

Supporting Your Partner Through Emotional Trauma

When a loved one faces emotional trauma, their behaviour and emotions may change, making them feel distant or unrecognisable. Supporting them requires patience, empathy, and an understanding of how people process and heal from past experiences.



Understanding the Impact of Trauma

Statements like, "I don't understand them anymore" or "I wish I could have my partner back" often signal that a relationship is going through a difficult period. Trauma can deeply affect the way someone sees and interacts with the world, leading to shifts in their emotions, behaviours, and relationships. If your partner is dealing with unresolved pain from the past, you may notice these changes and feel unsure about how to help. While it can be frustrating, it's important to recognise that everyone processes, copes, and heals from trauma differently.

Key Considerations for Support

- **Everyone Hurts Differently:** Each person carries past experiences into relationships, both joyful and painful. Sometimes, unresolved emotional wounds resurface later in life, needing attention and care. This isn't a sign of failure—it's a natural part of emotional processing. A compassionate approach helps create a space for healing.
- **Everyone Grieves Differently:** Trauma can trigger confusion, frustration, and a loss of identity. Your partner may struggle to articulate their feelings, making it seem as if they are withdrawing. During this time, patience and reassurance are essential. Recognising their internal struggle allows you to offer support without pressuring them for immediate clarity.
- **Everyone Copes Differently:** When facing emotional distress, people often turn to familiar coping mechanisms. While some may be helpful, others could be counterproductive. If you have concerns about your partner's coping strategies, gently remind them of their strengths and their ability to choose healthier alternatives.
- **Everyone Heals Differently:** Recovery isn't a linear process. Each person accesses their resilience in unique ways, influenced by their personal history and past experiences. Encouraging your partner to tap into their strengths, while also seeking professional support if needed, can help navigate the healing journey together.

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Maintaining Connection in Your Relationship

While supporting your partner, it's also important to nurture your relationship and personal well-being. Here are some key areas to focus on:

- **Safety:** Trauma can shake a person's sense of security, making them feel anxious or uncertain. Reassure your partner through words and actions that reinforce the stability and safety of your relationship.
- **Space:** Supporting your partner doesn't mean neglecting your own needs. Make time for activities that restore your energy and well-being so you can be fully present when they need you.
- **Connection:** You may feel like you're walking on eggshells, unsure of what to say or do. Simple acts of love—like a kind gesture, a meaningful conversation, or just being there—can help maintain emotional closeness during this difficult time.
- **Cooperation:** Professional support is available for both you and your partner. Seeking guidance from a counsellor can provide tools to navigate this phase while ensuring both partners' emotional well-being is prioritised.

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