



The Partner's Guide

🌸 TRAUMA

Loving someone who has been through trauma

A warm, practical guide for the partner of someone living with the after-effects of trauma: how to stop taking the distance personally, step out of the loop together, and stay whole yourself.

Who this is for: the wife, husband or partner of someone living with the after-effects of trauma.

Cited: NICE, Cochrane, and peer-reviewed research.

Languages: English, Hindi, Marathi, and Kannada.

Read it free at weave.clinic/family

1

✿ IS THIS US

Naming what keeps happening

✿ IN SHORT

If the person you love swings between too close and too far away, if small things set off big reactions, and you keep landing hurt and confused, you are not imagining it. Something real is going on, and it has a shape you can learn.

When someone has lived through something frightening or overwhelming, their mind and body can stay on high alert long after the danger has passed. This is a known reaction to what happened to them. It is not a flaw in them, and it is not a flaw in you.

You may recognise the pattern. Sudden anger or a sudden shutting down. Trouble sleeping. Jumpiness at a sound or a touch. Pulling away from closeness just when you reach for it. After months of confusion, putting a name to the pattern can bring real relief.

This booklet will not put a label on your partner. Only a doctor can say what someone is going through and what it is called. What we can do here is help you see the shape of it, so you can stop guessing and start responding.

Both of you

feel it, not just one

When one partner carries a trauma reaction, the strain shows up in both partners' sense of conflict and support, not only in the one who was hurt.

If a lot of this feels familiar, you are not alone, and you are not the problem. A trauma reaction affects the whole home, and the person who loves them most often feels it first and carries it quietly.

● **TRY THIS**

For two days, just notice, without raising it in the moment. When does the closeness feel easy? When does it tip into distance or a sharp reaction? You are not fixing anything yet. You are learning the shape of your own cycle.

2

✿ WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT IT IS NOT

The injury, not the person

✿ IN SHORT

A trauma reaction is the brain doing what it learned to survive a real threat: stay watchful, avoid reminders, brace for danger. The numbness and the distance are symptoms of that injury, not a message about how much they love you.

Here is the part that changes everything once you both believe it. A trauma reaction is the brain doing what it once had to do to stay safe: stay watchful, avoid reminders, brace for the next blow. The wiring got stuck in the on position. It is the injury, not the person.

The numbness, the distance, the flinching away from touch or talk, these are symptoms. They are not a verdict on your marriage or a measure of their love. In fact, the two things most tied to closeness problems after trauma are numbing and avoidance, the very parts of the reaction that pull a person inward. When they go flat or far away, that is often the reaction speaking, not the whole of who they are.



The day I understood that the distance was the injury talking, not him leaving me, I stopped taking every quiet evening as proof he had stopped caring.

A partner, 34

They are not choosing to hurt you, and you did not cause this by doing something wrong. The wound came before you, or from something outside the two of you. Naming it this way is not about excusing everything. It is about aiming your energy at the reaction, which can change, instead of at a person you have started to blame.

 REMEMBER

When the flatness reads as "he does not love me anymore", every quiet evening feels like a wound. When it reads as "his mind is still braced for danger", you can stand next to him and face it together. Same evening, very different night.

More, if you want it

Separating the trauma from the person does not mean the load on you is not real. It is real, and it is heavy, and you are allowed to say so. It means you stop fighting a character you have started inventing in the hard moments and start working on a reaction you can actually face as a team. "Your mind is still braced, and I am tired of feeling shut out, so let us find help together" is a sentence you can both stand next to. "You do not love me anymore" is not.

3

✿ THE CYCLE YOU KEEP REPEATING

The loop you keep landing in

✿ IN SHORT

Most couples slide into the same loop: something reminds them of the past, their body reacts as if the danger is here now, they pull away or snap, and you are left hurt, so you push harder or go quiet. Then it starts again.

The loop usually builds quietly. Something, a sound, a date, a raised voice, reminds them of the past. Their body reacts as if the danger is here right now. They pull away or they snap. You are left hurt and confused, so you either push harder to reach them or go quiet to keep the peace. And then something reminds them again. This is the trigger-and-pull-away loop, and neither of you chose it.

