hard to tell how far away the finish line is. Even only having one positive source of reinforcement is enough to provoke a positive change.

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter4blogpost>

- 1) click the above link to fill out your journal page and
- 2) listen to the healing audio to start releasing old disempowering beliefs

Chapter 5

Trapped: The sticky web of self-doubt

“Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage.” Dale Carnegie

LH creates another profound ripple in the psyche which is experienced as a pervasive sense of incompetency. Over time this feeling can give rise to imposter syndrome, where an individual can't enjoy their achievements and fears being exposed as a fraud. This self-doubt only hampers their ability to take decisive action. This inactivity leads to avoidance of or abandonment of significant life events, such as career advancements, relationships, or personal milestones. The fear of being exposed in one way or another is mind numbing for many. If this doesn't get corrected a deep feeling of inadequacy interferes with their ability to navigate and complete key life events. The following areas are major contributors in self-doubt.

Unrealistic expectations- Growing up in an environment with impossible standards often leads to feelings of chronic inadequacy. They feel, “I am not”, fast enough, smart enough, pretty enough, brave enough, you get the idea. Or the flip side of weak or unpredictable standards prevents a person from learning the life skills to be happy.

Negative reinforcement- When an individual is burdened by others who consistently narrowly focus on what is not done or done wrong, this kills any reward or logical reason to try harder. Instead, individuals that promote celebrating life’s wins and what has been done right (positive reinforcement), to encourage self-empowerment, is what provokes positive change.

I often learn what an individual’s trauma is by watching them with their pet, and how they do or don’t train them. Everyone enjoys a well-trained pet, even the pet. A lot of pet anxiety is from the animal not knowing who is supposed to make the decisions in life and being left alone too many hours in the day. Another factor is being removed from the mother too soon, especially true with cats. I have worked on a lot of crazy hostile cats, 98% of them have a

separation wound that was still active in the brain. Usually in the brain stem area. Integrating these can allow the cat to develop new behavior. Trauma patterns are fairly easy to see in brain imaging scans if you know what you are looking for. United States doctors believe the orbs on the scan are an image issue, yet in Germany there is research into these orbs for what they are. Trauma patterns held in the brain. Every person I have worked with that has blood sugar issues has an orb in the frontal area of the brain that regulates blood sugar. I find the research fascinating.

The blame game- Being punished or blamed consistently for real or perceived failures of others or even your own is crushing to the heart. The belief it is “ALL your fault” everything turned out this way is inaccurate. Reminding my clients and myself that it is statistically impossible for everything in every situation to be ALL their fault. Everyone has their part in the game of life. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. Often it isn’t any one thing, it is a cascade of things that are at blame, if we must point a finger at the so-called cause. Be skeptical of anyone that is more focused on finding blame instead of solving the issue at hand. I found this true in dating.

Anyone that spends time complaining how their last partner did them wrong, means I am just the next one they will be complaining about or to. Hard pass for me. I can still get on a jag of complaining to myself or others. I stop and ask myself. “What need isn’t being met that has me fall back into this copying style of complaining?” Complaining fills a need for something. Met that need, and shazam no more desire to complain.

Diminished confidence- Can show up as a hypersensitivity to real or perceived rejection. The lack of confidence amplifies minor setbacks as catastrophic events. This turns every task or challenge into a potential minefield of failure.

Imposter syndrome (IP) arises when individuals achieve success yet feel unworthy of it, attributing accomplishments to luck, external factors, or deception rather than skill. The more fragile the self-identity the more often LH leads to IP. For individuals steeped in learned helplessness, the transition to imposter syndrome is seamless. Instead of enjoying life’s wins. They just check it off their list of things to do. They skip allowing themselves to

enjoy the fruit of their labor. An inability to reward themselves for a job well done.

Disconnection from achievement- When success occurs, the individual may struggle to integrate it with their ingrained belief of incompetence. This cognitive dissonance fosters feelings of fraudulence/fakeness, and the fear of exposing the fake self in public is crippling. An inability to accept their part in success is like not being able to accept responsibility for one's actions.

Haunted by self-doubt- Success does not diminish the feeling of inadequacy but often amplifies them. Each achievement feels like another opportunity for failure or exposure. Internal thoughts often include, "I don't belong here," "they're going to figure it out one of these days," or "What happens if I got here by mistake." I walk clients through this tangled mess helping them to discern all the steps that are making them successful (so they will do more of them) and to celebrate the wins with them. Learning it is safe to enjoy the journey of life. Instead of feeling empty or anxiety when they have reached a mile marker in life.

Avoidance of opportunities- This one was a big one for me to overcome. To avoid the anxiety of a

potential exposure, individuals may turn down promotions, dismiss accolades, or avoid high stake situations. When one felt exposed as a child, they will do anything to avoid that feeling again. Especially if a child was taken advantage of in times of vulnerability, innocence, or consistently. They learn not to take risks and that no one can be trusted. The level of stress a person goes through when they realize the people they are surround by are harmful. This could be family, work, or institutional situations. Being in stressful situations without relief is another area that needs to be resolved for many before change can happen.

Paralysis in life events- Imposter syndrome profoundly impacts an individual's ability to engage with or complete significant life events. Fear of inadequacy leads to reluctance to pursue new opportunities whether it's for a better job, a loving partner, the risk feels too great. These people often suffer from burnout as they overwork themselves to prove they deserve, the position at work, a partner, a compliment. Feeling paralyzed in relationships either by avoiding emotional intimacy from a deep fear of rejection/exposure (of real or perceived flaws), they often feel like they are just going through the

motions in life. I feel it as a deep grief within them. They often feel heavily judged by others and themselves. I remind them and myself (often) that most people are too focused on their own problems to be that focused on them. However, with the increase of cancel culture and gangstalking imposter syndrome becomes even more intense. The fear of attack is real and feels like it can happen to anyone at any time. Finding a healthy tride to be with can feel challenging when so much fear is bubbling in the subconscious mind.

All of these can cause an avoidance of personal growth milestones. Major life transitions can be missed such as pursuing an education, starting a family, changing jobs, it all feels insurmountable. The idea of suffering one more failure keeps them stuck. Failures are not seen as an opportunity for learning but rather proof of inadequacy. A “shame avalanche” is what one of my clients says it feels like. You haven’t made mistakes, you are still learning.

