

## Dealing with Traumatic Experiences

Sometimes, despite our plans and intentions for our lives, we find ourselves experiencing something we neither expected or could prevent, that frightened us, scarred us and wounded us emotionally, and transformed our vision of a safe world into a dangerous one. We were traumatized by a violation, an act of violence, a catastrophic fire, storm, or earthquake that destroyed our home and possessions, the sudden loss of a loved one, or witnessing others being injured or killed, or undergoing torture or beating,

Trauma can dramatically change our lives. We can receive physical wounds in addition to psychological ones; it can change our lives forever. This webinar will discuss types of trauma, approaches to deal with trauma, how trauma impacts our ability to meditate, and how meditation has been used to work with trauma.

### Types of Trauma

There are a number of experiences that can traumatize you. These include:

Type	Level of Trauma	Emotionalized Belief
1	Physical violation – rape, incest, robbery, kidnapping, physical violence, torture, or war	My body is not safe
2	Etheric assault – poisoning through ingestion of drugs, toxins in food, or in the environment	My food or my world is not safe
3	Emotional assault – abusive relationship, betrayal, attack or vilification in the media, destruction of your reputation through slander	People are not safe
4	Mental assault – experiencing events of terror and horror, witnessing violence and murder	Terrible things can happen at any time and I am powerless to prevent them or change them

Type	Level of Trauma	Emotionalized Belief
5	Personal (identity) assault – identity theft, theft of your intellectual property, corrosive relationships of envy and gossip that aim to make you feel miserable, loss of livelihood	My finances, property, and reputation are not safe
6	Spiritual assault – acts of prejudice, racism, and hatred directed towards you because you belong to a particular tribe, ethnic group, gender, race, or religion; attack on your core beliefs and archetypal identity	It is not safe to be what I am
7	Attack on your worldview – catastrophic events of war, natural disaster, political protest or social upheaval, negative change in government policies or enactment of oppressive laws	There is no where I can be safe

There is no one who is immune to trauma; most people experience some type of traumatic experiences in the course of their lives. The impact of trauma may vary; you may recover from it quickly, or one traumatic experience may vitiate the remainder of your life.

As you reflect on these types of trauma, you may recognize events that happened to you that frightened you, that made you less trusting, and that continue to make you feel pain, shame, and regret even in the present. We next will address how you can deal with these traumas.

### **Approaches to Deal with Trauma**

There are two major strategies to deal with trauma:

- (1) Learn methods or use supportive measures to cope with it
- (2) Eradicate the impressions of karma that trauma generates from the mind

Supportive measures allow you to function in spite of having lived through the experience. The majority of interventions are of this type. These include:

1. Psychotropic medication, which enables one to function in spite of the lingering terror and fear.
2. Psychotherapy, which enables the individual to make sense of the experience, and gradually find ways to cope with it.
3. Support groups, which enable survivors to find strength and hope from each other.
4. Pastoral counseling, which uses religious teachings to bring comfort and strength.
5. Creative expression, which enables the individual to in some way redeem the experience and share it with others.
6. Mindfulness, meditation upon the impressions of the trauma in the mind (without eradicating them), which enables the individuals to have the pain, sadness, and fear, and to function anyway.
7. Transformation by wisdom, which occurs through the process of life experience and personal maturation, in which the trauma becomes embedded in the broader narrative of human life, and over time, no longer occupies such a large place in cognition and affect. In folk wisdom, this strategy has been captured in the saying, "time heals all wounds."

**Transformational methods** actually remove the impressions from the mind, so the karmic darkening of consciousness is reversed. Transformational methods include transformational mantra, Kriya Yoga, and Light Immersion.

Much of the impact of trauma, you experience emotionally. These emotional wounds linger as issues. In working with trauma, you need to gain some facility with working with your emotions. We will share with you some of our writing on dealing with these emotional issues.

## Dealing with Emotional Issues

By George A. Boyd © 1992

The seven basic emotions are shame, anger, grief, fear, disgust, love, and joy. The other emotions are blends of these basic emotions, like the multiplicity of colors are permutations of the basic rainbow. They may vary in intensity, for example, anger ranges from mild irritation to rage. They may vary in quality, like sadness is much less poignant than depression.

