

Partial List of Therapies for Trauma

Collected by Linda J. MacDonald, M.S.

Here is a partial list of the kinds of therapies that can relieve PTSD symptoms and the self-esteem injuries associated with them. Trauma therapy needs to involve more than “talk therapy.” It needs to access the parts of the brain where fragmented memories are stored, take them out of isolation, and connect them with the self-controlled and wise parts of our brains. This can be achieved by utilizing what therapist Shelley Bartels calls our “sanctified imagination” or, as therapist Helen Hofman calls it, our “Redeemed Imaginative Tools” to revisit and reframe painful memories.

Scripture is filled with metaphors, symbols, parables, dreams, visions, and illustrations, which the Lord uses to teach us godly truths. In the same way, a skilled Christian trauma therapist can guide you back to former abusive experiences and allow the Lord to inject himself into the memory with new messages such as, “You are loved,” and assure you, “I was there.” We need nurturing, corrective experiences to counter the negative beliefs we associate with each distressing event.

Some therapies help a client to re-picture a painful experience and infuse it with new visuals to allow fresh meaning to be associated with the trauma. Other therapies place emphasis on cognitive restructuring – directly identifying and challenging unhealthy beliefs and helping individuals find more helpful language to explain the significance behind what happened. Still, other approaches utilize bodily movements and senses to help people connect with trapped, fragmented memories so they can be processed, while many clinicians try to incorporate all three modalities, visual, cognitive, and sensory, in their work.

I have divided these therapies into rough categories, although most modalities and therapists use overlapping approaches. New ones are being developed. These are the ones I am most familiar with or have heard good things about.

VISUAL AND COGNITIVE APPROACH:

- **Transformational Prayer Ministry**, developed by Ed Smith (formerly known as Theophostic Prayer.) This was the approach my supervisor used with me that was so transformational in healing my PTSD. Not everyone experiences the same rapid and dramatic healing from PTSD as I did. However, the powerful way this approach impacted me convinced me of the importance of finding therapies that help us access and recalibrate the traumatic memories stored on the right side of the brain. And, since Jesus is my most safe and nurturing person, I love how this ministry allows room for the beauty and presence of Christ to enter and mend our wounded places, correcting the “lies” we believe about ourselves and the negative meaning behind our traumas. <https://www.transformationprayer.org/>¹
- **Lifespan Integration**, developed by Peggy Pace, M.A. Peggy, who used to be an EMDR trainer, wanted to develop protocols that she believed were less activating and to use a timeline of memories (also known as timeline cues) up to the present. This theoretically helps individuals develop new neural pathways, which can be beneficial for the present, as it suggests that these events occurred a long time ago and are no longer ongoing. The Trauma Protocol is especially useful to help victims of trauma resolve. Spiritually attuned therapists know how to allow Jesus to accompany clients on this journey of connection and healing. <https://lifespanintegration.com/>

- **The Healing Timeline**, by Cathy Thorpe, M.A.²

Cathy incorporates a simpler method for healing memories with time-line cues, as explained in her book. This can be used by church lay helpers and not just professional counselors.

<https://healingtimeline.org/>

- **Prolonged Exposure Therapy**

Prolonged exposure to the activating event, actual or imagined. Probably the most common treatment approach for veterans of war. The goal is to review traumatic memories over and over again with a therapist or group or revisit the scene of an event to desensitize them to the horror, pain, and shame they feel. It may or may not include treatment for the “moral injury” that conflicted vets feel for witnessing or doing things that violate their consciences.

<https://www.choosingtherapy.com/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/>

<https://www.usmedicine.com/current-issue/prolonged-exposure-therapy-showed-some-advantages-in-treating-ptsd/>

VISUAL AND SENSORY:

- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)**, developed by Francine Shapiro, Ph.D. One of the most researched and clinically validated treatments for trauma in the world. <https://www.emdria.org/>

- **Attachment-Focused EMDR**, adapted by Laurel Parnell, Ph.D.