Instead of feeling excited or a sense of accomplishment many times they just feel a relief that it’s over and then on to the next task. The feeling “exposure/seen” during a celebration is

what is being avoided. The inability to celebrate an accomplishment of another is a sign of learned helplessness, just a different flavor of it.

To help clients overcome many of these patterns I have them start with safe requests. I helped them reclaim life's milestones so they can engage more fully in life. It is all about the ability to engage more into the life you want and engage less in the life you don't.

Celebrating little wins- I celebrate and encourage people to continue taking steps that align with their personal values and desires. Or help them find their values and desires. Do you know yours? Can you list, right now, your top three values? Your top three desires? Write them down! Learn to be grateful for the progress, no matter how small, helps develop self-agency. Finding an outlet for creative expression even if it's only just for them. I let them know it's just for them, it's just for fun, never needing to tell anyone. Many find journaling helpful; many have found dance classes to be extremely helpful as a form of self-expression.

Self-compassion- Accepting imperfection as part of the human experience allows for greater

resilience. Cutting yourself as much slack as you cut others can be very nurturing. Releasing hyper vigilance/perfectionism for a that's good enough attitude. If it is worth doing it is worth doing poorly until you can master it. Releasing perfectionism was a hard one for me. I realized it was an issue when I was in a job performance review, and I was told I was too efficient. I had the belief that you could never be too efficient. However, my perfectionism was keeping me out of the flow with my fellow coworkers. I couldn't effectively work in a team if I was off doing my own thing as fast as I can.

Embracing uncertainty- Life involves ambiguity. I still can stress out on this one. Learning to tolerate uncertainty is a critical skill for overcoming inaction and anxious behaviors. Some individuals view uncertainty as an adventure rather than a threat. I can honestly say, I'm not there yet. I am much better than I was. I have taken more risks as my tolerance for uncertainty strengthens, but there is a part of me that has a hard time tolerating the unknown. I often remind myself 99% of the stuff I worry about will probably never happen, but the 1% I want to be prepared for. The preparation process looks different for each person. Understanding what

makes you feel safe and not safe helps you to develop a plan to embrace uncertainty.

Reclaiming mastery over your life is not about eradicating self-doubt but learning to skillfully act despite it. Each small step forward chips away at the false narrative of incompetence and imposter syndrome. Paving the way for a life filled with authenticity, accomplishment, and more fulfillment.

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter5blogpost>

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Chapter 6

The paradox of opposites: Hope and hopelessness

“Hopelessness is a feeling. It’s not a fact.” Anohni

Feeling stuck between hope and hopelessness is the tension of two opposites. Hope, the longing for change or improvement in one’s circumstance. Hopelessness, the belief that efforts to achieve that change will inevitably fail. Two sides of the same coin. Learned helplessness is often thought of as pure despair, but for many, it creates a complex emotional state where hope and hopelessness coexist. These individuals may desperately want change but feel incapable of achieving it. The paradox of hoping for better while believing it’s out of reach, can lead to profound inner conflict. While in the vice of this conflict it stalls growth by trapping a person in a cycle of inaction. No one likes to be in limbo; this contradictory state can’t exhaust the emotions.

Hope and hopelessness coexist in all of us. At its core hope is a universal human trait. In young children it's like "wonder" a curiosity for more. Even in the depths of helplessness, individuals often harbor a desire for better circumstances. This hope may manifest in fantasies, wishes, or intermittent bursts of motivation to take action. However, hopelessness is learned through repeated failure a real or perceived lack of control in life. Turning hopeful intentions into fleeting, frustrating moments of optimism. Sometimes people turn to toxic positivity trying to drown out their hopelessness. The tension between hope and hopelessness creates an outer oscillation between taking action and resigning themselves to inaction. A come here, no, go away scenario in life. Starting lots of things yet finishing few. Chasing the next shiny object. I still have to tell myself, "No, you can't start something new until you finish your last project." If this book wasn't part of a structured step by step 7 day challenge it would still be sitting around half done. I still feel a little cringy about putting this book out for all to see, yet I do think an interactive book is needed by a lot of people. Reading isn't the same as implementing. My goal is to help people implement their way into a better life.

Experiencing a constant state of a stalemate can create chronic anxiety and frustration because an individual may feel they are always undermined in their efforts. The brain remains in a heightened state of tension, constantly weighing possibilities, but unsure of the exact action steps. They want a guarantee before acting. This inability to reconcile which choice is best can create an emotional numbing because they are constantly having to cope with this inner conflict. This numbing may provide a temporary relief, yet it deepens the sense of stagnation. Feeling stuck can foster shame, guilt, negative self-talk, leading individuals to withdraw from relationships, and opportunities that could improve their life. This makes change feel impossible.

It can feel safer, emotionally, to remain stuck than to risk hoping once more. The idea of trying again and potentially failing again, is unbearable. I've had many clients tell me, "I just can't suffer one more loss without losing my mind." When a person is at this point it is important to help them develop a clear path of action. A clear step by step movement forward no matter how small the steps are. It must be a plan they can implement. Implementation only

happens when an individual can wrap their mind and heart around the plan. They get to do it their way. Even if it is the long way, they must do it that way, it must make sense to them, or the primordial part of the brain will stop them in their tracks.

In this state of oscillating between hope and hopelessness self-agency often goes from internal to external forces. Change feels dependent on external events or people, rather than personal effort, and at first this can feel like a relief. However, the relief is only temporary because others cannot live your life. Inaction offers a temporary comfort of avoiding risk or uncertainty, but it often perpetuates larger problems down the road. I hear people say, “If only everybody else would change my life would be better.” When they are stuck in the polarity of opposites.

Breaking free from the limbo of hope and hopelessness requires a deliberate strategy to rebuild self-efficacy and challenge the learned beliefs that trap an individual in inaction. Reparenting is another way to look at this process.

Nurturing baby steps- I have people start with low-risk steps to create evidence of success. Each

small accomplishment reinforces the belief that change is possible and begins to challenge the feelings of powerlessness. It also doesn't trigger to many subconscious triggers to slow them down. Pick something and go with it. If it doesn't work or you don't like it you have the right to pick again.

Reframing failure- Helping an individual to understand failure (real or perceived) is not a permanent judgment but an experience. Having them express the learning from an experience and what are the things they don't want to experience again. Then taking action steps to move away from the things an individual doesn't want to experience and action steps towards the experiences they do want in life.

