

# HAPPY + HEALTHY RMT: TRAUMA REFLECTIONS

In this exercise, you will take time to reflect and explore your own personal stress and trauma experiences. There may be reflections that don't apply or that you have no interest in, and others that resonate with you, and you will want to take more time with them. Know there are no right or wrong answers in this exercise.

The goal of this exercise is to help you learn about your self-care needs by spotting patterns and recognizing areas of your life that may need more care and attention. This list is certainly not comprehensive, but it does serve as a great starting point for thinking and understanding your stress and trauma history, and how it may be affecting your emotional and physical health, both personally and professionally as a Massage Therapist.

## Small "t" Trauma

Small 't' traumas are events that exceed our capacity to cope, and usually occur on an ongoing basis. This small 't' trauma can be understood as traumatic, because

1. it has had a significant impact on your sense of self-worth;
2. your belief in yourself or others, and the world at-large;
3. May be the cause of feelings of helplessness or powerlessness.
  - Bullying in any form
  - Differences in culture: *neurodivergence, gender/sexuality, race, learning differences, etc.*
  - Your sense of safety or being loved or valued by your significant others is disrupted by abandonment, Infidelity of a partner, separation or divorce
  - Abrupt or extended relocation (*you cannot get rooted*)
  - Interactions with the law or criminal systems
  - Financial Scarcity: *including scarcity of food, money, shelter, poverty, love, etc.*

What small 't' trauma(s) have you experienced, if any?


## Large "T" Trauma

The large 'T' trauma is what we usually think of when we think of the term "trauma". It is defined by the DSM\* as *"exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways: Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s). Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend."*

\* The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)

Examples that fit this definition include, but aren't limited to:

- Natural Disaster
- Terrorist Attack
- Sexual Assault
- Military Combat / Firefighter Syndrome
- Vehicular Accident (car, plane, etc.)

What large 'T' trauma(s) have you experienced, if any?


## Impact of Trauma

Traumatic experiences can affect us in many areas, including:

- safety: *not feeling safe where you regularly did, or in common situations*
- trust: *may find it hard to trust people, situation, or your own judgement*
- power and control: *feel powerless, like you have no control over a situation*
- self-esteem: *your self view and self esteem are becoming compromised*
- intimacy: *difficulty in your relationships with loved ones, family and friends*
- boundaries: *hard time setting and sticking to boundaries, not sure where to set them*
- visibility: *feel invisible or that you have no voice*

What are some of the areas of my life that have been affected by trauma, and how?


What are some of the beliefs I have about myself in these areas of life?


### Trauma Responses: Fight, Flight, Freeze and Fawn

What is my 'go-to' trauma response?


How has my 'go-to' trauma response shown up in my practice (business)?


## Parts

The psychological concept of parts suggests that we are all made up of "parts" that can think, feel and act differently from each other—sometimes even at the same time. When we've been through trauma, sometimes we can find ourselves doing or saying things that we don't want to or intend to. In these cases, we might say that our parts are making the choices for us.

Parts almost always have valid concerns and wisdom to share, and come forward for a good reason. However, understanding and connecting with that requires time and care. Please spend some time and revisit these Reflection Questions as often as you need to.

What are some of the parts I have become aware of today?


What thoughts, fears, criticisms, judgments do they have?


What might be on the flip side of these thoughts, fears, or judgments?


## Other ways trauma can show up at work, or at your practice

If you are a clinic owner, or manage other healthcare practitioners in your space, or share space in a clinic, you might ask:

What does my relationship with myself look like to my colleagues?


What might I want to change about that?


What support do I need to be able to do that?


## Other ways trauma can show up in professional self-esteem

How is the hustle culture\* showing up in my practice?


\*Generally, the term refers to the idea that one should always be working hard to achieve success

How did these behaviours come into my work life?


How is this affecting my clients/patients, or my treatments with them?


In what ways have I been equating busyness or productivity with my value as a person?


As a massage therapist?


Where might these ideas have come from? (environment, social media, family, colleagues, etc)


Who has said these things to me or where have I heard them? (use the **T•H•I•N•K** prompt)


How will I apply what I've learned today with how I run my practice (business)?


How will I apply what I've learned today with my clients/patients?


What areas do I feel strong in as an RMT, and how can I celebrate this?


## Becoming a Happy + Healthy RMT

How will I apply what I've learned today with myself? (as a person, not an RMT)


What areas do I feel I need support in? Who can I reach out to?


What activities give me joy, and I would like to start doing regularly again?


What areas do I feel strong in as a person, and how can I celebrate this?


"We are each gifted in a unique and important way.  
It is our privilege and our adventure to discover our own special light." ~ Mary Dunbar