

# Healing Psychological Trauma in Addiction

## What is Trauma?

Trauma can be defined as a shocking, scary or dangerous event that leaves a person deeply distressed, with feelings of being under threat and/or a grave sense of loss.

Psychological trauma can result from a specific experience, or from continual challenging conditions. For example:

- A one-off incident may include being the victim of a crime or violent event, or suffering the death of a loved one.
- Longer-term situations may involve abuse, neglect, rejection, or relationship breakdown.

A traumatic event or ongoing negative situation creates psychological trauma when it overwhelms someone's ability to cope. The individual ends up feeling fearful and helpless.

The level of trauma experienced and the way a person responds is unique to each individual.

## Trauma May Underlie Addiction

The long-term consequences of unresolved psychological trauma include an increased risk of depression, anxiety, anger, acute stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, and addiction. This includes Alcohol Abuse Disorder and, in its

severest form, what is commonly known as alcoholism.

Although there is a strong link between trauma and alcohol misuse, not all people with an alcohol problem will have experienced trauma. Similarly, not all trauma victims become addicted to alcohol.

## Trauma Must be Treated

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may develop as a result of injury or severe psychological shock. Not all people who experienced a traumatic event will develop PTSD. However, if there is untreated trauma, it will have a long-term negative impact on emotional wellbeing. A person may turn to alcohol or drugs to find relief.

Where trauma underlies alcohol misuse and addiction, the connection between the drinking and trauma must be addressed, and the psychological trauma itself must be resolved.

## Alcohol May be Used to Self-Medicating

If you (or a loved one) are struggling with emotional pain and symptoms of anxiety or depression, the issue may be unresolved trauma. If you began using alcohol to self-medicate and relieve the sorrow, then any associated addiction can be largely attributed to the underlying trauma and emotional pain. In such cases, trauma is the root problem. Your drinking was an attempt to cope with it.

When repressed trauma and addiction co-exist, it is essential to treat both together.

If the underlying trauma is not treated, there is a risk of relapse into drinking whenever the pain resurfaces. You are particularly at risk when something in the 'here and now' triggers negative emotions from the past.

## Tailored Therapy Can Resolve Trauma

Trauma can never heal itself. It must be psychologically integrated and processed. Studies show that traditional 'talk therapy' is not enough for resolving trauma.

Some of the current preferred, specialised approaches for treating trauma include:

- Hypnotherapy – Ego-State Therapy.
- Eye Movement Integration (EMI).
- Somatic Experience.
- Brain Working Recursive Therapy (BWRT).

Some people respond to one intervention better than another. Sometimes, using more than one approach works best.

**Diana Southgate has a special interest in treating trauma. She is qualified in BWRT, EMI (advanced level), and Ego-State Therapy (advanced diplomat). She is also the founder of Surely Sober, a proven alcohol addiction recovery programme**

**Diana practices personalised care. She tailors her treatment plans to each patient's need.**

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