I need to mention. I am not a believer in finding the positive from a negative experience. Finding the "silver lining" so to speak. I feel this slows a person down and allows them to accept bad behavior from self or others. Bad experiences need to be dealt with in a direct fashion, as to not repeat them. Bad things happen to good people. Trying to dilute a bad experience into a blessing is usually an emotional/responsibility bypass. In my opinion. It

leaves the bad experience (an imprint) in the field and psyche which often attracts more of the same. When a client has a “theme” that keeps showing up in life no matter what they do it doesn’t go away. I check for silver lining wounds; bad things have to happen to get good things. Or wounds around pretending it wasn’t as bad as it was. When these areas get resolved the brain stops throwing it in your path to resolve it. You just move on with your life. It feels like forgiveness, when you actually just stop thinking about it or acting it out because the emotional charge on it is gone. It feels weird (or freeing) to just snap out of it and move on with life.

Anchoring in the present- Developing mindfulness practices and grounding techniques helps bring one’s focus into the present moment rather than ruminating on past failures or future fears. Breathwork can be helpful, others find exercising gets them more in touch with their body, the more you can bring yourself back to your body and the present moment the more clarity we’ll come in. Exercise is a must, it is how the body takes the trash out.

Gradually increase perceived or real risk- Being able to take on challenges that feel slightly uncomfortable we'll help make the unfamiliar familiar. Taking small risks is easier to embrace than larger changes. Large changes trigger the primordial brain into protection or shut down mode. Learning to tolerate uncertainty helps reinforce resilience. For example, making small decisions without consulting others can help restore confidence. For some learning to make decisions as to what they will wear, eat, or do for the day, without consulting what others are doing or eating helps to build a stronger identity. This process teaches them what preferences they have without the influence of others. Who are you when no one else is around?

Support systems- Established supportive relationships with friends, mentors, therapist, support groups, that provide positive perspectives and encouragement. Being able to share their experiences often reduces the intensity of helplessness and can help develop accountability for actions. This step can feel the most daunting for many. Engaging with others more successful than you in a positive way helps pave the path to success. Our brain has mirror neurons that pull parallels from

others. This is why you become who you hang around! Unhealthy brains can learn to pull healthy habits from others that have healthy habit. More about this in chapter ten.

Moving towards empowerment- Reconnecting to your purpose is a process of clarifying personal values and desires, even in the face of uncertainty. Everybody needs something tangible to look forward to and work towards. This makes it easier to make progress when you are forward focused and not reexperiencing the past. This gives a sense of direction and structure to one's life. The biggest challenge of this step is making sure they are your values and your desires, not those of others that you've come accustomed to living out. You get to pick your purpose, and your purpose will change over the course of your life.

The journey out of limbo between hope and hopelessness can be linear. It requires persistence, self-compassion, and a willingness to challenge long held beliefs. As an individual takes small steps towards reclaiming their agency, hope gets replaced by self-confidence. Self-confidence builds desire and desire becomes the catalyst for action rather than a

source of frustration. By gradually challenging disempowering beliefs an individual can learn to navigate this paradox and move forward in life. Developing intentional actions, becomes a transformative force. It allows individuals to step out of the shadows of helplessness and to reengage in life. Where effort and belief align, opening a door to growth, resilience, and more fulfillment. The goal is not to eliminate negative emotions but to be able to act effectively even with a negative emotion. Feeling better happens after we have acted instead of before the action. Self-confidence comes after doing the “thing”, over and over. Doing the reps. I remember during one of my phases of feeling depressed I would remind myself that the carpet doesn’t care if I cry while I vacuum it. That the dishes don’t care if I’m angry as I washed them. By the end of the day, I felt better because the house was cleaned, dishes were washed even when I couldn’t shift out of a heavy emotional state.

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter6boggost>

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Chapter 7

The tightrope of validation: The role of praise and guidance

“When we consistently suppress and distrust our intuitive knowingness, looking instead for authority, validation, and approval from others, we give our personal power away.”
Shakti Gawain

Praise and guidance are essential experiences in shaping an individual’s sense of competency and agency. However, when there is an imbalance, either through overindulgence or neglect, this can inadvertently foster a sense of helplessness. Too much praise can lead to a reliance on external validation, or the Dunning-Kruger effect (overestimating abilities). While too little guidance can leave individuals feeling lost, unsupported, and underestimating of abilities (imposter syndrome).

Praise, when appropriately given, can build self-esteem and reinforce positive behavior. It helps an individual feel valued and capable of doing more. The nature and frequency of praise can significantly

affect how individuals internalize their sense of worthiness. When someone is constantly praised, especially for trivial achievements, they develop an inaccurate sense of their skills and often are not adequately prepared to face life's bigger challenges. Over praise can create a pressure to attain high standards which often makes mistakes feel catastrophic. The flip side is it can create lack of action from the false belief "they are doing enough". Excessive praise for innate qualities can foster a fixed mindset, where individuals believe their abilities are static. This prevents them from having perseverance in the face of challenges. When individuals have too much input from other individuals a fear of acting independently can develop. The opposite of this is they become resentful/rebellious from feeling oppressed from real or perceived authority. They want to do it all their way yet might lack the tools to act effectively on their own because over praise steals independence from another. Often those who struggle with autonomy may only feel competent under the supervision of others leading to learned helplessness.

On the opposite spectrum neglect, a lack of praise and guidance often leads individuals to feeling

undervalued as though their efforts and achievements are insignificant. This neglect can often create an aversion to effort. They don't feel a reward or satisfaction for completing a task from the lack of positive feedback. For others the lack of guidance/feedback can leave an individual unable to discern how to approach challenges to discern what their next step is. In the absence of direction, it reinforces the idea that they must figure everything out alone. Taking on all of an unknown risk which leads to feeling overwhelmed or the need to withdraw. Or to recoil at the first sign that things aren't going as expected. This lack of support during formative experiences can lead to chronic self-doubt, as one watches others succeed as they struggle to get rewarded. Being left in situations with little acknowledgment (or harsh feedback) and no direction is given on how to course correct, is the mixture for failure. This pattern left unchecked internalizes into a belief that they are inherently incapable of engaging fully in life because it feels like too much. This develops behavior of quitting too soon or hanging on too long in situations that are unhealthy. A level of effective discernment was never developed through trial and error, and positive encouragement to continue in the face of challenges.

