

“Don’t miss this! Trauma is ubiquitous and these are the cardinal skills needed to best help those in need.”

Lloyd I. Sederer MD, Former New York City Mental Health Commissioner.



The Trauma- Informed Coach

Strategies to support clients
when their past prevents progress

JOANNA HARPER



Part One **Resourcing Coaches and Clients**

- Discover why the past prevents progress for some clients.
- Integrate ten important trauma- informed core competencies into your coaching practice.
- Enhance your skills with four unique, client-centred, integrative coaching models.



Part Two **The Trauma-Skilled, Integrative Coach's Casebook**

- Reflect and learn as you read about the impact of unresolved trauma on the behaviour, relationships and lives of five complex coaching clients.



Part Three **Trauma Demystified**

- Untangle trauma definitions, jargon and emergent trauma theories.
- Learn about the long-term impact of unprocessed early childhood trauma.
- Refine your professional practice.



Part Four **Skills and Models for Integrative Coaching**

- Introducing the key skills, models and methodologies you need to develop a trauma-informed, integrative coaching approach.



Resources

- Plan ahead with the skills audit.
- Safeguarding - be prepared.



Trauma is ubiquitous. But not an understanding of its toxic presence in our minds and bodies. Nor how to enable its casualties to build a life of hope and contribution. In the wake of 9/11, I was mental health commissioner for NYC. A substantial FEMA grant allowed the city to mount a mental health response to this deeply disquieting disaster. But for all the mental health professionals in NYC, and there were many, very few were skilled in fostering resilience and trauma counselling. Had Joanna Harper's book, The Trauma Informed Coach, been in print, we could have used it to equip counsellors and coaches with the cardinal skills needed to best serve those in need. It is now. Don't miss it.

- Lloyd I Sederer, MD, former Mental Health Commissioner for NYC; former Chief Medical Officer for the NYS Office of Mental Health, USA

This is such an important book for coaches. Coaching is so valued for its primary focus on the client's present and future. Yet often issues may be driven by past events, many of which can involve trauma. This book provides an invaluable roadmap for identifying these issues and compassionately navigating a safe and effective route for the client to find their way to solutions. Highly recommended.

- Dr Phil Parker, Lead University Lecturer in Coaching and designer of the Lightning Process, UK

A most valuable contribution to the field by Joanna Harper that examines and outlines the different ways of approaching the traumatised individual in a manner that alleviates the suffering that is all too common in our modern world.

- Andrew T. Austin, developer of Integral Eye Movement Techniques (IEMT), UK

Comprehensive, practical and timely, this book addresses one of the biggest challenges of our time. In our highly and pervasively traumatised world, many people have lost their way, feel broken into pieces and hopelessly cut off from one another. Joanna offers a unique, trauma-informed, whole-person coaching approach tapping into her extensive experience and coaching wisdom. Undoubtedly, this book is for coaches who need the best, most reliable and inspiring guidance.

- Jean Bosco Niyonzima, MD, Ubuntu Center for Peace, Rwanda

Vital reading for all coaches working with traumatised populations. Whether your clients are veterans of military war zones or familial war zones, this book will give you the tools to create a trauma-sensitive practice for them all.

- Charlie Morley, sleep coach and author of *Wake up to Sleep*, UK

This is a much-needed book in these times of extreme change. And Joanna has dealt with this in such a profound way. So much of what she says supports the principles that I have learnt with my NLP work over the years - that we work in the present, that every client is unique and it is our ability to relate to that that makes the difference. I am sure that as a result of reading this book your range and therefore your ability to deal with whatever comes up in a coaching session will be enriched. Definitely a book for all coaches who want to deal with the truth of the unexpected.

- Sue Knight, NLP Master Trainer and author of *NLP at Work*, France

Finally, a detailed practical guide! Recent years have seen many popular books on the evolving, underlying philosophies involved in approaching trauma... but what Harper has created is a rare trinity: comprehensive, in depth, but, most importantly, applied. She has deftly isolated and delineated models and tools required for contemporary trauma-informed coaching. Hard-won insights from years of impassioned exploration, distilled into a well-structured, must-have toolkit for coaches – this book will save you years of searching!

– Tom Granger, author of *Draw Breath; The Art of Breathing*, UK

This book is an absolute gem for anyone in a coaching and/or supporting role to enhance the quality of your work. Joanna's years of personal work, practice and wisdom shines through. She offers a clear trauma-informed pathway of working intelligently, kindly and safely and beautifully explains the value and importance of compassionate co-regulation and deep listening.

– Jyoti Jo Manuel, developer of the Special Yoga methodology, UK

What a wealth of practical advice and expertise all in one place. To be safe around trauma we need a depth of understanding, awareness and range of options. This book beautifully talks coaches through grounding and safety practices and to make wise decisions in their practice. This is the first and only book I have come across of its type and I will absolutely recommend it as essential reading for all new coaches I train. I wish I had had this available earlier in my coaching journey.

