

# Betrayal Trauma Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to provide knowledge regarding betrayal trauma. It is highly recommended that if you are experiencing betrayal trauma that you seek professional support. Please note that you do not have to continue with this worksheet if you feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed.

## Understanding the trauma response

We depend on our intimate partners to be there for us, to follow through on commitments made, to feel seen and to feel safe. When this understanding is broken through a partner's chronic infidelity and or sex addiction it can trigger a trauma response in our brain. This means that our brain is responding as if our very life is threatened. This trauma reaction can be scary, it can change the way we think and respond (even just temporarily).

**You can heal from a betrayal trauma!** The first steps towards recovery include identifying the experience and creating safety. Below are some common response to betrayal trauma. Take a moment to review the list and reflect on what responses you may have experienced.

## Common Trauma Responses

- Jaw tightness
- Feeling like you're in a "fog"
- Feeling hopeless or helpless
- Shock
- Avoiding spending time with others
- Minimizing the impact of this experience
- Feeling depressed
- Focusing on body image
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Feeling disoriented
- Obsessing over certain details or thoughts
- Excessive alertness (hyper-vigilance)
- Fear
- Powerlessness
- Anxiety
- Feelings of panic
- Difficulty sleeping
- Oversleeping
- Irritability

What symptoms did you relate to?

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Were there any responses you experience that were not mentioned above?

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## **Creating Safety**

A trauma response often results in feelings of powerlessness. By regaining emotional safety you are empowering yourself and letting your brain know that you are not currently in life threatening danger (although there still may be some upsetting and scary events happening). This helps your nervous system cool down and allows you to access mental clarity, to move forward to the next stage of trauma healing.

For the purpose of this worksheet we will be focusing on both physical and emotional safety. Emotional safety simply means that you trust what you are feeling is true, and that you feel comfortable and capable to engage with those feelings. Physical safety addresses your body and physical space. It means that you feel comfortable, and have a sense of power and choice in how you manage both your body and your space.

If you are in a threatening situation where you do not feel physically or emotionally safe I encourage you to reach out for support (i.e., [distress line](#), your local police, or emergency room)

## **Ways That Can Create Safety Now**

### *Finding a Safe Place to Sleep*

During a time of stress and crisis it is important to be able to get as much restful sleep as possible. When experiencing betrayal trauma people often talk about not feeling “comfortable” or “safe” when their acting out partner is sleeping beside them. If possible, creating a sleeping space that you feel as peaceful as possible in can be helpful. This might mean asking your

partner to sleep somewhere else (such as a spare room or sofa) or finding a place in your home or a friend's home where you feel you might be able to get a more restful sleep.

*Having Access to Your Own Finances*

Whether it means having a credit card in your name, a sperate bank account or some money that you have access to this practical step can create a sense of relief knowing you have financial options.

*Taking Care of Your Physical Health*

When experiencing betrayal trauma it can become difficult to take care of yourself the way you once were able to. Focusing on obtaining regular sleep, drinking water, and eating may seem basic to the outside eye, however addressing these fundamental human needs can be monumental when experiencing a trauma response.

*Sexual Health Screening*

Going to your doctor, or a sexual health centre and requesting a sexual health screening can be one of the most terrifying and heartbreaking acts. Getting checked for an STI is difficult, and it can be incredibly helpful in moving towards physical safety.

If you're looking to get a discrete STI check in the Toronto area the [Hassel Free Clinic](#) may be a helpful resource.

*Reach Out For Support*

Finding someone who you feel safe to talk with, whether it be a friend, family member or therapist can reduce the feelings of isolation and help provide a comforting, safe, and loving space to talk about what is happening for you. It is important to identify people whom you feel would be [helpful](#) and supportive in this time of crisis.

In what ways are you already creating safety for yourself?

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Are there any areas in your life where you would like to create more emotional safety?

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After finishing this worksheet take a moment to sit and take note of what you are feeling, if you're feeling distress it may be helpful to engage in some [grounding strategies](#).