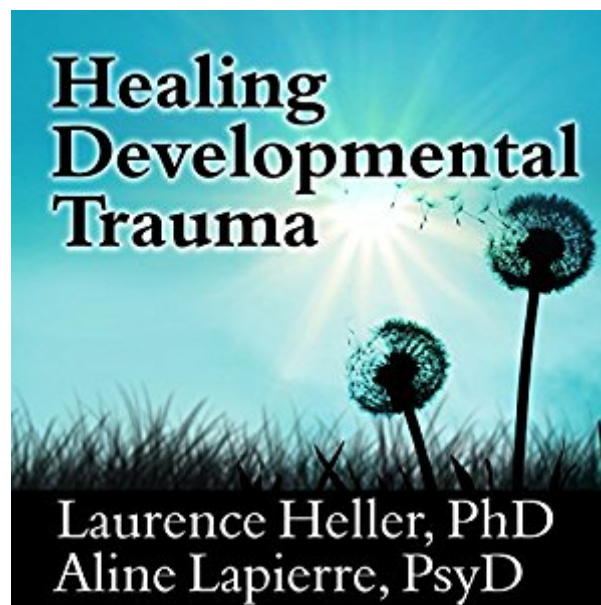




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Healing Developmental Trauma: How Early Trauma Affects Self-Regulation, Self-Image, And The Capacity For Relationship



Synopsis

Explaining that an impaired capacity for connection to self and to others underlies most psychological and many physiological problems, clinicians Laurence Heller, PhD, and Aline LaPierre, PsyD, introduce the NeuroAffective Relational Model™ (NARM), a unified approach to developmental, attachment, and shock trauma that emphasizes working in the present moment. NARM is a somatically based psychotherapy that helps bring into awareness the parts of self that are disorganized and dysfunctional, without making the regressed, dysfunctional elements the primary theme of the therapy. It emphasizes a person's strengths, capacities, resources, and resiliency, and is a powerful tool for working with both nervous system regulation and distortions of identity such as low self-esteem, shame, and chronic self-judgment.

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Customer Reviews

Briefly put, this is one of the most important and profound works in the whole trauma literature. The authors' thesis holds that developmental trauma is very different than PTSD. Developmental trauma is radically far-reaching and colors the entire life of those affected by it. The authors outline five different adaptive survival styles used by infants to cope with trauma. The five styles are chronological in order. The first, connective survival style, is the earliest and most impactful. It takes place between birth and about a year. Where the child receives inadequate nurturing or abuse, this style becomes dominant. Other styles come in different times and have their own but less catastrophic impact. In the connection survival style the child adapts by disconnecting from his(or

her) physical and emotional self. As a result, the child experiences great difficulty in relating to others and is often isolated without knowing how to address the problem. The other survival styles flow in later stages of infant development progression : attachment (difficulty knowing what we need and feeling that our needs deserve do not deserve to be met), trust (feeling that one cannot depend on anyone but themselves and feeling a need to be in control), autonomy (feeling burdened and pressured with difficulty setting limits and saying no directly), and love-sexuality (difficulty integrating heart and sexuality). The book focuses almost exclusively on the connective survival style. The two authors spend a great deal of time describing the conditions that cause this style and the difficulty that those who use it have with even recognizing it. They also spend several chapters outlining how to address the connective survival style therapeutically. In fact, those chapters are a superior description of how to operate therapeutically. Anyone in a helping profession could profit by reading them. Yours truly is one of the connective survival products. Reading the book felt like seeing myself for the first time and knowing why I was this way. The book well shows the disastrous consequences for a combination of abuse and neglect. IÃ¢Â™m not sure what to do with all this yet but do something I will.

I read this book recently and found it very helpful. I struggle(d) myself with all these issues described. As no such books existed when I started, it took me a long time to figure out the root course of my trouble. To my mind this book gives a very good description of the complex topic of developmental trauma. The way into this unfortunate state of being traumatized (and the impact on life), and also the way out. It all fits to my personal experience. It is very helpful to understand the dependencies and also the effect trauma has on the nervous system. It is certainly not easy to get out of a developmental trauma, but it is possible - it will take time however. This books gives a good starting point by making you understand: "Yes, you are not crazy. You only reacted in a "normal" way to an unbearable situation." Being aware, of what happened to you is already a big step forward. I hope this book helps many people to come to a better life.

