



Psycho-Social Trauma Resource Guide

➤➤➤ A resource guide for anyone impacted by the events of the G20 in Toronto

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*Introduction to Trauma and Recovery by Sandi MacDonald, Harmony
Counselling & Coaching*

Trauma and Recovery

Acute Trauma

Inside this Guide:

- Introduction to the signs and symptoms of trauma and steps to recovery
- List of available services for help dealing with trauma
- List of additional online resources

“Psychological Trauma is an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities.” – Judith Lewis Herman, M.D.

The incidents which took place during the recent G20 Summit, have left many feeling terrorized, beaten, numb, depersonalized, dehumanized, helpless, and horrified. Whether you were a protestor who was beaten, detained, etc., or someone who witnessed the abuse either at the protests or even on T.V. or the internet, these events have left many psychologically traumatized. Victims of atrocities are not only those who experienced it, but also witnesses and society on the whole.

Acute Trauma is what most people are experiencing. Gaining knowledge of Acute Trauma is the first step in empowerment. Knowledge is definitely power in this instance.

Ordinary responses to Acute Trauma include:

- Dissociation (feeling numb, poor concentration, forgetfulness, constriction, such as going into a state of surrender, disconnection), alternating with Reliving the event.
- Reliving the event (i.e. intrusion, such as reliving the event in the present, unable to think of anything else, nightmares, and hyperarousal, such as always being on alert.)
- Denial of the atrocities (i.e. “This couldn’t possibly happen in Canada!”), conflicted with The Desire to talk about what has happened.
- The Desire to shout OUT LOUD what has happened.

It is very important to understand what has happened to you. Part of this understanding comes from being educated about psychological trauma and how it affects you. Another part involves looking at the tactics used by the typical Perpetrator, who inflicts psychological trauma on individuals.

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The Perpetrator:

PSYCHOLOGICAL DOMINATION: In 1973, Amnesty International published, "Biderman's Chart of Coercion". This chart details the psychological tactics used by captors/perpetrators against their victims.

1. Isolation—Deprives victim of all social support of his ability to resist, i.e. denied phone calls to lawyer, family, etc.
2. Monopolization of perception—Eliminates stimuli competing with those controlled by captor (perpetrator); frustrates all actions not consistent with compliance. Monitors where you go, who you call and who you spend time with.
3. Induced debility, exhaustion—Weakens mental and physical ability to resist.
4. Threats—Cultivates anxiety and despair. Threatens to hurt you, your children, your family or your pets.
5. Occasional indulgences—Provides positive motivation for compliance; Hinders adjustment to deprivation.
6. Demonstrating "omnipotence" – Suggests futility of resistance.
7. Degradation – Makes cost of resistance appear more damaging to self esteem than capitulation; Reduces prisoner to "animal level" concerns. Calls you names, insults you or continually criticizes you; humiliates you in any way.
8. Enforcing trivial demands – develops a habit of compliance.
9. Expects you to ask for permission.
10. Controls finances or refuses to share money. (This may be comparable to people leaving detention centre without the police returning personal belongings, i.e. airline tickets, money, etc.)

The above, are all techniques of disempowerment and disconnection. The chart is not only compatible with political prisoners but also victims of domestic abuse.

Post Trauma Perpetrator's Response:

First and foremost, let us understand something about Perpetrators.

"The more powerful the Perpetrator, the greater is his prerogative to name and define reality, and the more completely his arguments prevail."

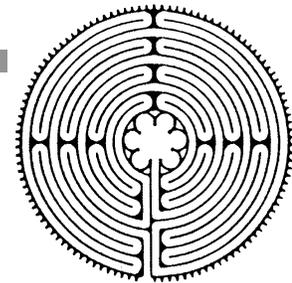
The Perpetrator asks one thing of his/her victims, witnesses, and society, which is to do nothing. The Perpetrator appeals to the universal desire to hear, see and speak no evil. Thus, secrecy and silence are the Perpetrator's first line of defence. He/she will do everything in his/her power to promote forgetting.

If secrecy and silence fail, the perpetrator will attempt to discredit the victim. The perpetrator will send messages such as:

- It never happened!
- The victim lies!
- The victim exaggerates!
- The victim brought it on her/himself!
- It is time to forget and move on!

The perpetrator tries to ensure that NO ONE listens to the victim, and will have impressive arguments, from blatant denial to rationalizations.





Recovery

Dr. Judith Lewis Herman is a specialist in dealing with Trauma and Recovery, from domestic violence to political prisoners. She lists a three-stage recovery process.