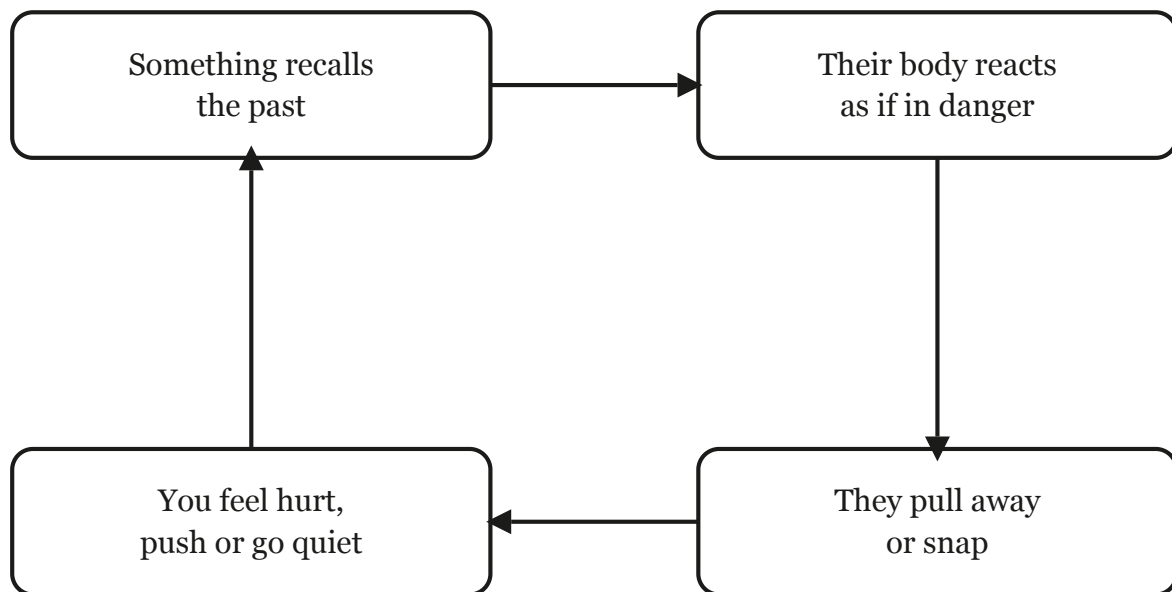
Because avoiding reminders is part of the reaction, they may dodge the very conversations, places, or closeness that could actually help. Over time that avoidance can quietly pull the whole relationship smaller, until your world together has shrunk without either of you deciding it should.



A reminder lands, the body braces, and the distance opens
before either of you can name it.

You said something ordinary, or the doorbell rang, or a scene came on the television, and in a second the person beside you was somewhere else. Their jaw set, their eyes went far away, and the warmth you had a moment ago was gone. You reached out and they flinched, or went cold, or left the room. You are left standing there, hurt and bewildered, wondering what you did. Most likely, you did nothing. A reminder landed, and their body did what it learned to do a long time ago.

You may find yourself walking on eggshells, managing their moods, or doing more and more to keep the peace. This is exhausting, and it is a sign that the trauma is running the relationship, not that either of you is failing.



The loop that keeps landing you both in the same hurt. Naming it is how you catch it earlier, and either of you can step out.

A reminder brings the past into the room.

Their body reacts as if the danger is happening now.

They pull away or snap, without choosing to.

You are left hurt, and push harder or go quiet, until it begins again.

Seeing the loop is most of the escape. The point of naming it is not to decide whose fault it is. Each step makes the next one almost automatic, which is exactly why trying harder in the moment keeps failing. You do not have a love problem. You have a pattern problem, and a pattern is far easier to change than a person.

● TRY THIS

Next time you feel the loop starting, name it out loud, gently: "I think the old alarm just went off." Saying it together, as one shared thing to step out of rather than a fight between you, breaks the spell more often than you would expect.

4 ✿ WHAT ACTUALLY HELPS, WHAT BACKFIRES

Presence over fixing

✿ IN SHORT

Staying calm and near, without demanding they explain or cheer up, tells their nervous system it is safe. Trying to argue them out of a reaction usually makes it stronger. Facing it together, with a doctor's help, helps both of you.

Presence helps more than fixing. Staying calm and near, without demanding that they explain themselves or cheer up, tells their nervous system that it is safe here. Trying to argue someone out of a trauma reaction almost always makes it stronger, not weaker. You do not have to fix the moment. You have to be a safe place inside it.

In a triggered moment, simple grounding helps. A steady voice. Naming plainly that they are safe here and now. Giving space without leaving the room. What settles one person can unsettle another, so ask ahead of time, in a calm hour, what actually helps them when the alarm goes off.

figure

label

Face it as a couple

not alone

Presence

over pressure

Facing it as a couple genuinely works. When partners learn about the reaction together and support treatment, both the symptoms and the closeness tend to improve. A talking treatment done as a couple, with the survivor and their partner together, has been shown to reduce symptoms and lift how satisfied the couple feel in the relationship. You are not a bystander to their recovery. You can be part of it.



Small, shared steps, repeated on the calm days, are what rebuild the closeness over time.

