

Understanding Trauma

Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc.

This is one of several recovery stories that trauma survivors and providers shared with us as we developed the Understanding Trauma Report.

And She Moves: A Therapist's Recovery from Trauma

Outside of a strange dream that I had the previous night, it was a typical Friday morning. I got in my car with work as my destination. I never made it to work that day, as I was in an automobile accident. At the time, I had no idea what was in store for me. I had a concussion and was soon diagnosed with post-concussive syndrome.

My neurologist informed me that I would not be returning to work for an indefinite period of time. I remember many things about this time, too many to list for the purposes here, but the pieces that stand out to me the most are about my own sense of loneliness, loss of identity (who am I if not a therapist?), loss of control, and no actual reassurance about when any of it was going to improve.

I know all about trauma, the treatment of trauma, and the journey through it with another. I had little interest in journeying through it as the trauma survivor.

Over the next several months, I struggled with a neck and shoulder injury, incredible

headaches, nausea, vertigo, balance disorders, tremors, an inability to read, cognitive difficulties, struggles with word retrieval and memory, ringing in my ears, and a level of internal anger that pushed me far from my comfort zone.

What I failed to have in this cluster of symptoms became very poignant to me. I failed to have any *patience* for the process of my own recovery. As a therapist, I spent a great deal of time emphasizing the importance of patience. I felt like a hypocrite. And I was.

What I eventually discovered is that, for me, recovery from my own trauma could be painstakingly difficult and surprisingly rewarding, if I would not begrudge myself the seemingly miniscule rewards. I learned that everything felt like work and indeed was. I learned that I can not think my way through trauma no matter how thick the desire to do so. I also learned through an intensely meaningful relationship with a woman named Laura, my balance and vestibular therapist, that pushing myself harder was no help to my

healing, but rather a hindrance. The therapy that she provided was incredible, but it was in the trusting relationship that most of the healing happened. While traditional medicine played a role in the work that we did together, the role was small. I believed in Laura's methods, because Laura believed in me!

After a year and several months of intense recovery work, I return to the field of psychotherapy a far more enlightened therapist. I have a new appreciation for my own vulnerabilities, shortcomings, and successes. It was in the transformation from capable and competent to sick and confused to healing and reflective that I found hope, clarity, and a revitalized vision of self.

Though the transformation was not something that I had welcomed at the time, today I look fondly and with deep admiration at all aspects of my journey and the profound insight it offered into the depth of the human experience.

By Anonymous

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