Each emotion arises as a reaction to stimuli; it raises an issue, through which one struggles until a resolution is reached. There is a basic perception, founded on beliefs, which underlies the emotion. These underlying beliefs and perceptions must be altered if one is to change the emotional reaction to stimuli. A summary of the emotions is presented in the table below.

Basic Emotion	Issue	Perception	Foundation
Shame	Lowered self esteem	Self is flawed	Comparison with ego ideal "the way I should be"
Anger	Increased Frustration	Other is flawed	Comparison to inner standards or values "the way others or the world should be"
Grief	Loss	Other is gone	Feeling that the other cannot be replaced
Fear	Avoidance	Other is dangerous	Feeling that survival is in jeopardy
Disgust	Aversion	Other is distasteful	Feeling that the other is alien, strange or unpleasant because he does not share any values or lifestyle

Basic Emotion	Issue	Perception	Foundation
Love	Attraction	Other is desirable	Sexual attraction and emotional longing: falling in love
Joy	Fulfillment	Attainment of desire	Experiencing what one has visualized and desired: having, doing or being what was desired

These seven issues can be resolved either actively or passively.

Emotion	Active Mode of Resolution	Passive Mode of Resolution
Shame	Change beliefs comprising ego ideal; change behavior that conflicts with ego ideal	Accept the ideal is unattainable and stop pursuing it
Anger	Seeking justice without violence	Forgiving the offender through understanding
Grief	Seeking to restore that which was lost	Acceptance of loss through grieving process
Fear	Facing the object of fear and mastering it	Acceptance that object of fear must be avoided
Disgust	Changing values or beliefs that make other distasteful	Staying away from object of aversion
Love	Pursuing object of desire and possessing it	Accepting object of desire is unattainable and accepting a symbolic or substitute satisfaction
Joy	Tenaciously applying the will to a goal until the goal is achieved	Having the desired object come to one by the agencies of Fate

With the resolution of each emotional issue, an inner core of emotional maturity is developed. This comprises a competency to deal with diverse stimuli of multiple situations, and to cope with the tension of the emotional issues themselves. When one knows that resolution is possible, it becomes easier to defer gratification of desire or completion of the perceptual gestalt.

One can live with some ambiguity, without requiring immediate clarification or resolution. This inner patience and acceptance is what is called peace of mind. It is achieved by working through the emotions, the issues of life, and not by avoiding them. In the world of the emotions, the only way “out” is through.

### **Meditation’s Role in Working with Emotionalized Issues**

As we have seen, mindfulness meditation is one of the supportive measures that have been used to help people cope with trauma. In addition to Vipassana, I have learned that Transcendental Meditation™ is now being used in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Transcendental Meditation™ is a practice derived from one of the Supracosmic Paths. The first stage of this practice is based on a mantra that is given to people based largely on their age and the challenges they are experiencing in life at that stage.

Their way of using a mantra I have termed, the *thought-bubble mantra* method. Unlike *chanting*, where the mantra is spoken aloud, or *japa*, where the attention repeats the mantra silently within the mind, the thought bubble method places the attention on the mantram resonance and follows it—like you were following a moving object with your attention.

The mantram resonance gets subtler and subtler, as it moves to deeper strata of the mind. The thought-bubble mantra practitioner experiences deeper states of relaxation as he or she allows attention to follow this resonance along its track.

In the article, “Use of Transformational Mantra as a Therapeutic Modality,” which is in our book, *A Mudrashram® Reader: Understanding Integral Meditation*, we discuss the use of these mantras. We excerpt from this article about this type of mantra:

“There are four types of bija mantras that operate in the First Cosmic Initiation. These bija mantras are:”

- (1) Mantras associated with the developmental cycles of life that are based on age. These invoke the gods and goddesses of the first Subplane of the Cosmic Causal Plane of the First Cosmic Initiation... [This is the first Transcendental Meditation mantra the practitioner receives. The article goes on to discuss the other three types encountered at this level.]

