

About Body Memories

Your body remembers everything that you've experienced, whether it's good, bad or indifferent. It stores all of those memories on a cellular level. Your brain may or may not remember things, but your body does. This is why certain smells, sounds, tastes, or sights can bring specific feelings to mind.

Body memories are especially common with victims of sexual assault. Even if the assault happened when the victim was too young to recall details, smelling the same perfume or cologne the attacker wore, or hearing music that was playing in the background during the assault can trigger incredible anxiety in the victim, or even a panic attack. The victim's mind may not recall details of the assault or maybe not even the assault at all, but the body remembers every detail. Body memories are your body's way of trying to protect you from things like that happening again.

Body memories aren't only linked to sexual assault, however. They also happen with victims of other types of abuse, including narcissistic abuse.

Often, narcissistic abuse is a series of constant traumatic events. I think of it much like a machine gun of abuse- one trauma immediately follows another then another & yet another in rapid succession. You don't have time to heal from one trauma when another five are thrown your way. It easily can be way too much to cope with, so your mind forgets some of the abuse as you try to survive the constant trauma. This is often how repressed memories are formed.

A few years ago, I went to my old high school with a friend. They were having a craft show & we thought it'd be fun to check it out since we both love crafts & both attended that school. From the moment we set foot on the campus, I became anxious & even panicky. I had trouble holding back the tears until we left. It turned into a miserable experience for me & me swearing I'll never set foot on that property again. I had no idea exactly at that time why I was in such a state. Since that day though, I have remembered a few instances of abuse at the hands of my mother that took place on the property of that school though. Apparently my body remembered the experiences even though my mind didn't at the time.

When things like this happen, you first need to remember that you aren't crazy! Your body is simply remembering something pretty terrible even if your mind isn't ready to face it just yet, & it's trying to protect you from that event happening again. There is pain inside you that you need to acknowledge when you are ready.

Some people suggest talking out loud to yourself when this happens. Remind your body that what happened won't happen again, that you survived & you are safe. You're OK now, & the trauma isn't happening again.

I think prayer is a better idea, however. Ask God to help you to cope. Or, maybe a combination of prayer & talking to your body could work for you. Try both prayer & talking to your body to find out what works best for you.

If you end up remembering what has triggered this body memory, then use this to your advantage. Deal with the awful memory however works best for you. I look at body memories the same way I do nightmares, flashbacks, intrusive thoughts & repressed memories. These things are bound to happen after being abused, so why not use them to my advantage? When these things happen, I try to look at them as an opportunity to heal from yet one more trauma rather than simply a nightmare, flashback or awful memory or thoughts. Body memories can be a very unpleasant thing to deal with, but at least they can help offer some insight into areas where you need healing.