– Dr Suzanne Henwood, neuroscience-based coach and counsellor, New Zealand

An awareness of trauma and its impact is essential if we, as human beings, are to understand ourselves and each other. This book is a ground-breaking guide that brings trauma awareness into mainstream coaching in a way which emphasises coach and client safety, respects professional boundaries and is grounded in a deep understanding of the impact of trauma on the body. Joanna's whole-person and compassionate work draws together client journeys with powerful practice models. It is potentially game changing for practitioners looking to deepen their professional practice.

– Jenny Oklikah, coach and CEO of an international non-profit organisation for young people, UK

As a coach it's highly likely that you'll find yourself working with clients who have experienced trauma in their life. The Trauma-Informed Coach sets out to fill a critical knowledge gap and succeeds in doing so. This comprehensive book will give you confidence, knowledge, skills and tools so you can better support your clients and enable their progress towards a richer life. The models included are clever and useful, not only in working with trauma but in coaching practice more widely, while the case studies bring the concepts to life. A must-have for any serious coaching professional.

– Lara Cullen, coach and author of *How to be a People Person*, UK

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JOANNA HARPER

The Trauma-Informed Coach

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*This book is dedicated to my family, clients and students,
who have all taught me so much.*

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Please Note:

The information shared in this book is advisory and for your information only. It is not intended to be a substitute for mental or physical healthcare by medical professionals, nor is it intended to be used to treat those diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The reader uses these practices at their own risk; they are a complement to, not a replacement for, mental health treatment, care and professional training.

The five case studies included in this book are a composite of people's stories and experiences. They are intended to illustrate a range of trauma responses, definitions and theories. Any likeness to actual client case histories is coincidental.

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Foreword

As a Harvard-trained psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, I taught and practised conventional care during the first 20 years of my career until my husband, Dr Richard Brown, introduced me to complementary and integrative medicine, particularly breath-centred mind–body practices. Over the next 20 years, we discovered together that by applying modern psychology and neuroscience to ancient practices, we could modify them for the treatment of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and a host of other psychological and physical conditions. This led to working with survivors of mass disasters, research studies, and the creation of our Breath-Body-Mind™ (BBM) programmes.

Teaching my patients breath-centred mind–body practices enhances their progress in psychotherapy, especially for those who have survived trauma. In many cases, physical and emotional traumas become intertwined, locked deep in the mind, inaccessible to verbal therapies. Using the breath and the body to send signals to the brain, one can access and reduce the negative influence of the past on the present without retraumatisation.

I first met Joanna when she enrolled in a BBM course after she attended my presentation at an Action Trauma conference in Ireland. Being an experienced trainer and clinician, she progressed quickly through the levels of BBM teacher training to become one of our most active senior teachers. One of the first qualities that resonated with me was Joanna's voice – soft, gentle, steady, calming, unrushed – a voice devoid of any tension, a voice that creates a feeling of safety and gently holds the hearts of those who seek help. Such a voice comes from years of working through one's own traumas, becoming well grounded and helping others to work through their traumas.

The second insight that came to me about Joanna was that she gave me very detailed and accurate progress reports on our BBM course participants. I came to trust her assessments and her clinical judgement. The third talent I noticed was Joanna's ability to organise teaching points and convey complex material effectively, a talent she has clearly applied in writing this book.

The first task for coaches and therapists is to prepare to do the very best for their clients. This preparation includes training, ongoing study, self-

development and self-tuning. The trauma-informed coach is the therapeutic instrument. Just as musicians listen carefully and tune their instruments before playing, coaches must also become aware of their own psychophysiological states and apply the necessary tools to balance and adjust themselves for sensitive, attuned engagement with clients.

As healthcare providers, we often forget that what is good for the client may also be good for the therapist. We know intellectually that self-care is important, but do we regularly practise it? We expect our clients to make time for self-reflection, but too often forget to do so ourselves, and in neglecting self-reflection, we omit a rich source of insight into our work with clients. We miss opportunities to monitor our inner responses to the moment-to-moment events occurring in the treatment, to notice what feelings may be influencing our words and actions, to pause long enough to assess our interventions and, when appropriate, to change course.

This is not a book to rush through. Take your time to experience the exercises and absorb the nuanced case studies. As you learn the methods and sequences in this book, you will find that Joanna applies the same tools for supporting clients that she uses to help coaches develop. You will be guided towards the inner resources you will need to work more effectively and to sustain your own growth and wellbeing throughout your coaching career.

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Introduction

Imagine yourself in the following situation with a coaching client. You have established a collaborative thinking space and a relationship of trust, rapport and connection. The session (or course of sessions) seems to be going well. You ask them a simple coaching question that generates an answer you neither expected nor asked them for. Your client discloses details about adverse events from their past that were traumatising to them. What do you do if this is beyond your coaching agreement, client contracting and professional boundaries, your scope of professional practice, training level or current skillset?

Maybe this has already happened to you, as many coaches find themselves in this situation with clients who disclose trauma. It has often been my professional experience as a coach, trainer and co-coaching facilitator. When I've asked many newly certified as well as experienced coaches if they've ever been in a situation like this too, almost all of them have. Coaches have asked me what to do in these situations, how to stop this from happening, and whether I've written about my experience and approach. The need and enthusiasm for more information inspired me to write this book to trauma-inform and support you as a coach, as well as your clients, sharing some content from my signature trauma-informed coach professional development course.