“Bija mantras of type one are geared toward the maturation of faculties of the personality. These mantras are linked with age appropriate learning, attraction of a life mate, achievement of career success and wealth to support a family, transmission of values and wisdom to the children, and integration of the experiences of life. The following list of 18 type one mantras was gathered from the Internet in 1998 at”

<http://www.trancenet.org/secrets/mantras.shtml#advanced>

“This list purports to be the actual mantras that are revealed by one of the Supracosmic lineages that use type one bija mantras. It lists these mantras together with their associated deities. The discussion of life stage is our own added commentary to this material.”



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MANTRA(S)	ASSOCIATED GOD/GODDESS	LIFE STAGE
eng, em, enga, ema, aing, aim, ainga, aima	Saraswati, [goddess of learning. music, speech and fine arts]	Academic preparation from kindergarten to college, typically given for ages 5 to 24
shiring, shirim	Mahalakshmi or Lakshmi, [goddess of wealth]	Career development, gaining wealth to support a family, typically given for ages 18 to 32, when an individual is working
hring, hirim	Bhuvanewari, or Mahamaya [goddess of wisdom]	Parenting, transmission of values and wisdom to the next generation, typically given to parents, ages 25 to 40
kiring, kirim	Kalika [goddess of fulfillment of desires, destroyer of obstacles]	Integration of the experiences of life, fulfillment of remaining personal aspirations and desires, given for middle age and above when the children are grown, as early as age 40
shyam, shyama	Krishna [the god of love, the all-attractive one]	Attraction of a life mate, may be typically given at any age from 18 to 36, when issues of loneliness or being single are paramount for the individual
ram, shri ram	Agni [the god of fire]	Personal mastery and overcoming obstacles in career or life, given as an alternate mantra for the same age groups as Shiring or Shirim when the individual is seeking achievement and success in their career as their primary objective; this mantra is associated with the achievement of leadership and personal power

## **Can Transcendental Meditation Help Overcome Trauma?**

I brought this question to the Swamis in a recent meditation, who answered me in their characteristic comprehensive manner. In their response, they refer to something called the mantram ladder, or what we have previously called the *axis of correspondence* in an article, "Guidelines for Successful Simran," which is also in *A Mudrashram® Reader: Understanding Integral Meditation*.

Each mantra guides the attention in a slightly different fashion, so as one repeats the mantra of one path, it will lead the attention to different levels of the Great Continuum than a mantra from another tradition. As we follow this mantra with each repetition, and chart the content, it yields a series of discrete locations along the Continuum. [It is important for you to grasp this idea to be able to follow their response.]

So here's my question and their response.

**Q:** Does Transcendental Meditation™ have a role in overcoming post-traumatic stress disorder? How does this work?

**A:** To answer this question, we must carefully study the actual mechanism through which the Transcendental Meditation™ mantra (T.M.) operates, and where it operates. To do this, we must track the loci of their mantram ladder.

In the table on the next page, we follow a typical T.M. mantra through the major stages of its journey to the seed atom embedded in the substrate of the Cosmic Causal Subplane of the First Cosmic Initiation, [and beyond]. We track the location of these mantram loci and give some general markers for that band of awareness [on the mantram ladder.]



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Repetition	Location	Band of Awareness
1	Frontal brain	Conscious awareness
2	Solar plexus	Somatic awareness
3	Ego	Personal issue, life awareness
4	Intellect	Cognitive/conceptual awareness
5	Being	Unitive awareness, peace
6	Subtle causal form	Yantra of the deity invoked
7	Subtle Physical Plane	Form of Vedic god or goddess
8	Subtle Illumined Mind	Reflection of the Brahma 5 Path
9	Biophysical Universe: Quantum Unified Field	Union with the substrate of Matter
10	Psychic Realm: Psychic Guide Form	Union with the Psychic Realm form of the Brahma 5 Guru
11	Manasic Plane: Ancient Wisdom Subplane	Reflection of the Brahma 5 Path
12	First Cosmic Initiation: Whirling Cave	Seat of cosmic consciousness
13	Base of spine chakra	Cosmic Physical Subplane: Cosmic Physical form
14	Navel chakra	
15	Solar plexus chakra	

