

Keep the past in the past

Images, bodily sensations, thoughts and memories of traumatic events can sneak into our present day life. It's important to notice when this happens and to put these experiences where they belong: in the past.

Trauma 01

To keep the past in the past, I:

- ☐ Notice when an unpleasant memory or thought about the trauma enters my mind
- ☐ Say, "This is a thought or feeling that belongs to my past"
- ☐ Say, "This is not happening now. I am safe in the present."
- ☐ Turn my attention outward toward a chore, a task or a conversation
- ☐ My idea:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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Use the 5-3-1 technique

Sometimes we can be flooded by thoughts, memories and sensations from the past. When this happens, it's important to reconnect with present reality.

Trauma 02

To get grounded, I:

1. Name out loud **5** things I can see
(e.g.: *Leaves blowing, photo on my wall, a blue book, wooden floor, a black plug*)
2. Name out loud **3** things I can hear
(e.g.: *A fan, people talking, the wind blowing*)
3. Name out loud **1** thing I am sensing
(e.g.: *The wind blowing on my face*)

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me (*describe*):

☐ No – I will try another

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Visualize my safe place

When experiencing memories, thoughts and sensations of past trauma, visualizing a safe place within ourselves, even if imaginary, can remind us that we are safe in the present.

Trauma 03



My safe place: *(describe the location, what it looks like, what it smells like, how I feel when I am there):*

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe):*

☐ No – I will try another

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☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe):*

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Use my five senses

Things are safer for us when we are grounded. We can use all five senses to help ourselves return to the present. We can turn on loud music (*hearing*), grip a piece of ice (*touch*), sniff some strong peppermint (*smell*), bite into a lemon (*taste*), or take an inventory of everything around us (*sight*).

Trauma 04

To get grounded, I name out loud:

1. Something I **see**
2. Something I **hear**
3. Something I **touch**
4. Something I **smell**
5. Something I **taste**

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me (*describe*):

☐ No – I will try another

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2. Something I **hear**
3. Something I **touch**
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Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me (*describe*):

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Remind myself I have choices today

When trauma happens we have few, if any, choices. We are overpowered by the traumatic event. But today, in the present, we have choices.

Trauma 05



When the trauma happened, I was ____ years old

Today, I am ____ years old

Some of the choices I can make today that I couldn't make in the past are: *(example: "I can run away"; "I can ask for help"; "I can say stop")*

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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Replace shame with healthy self-pride

Trauma leaves many of us with a deep sense of shame. We feel like we just aren't good enough. Often these shaming messages came from our abusers.

Trauma 06

When I feel shame, I remind myself of three things that make me proud to be me *(example: I volunteer at my church; I am good to my dog; I'm slow to judge others)*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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- 2.
- 3.

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☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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Practice rhythmic exercise

We survived trauma by learning to ignore and distance ourselves from our body. Healing from trauma means learning to feel at home in our body again. Rhythmic exercise is repetitive and creates a rhythmic flow that can relax us as we reconnect with our body in ways that feel safe.

Trauma 07

I practice rhythmic exercise by:

- ☐ Swimming laps
- ☐ Bouncing a basketball
- ☐ Weight lifting reps
- ☐ Walking
- ☐ Cycling
- ☐ Punching a speed bag
- ☐ My idea:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

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Replace abusive messages with positive affirmations

Sometimes our abusers said terrible things about us. Those abusive messages can live in the present as our own negative self-talk.

Trauma 08

An abusive message I received:

My positive affirmation:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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My positive affirmation:

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Use art to express myself

Research has shown the parts of the brain which control speech shut down in traumatic situations. It literally can be impossible to find the words to express our experience of trauma. Expressive art (*film-making, poetry, dance, music, writing, painting, etc.*) can help us express what words can't say.

Trauma 09

I express myself through *(example: drawing):*

I share my art with *(example: my therapist; no one; my best friend; online):*

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe):*

☐ No – I will try another

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Remind myself I am not defined by trauma

In a flashback, we lose perspective on who we are. Our sense of self is engulfed by traumatic memory. But trauma does not define us as individuals. In the present, there are aspects of our lives that are free from abuse. Reminding ourselves there is more to us than our traumatic past can help.

Trauma 10

The trauma-free areas of my life today are:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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Prepare for triggers

Certain sounds, smells, tastes and bodily sensations can trigger traumatic memories. Anniversaries, situations and people can also trigger us. Getting to know our trauma triggers, and having a plan, can help us anticipate and take charge of our wellbeing. We are no longer victims of the past.

Trauma 11

My trauma triggers: *(example: holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, loss days)*

My plan:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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Use my power playlist

When we experienced trauma, we felt small and vulnerable. Things are different today. Music can pump us up and connect us to our power. A power playlist can remind us that today we are strong.

Trauma 12



My power playlist:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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Trauma 12



My power playlist:

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Stay connected

Trauma can undermine our faith in people and the world around us. It's natural to want to isolate when we are overwhelmed by traumatic memories. However, isolation can make it easier for memories to flood us. Connecting with people (*by phone, online or in person*) or just getting outside into the world with others can help.

Trauma 13

I stay connected by:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me (*describe*):

☐ No – I will try another

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Trauma 13

I stay connected by:

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☐ Yes – it helps me (*describe*):

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Name the oppression that traumatized me

Systemic oppression can lead to widespread trauma within our communities. Sometimes, it helps to work collectively to heal.

Trauma 14

The oppression I experience:

How it affects me:

Organizations or groups I can join:
(name and contact info):

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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Act to preserve my enduring culture

Some cultures have survived intergenerational or historical trauma. Feelings of loss can run very deep and permeate our families and communities. Naming the trauma and working to preserve our resilient culture can be healing.

Trauma 15

The intergenerational or historical trauma my people experience:

How it affects me:

How I help preserve my culture:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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How I help preserve my culture:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:

☐ No – I will try another

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Is my Personal Medicine powerful?

- Is it a specific activity, not a feeling/state-of-being? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Is it something I do now, not a future goal? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Is it something I do, not something I take? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Does it say how it helps me? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Trauma Blank



My plan:

Does this Personal Medicine work for me?

- ☐ Yes – it helps me *(describe)*:
- ☐ No – I will try another

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