Now is the time for us all to consider new and additional client-centred approaches, including a coaching and change work approach based on individual needs and outcomes. The mental health and emotional wellbeing of adults and children all over the world have been impaired by the pandemic, social distancing restrictions and other significant global events including wars and conflicts. Mental healthcare provision in the UK was stretched before the emergence of COVID-19, with only the most urgent cases being able to access help. This is a global issue that's not unique to the UK. A large body of evidence-based research links the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on both physical and mental health and life expectancy. Therefore, it's vital for us to become a more trauma-informed, trauma-aware society.

Coaches are well positioned to make a positive impact with their specific skills, knowledge and awareness. Whether you coach in an organisation, private practice or as a volunteer, you'll find helpful information and unique coaching

models in this book. As you read, you'll be invited to explore your response to the case studies as if they are your clients, and to identify your professional practice and training needs. Coaching is primarily focused on working with clients in the present moment and orienting them to the future. However, sometimes a client's past prevents their progress. Some find it a challenge to be fully present; they can ruminate on and relive their past while feeling anxious and worried about their future.

Many psychotherapists and counsellors are adopting a coaching and change work approach with their clients. They are trained in coaching and change work methods, including mindfulness, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Integral Eye Movement Techniques (IEMT), but not all of them also have in-depth trauma training. Other coaches have attended coach training specific to their professional field, niche or area of coaching interest and have no trauma awareness; it's not a requirement of a coach training course syllabus. I have included content in this book to close knowledge gaps and develop skills, raise awareness of complex issues, and inspire deeper learning and understanding of the impact of trauma on the lives of your clients and everyone with whom they interact. Being trauma-informed and aware will help you to become a more effective coach.

I don't intend to instruct you on how to work with traumatised clients in this book, but to trauma-inform you and raise your trauma awareness. The multi-layered topic of trauma requires specific training and professional development for those who wish to become trained to appropriately and effectively coach clients who have experienced trauma and adversity. There's no set format or list of questions to ask when working with clients. Integrative coaching is generative, developmental, client-focused and client-led. There's no one answer, approach, technique or medication that suits every client. Clients are unique and individual, as are their life experiences and circumstances.

How to use this book

To help you navigate the content and easily find what you need, this book is structured in four parts as outlined.

Part One

This section will explain why the past prevents progress for some clients, and the value of having a range of safe strategies to support your clients.

Chapter 1 sets out my ten core coaching competencies for trauma-informed coaches. It also outlines my integrative, client-centred, whole-person approach to coaching, where I will introduce you to some top-down and bottom-up practical skills.

In this part of the book, I will also be sharing four new coaching models that I have developed and refined based on my years of experience, which my clients and students have found useful, empowering and easy to use:

1. **The GROUNDED model:** This is more than a regulated way of being present for coaches, clients and teams; it's also an integral coaching style and solution.
2. **The APEX model:** A practical, easy-to-use, four-step strategy to help you break the patterns of circular thinking, negative self-talk, habits and behavioural responses.
3. **The Trauma Trees:** These are illustrations designed to show you some of the more complex trauma concepts and the ripple effect of trauma and adversity in an at-a-glance format. They aren't intended to be definitive or diagnostic but to provide a thought-provoking visual prompt, spectrum of symptoms, experiences and potential outcomes.
4. **Roots and Branches:** Not all the Trees illustrate trauma and adversity concepts; some show the growth and potential of nurturing inner resources, regulation and resilience-building practices. You can return to these illustrations as you read and reflect on the multi-layered ideas they symbolise.

Key

These are symbols you will find throughout this book inviting you to pause, reflect, engage and take action:



Action point



Coach's caution



Pause



Reader reflections

Part Two

This comprises a casebook. I've created five fictionalised composite case studies that are rich in detail and content to demonstrate a wide range of trauma theories, definitions and principles. They show the impact of trauma on five people and their lives through their stories. Each client has a complex trauma history that is not immediately apparent or disclosed. Their stories demonstrate the long-term legacy of unresolved, unprocessed adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and illustrate a trauma-informed, trauma-skilled, integrative coaching approach. Do explore the case studies in the sequence they are ordered as they become progressively more complex.

Not all trauma happens in childhood; however, early exposure to negative relational experiences significantly increases the risk of repeated, retraumatisation into adulthood, as you will discover as you progress through the book and explore each case study.

There are many opportunities for you to pause, reflect and engage with the information covered, and for you to self-regulate with the state management practices shared in Part One. There are also key learning points for you to consider. Pausing and self-regulation are essential for your psychological safety; spending too long studying and thinking about trauma in one session is not recommended. Researching and writing this book has been challenging for me at times and triggered memories of my own traumatic experiences. Taking a break from the subject has been a healthy and resourcing necessity for me.

The case studies represent my integrative methodology, expertise and experience, demonstrating how I work with my clients. As you read, you're encouraged to reflect, experience and embody the practices, resourcing yourself throughout. Consider the case studies as if these were your clients. Reflection will help to prepare you emotionally, practically and professionally for the time when a client presents with or discloses a trauma narrative in a coaching session with you.