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Repetition	Location	Band of Awareness
16	Heart chakra	Cosmic Physical Subplane: Cosmic Physical form
17	Throat chakra	
18	Point between the eyebrows chakra	
19	Brain chakra	
20	Merging into a brilliant star	Cosmic Physical Subplane: Cosmic Physical Universe
21	Merging into the center of a galaxy	
22	Union with the entire Cosmic Physical Universe	
23	Astral form of the deity invoked	Cosmic Astral Subplane: Cosmic Astral Universe
24	Yantra of the deity invoked	Cosmic Causal Subplane: Cosmic Causal Universe
25	Compassionate heart of the deity invoked	
26	Rosary of mantras for the deity invoked	
27	Essence of the seed atom of the Path in the spinal tune	
28 to n	Transmuting karmic impressions behind the seed atom	
N+1	Brahman - origin of the seed atom	"Pure consciousness"

The number of additional repetitions (n) is dependent on the density of the karma along the track of the seed atom.

The potential impact of the T.M. on any current life issue is dependent on whether this issue is represented as karmic impressions in the karmic reservoir at this level. Repetitions of the mantra beyond octave 27 will begin to transmute this karma at the Cosmic Causal level. When this karma is fully removed, the seed atom is merged into Brahman, which in Transcendental Meditation philosophy has been called the Pure Consciousness.

If the T.M. mantra is going to fully resolve a traumatic issue that appears in the unconscious mind as unresolved karmic patterns, we need to trace the impact of the technique on the global karmic storehouse. We examine the impact of T.M. on 16 levels, at which we can monitor these karmic impressions. If T.M. is truly removing the karmic substrate of the issue and completely resolving it, we should see concomitant purification of the issue at all 16 levels.

We observe that through completion of the karmic transmutation process at the Cosmic Causal Subplane of the First Cosmic Initiation that the karmic impressions at this level are removed, and the seed atom merges into Brahman. But the question is, does this purification concomitantly occur at the other bands of the mind where karma dwells, when someone uses this mantra?

Level	Appearance of karma	Affected by T. M. Mantra?
Physical body	Muscular armor, tissue inflammation, accretion of mucus and phlegm	No
Emotional seed atom	Unresolved emotional issues	No
Ego (Shadow)	Uncontrolled life problems in the personal unconscious	No

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Level	Appearance of karma	Affected by T. M. Mantra?
Chakras of the Subconscious Mind	Blockage in the left hand channel (Ida)	No
Causal body of the Subconscious Mind	Unresolved karmic issues imbedded in the pattern of human life	No
Self	Non-integrated subpersonalities in the middle unconscious	No
Subtle causal body	Karmic impressions in this form	No
Akashic Record Subplane: Present Time Awareness	Autonomous life patterns or unresolved issues	No
Planetary Realm: Causal body of the Soul's essential vehicle	Karmic impressions in the four quadrants of the throat center of the Soul's essential vehicle	No
Causal body, 1st Cosmic Initiation	Impressions in the causal body behind the heart seed atom	Yes
Starry realm above the 5th Cosmic Initiation	Mirror of karmic completion	No
Path Karma, Supracosmic Sphere	Karma dwelling behind the seed atom of a Supracosmic Path on which the mantra is active	Yes (for the seed atom of Brahma 5)

Level	Appearance of karma	Affected by T. M. Mantra?
Lords of Karma, top of the Supracosmic Sphere	The entire record of karma for the Personal, Subtle, Planetary, Transplanetary, Cosmic, and Supracosmic Bands of the Mind	No (except the two instances of purification noted above)
Lords of Karma, top of the 2nd Plane, T2 (three mountains center)	The entire record of karma of T7 to the Mahatma Stage (mountain one), the entire Path of T1 (mountain two), and the path of T2 up to this stage (mountain three)	No
Lords of Karma, top of the 2nd Plane, T5	The record of karma for the remainder of T2, the entire T3 and T4 paths, and the T5 karma up to this Plane	No
Bridge path, Lotus of Incarnation at the Dharma Lord Stage	Mirror of all karma from the Personal, Subtle, Planetary, Transplanetary, Cosmic, and Supracosmic; and the karma for the entire path of T1 to T5, the Bridge Path and T7 to the Dharma Lord Stage	No (except the two instances of purification noted above)

As can be seen from this analysis, the T. M. mantra exerts its karma-purifying effect at two levels, and does not remove the remainder of the karmic accretions.