When there is a mismatch between praise and guidance individuals may feel as if life is one bad surprise after another, despite being told they are capable. This leads to a disconnect between self-perception and real-world competence. Inconsistencies between praise and guidance, such as high praise but low guidance can't create confusion and anxiety. The reverse of a lot of guidance and little praise often creates a feeling of not knowing when to stop. Patterns of working hard for a tiny, thank you. Patterns of intermittent reinforcement (lack of consistency/predictability) causes addictive tendencies in people and between people. I have noticed many people stay in unhealthy relationships because of this push/pull, high/low, dopamine hit that comes from unpredictable people. I redirect my clients to “witness” a person’s behavior and have them report what insights they have noticed. In extreme cases I have them practice not listening to “the words” that come out of another’s mouth, and to only respond to the others behavior. Behavior IS a language, often a clear telling of truths. Then we play the matching game. How much of an individual’s words match their behavior? If they don’t match, it is time to be moving on. If you can’t walk away, then at least keep them at arm’s length or

spend as little time with them as possible. No matter how painful it is in the moment. Why? Glad you asked. One, they are often doing it on purpose which means they cannot be trusted. Two, if they aren't doing it on purpose there is a bigger problem under all that mismatch of words and behaviors.

Texting as a form of communication that can create the illusion that more is going on than there really is. It is impossible to get to know someone in a deeply personally way unless you see them in action, in real life. In the wild, as I say. Individual's that are skilled at stirring up emotions with words (this is how marketing works) have a great power over others. People base their choices on their emotions most of the time. Which isn't bad if you know this is what you are doing.

It took me a while to realize I use to make most of my choices out of fear. Always wanting to be prepared for any situation. In some ways this made me successful, and in other ways feeling exhausted from the constant hyper vigilance. It's helpful to know what are the top three emotions that move you into action. Beneficial action or harmful actions. This is a powerful exercise for anyone to do. The list I use

is happy, sad, contempt, surprise, fear, disgust, and anger. Once we find the main driving emotional forces, I start to direct an individual to finding their sweet spot.

Being able to find a balance between nurturing, competence, and independence is the sweet spot. To avoid fostering learned helplessness, it's essential to strike a balance between praise and guidance that encourages both confidence and independence.

Effective praise- Is specific and sincere. Praise should focus on effort, improvement, and specific achievements rather than vague or excessive compliments. Instead of saying, "Wow you're so talented," you might say, "I'm impressed by how much effort you put into this project." To encourage a growth mindset, praise a person's effort and resilience rather than innate abilities. Emphasizing that learning new skills is nothing more than the process of making the unfamiliar familiar. Sounds easy until you start putting it into action. What are the things you need to be familiar with to be more successful in life? Giving yourself praise for a job well done is a good practice.

Balanced guidance- Offering support without overstepping. Clear boundaries empower an individual to make decisions and solve problems while providing a safety net when needed. Instead of offering immediate solutions, ask questions that prompted an individual to think critically and to explore more options. Examples might be; “What do you think your best options are?”, or “Give it a try first and if you need help come get me.” Instead of giving up at the first sign of friction. Ask yourself, “What is my next step?” or “How have others with this problem solved it?” We can be solution seeking machines when we know how to ask the right questions.

Fostering autonomy- Gradually increasing the opportunity for independent decision making, how are low risk situations handled? Allowing an individual/yourself to strengthen independence by doing low risk actions first. Celebrating attempts at independence, even if the result didn’t go as planned. It’s not possible to make somebody else happy. However, when an individual has learned the skills to navigate life, they have a chance at developing their own happiness. The true problem is a lack of

developing a group of life skills, that creates the downward spiral of learned helplessness.

Modeling resilience- Watching how others navigate challenges and setbacks constructively helps problem solving skills by proxy. Seek role models that embrace challenges as a part of growth and become curious as to what skills they have developed to do this. Individuals that get back in the game of life after a real or perceived failure have developed the ability to validate themselves, the ability to take an inventory of what needs to be improved and creating new action steps to get them out of situations they are currently experiencing. Most resilient people have mentors (or a good game plan) and seek out other positive people. Resilient individuals can accept where they are at in life, which can be hard to do, yet this frees them to make new choices.

Understand the dynamics of praise and guidance, makes it easier to foster an environment that empower individuals to believe in their abilities and take ownership of their actions. For those already caught in the grip of learned helplessness, restoring this balance offers a path towards renewed

confidence, autonomy, and a life free from the shadows of inaction.

The environment you are stepping in daily matters. Cluttered environments make it harder to finish tasks and is an energy leak for many. The more disorganized the outer environment the more focus it takes to support a better inner environment.

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter7blogpost>

- 1) click the above link to fill out your journal page and
- 2) listen to the healing audio to start releasing old disempowering beliefs

Chapter 8

Growing up without a stable compass: Immature parenting

“Emotionally immature people don’t step back and think about how their behavior impacts others. There’s no cringe factor for them, so they seldom apologize or experience regret.” Lindsay C. Gibson

A child depends on their parents for guidance, stability, to build a foundation of self-efficacy. When parents are immature because of their own trauma, or other reasons, they fail to provide the consistent support and modeling that a child needs to develop competence and independence. As adult children of immature parents can struggle to reconcile unmet needs while meeting the demands of adulthood. It creates a cycle of frustration that many do not understand. They feel misunderstood.

Parents can be immature emotionally, mentally, behaviorally, or all of them. I am not blaming parents in this chapter it is an exploration of ways immature parenting fosters learned helplessness, the unique

challenges faced by these adult children of immature parents, and strategies for reclaiming agency and breaking free from LH.

In general, immature parents are characterized by emotional instability, self-centeredness, or an inability to fulfill the responsibilities of caregiving effectively. Immaturity often manifests in such behaviors as.

Emotional reactivity- Overreacting to minor issues or failing to regulate their emotions when under stress is common. This creates an unpredictable environment at home leaving the child feeling unsafe and unsupported. The child is overly focused on what appears to be a dangerous adult and therefore does not develop their own emotional awareness and expression of needs. Often a child can develop a hyper awareness of their emotions yet lack the ability to regulate themselves which leaves them in a constant state of distress.

Neglect of responsibilities- When parents prioritize their own needs consistently over their child's this leads to neglect and inconsistent caregiving. This leaves what I call "the gap". The gap is the space where things could have happened but

didn't and it leaves a void in a person. Examples would be hugs that didn't happen, words of affirmation that didn't happen, conversations that never happened, especially if a child sees another reality in the lives of other children, they become painfully aware of what is missing. Parents that oscillate between over involvement and then neglect create an uncertainty about whether any needs will be met, leading to confusion about when and how to act. Suffering inconsistencies can create either an internally focused child or externally focused child. Where the internally focused child will often internalize the belief that they are to blame for the bad things happening life and the externally focused child will believe it's everybody else's fault for the bad things that are happening in life. Of course, this is a very simplified version of two popular coping mechanisms.