Part Three

This part of the book opens with an at-a-glance section that demystifies trauma jargon and terminology, including summaries of the diagnostic criteria for PTSD from three major international sources and emergent trauma theories, definitions and models. Here you will increase your awareness of potential trauma triggers and responses.

Medically, trauma is defined as an injury such as a wound to body tissue. Emotionally, it is an upset that results in severe mental or emotional stress. From a whole-person perspective, it applies to *any event or experience* that

overwhelms a person's ability to cope and rebalance afterwards. Those experiencing high levels of stress and trauma may cope for a while, but in the long term they need strategies to calm and regulate their nervous system, to process events and the impact of them.

Chapter 10 summarises the interconnectedness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), attachment theory and polyvagal theory (the range of autonomic nervous system responses to danger) in the context of trauma and adversity. The physiological and emotional impact of attachment relationships are illustrated in the case studies and explained further. To counterbalance trauma and adversity, I've emphasised the value of regulation strategies, protective and mitigating factors, building hope and resilience and the potential for post-traumatic growth following adversity.

Chapter 11 begins with two coaching dilemmas that highlight and consider the importance of safeguarding, confidentiality, professional practice, defining your scope of coaching practice, regular reflective practice and supervision.

Part Four

In the final part of the book, you'll discover the steps to more supportive strategies – regulation techniques, including three fundamental Breath-Body-Mind™ (BBM) evidence-based breathing with movement techniques, plus coaching, NLP and change work models that I've adapted for use with an integrative trauma-informed coaching approach. I will also be introducing you to the PRESENT model, which is a generative well-formed outcome framework that can be transformative and empowering for clients while they're considering and setting their goals and outcomes.

Lastly, as this book's core message and intention are to trauma-inform you, you can establish your current scope of practice, skill and training level by using the resources included in the appendices. This will help you to know when to coach a client or refer them to trauma-trained professionals. The skills audit section in the appendices will guide you to identify and plan your professional development requirements and training needs.

Becoming trauma-informed

The term 'trauma-informed' means being trauma-aware and trauma-sensitive. Reading this book will give you some knowledge of the short- and long-term impact of adversity, trauma definitions and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) criteria. You can also develop processes and strategies to support your clients, including a policy to refer them to other trained professionals and relevant organisations.

Who is a coach?

'Coach' is an umbrella term used throughout this book to represent anyone who offers coaching and change work, regardless of their level and diversity of training, experience and background. The term 'coach' includes coaching psychology, brief therapy and a spectrum of coaching methodologies, including NLP and IEMT, health, life, gestalt, generative, mBIT, cognitive behavioural, solution-focused, humanistic, developmental, strengths-based, executive, leadership, performance, positive psychology, mindfulness and breathwork.

Who is the client?

The word 'client' represents anyone who receives coaching and change work, either formally or informally, in one-to-one sessions or groups. I believe that clients who have experienced trauma and adversity don't always need to be excluded from access to coaching. It's not a binary choice between more traditional counselling and psychotherapeutic approaches or coaching and change work.

Some people try to avoid the stigma of therapy, or they've already had some treatment. They've talked about what happened, and now they need some safe, supportive strategies to move forward in their lives. Clients can choose the best approach for them.

Coaching and change work have many therapeutic benefits. However, it's not the coach's role to offer 'therapy' or 'fixes' to the client, but to meet them and accept them where they are and as who they are. Coaches work with clients in the present moment and connect them with their inner resources, identifying any obstacles to achieving desired outcomes and goals.

Curious to know more and take your coaching to the next level? Let's get started.

Part One

Resourcing Coaches and Clients

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1 An Integrative Coaching Approach

Trauma change happens in the present.

Bessel van der Kolk, trauma researcher and author

Coaches primarily work with their clients in the present, orienting them to their desired outcomes, wishes and goals, not their problems and issues. Many core coaching and change work skills can guide clients towards accepting life changes, making their own informed choices, acting decisively, increasing their resilience, flexibility and motivation to achieve their goals and outcomes with a positive outlook. These are all key to transformation and acceptance following trauma and adversity.

Chronic, unresolved stress and dysregulation impact emotional and physical health and wellbeing. Coaches can help clients to reduce the short- and long-term effects of stress and trauma on health, wellbeing and high rates of burnout. Safe, supportive strategies for transformation, peace and acceptance include increased awareness, connection with others, a hopeful outlook, self-regulation, self-care and autonomy.

What is an integrative coaching approach?

*Knowledge comes from but a single perspective;
wisdom comes from multiple perspectives.*

Gregory Bateson, philosopher and anthropologist

An integrative coach uses a range or blend of coaching and change work approaches in a client-centred way, appreciating that each person is a unique individual shaped by their circumstances, family and all their life experiences. In the same way that there is no one shoe to fit and suit every foot, there is no coaching model or set of questions that is the 'best' approach for all clients. Having a range of coaching skills and change work options that can be drawn upon and blended while considering multiple factors as you are working in a grounded, facilitative way are all essential when adopting an integrative coaching approach.

So how do you coach this client? The answer depends on multiple factors.

Essential skills include:

- ♦ maintaining an attitude of curiosity
- ♦ tracking non-verbal communication
- ♦ deeply listening to what the client says and how they say it
- ♦ accepting the client as they are
- ♦ inviting them to experience coaching and self-management techniques.