Since initial studies of its effects suggest that it, to some degree, ameliorates the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), we need to uncover how this might be occurring. We can speculate that it exerts its effects through one of the following mechanisms:

1. *Rebalancing the hemispheres of the brain through the effects of the meditation.* The T.M. mantra may link up the two hemispheres of the brain and synchronize them. The mantra may promote inter-hemispheric processing, which appears to have some impact on trauma, similar to EMDR.
2. *Regenerative effects of meditation.* The “deep rest” and stress-reduction resulting from T.M. practice may soothe the terror and hyper-vigilance of PTSD, and allow the practitioner to relax.
3. *Entraining brain wave patterns and synchronizing the patterns of the subatomic field.* The brainwave patterns of hyper-alertness and stress [fast beta] are supplanted by slower meditation-generated alpha, delta, and theta waves, which accompany states of serenity, calmness, and peace. This might ameliorate some PTSD symptoms for the period of meditation, and may be sustained after the meditation session.
4. *The dissociative effects of meditation may remove attention from embeddedness in the traumatic issue.* By focusing attention on the mantram resonance, attention ascends the mantram ladder and becomes merged in the seed atom. From this detached vantage point, the practitioner may not feel the impact of the terror [and other emotions that make up the PTSD syndrome for the individual]. In this way, the effects of T.M. resemble a psychotropic meditation that deadens the feelings of trauma: when one is high (dissociated), one feels no pain.

5. *Re-identification with cosmic consciousness or the seed atom of a Supracosmic Path permits disidentification with the traumatic issue.* If using the T.M. mantra ultimately results in a re-identification with either cosmic consciousness or the seed atom of the Brahma 5 Path, the issues of human life may seem distant, illusory, or dream-like.

In Hindu Philosophy, this awakening to higher consciousness, together with the discovery of the illusory nature of all phenomena (Maya), confers inner peace and joy upon the practitioner. In this scenario, the practitioner identifies with this higher essence and does not return to his or her traumatized personality.

6. *The strong desire of the patient for healing and surcease may lead him or her to identify the T.M. mantra as a panacea.* Some of the T.M. mantra's healing effects might be a function of the patient's own beliefs, which in turn, affect his or her nervous system to produce symptom relief. In this scenario, the T.M. mantra triggers a placebo effect—the patient uses a form of autohypnosis to convince the subconscious mind that the mantra is making him or her feel better.
7. *Meditation may facilitate a perceptual reframing of the way the trauma is perceived.* By lifting attention out of identification with the victimized ego, which believes “I have been traumatized, the world is threatening”, it becomes possible to change this frame to “I have been traumatized, but many other positive things have also happened to me, and in my deep core, I am safe.”

Instead of the trauma occupying the whole of the patient's perceptual focus, it just becomes one episode in a full life that has experienced pain, misery, unhappiness, and other bad experiences, but has also known joy, satisfaction, happiness, and other good experiences.

From this new mindset, it appears possible to live with whatever has happened, and to expect that he or she will recover, put this aside, and move on. This transformational shift resembles the outcome of successful coaching and psychotherapy: the patient adopts a new perspective in which the traumatic events are viewed as unfortunate, but he or she can live with them, and move on with life.

In summary, while the T.M. mantra does not appear to be removing the actual karmic impressions that hold the trauma in place, its therapeutic action appears to stem from these seven other mechanisms that facilitate relaxation, stress-release, dissociation and disidentification, and perceptual (mindset shift), amplified by the patient's own expectations (placebo effect).



- If you have experienced trauma in your life, what has helped you recover and function again?
- Has meditation helped you deal with this trauma? What types helped you? In what ways did it help you?
- Have you found that meditation paradoxically intensified your traumatic symptoms, so you had to stop meditating?
- If you have experienced trauma, do you feel that you have fully recovered from it, or does it continue to affect you today?
- Have you done anything to redeem your experience, so you can create something good from a bad experience?
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Thank you for attending our webinar today!

