






Veronique Mead, MD, MA
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Summary of Relationship between Life Events & Symptoms

Working with symptoms (see questions below):

Give yourself permission to indulge in your resources. Cultivate them. This helps to retrain your brain and gives it new places to go, and provides the safety that facilitates mobilization of fight/flight/freeze.

Look for your triggers. Knowing what they are can help to:

-  understand exacerbations
-  feel less out of control
-  prevent exacerbations (not driving on a rainy day if that is a trigger)
-  make sense of symptom variation in relation to past traumatic events
-  feel less judgmental about the ways our bodies/minds behave

What are your Resources?

Resources are persons, places, things that help you feel supported, calm, grounded, or that enable you to recover after a stressful event and to feel SAFE. A resource could be a dear friend, the presence or the act of touching or walking your dog, a peaceful place you've been to or that exists in your imagination, a wonderful childhood memory drawing, painting, or writing in a journal... hiking...etc

My resources include (respond on another piece of paper):

What stressful / traumatic events occurred early in life?

Events perceived as life-threatening may predispose us to risk for a specific disease when they occur during organ development in early life. Most people who experience trauma in early life will never develop symptoms, however, and loving relationships are very protective. Early stressful events could include maternal prenatal stress (loss of a loved one during pregnancy, illness such as preeclampsia, etc), complications during labor and birth (cesarean, forceps delivery, difficult labor,...); bonding disruptions at birth, such as when babies are separated from parents in the first hours or days such as for nursery care); illness early in life (polio, meningitis, flu) especially if requiring hospitalization; surgery, accidents, falls etc...

Some of my early triggers (traumatic events) could include:

Prenatal life:

Labor and birth:

Early childhood:

Did stressful event(s) precede the onset of symptoms?

Symptoms of chronic illness often first appear within a year or two of stressful events. These events may be painful or traumatic and can include job loss, loss of a loved one, divorce, a seemingly “minor” accident (car, motorcycle, bicycle, ski, etc) or a fall; may involve a painful or invasive medical procedure such as surgery; or might occur on learning that someone you know has been through a traumatic event. Stressful events that precede illness may also be positive, such as marriage, birth, or a job promotion.

Stressful events that might have unmasked my symptoms include:

(If answering this question is stressful, take a break and spend time in or with or thinking of your resources...come back to this later when you feel calm or are feeling better, or you can also simply not do it. This is just a sign that these events are triggers for you.)

What Triggers your Symptoms?

Triggers are experiences, things, people, or events that exacerbate or worsen any of your symptoms. They may be obviously stressful, or may seem subtle and completely ordinary. The subtle triggers are often outside of our conscious awareness or may be disregarded by ourselves and others because they don't make sense or don't appear stressful. Over time, triggers begin to make sense when we compare them to past traumatic events (divorce may be especially painful if our own parents' divorce was very difficult for us; symptoms may get worse a few hours after driving if we've been in a car accident, etc). Triggers can also include: time of day, weather, certain colors, certain movements, getting in your car or back on the ski hill, mood (joy, sadness, anger, grief).

Some of my triggers include:

Places People Time (of day / month / season) Colors Moods Other