Coaching mastery evolves with experience and practice; it's essential to commit to your continuing coaching development.



Coach's caution

However well-intentioned you are, you may do more harm than good without understanding the complexities of trauma. It is important to keep your clients and yourself safe, resourced and supported.

Stay safe while exploring trauma by using the models and regulation techniques in this book yourself. When studying and reading about trauma, you may see trauma and adversity everywhere. Trauma can taint and distort people's sense of themselves and their world view. They can be in a cycle of fear, pain and suspicion, leaving them feeling overwhelmed and helpless. Adversity is, in many ways, part of daily life, as is nature, humanity, friendship, happiness, love, compassion, hope, joy and kindness.

It's vital for your emotional wellbeing and balance to remain grounded and aware of your state of regulation, triggers, filters, and perceptions. Take time to notice the beauty of life, removing your trauma goggles regularly; coach your clients to do the same.

Your state matters

Coaches who are regulated, and in a balanced state of mind and physiology, can be present and attentive with their clients. Your state influences your client's state. This is known as co-regulation.

Trauma creates a state of dysregulation, emotional and physiological arousal. The client may not be able to manage and stabilise their own physiological state or thoughts. Coaching them to effectively use regulation and stabilisation techniques and practices will improve their self-management and presence.

Coping and soothing strategies

Unwanted behaviours and habits are often coping or soothing strategies to manage stress and avoid feelings, emotions, thoughts and memories. It is essential for the client to generate resourceful, meaningful, achievable and realistic alternatives.

The GROUNDED and APEX models described in chapter 2 have been developed and refined to include self-regulation and awareness skills.

The roots and branches model

The ripple effect of trauma spreads across a person's life and their relationships with themselves, to others and into the world around them. Their behaviours can be problematic, chaotic and maybe the first indication of a deep-rooted issue.

With respect to this, I have developed the concept of the Trauma Trees to illustrate and simplify a spectrum of complex, interwoven and multi-layered trauma concepts and consequences. They show the potential (not literal) impact and legacy of unresolved trauma and adversity in an at-a-glance format.

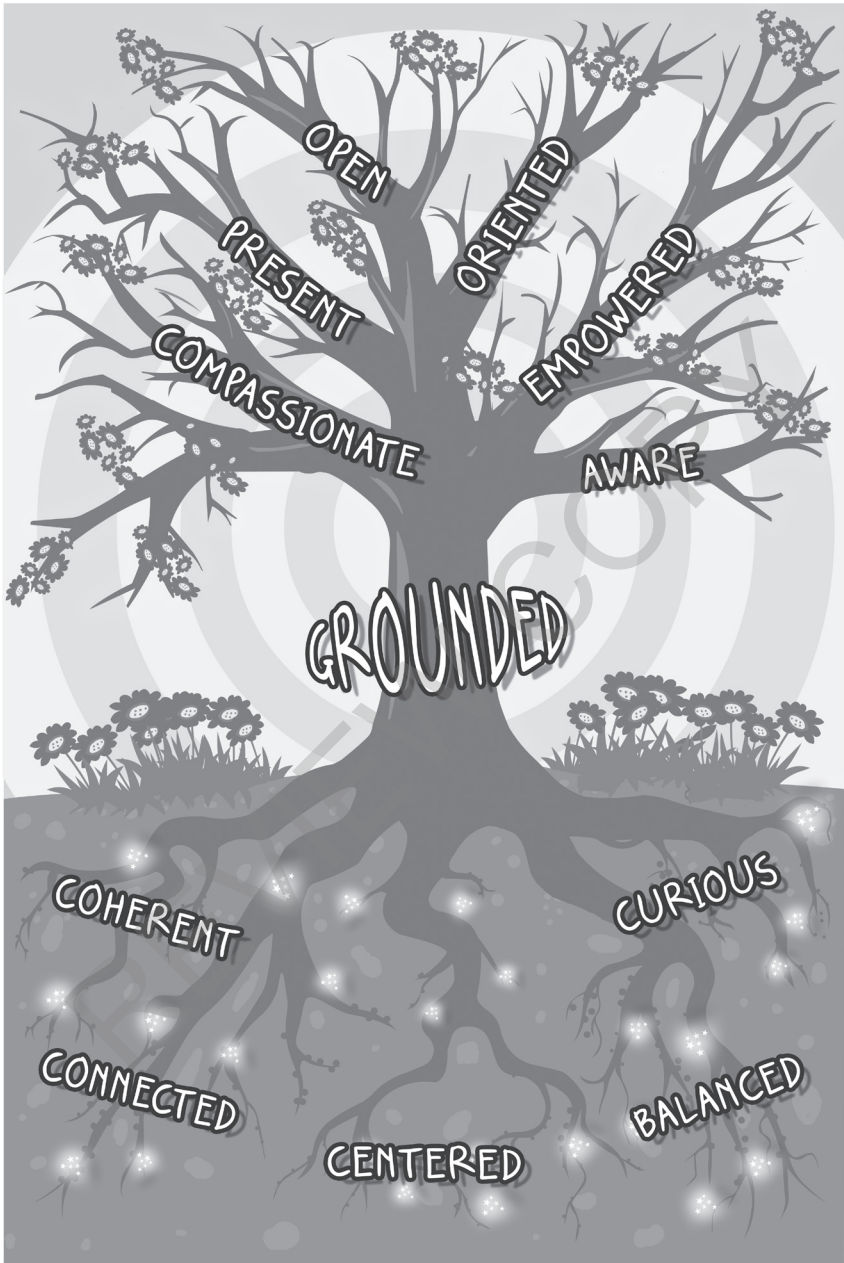
By contrast, there are many benefits of cultivating an ongoing self-regulation practice and strategies that are positive, empowering and life-enhancing to counter the impact and overcome barriers to progress. Not everyone who experiences trauma and adversity develops PTSD.

