

How The Body Stores Trauma & Narcissistic Abuse Recovery

Today's podcast is called, "How The Body Stores Trauma & Narcissistic Abuse Recovery. "

When we talk about healing from narcissistic abuse, we often focus on thoughts, beliefs, & emotions. But trauma is not stored only in the mind. The body stores information too.

I learned this the hard way.

My agoraphobia began at a very specific moment. On two separate occasions, my husband told his mother & sister that my grandmother had recently passed away. Their response was identical - to immediately change the subject, as if the news meant nothing. As if my grandmother's life & my grief were unimportant.

In that moment, something shifted inside me.

I suddenly felt that I had no right to have emotions. My normal, human grief felt like something shameful. I internalized the message that I should not "bother" anyone, not even with my presence. My pain was unwelcome. My existence felt intrusive.

Shortly afterward, I began struggling to leave the house.

At the time, I thought my agoraphobia was purely emotional. I believed it was about hurt feelings & unresolved grief. & yes, it did begin when I thought it did. Later on, I learned something deeper: my body had interpreted what happened as danger.

When I received no support, no comfort, & no concern while grieving, my nervous system drew a conclusion. The world is not safe. Your emotions are not safe. You are not safe out there. As a result, my body tried to protect me.

In public places, blind panic would suddenly surge through me. My heart raced, chest tightened & I felt the overwhelming urge to escape even when I knew I was completely safe. My body honestly believed it was keeping me safe by keeping me home.

Psalm 139:14 reminds us that we are fearfully & wonderfully made, & that includes our nervous systems. God designed our bodies to respond to danger. The problem is that trauma can teach the body to misinterpret emotional abandonment as physical threat.

The body remembers what the mind tries to minimize. This is why trauma recovery must involve more than changing thoughts. We must retrain the body.

For years, my agoraphobia persisted because the original wound was reinforced by continued lack of support. Each time I struggled & received little understanding, my nervous system strengthened its belief that the world is unsafe. Stay small. Stay hidden.

In 2019 when my mother died, I had no choice but to go out frequently to handle her estate. I was terrified, but I went anyway. & slowly, something began to shift.

This forced exposure helped, but what helped most was learning grounding techniques that communicated safety to my body.

When I feel strong emotions rising, I sit down, press my feet firmly into the floor & notice the sensation. Then I inhale slowly & exhale longer than I inhaled. I repeat this several times.

It is simple. Almost deceptively so. But what I am really doing is teaching my nervous system a new lesson: You are safe right now.

Proverbs 17:22 in the Amplified Bible says, ***“A happy heart is good medicine & a joyful mind causes healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.”*** Trauma affects bones, muscles, even breath. Healing must reach there too.

Grounding works because it engages the body directly. Pressing your feet into the floor anchors you in the present moment. Slow, extended exhales activate the parasympathetic nervous system—the part responsible for calming & restoring. Over time, this retrains the body to respond differently.

This is so hopeful for those recovering from narcissistic abuse. Your panic is not weakness or failure. Your body adapted to survive neglect, invalidation, & abandonment. It was trying to help you.

Survival responses that once protected you can become prisons. The good news is that God created the body with the capacity to relearn. Neural pathways can change. The nervous system can recalibrate. Safety can be experienced again.

Healing is not just changing how you think but also teaching your body that the present is not the past. Each time you ground yourself instead of spiraling, you are rewriting old training, & telling your nervous system that the danger is over.

And little by little, the body begins to believe it.

Thank you for listening to my podcast!