1. Safety:

This is the most important stage in the recovery process. The goal of this process is to empower the victim by re-establishing control of the body and bodily functions and the environment the victim lives in. Herman states the importance of regaining control on the inside and then work towards the outside. After the events of a trauma it is likely the victim will not feel safe in his/her own body. It is crucial to take the control back by getting medical attention if needed, getting adequate sleep, nutritional food, and sufficient amounts of water, and to use stress management strategies, i.e. relaxation, exercise, etc., instead of misusing/abusing alcohol and/or drugs to "numb-out" any intense, overwhelming feelings. The misuse or abuse of alcohol and/or drugs will prolong any affects resulting from the trauma.

Environmental safety includes connecting with loved ones, friends and family. Reach out to those who provide a sense of safety. Also, travel with others. You do not have to go out alone. If you feel safer travelling with friends, then do so. "Because no one can establish a safe environment alone, the task of developing an adequate safety plan always includes a component of social support." – Judith Lewis Herman, M.D.

2. Remembrance And Mourning:

Remembering the trauma in great detail is not always possible, immediately after the event(s). This is okay, because it is the normal response to trauma to try and forget. The mind will shut-down as a way of self-preservation. After establishing a sense of safety, memories of the trauma may surface and overwhelming feelings may arise. **TELL YOUR STORY! AND KEEP TELLING IT.** It's okay if you don't have all the details yet, they will come when you are ready. Put the pieces together. Write down your memories, if necessary. Feeling of depression, anxiety, and terror may arise but this too is part of your story. **LEAN ON YOUR SUPPORTS.** Many victims of atrocities feel a sense of loss. Perhaps you feel a loss of the old self, the person you were before the trauma, **GRIEVE**, it's okay.

3. Reconnection:

Isolation is what the perpetrator wants for you. Reclaim your power by networking, joining support groups, community groups or reconnecting with your peers and tell your story. Get out and be in community and live your life. **ENGAGE! RECONNECT! YOUR LIFE IS YOURS! THEY TOOK YOUR CONTROL BUT NOT YOUR POWER!!!** Your future is **YOURS**. Create your future. Create your **NEW SELF**. Fight back!

The recovery process for trauma is **NOT** linear; however safety is the most important and the foundation for healing. This process does take time and varies with the severity of the trauma. Either way, you will not forget but you will heal. It is important to inform you that the trauma may resurface from time-to-time but the feelings will not be as intense. Be patient with your **SELF**. Everything you are experiencing is part of the healing process.

In the inspiring and empowering words of Herman, "Most survivors seek the resolution of their traumatic experience within the confines of their personal lives. But a significant minority, as a result of the trauma, feel called upon to engage in a wider world. These survivors recognize a political or religious dimension in their misfortune and discover that they can transform the meaning of their personal tragedy by making it the basis for social action. While there is no way to compensate for an atrocity, there is a way to transcend it, by making it a gift to others. The trauma is redeemed only when it becomes the source of a survivor mission." Be inspired and empowered.

Accessing Services

There are a variety of services available to help people experiencing trauma after the G20:

- **Sandi MacDonald of Harmony Counselling and Coaching** is offering free trauma counselling to anyone who is experiencing one or more of these signs of trauma. Contact her at harmonycounselling@sympatico.ca or **416-432-6762**. For those outside of Toronto, she also offers counselling by phone or email. Confidentiality is guaranteed. "Free Counselling After G8/G20" Facebook group: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=128522747186111&ref=ts
- **Peer To Peer Support For Activists Collective** is a group of counselors and healers who have volunteered their services for those experiencing trauma following the events of the G20 in Toronto. They can be reached at peertopeersupportforactivists@gmail.com
- **Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape** runs a 24-hour hotline: **416-597-8808** and can be reached by email (English and Spanish, M-F business hours only) at crisis@trccmwar.ca. **TRCC/MWAR-Programa de Mujeres Latinoamericanas: 416-597-1171 x228** (non crisis/ este numero no es ayuda de 24h). www.trccmwar.ca/crisis.html
- **Distress Centre Crisis Line** is available 24-hours a day at **416-408-HELP (4357)**. Their website is www.torontodistresscentre.com/distress.shtml
- **LGBTQ Youth Line** can be reached at **1-800-268-YOUTH (9688)**. Their website is www.youthline.ca/where.html. (Volunteers are available for phone support and may be able to help you find LGBTQ2SI positive resources). They are open 4pm - 9:30pm, Sunday-Friday
- **Gerstein Centre** provides crisis and non crisis- mental health support. They can be reached at **416-929-5200**. The Gerstein Centre provides crisis intervention to adults, living in the City of Toronto, who experience mental health problems. The Centre provides supportive counselling for immediate, crisis issues and referrals to other services for on-going, non-crisis issues. Their website is www.gersteincentre.org/

Additional Online Resources:

www.pscap.org/healingtrauma/

www.activist-trauma.net

<http://aftershock.patricejones.info/>

www.activist-trauma.net/en/downloads.html

www.scarsongs.net/