Rebuilding does not happen in one big conversation. It happens in small, shared steps, repeated on the ordinary days. A quiet walk where nothing has to be solved. A signal you agree on for "I need a minute". Sitting near each other without words. A hand offered, not demanded. None of it looks dramatic. All of it, repeated, tells a braced nervous system that this person, this home, is safe.

What backfires is worth naming too. Pressuring them to just move on. Avoiding the subject forever to keep the peace, so it quietly runs the house. Or carrying everything silently yourself until you are empty. Small, shared steps beat one big fix, every time.

IN YOUR CORNER

You will get this wrong sometimes. You will push when you meant to wait, or go quiet when you meant to stay. That is not failure. Repair, the coming back and trying again, matters more than getting every moment right.

● TRY THIS

On a calm day, ask one question: "When you get that far-away feeling, what helps, and what makes it worse?" Write down the answer together. Having the plan ready before the next hard moment is worth more than any perfect reaction in it.

5

✿ STAYING WHOLE YOURSELF

You cannot pour from empty

✿ IN SHORT

Loving someone through trauma can leave its mark on you too. Your tiredness and sadness are valid, not selfish. You are their partner, not their therapist, and looking after yourself is what keeps you a partner at all.

Loving someone through trauma can leave its mark on you as well. Partners and families of trauma survivors can carry a real strain of their own, a kind of secondary stress that builds up quietly over months. Your tiredness, your sadness, your own moments of dread, these are valid. They are not selfish, and they are not a sign you love them any less.

Here is a line that protects you both. **You are their partner, not their therapist.** You can support their treatment, but you cannot be their treatment. Handing the clinical work to a professional is not stepping back from them. It protects your relationship and gives them the real help you were never trained to provide.

Keep your own oxygen. Your sleep. Your friends. Your own doctor if you need one. The parts of your life that are simply yours. You cannot pour from an empty cup, and this is a long road, not a short sprint. In a joint family, where relatives may pile on advice or blame, keep one corner of your life that belongs only to you.

 REMEMBER

Boundaries are not betrayal. Saying no to being shouted at, no to being the only fix, no to giving up your whole self, is part of a relationship that can actually last. A steadier you is the best thing you bring home.

More, if you want it ^

Find one person who is on your side, a sibling, a friend, someone who does not judge. Saying the hard part out loud to someone safe takes weight off your chest, and resentment grows fastest in silence. You are allowed to want a life that is more than managing someone else's pain. Looking after yourself is not a betrayal of them. A rested, steadier you is exactly what a long recovery needs beside it.

 TRY THIS

This week, take one thing that is only for you, half an hour with a book, a call to a friend, a walk without your phone, and take it without guilt. Notice that the house does not fall apart, and that you come back with a little more patience than you left with.

6

✿ WHEN TO STEP IN, AND GETTING HELP

When to reach for help

✿ IN SHORT

Some signs mean it is time to reach out now. Getting them to a doctor is the single most helpful step. If safety is ever in doubt, for either of you, there is a free helpline you can call any time.

Some signs mean it is time to reach for help now, not later. Talk of not wanting to be alive. Giving belongings away. A sudden calm after deep despair. Heavy drinking or using to cope. Or any threat to safety, theirs or yours. If you notice these, treat them seriously and act.

If your partner may not be safe, or you are frightened, you do not have to hold it alone. Call **Tele-MANAS at 14416**. It is free, available any time of day or night, and offered in many Indian languages. If there is immediate danger, contact your local emergency services straight away.

📖 REMEMBER

Getting them to a doctor is the single most helpful step you can take. Effective treatments for trauma reactions exist, and a doctor can guide what fits, which may include a talking therapy and sometimes medicine as one part of care.

Getting the person to professional care is the key that turns everything else. You have been holding a lot, steadily, for a long time. Handing the clinical part to someone trained for it is not giving up on them. It is the strongest way to stand by them.

And if there is ever violence, or you feel genuinely unsafe, your safety comes first, full stop. Reaching out for help in that moment is not abandoning them. It is the bravest way to protect both of you.



The same person whose mind is still braced for an old danger can, with time and the right help, feel safe beside you again. You do not have to carry it alone, and neither do they.

● TRY THIS

Tonight, do two small things. Name one moment today when you felt close, however brief, and hold it. Then write down one thing you would want to ask a doctor about, and keep it on your phone. Two small moves, one toward each other and one toward help, are how the long road starts.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

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FURTHER READING

- NHS: Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), information for families and carers

This guide helps you recognise and understand. It is not a diagnosis. For that, see a professional.

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- Feeling like it is all too much? **Read the crisis card.** Help is one page away.