



HEALING FROM GENERATIONAL TRAUMA

# WORKBOOK

# What is generational trauma?

Generational trauma, also known as intergenerational trauma, refers to the impact of a traumatic experience, not only on one generation, but on subsequent generations after the event.

This means that trauma can be transferred from one generation to another and can impact the way individuals understand, cope with, and heal from trauma.

## What are examples of generational trauma?

Slavery, genocide, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and poverty are examples of trauma that can lead to generational trauma. For Indigenous peoples, a lot of trauma resulted from colonization through the banning of Indigenous languages, banning of traditional religious practices, disease, and much more.

A parent who never truly healed from or explored their own trauma may find it very difficult to provide emotional support to a family member suffering from their own trauma.

## How does it show up in my life? Generational trauma can show up in unexpected ways such as:

- If you or your family view discussing feelings as a sign of weakness
- Trust issues
- Anxious or overly protective of children or family members
- Emotionally detached from loved ones, internalizing emotions until something sets you off
- Drinking or drugs to cope with the pain

# Let's start to unpack...

Sometimes we feel like the burden we're carrying isn't ours to carry. It's important to get curious, and learn to understand and express our feelings openly and honestly with ourselves and others.

**Do I feel safe and comfortable openly discussing my feelings with loved ones?**

**How does generational trauma show up in my life?**

**Are there any limiting beliefs I hold about my abilities, success, or appearance due to this trauma?**

# Understanding triggers

Our anxiety and worries can result in triggers. Triggers are rooted in trauma. They show up in situations, thoughts, fears, and our upbringing. Use this space to dig deeper to understand your pain and the narratives surrounding your trauma.

**Do I notice any tension or rising anxiety around certain people, locations, or situations?**

**What story or narrative emerges in my mind when I notice I am triggered?**

**Reflect on your childhood and upbringing. What has made you uneasy, tense, fearful, or abandoned in your life?**

# Let's start to break the cycle

If you sense you live in an environment where you have experienced the impacts of generational trauma, it's important to learn better ways to connect with yourself and others.

**What am I unlearning?**

**How am I going to create space for rest?**

**What new and healthy boundaries will I set with others in my life?**

# Recognize the patterns

Our parents and family members are the blueprint for how we view and approach relationships. They create our **attachment styles** in relationships. Instead of blaming, it is critical to understand our behaviour, engage in self-reflection, and **break the cycle**.

## Self-Soothing Techniques

- **Mindfulness:** check in with yourself throughout the day. Identify the emotion you're feeling
- **Breath-work:** inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, hold, and release for 6 seconds
- **Grounding techniques:** use one of your five senses to bring yourself back into the present (*i.e. name 5 things around you that you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things that you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste*)

## Daily reminders

- Your healing is deeply personal and your family may not understand
- Process your trauma. Do not pretend it doesn't exist
- We repeat what we do not repair



# Recommended Reading

- The Racial Healing Handbook by Anneliese A. Singh, Ph.D, LPC
- It Didn't Start with You: How Inherited Family Trauma Shapes Who We Are and How to End the Cycle by Mark Wolynn
- Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And Other Conversations About Race by Beverly Daniel Tatum
- Restorative Yoga for Ethnic and Race-Based Stress and Trauma by Gail Parker, Ph.D.
- The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel Van der Kolk

## References

<https://www.ensembletherapy.com/blog/what-is-generational-trauma>

<https://www.choosingtherapy.com/intergenerational-trauma/>