Role reversals- Immature parents often see their children as little adults and not children in need of guidance and support. When adults treat children as a peer expecting the children to meet their emotional needs or practical needs, it blurs the boundaries of the parent child relationship. This can leave a child feeling powerless in getting their needs met or on the

flip side it develops into a child who feels they are all powerful and are not to be challenged. The parentification of a child can turn into codependency in an adult often only feeling valuable if they're rescuing someone else. It feels rewarding to rescue another, and like hard work to rescue oneself.

Lack of skill building opportunities- When children are forced into a caregiving role prematurely, suppressing their own needs, to manage their parent's emotions or responsibilities. A sense of learned helplessness begins to develop when children reach adulthood, as they feel unequipped to prioritize their own needs. Immature parents fail to teach problem solving, emotional regulation, decision making skills, or even just basic life skills. I will often hear these individuals express how hard it is to be an adult. Some children master a lot of skills and often appear to be doing well in life yet have an emptiness inside.

Unrealistic expectations- Immature parents are often critical of their children feeling burdened by care taking responsibilities. These parents maintain unrealistic expectations or may try to live vicariously through their children. Unrealistic expectations

delivered in an unpredictable emotional environment is impossible for children to navigate. Even if children complete the demanded goals they are often met with indifference or hostility. Overtime the child internalizes the indifference and hostility. Then as an adult an individual can be confused as to why they are indifferent to meeting their own needs or gets angry when they must meet their own needs or the needs of another. Realizing that these negative reactions come up as you improve your own selfcare, self-generated actions, these are not yours they are internalized emotions of the old experiences coming up to leave. These emotional reactions were absorbed/internalized from the environment as a child. Understanding this can help eliminate the resistance to self-care and to understand where all the negative self-talk comes from.

Some individuals that are not interested in having children were simply exhausted early in life by immature parenting. This isn't the only reason; individuals decide for various reasons not to have children. I'm just shining light on the topic for those that wonder why at a deep level they have no interest in parenting.

You made it this far, time to celebrate. Happy Dance! It takes dedication and effort to stick to your game plan in life. I understand, this isn't a book that is a one night read and poof life is fixed. It can be triggering or unsettled as each chapter is digested and to acknowledge that things might have been rough for you. It is possible to reparent and move beyond these limitations. Understanding the origins of learned helplessness is a huge step towards change.

The first steps in reparenting are finding resources for integration, guidance, and praise that wasn't receive as a child. Offering self-compassion to counteract the inner critic developed during childhood. Establishing boundaries to protect emotional wellbeing is a must. Next, developing daily habits of self-care is necessary. Adult children of immature parents that were raised in chaos, often will resist structure. Yet a certain amount of structure provides predictability and a consistent plan for success. Developing good eating habits, good sleep habits, stayed hydrated, and regular positive socialization our goals to consistently work towards. Individuals that suffer from learned helplessness often feel guilty or worry when life starts to feel good.

In time learning to trust the inner intuition we all have will develop on the path to self-empowerment. It is a gradual process, requiring patience and self-awareness. It is most important to focus on progress rather than perfection. Realizing the future, does not have to be determined by one's past. As new skills are developed it is easier to embrace more challenging roles and foster resilience. Having the power to reparent oneself by nurturing independence and reclaiming what life has to offer can be a positive adventure. While the process seems challenging at first, each step forward is a testament to resilience and capacity for growth, proving that learned helplessness is not a permanent state.

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter8blogpost>

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Chapter 9

The tyranny within: Barriers to self-sovereignty

“A man cannot directly choose his circumstances, but he can choose his thoughts, and so indirectly, yet surely, shape his circumstances” James Allen

Self-sovereignty, the belief in one’s autonomy, capacity to exercise free will, lies at the core of human dignity and fulfillment. Yet, this sense of agency can be eroded by learned helplessness. The interplay between LH and self-sovereignty reveals insights into the barriers people face when reclaiming autonomy over their lives.

Losing self-sovereignty as a child is a deeply painful experience, resulting from factors that limited a child’s ability to express themselves freely, make decisions independently, or develop a strong sense of personal identity. All this shapes an individual on their path into adulthood.

Often the strongest emotions to overcome are rage and apathy. The emotional barrier of apathy

saps the strength needed to assert autonomy and make meaningful life changes. On a social level, learned helplessness perpetuates a collective disempowerment. Media does this all the time. It thrives on negativity. If it isn't controversial, it isn't news. It can build an increase in mental health issues due to suppressed rage, continuous fear driven media, and has causes burnout and apathy for many. Feeling like a real loss of control over one's life. Increased hostility towards each other and inconsistent (or no) support rips away at everyone's self-sovereignty. Many individuals are finding the path to rebuilding their life challenging during so many strong polarizing life events. It can be hard to hold one's truth when challenged or threatened for having a different point of view, or while watching others be punished for standing their ground. We can lose the happy place in our heart.

When individuals believe they have lost control, they might disengage from the decision-making processes altogether. Others will fight to the death because they don't feel they have anything else to lose. These are opposite ends of the same issue. How does one find their way back to their truth, their center? Escaping with disempowering coping

mechanism can become a habit (mainly trying to get some relief) from the inner tension that is building. Disengaging strips an individual of the practice required to develop and continue self-agency, reinforcing the dependency on external forces to dictate their lives, and reliance on disempowering coping mechanisms. I often notice this type of disengagement as an invasion of different energies within an individual's energy field. I can tell they are just trying to "get through" the day.