Ten essential trauma-informed core coaching competencies

It is strongly recommended that you develop the following skills, policies and trauma-sensitive competencies into your coaching practice. (Professional practice will be explored more deeply in chapter 11.)

- 1. Acknowledge:** Acknowledge what the client has disclosed and any strong emotional releases and tears (no need to physically comfort them – not everyone likes to be touched). Remain in a grounded coach state, thank them for sharing and respond in a way that's reassuring and validating. Avoid immediately shutting the client down, leaving them feeling abandoned and disbelieved. Abuse happens in secrecy, often with coercion. Establish if the client has told anyone else. Focus less on the narrative of the issue and more on the structure of how they're currently experiencing it and how it's impacting them now. Acknowledge what they have shared, pause and consider options for continuing or referral.
- 2. Boundaries:** Make sure you clearly define your professional scope of practice within your skill level and coaching context. Manage your client's expectations of what coaching and change work you can offer, re-contract with them if you are beyond the scope of your initial coaching agreement. Explain what skills, experience and training you have by representing your coaching approach accurately and with integrity.
- 3. Connection:** The quality of your coaching presence helps you to create a safe client connection. A supportive, regulated and predictable presence offers a flexible approach to managing diverse situations and challenges. Awareness of the potential for your own biases and assumptions enables you to cultivate an inclusive, non-judgemental coaching style. Support and trust can help mitigate the effects of trauma, distress and marginalisation.
- 4. Educate:** Coach and inform your client so that they understand their survival and fear responses and why they responded to events in the way they did. Explain in simple terms how and why they can be triggered many years later, and that their unwanted behaviours may have become coping, soothing and self-regulation strategies. (This is included in chapter 10.)

5. **Empower:** Coach clients with useful resilience-building, motivating, self-coaching, self-awareness and self-regulation skills, actions and techniques to help them develop autonomy. Clients can learn to respond resourcefully and take immediate and effective action to change and modulate how they think, respond, relate and feel.
6. **Prevent:** Safeguard clients, raise awareness, report serious concerns and protect the welfare of vulnerable and at-risk individuals by training in safeguarding and suicide awareness.
7. **Professional policies and procedures:** Prepare policies and procedures for client referral, safeguarding and data protection. Commit to and schedule time for regular supervision and reflective practice.
8. **Refer on:** Assess and establish if and when crisis support is required, and when you must refer a client to their doctor or other trusted trauma-informed professionals. Signpost clients to useful resources and organisations. Establish a safe referral network and trusted professionals contact list.
9. **Strengths-focused:** Develop a connection to the client's inner resources and external support structures, organisations and networks. Focus on what they can do to help themselves cultivate new skills and capabilities, positive motivation and the ability to make effective decisions.
10. **Training and professional development:** Develop and update your coaching and change work skills. If you intend to sensitively guide, safeguard and coach clients who have experienced trauma and adversity, attend trauma-informed and trauma-skilled training.



Cultivating a grounded coaching presence.

2 Supportive Strategies

In this chapter you will find two unique models and some strategies designed to support you. Coach and client regulation and stabilisation throughout the coaching session are fundamental to client safety and progress between and beyond coaching sessions.

As a coach, the quality of your presence and your ability to maintain your state in challenging situations matters. When you're regulated, grounded and balanced you're more present with your clients. You'll also be prepared to coach and facilitate change as well as manage distress, anxiety and any difficult emotions that may emerge, while empowering and increasing your clients' self-management and regulation.

The GROUNDED model

The GROUNDED model is an integral coaching style with grounding, orienting and regulation strategies; it's intrinsic to being a coach, in preference to 'doing' coaching.

- G = Grounding
- R = Regulation
- O = Open and orienting
- U = Understanding
- N = Nurturing
- D = Drop the disorder
- E = Ecology
- D = Direction

It's important for you to be GROUNDED when you're coaching, for you to consistently practise these skills yourself.

Grounding – A way of being a coach

Grounding is an embodiment practice integral to many mind–body traditions and methodologies. You can use grounding practices to bring awareness into the present moment, into the coaching space and into the physical body.

Ground first: your state matters. You can practise grounding before, during and after working with clients.

Many stressed and dysregulated clients feel disconnected from their physical body, dissociated, or spend a lot of time ‘in their head’ worrying and overthinking. While you coach your client to become grounded themselves, do the practice at the same time, pacing and leading them to a resourceful, embodied state.