A number of betrayal trauma therapists prefer this version of EMDR, as it allows folks to stay with their feelings and memories without the distraction of the intellectual rating exercises used in EMDR. Laurel trains therapists to help clients develop new, nurturing associations with their painful memories. Then, while infusing hurtful experiences with loving truths, she uses sensory tools to move these previously locked memories, stored on the right side of their brains, to a more functional part of their brains. This lifts clients out of past feelings of helplessness and shame, freeing them from old, ineffective coping strategies.

<https://drlaurelparnell.com/>

- **Emotional Transformation Therapy (ETT)**. Developed by Psychologist, Stephen Vasquez in 1991.

It is described as a therapeutic method incorporating the use of light, color wavelengths, and eye movements, aiming to rapidly transform emotional distress and related physical pain into a positive emotional state. <https://www.etttraining.com/>

- **Internal Family Systems**, developed by Richard Schwartz, Ph.D.

<https://internalfamilysystems.pt/index.php/intervenientes/richard-schwartz> I especially appreciate how Jenna Riemersma frames Internal Family Systems from a Christian perspective. The general idea is that we have “parts” of ourselves that defend, protect, and cover our core, authentic selves, keeping us from functioning from a deeply self-led place. She teaches that our true selves hold the keys to our own healing. But when our “protectors” get in the way, it keeps us from operating from an authentic, mature place. Here is Jenna Riemersma’s book that incorporates a spiritual approach to Internal Family Systems:

<https://www.amazon.com/Altogether-You-Experiencing-spiritual-transformation/>

COGNITIVE:

- **Cognitive Restructuring** for Betrayal Trauma, as taught by Doug Weiss and Robert Weiss.
Both therapists are among the first to identify Betrayal Trauma as its own malady and introduce healthier beliefs for betrayed spouses to adopt. Both offer training for therapists seeking to help betrayed spouses.
<https://www.drdougweiss.com/> (Dr. Doug Weiss' site)
<https://sexandrelationshiphealing.com/> (Dr. Robert Weiss' site)
- **APSATS Three-Dimensional Model.**
Specialized training for therapists who treat partners/former partners of sex addicts. A therapist who has been trained in this would be very qualified to help betrayed spouses. They often integrate a variety of therapeutic approaches beyond cognitive restructuring. <https://www.apsats.org/specialists#!directory/map>

COGNITIVE AND SENSORY:

- **Complex Trauma Treatment** Training by Janina Fisher, Ph.D.
Janina Fisher is a very respected psychologist who knows how to integrate a number of therapies for treating PTSD and C-PTSD. She utilizes Sensorimotor body-based therapies and poly-vagal theories, which acknowledge what is known as “the second brain” (our internal gut) and Internal Family Systems. Any therapist trained by Dr. Fisher would be well-equipped to treat those suffering from PTSD.
<https://janinafisher.com/>
- **The Institute for Sexual Health; Dr. Omar Minwalla's Approach³**
He has extensive experience working with both offenders and partners. He uses the metaphor of a house where the faithful spouse lives on the main floor while being unknowingly harmed by the activities going on in their unfaithful spouse's “secret sexual basement.” His approach helps betrayed spouses find new language and metaphors to validate the craziness they feel regarding their partners' prior or current clandestine activities. Dr. Minwalla helps betrayed partners notice and validate their “second brain” (gut instincts), conceptualize the reality of their situations, and cope more wisely. He also equips therapists with helpful tools for treating the sexually addicted. If I were still doing therapy, I would definitely take his training.
<https://www.minwallamodel.com/>

SENSORY:

