

● Resource Page 1. Using Mindfulness and Meditation for Trauma ●

Why practice mindfulness and meditation (MM) for trauma? Many people who have experienced severe stress have symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, called PTSD. To understand why PTSD continues over time for some people, it is helpful to review what the symptoms are and how certain ways of using attention and thinking that result from the trauma may actually keep people from recovering on their own. This information will help you understand why practicing MM may help resolve trauma reactions.

When people have trauma-related disorders, they may:

- Have upsetting memories or dreams about their traumatic experiences
- Become upset when they encounter reminders of the trauma
- Be vulnerable to trauma triggers, which are reminders of things that happened right before or during a trauma
- Dissociate, or have difficulties maintaining attention on the present moment
- Try to avoid things or thoughts that will remind them of their traumas
- Have difficulty remembering important parts of the traumatic event
- May ruminate, or have many negative thoughts and feelings that are difficult to manage
- Have difficulty experiencing positive feelings
- Feel detached from other people and disinterested in doing things they used to enjoy
- Have problems with concentration, sleeping, anger, or reckless behavior
- Avoid new situations and challenges because of fear and lack of confidence

Traumatized people can use MM techniques to:

- Maintain present-moment attention, even when stressed
- Become more mindfully aware of themselves, including feelings, thoughts, and how they feel physically, without negatively judging themselves
- Understand the connection between their distress and the traumas they have experienced
- Use mindfulness practices in daily life to help regulate responses to stress
- Let go of stressful memories and feelings as they come up, so they are not overwhelming
- Regulate their thoughts, feelings, and behavior even when triggered
- Learn to develop a state of *relaxed alertness* rather than being *hyperalert*
- Learn to be around reminders of their traumatic events without needing to avoid them
- Reestablish their sense of safety and confidence in dealing with new challenges
- Improve sleep and let go of anger as it comes up rather than acting on it
- Improve their relationships with others

People who meditate do not forget past traumas, but they can:

- Honor their memories without being as upset by them
- Be around reminders of the event and maintain their feeling of relaxed alertness
- Stop needing to avoid thoughts, feelings, people, and places that remind them of their past experiences
- Accept that trauma has occurred in the past and may always have some impact