My goal is to build a path to reclaim self-sovereignty if it has been lost or crushed. It is a journey of self-discovery, new skills, and empowerment. It requires self-reflection to reconnect with your inner strength, intuition, values, and actions. In a world that wants to influence individuals in various less than healthy ways and in the extremes encourages individuals to freely give one's power away, I offer a path to rediscover who you want to be. While the path of reclaiming self-sovereignty is deeply personal there are several key steps and practices that can guide the process

Self-awareness and reflection- Reflecting on how and when you lost your sense of sovereignty. Was it

due to external influences or an internal struggle? External influences include society, family, relationships, trauma, and religion. Internal struggles include self-doubt, fear, addictions, and disempowering coping skills. Understanding this root cause will give you clarity. If revisiting the past is too painful. Examining current beliefs and patterns that have led to feeling disconnected from life is enough to get started. Every negative emotion you suffer from today was put there from the past. It can be rewired to a new elevated emotion. This could include self-limiting beliefs, people pleasing tendencies, unexpressed grief, or a history of disregarding personal needs and desires. A deep acceptance of where one is starting from and the ability to acknowledge in what direction one wants to move is a powerful place to start. This will allow the development of a personal game plan that can be put into action.

Live with integrity- As an individual continues to align their actions and decisions with their inner truth life can become more fulfilling. Stress is experienced when an individual is living outside of their core values. Integrity is at the heart of self-sovereignty. Feeling one's inherent value when

facing challenges and continuing to take action steps no matter how small, is powerful progress. It sounds easier than it is. Living by one's values doesn't mean trying to get others to agree. It's a state of interdependence without being dependent on how others act.

During the last five years many people came face to face with devastating losses. This forced many into deep self-reflection and growth, others into a negative downward spiral. It brought some family's closer together and completely pulled other family's a part. I hope to bring much needed relief and clarity to those that are wanting to develop better self-sovereignty in life. No matter what is going on around them.

A simple daily practice is to have "learning snacks" and "exercise snacks". As much time that is spent on the internet, social media, etc. Many have the opportunity for "learning snacks", instead of losing time watching cute cat videos. As cute as they are, take 20 minutes a day to learn a new skill. Cooking, cleaning, exercising, singing, investing, anything can be learned in 20-minute chucks. Then

watch the cute cat videos. I used to do my taxes in 10-minute intervals because I hated doing my taxes.

I have found the people who have the most skills develop the most resiliency and self-sovereignty. As an individual develops more skills, they naturally develop self-confidence, accountability, improved relationships, better finances, and a strong sense of authenticity. Self-sovereignty does not mean isolation, it can strengthen communities by fostering collaboration, voluntary relationships based on mutual trust and shared goals. Practical applications of self-sovereignty come with the form of blockchain based systems that allow individuals to own and manage their own digital identities. Self-directed learning enables people to tailor education to their goals and their interests. Personal sovereignty enables individuals a stronger sense of control over their health and vitality by enhancing autonomy, privacy, and a feeling of control, self-sovereignty empowers people to live more intentional, fulfilling, and balanced lives.

Link is on the next pages.

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter9blogpost>

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Chapter 10

Incompetence: Surrounded with ineptitude can foster LH

“Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence.” Unknown

Human beings are social creatures, and the people around us profoundly shape our beliefs, behaviors, and perceptions. When surrounded by incompetent individuals, whether due to the lack of skills, understanding, or emotional intelligence, this environment could have a cascading negative effect. The inability of others to provide effective guidance, solutions, or support can erode confidence, create chronic stress, and contribute to learned helplessness. Being immersed in an environment of incompetence fosters feelings of futility, stagnation, and inactivity. Often as an individual begins to improve their situation it brings a level of discomfort to others that lack initiative.

The ripple effect of incompetence.

Lack of support- New behavior brings with it new boundaries and new emotions. Old environments may not like new boundaries, an individual will receive pressure to go back to the old ways. I call it, “The change back or else behavior”. The stronger a new boundary is enforced often the more others can push back. When I left the medical field to become a hairdresser. I received a ton of push back. I heard repeatedly, “Oh, you’re just going to be a hairdresser.” I made more money in “just that” industry than I ever would in the medical field, and I loved it, absolutely loved it. Many will pay twice for vanity and yet want health for free.

Lack of trust- When surrounded by individuals who consistently fail to deliver on promises, provide inaccurate guidance, or can’t handle responsibilities effectively, trust erodes. This lack of trust can generalize, making individuals skeptical of seeking help or collaborating with others in the group.

Lack of accountability- Inept environments often shift the responsibility for problem solving to the most capable individuals in the group. This creates an overwhelming burden on the competent folks,

leading to burnout and reinforcing the belief that success is impossible, no matter how much effort is applied. In my first marriage I over functioned a lot. Meddling as my grandmother would say. During marriage counseling I was instructed not to do for my partner things a grown adult can do for themselves. We were divorced in three months. It was so freeing for me, and I am sure a miserable experience for him. Sometimes when you level up others try to bring you down. Don't let that happen.

Lack of skill development- Children or adults exposed to incompetent leadership, mentorship or peer behavior internalize ineffective strategies. Further hindering everyone's growth from a lack of strong role models, these individuals lack the tools to approach challenges constructively. If you aren't getting results you need to evaluate your strategies.

Lack of success- Being surrounded by incompetence leads to repeated failures, mismanagement, stuck in crisis management mode, creating a chaotic high stress environment. Constantly struggling or watched others struggle can reinforce the feeling of helplessness, as efforts to improve the situation seem doomed.

Normalizing dysfunction- In an environment where incompetence is pervasive, dysfunction becomes the norm. It becomes difficult to decipher what is helpful and what is not. It becomes easy to passively follow the dysfunction. This creates a loop of frustration or passivity. Overtime individuals stop learning new skills, and can fall behind, even in situations where success is possible. It may seem like everyone is doing “it” doesn’t mean it is helpful, safe, or healthy.

Lack of positive emotions- Frustration, apathy, and negativity can’t build from being around incompetent individuals. A pervasive sense of defeat can amplify negative feelings and slowly drain proactive individuals. The emotions of others tend to rub off on each other the longer they are around them enough positively, or negatively. Remember the mirror neurons.

If you realize you have fallen into any of the above patterns. It is possible to break free from these influences. You will need to take deliberate steps to counteract the negative effects and reclaim your agency.

Recognizing the problem- Acknowledging the impact of others behavior is the first step. Journaling to reflect, can be an effective tool for clarity about which people and which behaviors are most frustrating. Being able to decipher which patterns are coming from external factors rather than your own personal shortcomings (keeping breathing, I know it's hard to hear) gives a clear direction for growth. Once external factors are located an individual can buffer themselves from them. Begin to build strategies for self-reliance and boundaries. Getting clear on personal shortcomings also allows a clear path to improving the situation. The goal isn't to change others; the goal is to not get sucked into downward spirals in life.