- **Somatic Experiencing** and **Sensori-Motor Body Therapies**, Dr. Peter Levine, Dr. Pat Ogden, & others.
Somatic therapies focus on helping the body release the pent-up energy and traumatic shock still trapped in the body. The goal is not so much to address beliefs and memories but to gently help the person develop a tolerance for distressing emotions and release them. This often prepares the way for other kinds of mind-based therapies later. Such therapies include those performed by specially trained massage therapists and craniosacral therapists. **Sensorimotor** therapies involve the person talking about their trauma while learning to identify the concurrent sensations in their bodies. Thus, they learn how to read their bodies and gain a better sense of control over triggers. <https://traumahealing.org/se-101/>

- **Brainspotting (BSP).** Developed by Dr. David Grand.
Brainspotting (BSP) is a relatively new method for processing trauma that focuses on locations in the visual field and the corresponding ‘spots’ in the subcortical brain. <https://brainspotting.com/>
- **The Safe and Sound Protocol (SSP)** – auditory-based therapy. Developed by Dr. Stephen Porges. <https://www.whatisthessp.com/>, <https://integratedlistening.com/polyvagal-theory/porges/>
- **Emotional Transformation Therapy (ETT).** A therapeutic method incorporating the use of light, color wavelengths, and eye movements. It aims to rapidly transform emotional distress and related physical pain into a positive emotional state. Developed by Dr. Stephen R. Vasquez. <https://www.etttraining.com/>
- **Kali Connection Therapy (KCT)** developed by Mara Giovanni.
KCT blends bilateral stimulation, cooperative movement, and attunement to create a safe and engaging way to promote healing. <https://www.kaliconnectiontherapy.com/>
- **Art Therapy** or **Dance Therapy** for PTSD Victims
Again, art therapy and dance make use of the other senses and body movements to help us access the right side of our brains, where trauma memories are stored. In the hands of well-trained practitioners, these therapies can be powerfully helpful.
<https://www.healthline.com/health/art-therapy-for-ptsd>
- **Spiritually Healing Music.** Music has the unique ability to penetrate our emotions beyond words alone. I have found songs can be useful to validate our feelings and our degree of sorrow by introducing the loving words of Jesus to heal our wounded selves. Worshipping God helps us rise above our temporal troubles to focus on the Lord’s transcendent qualities. Music connects us with both the left and right sides of our brains to help us express our pain and soothe our troubled minds.
- **Nature.** Psychologist Florence Williams, author of *Heartbreak: A Personal and Scientific Journey*. She suffered an unwanted divorce from her husband of many years. In her search for solace, she interviewed a number of scientists on the subject of heartbreak. One person she met was Elise Knicely, the founder of A.B.L.E., a nonprofit that seeks to help sex-trafficked young women. According to Elise’s research, “there’s evidence that time in nature can help build strengths these women particularly need: self-regard, peace from the anxiety and hypervigilance associated with trauma.” Florence went on to note, “They find beauty, peace and space for healing in nature.”⁴ Dr. Williams believes brokenhearted people need a transcendent sense of “awe” to heal. She has personally found this in nature.

NOTES

1. Theophostic Prayer (Theo = “God” & phostic = “light”) has come under a degree of criticism for certain aspects that Ed Smith no longer promotes (particularly his prayer against demonic forces at the start of a session). The ministry has been renamed Transformation Prayer Ministry, and in the right hands, I believe it is a powerful tool. For an objective evaluation of Dr. Smith’s approach, see the Christian Research Institute’s article by Elliot Miller: <https://www.equip.org/article/theophostic-prayer-ministry-part-one/>
2. While Peggy Pace is credited with developing Lifespan Integration, one of her chief trainers, Cathy Thorpe, has developed a simplified, Christian protocol, which she shares in her book for lay leaders and professionals, *The Healing Timeline*. I have adopted some of her approaches in my work with clients.
3. [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/61a5399eb4455c2a32f84d60 The Secret Sexual Basement Nov 2021.pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/61a5399eb4455c2a32f84d60%20The%20Secret%20Sexual%20Basement%20Nov%202021.pdf)
4. Williams, Florence, Ph.D., *Heartbreak: A Personal and Scientific Journey*, (2022) p. 118