This book was a very big "aha!" moment for me. I have read at least 2 dozen books (plus articles) on developmental trauma, most recently Dan Siegel, Allan Schore, Stephen Porges, Pat Ogden, Onno van der Hart, so I understand a lot of the concepts in this book, from these other readings. But this book helped me put all the pieces together for a more resonant understanding of my own particular life journey. I have had a very similar experience to 2 of the 3 case studies carefully described in this book, in terms of premature birth and incubation. And I also related deeply to the

3rd case study. I was born by Cæsarian section at 7 months and left in a cold (somewhat "refrigerated") incubator for the first 5 weeks of my life, without much human contact (in 1970, before they realized that this was traumatic). Then, I went home to a very internally disorganized and dysregulated primary caregiver, who had no conscious connection to her body or her feelings and so could not attune and connect with mine. She had also identified with the aggressor, and was an angry, very critical, controlling, powerful, emotionally abusive person. I think my default emotion in childhood was fear and terror. I was afraid and terrified of my caregiver. Severe chronic illness set in in my late 20's and became more pronounced over the years -- first, chronic fatigue diagnosed much later as Multiple Systemic Infectious Disease Syndrome, and then, in my mid-30's, severe environmental sensitivities and severe gut issues. (Environmental sensitivities are also covered in this book, including in one of the case studies.) Unfortunately, the severity of my environmental sensitivities made it so I could no longer tolerate housing or public places, and then my social "exile" and social "isolation" exponentially increased. And almost all requests for help from my culture (and family) fell on deaf ears. Trauma on top of trauma on top of trauma. I see more fully why I struggled with emotional pain (of various kinds -- depression, anxiety, freeze, collapse, PTSD activation, helplessness, hopelessness) throughout my life, as well as struggling with disconnection and no workable intimate relationships. And I see why I have felt stuck, frozen, collapsed, helpless, and an easy target for predators. I have better understanding about where my severe emotional and physiological dysregulation and illness have come from. I became too ill to work many years ago and have no financial access to treatments like NARM or Pat Ogden's Sensorimotor Psychotherapy. So I try to apply the principles from these fields in my life as much as possible, without a therapist's help. Including with the support of 3 separate phone meetings that I began -- an ACA meeting, a meditation meeting, and a "brain retraining for environmental sensitivities" meeting. My PTSD activations (in response to homelessness and poverty, and lack of help from anywhere, but also in response to warmth, caring, and connection) have become more manageable, as I learn more ("psychoeducation") and do more work with my peer groups, and as I connect more with myself and others. I am finally developing independence and autonomy and agency in the last 2 years, and I just realized in writing this that I have finally become my own best resource. The last chapter on integrating anger and aggression was one of the stand-outs for me. I am just now turning a significant corner in my life, on that one. I don't know if my illness can be reversed to a significant degree or if I'll ever have financial access to better healing resources (like NARM therapy or medical treatment). I'll keep trying. Thank you to the authors for this amazing work. I hope to meet you and become a part of your field somehow, someday. You offer a very compelling conceptualization of

and solution to life's impossibility and unbearableness, for people who have had a journey like mine. I want to be a part of the solution with you!

Edited 10/29/16: This therapy is solution-oriented (not past-oriented), which I have failed to emphasize in my review. It is a means of therapy where the very, very early trauma states are recognized, and the high levels of survival energies are discharged piecemeal (with Somatic Experiencing's "titration" and "pendulation"), and positive resources are developed, and the client learns to mindfully experience the body as it moves into, and out of, states of greater organization and connectivity, and the client learns about the expansion and contraction cycle -- all these facets and more are used in a very gentle process of developing greater and greater organization, regulation, and connectivity.

This book gave me a lot of insight on the impact of early trauma (intentional or otherwise) on the developing brain. We all have shock of some sort or degree in our past -- this book is very helpful in identifying the root of behaviors we might be able to modify, or at least understand, in ourselves. I bought copies for both my sister and my daughter so we could discuss family patterns. Note that this book is not really a "self-help" book, in that it is academically oriented, and intended to inform actual therapists about new discoveries that might help them in their work. It isn't so heavy, though, that the average reader can't gain from it. I found it fascinating reading and chillingly accurate in identifying symptoms of childhood abuse that I had not considered as symptomatic before I found this book.

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