Finding competent allies- Once you've figured out your plan of action actively seek out relationships with individuals who demonstrate competence, reliability, and good problem-solving skills. Surround yourself with as many capable role models as possible. Even having one other person to positively interact with can provoked change quickly in your life. Like one positive thought can blot out many negative thoughts. One positively constructive person in life can blot out many negative people in

life. The person you partner with in life can make or break you. One person can ruin your life, if you let them.

Creative boundaries- To limit the influence of incompetent individuals involves critical thinking and decisions. It may be impossible to eliminate certain incompetent people from life, however decreasing the amount of time spent with them will help. Developing better communication skills often decreases their influence. Some individuals can take this step too far and eliminate everyone out of their life that they feel does not support them. I am not suggesting this. I am suggesting concentrating on areas where specific efforts can yield results, even within a dysfunctional environment. While challenging because it can be hard to shift the cycle of dysfunction, an individual can work towards decreasing its effect on them.

Even in the face of incompetence, individuals can reclaim their power by focusing on personal growth and self-efficacy. Investing in skill development, pursuing opportunities, embracing new skills and strategies for navigating challenging situations with people. Learning to trust your own judgment and

celebrating your accomplishments without relying on positive acknowledgement from others. When possible, build or join communities that prioritize collaboration, growth, and competence. By recognizing the dynamics of your environment and taking proactive steps to build competence, resilience, and agency, you can break free from the cycles of dysfunction of learned helplessness.

While an individual may not be able to control the action of others, they have the power to choose how to respond and where to direct their energies and efforts. By practicing new choices, and aligning with supportive individuals and environments, you can rewrite the narrative and take charge with forward growth and success.

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Chapter 11

Learning life's lessons the hard way or not at all: Disappointment as a guiding force.

“You will end up very disappointed if you grow up thinking everyone has the same heart as you.” @thefemalenetwerk

Disappointment is one of the most universal emotional experiences. It's the gap between our expectations and reality, the moment when things don't turn out the way we hoped or planned. It's uncomfortable, sometimes even painful, but it's also a normal part of life. When we're disappointed, we feel a sense of loss, frustration, anger or even sadness. Our sense of control over the outcome of this situation is shaken, and in the wake of it, we often need to reassess our approach, release our expectations, to create the ability to move forward.

The transition from disappointment to learned helplessness is often gradual. It rarely happens overnight but rather emerges in response to a series of disappointing events that undermine a person's confidence in their own abilities. The first experience

of disappointment is often sharp and jarring. For a child it could be the loss of a toy, rejection from a friend or parent, or an unmet need. The emotional response is raw, and without a supportive environment it can be challenging to bounce back, reassess, and move forward. For those that are more sensitive rejection can feel like a physical assault.

However, when disappointment becomes chronic, repeated close together over time, something shifts within us. The initial steam fades, and a quiet, insidious process begins to take hold. It's no longer just about a single setback or failure. Overtime, repeated disappointments can erode the zest for life. Weakening the ability to influence outcomes, leading many to feel less capable, less fulfilled, and more passive. The emotional shift is not just about one bad experience: it's the beginning of a deeper psychological pattern. Where hope and inspiration become a distant memory, the belief in one's ability to succeed is significantly diminished.

Life often delivers lessons through hardship, mistakes, and adversity. However, the concept of "learning life the hard way" presumes that individuals eventually adapt, grow, and overcome challenges. In

contrast, learned helplessness can derail this process entirely, leaving people stuck in patterns of self-doubt and inaction. These individuals eventually break free from the negative cycle of inactivity and harshness. They grow stronger from the adversity.

The flip side of this are individuals that are unable to break the cycle of disappointment and harshness. Continued disappointing attempts can cause a pervasive sense of despair. As they internalize one disappointment after another it narrows the vision as to what is possible. Even when the situation shifts in their favor, they will miss the opportunities, because their belief system has been shaped by past failures. These individuals fall into the category of “not at all” where learning has been stalled at many levels. This shows up for them as feeling like life has no meaning. Over time, the effort to try hard or think differently becomes exhausting. The constant cycle of disappointment without reward becomes the norm. It takes too much effort, to effort, not because of laziness, but because through experience, that effort doesn't lead to success.

This leads to an emotional resignation, even looking for change is hard. Stay in unfulfilling jobs,

maintain unhealthy relationships, or avoid pursuing a passion. Embracing that living life is cycle of daily loss and renewal. Yearly loss and renewal. Even the phrase, “Out with the old, and in with the new,” mirror how life is constant change. The only guarantee in life is that it will change. This is comforting to those with a more resilient mind set and scary for those with learned helplessness.

While adversity can be a teacher, it does not guarantee learning or growth. The key difference lies in perception and response. As an individual develops resilience, they can extract valuable lessons, even from difficult experiences. When an individual is stuck in a cycle of stagnation, it makes life’s lessons in accessible. The journey from disappointment to learned helplessness is neither automatic nor inevitable. While it can be easy to succumb to the pull of disappointment after a series of setbacks, there is always room for change. By actively challenging the belief that there is a loss of dignity in the face of adversity and begin to rebuild self-agency that fuels future effort.

It is important to share that a person cannot hear advice, solutions, or validation that is too far from

the emotional state they are in. This is one of the reasons therapists wait for the client to get their own ah ha moment because then they are ready to hear new input. This is why one person can say the same thing for years and the other person can't act on it. If one is deep in grief, it is hard to feel gratitude. This is why if someone is angry and you suggest, "calm down" it makes them more pissed. They can't hear anything out of the state they are in. I work to match where a person is at and help them into a new state so they can take new actions.

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Chapter 12

Release the false self: Emerging Authenticity.

“In the depth of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer.” Albert Camus

The foundation of authenticity is the alignment between one’s actions, beliefs, values, and emotions. It involves being true to oneself and expressing one’s thoughts, and feelings without undue external influence or fear. The most important person to be authentic with is oneself. Being able to be vulnerable with oneself and accepting where you are at and who you want to be is pivotal point in growth. When an individual stops chasing other people’s dreams and focuses on their own, life becomes more interesting. I am not suggesting doing it all alone. I am suggesting to never lose sight of the heart’s desires. To always have a part of life that is for oneself and no one else. For some it is a hobby, others a vacation, some a career, meditation, reading, exercise, it is the space where cultivating the self, thrives and not hides. Some will say, “Being in nature”. Humans are a part of nature. It isn’t so much being in it, as realizing our

part of nature. I realize they mean being outside away from the concrete and noise. Away from life's distractions. Yet, humans are a part of nature, you don't have to lose that connect to it.

