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## Here to Help; Experts Suggest These Books to Help Cope With Trauma.

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Neuroscientists, psychologists and other experts share the titles they recommend most.

When Gabor Maté was in his 40s and a successful doctor in Vancouver, Canada, he struggled with depression and strained relationships. Picking up "The Drama of the Gifted Child," by Alice Miller, was the first step to understanding the root of his problems.

"A good book gives you a map to yourself," said Dr. Maté, now a trauma researcher and author of "The Myth of Normal."

While reading Dr. Miller's book, his experiences started to make sense. "My depression, my self-loathing," he explained, were a result of early childhood trauma.

Trauma is a deeply distressing experience that leaves lasting effects on a person's thoughts, emotions and behavior. It rewires both the body and mind and shapes overall health. Research shows, however, that the right tools can help us regulate our emotions and rebuild a sense of safety.

Many people are hungry for books that explore trauma: Dr. Bessel van der Kolk's "The Body Keeps the Score" has sold more than three million copies globally and spent more than six years total on the New York Times best-seller list. But there are other works that can help us make sense of negative experiences.

The five titles below were recommended by neuroscientists, psychologists and trauma specialists as sources to help you understand and process trauma.

'What Happened to You?' by Bruce Perry and Oprah Winfrey

Ms. Winfrey and Dr. Perry blend science and storytelling in this 2021 book, encouraging readers to reframe the question, "What's wrong with me?" and instead ask, "What happened to me?"

Caroline Fenkel, chief clinical officer and a founder of Charlie Health, said that after reading the book, her clients "experience more self-compassion and a sense of agency."

And, for some people, Ms. Winfrey's star power makes discussing trauma more accessible, said Heath Hightower, an assistant professor of social work at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford, Conn. He recommended the book to a trauma survivor who then took steps toward recovery because Ms. Winfrey had been forthcoming about her experience of childhood abuse. Reading the book, he said, helped his client unpack her own abuse and release shame.

'No Bad Parts' by Richard C. Schwartz

Lauren Auer, a trauma therapist in Peoria, Ill., said that this 2021 book is a "go-to for clients struggling with inner criticism." In it, Dr. Schwartz introduces internal family systems, a therapeutic model that encourages people to view their minds as having distinct parts or sub-personalities, "each with its own emotions, voice and protective mechanisms shaped by our life experiences," said Mollie Candib, a therapist based in New York City.

"When difficult emotions such as anger, shame or guilt arise, our instinct is often to push them away," Ms. Candib said. Instead, Dr. Schwartz recommends addressing each part individually in order to cultivate deeper self-compassion. His self-inquiry exercise, for

example, encourages readers to home in on the specific part of themselves that is feeling a certain way, and to listen without judgment.

One of Ms. Auer's clients began to see her anxiety as "a well-intentioned protector" after reading this book, she said. "It was one of those beautiful therapy moments that reminds me why I do this work."

'Trauma and Recovery' by Judith L. Herman

This book, published in 1992, is "an underrated and pivotal text for understanding trauma," said Prentis Hemphill, a therapist and the author of "What It Takes to Heal."

Dr. Herman explores the political and social aspects of trauma, said Hemphill, who uses they/them pronouns. "Survivors of all kinds articulate their experiences," Hemphill said of the book.

Dr. Herman also presents a framework for recovering from trauma that unfolds in three stages: establishing safety, processing the past and rebuilding connections, said Anita Webster, a counselor based in Houston.

This framework is especially useful for anyone recovering from interpersonal trauma, including abuse and assault, she added, "because it provides a clear, research-based understanding of how trauma affects survivors psychologically and socially, particularly when harm is inflicted by someone they trusted."

'Waking the Tiger' by Peter A. Levine with Ann Frederick

In "Waking the Tiger," published in 1997, Dr. Levine introduces somatic experiencing, a therapeutic approach that is aimed at helping the body to release trauma by addressing patterns of fight, flight or freeze.

He looks to the animal kingdom to illustrate how trauma affects humans: When an impala escapes a predator, it may start shaking as a way to release and move past the experience. But, Dr. Levine argues, when we become stuck in post-traumatic shock, we suppress that natural response.

His explanation of how the nervous system responds to traumatic experiences "is huge for helping my clients depersonalize trauma," said Emma Kobil, a trauma counselor based in Denver. "When we are on guard or shut down, these reactions aren't irrational," she said. "They're biological survival responses."

'It Didn't Start With You' by Mark Wolynn

This 2016 book "feels almost mystical in how it connects dots between our present struggles and our family histories," Ms. Auer explained. Her clients experience immense relief, she said, when they learn that their struggles may be inherited from previous generations.

In the book, Dr. Wolynn offers tools like the core language map, which help readers recognize how certain emotionally charged words can be passed down. In one example from the book, a man noticed how his mother repeated "We are cursed in love," which reinforced a narrative of abandonment. Tools like these "illuminate secret family trauma," even when the original trauma isn't openly discussed, said Dr. Hightower.

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