A simple introductory grounding practice is to place both feet flat on the floor. Move your attention to the soles of your feet and become fully aware of all the points of contact between your feet, your toes and the floor. Notice the size, shape and placement of your feet. If your attention wanders anywhere else, bring it back to focusing on the soles of your feet. This practice can be done standing or sitting, or with hands and fingers if focusing on feet is not appropriate for you or your client.



Pause

- ◆ Notice your response to grounding.
- ◆ What are you feeling?
- ◆ What are you thinking?
- ◆ Where would grounding be useful in your life? And coaching practice?

You will find more simple grounding techniques in the resources section in chapter 12.

Regulation

Self-regulation of your state, emotions, physiology, thoughts and breath are fundamental skills for you to master in all situations and contexts. Coaches can facilitate regulation for their clients and empower them to self-regulate their own state through active regulation of their physiology, mindset and breath. As

mentioned, your state regulation helps to regulate your client's state through co-regulation. You can actively guide, pace and lead them or allow this to develop naturally. Some examples of this in action can be found in the case studies in Part Two and techniques in Part Four.

Open and orienting

The letter 'O' in the GROUNDED model introduces two concepts, openness and orienting:

- ◆ **Open:** Adopt an open-minded, open-hearted attitude of curiosity. It's a powerful resource for both coaches and clients. Inviting your clients to explore this way of being in relation to themselves, their life and the world can open new possibilities, ways of behaving, perceiving and responding, particularly if they start with a fixed and inflexible mindset and attitude.
- ◆ **Orienting:** This is a term for focusing on being in the present moment, and current environment, which enhances your coaching presence and awareness. Coaching clients to orient themselves in the present is a mindfulness technique which is useful for clients who frequently relive past events and/or worry about the future.

A seated orienting practice

- ◆ Ground yourself first and keep your eyes open, maintaining a soft gaze. Sense what you are sitting on beneath you, the floor or earth below you and the space all around you.
- ◆ Notice the temperature of the air on your skin, the touch of your clothes and the way your body is supported.
- ◆ Staying grounded, notice one object nearby – observe all the fine details, the size, shape, texture, colour, light and shade.
- ◆ Staying grounded, notice the sounds all around you, near and far. Notice the spaces between the sounds.
- ◆ If your mind wanders, or any thoughts occur, simply notice this and bring your attention back to your grounded practice of present-moment awareness.



Pause

- ◆ Notice your response to the orienting practice.
- ◆ What are you feeling?
- ◆ What are you thinking?
- ◆ Where would orienting be useful in your life? And coaching practice?

Understanding

Rather than making any assumptions, ask clarifying coaching questions to help you to understand your client's current presenting issues and behaviour. Avoid asking for details and narrative about what happened to them in the past, which can be overwhelming and evoke feelings of embarrassment, shame, fear, grief and anger. Maintain your presence, understanding, curiosity and compassion.

Many unwanted or unpredictable client behaviours or habits are often coping, avoidance or self-soothing strategies used to suppress strong emotions, reactions and memories. Help your client to understand how they responded at the time was a survival response when they were facing or witnessing danger or distress by educating them on simple, factual information about trauma and fear responses. After trauma, the body and brain can respond as if the danger is still present. (This is explained in more detail in chapter 10.)

Nurturing

Establish what the client already does to nurture, regulate, soothe, calm and rebalance themselves.

Co-design a realistic, achievable plan of simple practices and rebalancing techniques, with clarity about how, when and where to practise these. Many clients who are stressed and tense practise minimal self-care and self-compassion. They may do a lot for others and very little to nurture themselves.

Drop the disorder

If a client discloses adversity, trauma or a diagnosed condition such as generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), for example, it's important for you to coach the person, not their issue, label, problem or diagnosis. Focusing on the issue can be a distraction. Notice your reaction and response to their disclosure,

in the present moment, without labelling or judgement. Take a few regulating breaths as you ground and orient yourself.

You can find formal post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) criteria and details described in Part Three. Consider if you're coaching the client, not their diagnosis; how could coaching benefit this client? Coaching is complementary to, not a replacement for, medical and mental health treatment.

It's important to ask your client if they mention a diagnosis on their intake form or in conversation where their diagnosis came from. Some clients self-diagnose, their source being someone they know and often the internet, not a diagnosing medical or mental health professional.

Consider this: If someone has experienced an adverse event that was terrifying and traumatic to them, it's reasonable that they responded with an extreme fear or stress reaction. If they did not have access to support and help at the time or since, they may have unresolved, unprocessed emotional and physiological stress. Post-traumatic stress (PTS) is a response to what happened at the time that continues as if there is still clear and present danger.

Ecology

Invite your client to consider and anticipate the ripple effect or impact of their desired change, goal or outcome in their life, work and relationships.

Examples of ecology questions: in the context of family boundaries

- ◆ What will happen when you maintain clear boundaries with your family?
- ◆ What will they notice about you?
- ◆ How might they respond?
- ◆ Can you think of any personal or family objections to your change?
- ◆ Or reasons for you not to maintain clear boundaries with some/specific family members?
- ◆ How can you manage them?
- ◆ What will happen if you don't maintain your boundaries?
- ◆ What other strategies or responses would be useful to you?
- ◆ What would be the first step to achieving this?