Authentic individuals have developed self-awareness, confidence, and resilience. They continue to learn new ways of navigating life's challenges while remaining consistent with their inner identity. They can allow others to be themselves and they can maintain their sense of who they are in the constant changing environment of life. It all sounds wonderful until it is put into practice, then things can get a little messy. Especially if an individual tries to change things too quickly. Sometimes things need to change quickly for success, and other times it is a slow burn that is best. My goal is to create a space for self-exploration that leads to a more graceful experience during the transformation process.

What if life could be *experienced as a group of expressive interactions and exchanges. Not a group of interruptions and rejections.* Reread that again. What does this mean? Don't fuss, I am not there yet. I still experience life as a trail of interruptions. Interruptions of thoughts, emotions, tasks, etc. I

love being in the flow, it's so amazing. Then it gets interrupted. The real or perceived ups and downs of life.

Learned helplessness often fosters a heightened sensitivity to real or perceived external or internal judgments. So much so that there is a phrase for it; rejection sensitive dysphoria (RSD). RSD is a condition that causes people to experience intense emotional pain when they feel rejected, criticized, or fail. In general, not accepted. Often failure, rejection, and criticism are subjective experiences. One person's failure is another person's success. I have found individuals must "consider the source" from which the incoming information is coming from. Everyone nor everything should not be taken seriously. Manipulation is at an all-time high with social media, alternative facts (lies are okay now?), and the constant intake of too much negativity on the internet and in the news. Self-acceptance can hard to develop, when others acceptance of an individual had "strings attached". It's the strings we need to cut to be free to see life clearly. The strings of shame, guilt, and fear.

Authenticity requires an intrinsic sense of worth. Having a strong sense of worth makes it easier to take risks and recover if things don't go as planned. Feeling an inherent sense of value creates a larger comfort zone to function within. Situations and people are not taken personally. Challenges are seen as an adventure and not something to overcome. Again, not every challenge has to be tackled. Pick them wisely. Authenticity can feel vulnerable especially if an individual was not supported while sharing their genuine thoughts, ideas, and emotions in the past. It can feel like learning a new language, a new way of being. Not everyone can find a safe person to share openly with. I think that is why many anonymous blogging sites are so popular and possibly damaging. I have read some awful advice from random people. Other random people. Other blog sites are amazing at sharing needed insight and information. I offer no advice, only a plan of action that can be consistently put into practice to create a life you love. I do feel it is important to mention that there is such a thing as "bots" used on the internet to drive negative narratives. This is making it harder to know what is true anymore on the internet. I find it helpful to ask the questions. "Who is benefiting from this? And why now? How does this make my life better?"

Another interesting thing is the “uncanny valley” experience. This is a psychological phenomenon that describes the feeling of unease or revulsion/fear that is experienced when something seems almost human/alive but isn’t. An eerie sensation that happens with robots, AI generated pictures, and certain people. It is an intuitive sensation that something lacks a concrete center to its “being”. It lacks an “a live” core. It is a primordial defense reflex for protection. The ability to tell if something is alive or not is important to survival. It is important not to ignore this reflex. The unsettling feeling one gets when interacting with a person who appears outwardly normal but lacks genuine emotional expression, empathy, or other human qualities should give an authentic person an uneasy feeling. The uncanny (the opposite of what is familiar) I think came from a Freudian concept. It is the concept that something can be familiar and alien at the same time. An incongruity in a situation, event, or person. Creating an attraction and repulsion at the same time. This is important because trauma shuts this reflex off and many other protective reflexes.

I worked in hospice for a long time. I could tell the moment the “essence” or “the live part” left a

person's body. Sometimes the heart would beat a while after and more often the heart would stop the energies would consolidate and then leave the body. It is a primordial instinct we all have. To be able to tell if something is "a live" or has "an essence". AI generated voices, commercials and pictures still give me a creepy feeling. It is everywhere now. For those that have not lost this primordial instinct it is exhausting and feels a bit predatory in nature.

When an individual's natural primordial alarms for danger are going off all the time (because they are in a dangerous situation), yet they can't get out of the situation, to conserve energy the body shuts them off. Bringing these reflexes back online can be intense for some. Yet, it is necessary so an individual stops walking into bad situations because they can't feel it coming. A friend and I were going to a party. The closer we got to the location the heavier my chest felt, and a panic feeling started to fill my body. I expressed this to my friend. They said, "Oh, that's dread. I feel it too." At the next red light, I did a U turn and headed in the opposite direction and the dread went away. I know we dodged a bullet that night.

Another example: I was driving late at night on my way home from an outcall. Sleepy and just wanting to get home. Even though the road ahead looked clear. The closer I got an overpass the sicker I felt. I needed gas so I didn't want to take a longer route, however, something came over me and I quickly exited off the interstate, right before the overpass. Relief came over me. Made no sense. I sat in my car for a bit at the stop sign wondering. "Now what am I supposed to do"? The exit lead nowhere to get gas. Soooo, I headed back onto the same interstate. As I looked back to make sure no traffic was coming as I merged onto the interstate. I got a glimpse of a stalled vehicle under the overpass. I might have slammed into it if I didn't exit when I did. Even in my sleepy state my intuition could tell something was off. My goal is to strength this type of intuition for those that feel it has been lost or shut down.

We are hard wired to heal. Our body is a big bag of sensory tools and feed back loops. As the old, outdated emotions and experiences get integrated. Your body's big bag of sensory tools will stream line and you will be able to feel your way through life again. Intuition can be your best friend in the times

we are living in. You can develop your own strong sense of knowing, where you should be, what you should be doing, and who you should be doing it with no matter what is going on around you. That is my dream for you.

I will wrap it up here. Thank you for taking the time to read this book and do the exercises to create a better life. I believe when everyone is tending their own emotional garden the world will be a better place. As an individual comes into their authentic self, all that doesn't match will fall away and new possibilities arrive. Be brave, eat well, sleep well, and stay hydrated!

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter12blogpost>

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Resources

I will include all the links listed in the chapters here for the audio file.

Chapter :1

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

Chapter:2

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter2blogpost>

Chapter:3

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter3blogpost>

Chapter:4

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter4blogpost>

Chapter:5

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter5blogpost>

Chapter:6

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Chapter:12

<https://www.unlockingresilience.org/chapter12blogpost>

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