Direction

When you are grounded, focused, aware and present while coaching, you can facilitate the same state for your clients. However, maintaining your presence and future-focused direction can be challenging with clients who frequently recall and relive their past, as they're oriented in their past, not the present or future.

Daily grounding and awareness practices can be helpful, particularly for those who appear vague, unfocused and lack presence. Be aware of the contracting and boundaries agreement you have with these clients. Acknowledge what they have shared and give them feedback on their behaviour patterns.

Examples of behaviours from clients not oriented in the present:

- ◆ Frequently retelling narratives of past events.
- ◆ Their outcome is described as wanting to go back to how things were before...
- ◆ Pattern of regret – 'if only I could go back in time and make different decisions...'
- ◆ Failing to answer or forgetting your questions.
- ◆ Giving a lot of detail about topics you have not raised.
- ◆ Talking about people and past events as if they are current.
- ◆ Taking tangents away from the session and present to focus on the past.
- ◆ Replying 'I don't know' and asking you what you think.
- ◆ Actively avoiding answering questions.
- ◆ Vague, unclear answers.

The APEX model – a model for change

Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will control you, and you will call it fate.

Carl Jung (attrib.), Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst

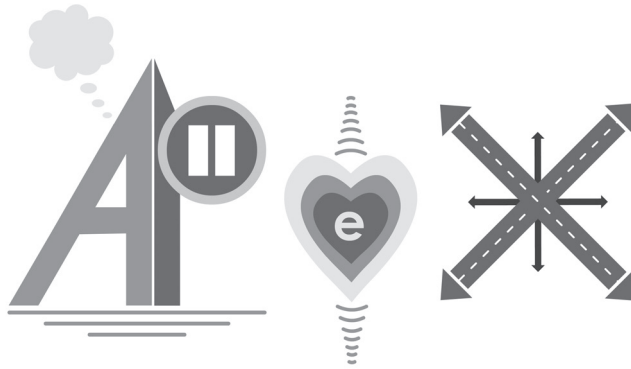
This is a practical, easy-to-use strategy to help you and your clients break the patterns of circular thinking, negative self-talk, unhealthy habits and compulsions and to actively change limiting behavioural patterns. The APEX model enables clients to move from being at 'effect' to being 'at cause' with their decisions, responses and behaviours by increasing awareness, developing autonomy and self-efficacy:

A = Awareness

P = Pause

E = Embody and engage

X = Crossroads = Choice = Direction



The APEX model.

A = Awareness

This means actively noticing and becoming consciously aware of triggers, problematic patterns of thinking, dysregulation, behaviour patterns, habits, needs, desires, compulsions and beliefs that have previously been automatic and unconscious.

Elicit five problematic responses and triggers from your client for them to become consciously aware of. Coach your client to actively notice and be aware of their state, physical sensations, emotions and actions and when and where these occur.

Some examples: Awareness of emotional, physical and autonomic state. Noticing negative self-talk, aware of sighing, slumping, compulsion to scroll the internet or mindlessly eat. Awareness of limiting beliefs and negative and/or spiralling thought patterns.

P = Pause

Purposefully pausing with awareness creates an opportunity to interrupt the behaviour pattern, habit or reaction as soon as they have been noticed. While pausing, grounding and taking a mindful breath, some people like to imagine or gesture the action of pressing the pause button on a remote control or video clip, or use a change of posture or movement to create a break or shift in their unresourceful state.

E = Embody and engage

The following simple embodiment practice can help clients to avoid an over-reliance on logical thinking and connect with deeper, heartfelt emotions, self-compassion and interconnection, creating a new somatic repatterning:

Embodiment: actively progress from pausing (see step above) to conscious and full body awareness of what just happened. The client asks themselves: *What did I just do, think, feel, experience?* Bring their attention to their whole mind and body system. Many clients benefit from placing their hands on their heart or abdomen to remind them to connect to their body. Invite them to consider what the stimulus or trigger was for the unwanted, unresourceful behaviour, pattern or thinking.

Engage: practise conscious thinking. The client asks themselves: *What is important now? What do I really want?* By placing their hand on their heart, they can begin to connect with another level of awareness – what their heart wants and desires while answering these questions.

For example, when using this practice, Saira (see chapter 7) reached for a cigarette, noticed the automatic behaviour, paused, grounded through her feet, took three mindful breaths and realised she didn't want to smoke but to have ten minutes' peace away from her computer and colleagues. Going outside to smoke usually gave her this opportunity.

X = Crossroads = conscious choices = change of direction

Actively choosing to respond, do, think or say something differently, or purposefully choosing to continue the pattern with acceptance, conscious awareness, from a grounded position of choice, strength and clarity helps to create new positive habits, behaviours and responses.

Create a list of positive and empowering alternative behaviours, practices and options with your client. Avoid suggesting options; simply ask: 'And what else?' until they have generated at least five good achievable options. By using the APEX model independently beyond the coaching session, clients can consistently make ecological, conscious, positive, empowering choices in contexts and situations that are challenging for them. Each case study in Part Two includes five ways the client used the APEX model, with a list of the triggers they identified and their resourceful choices.

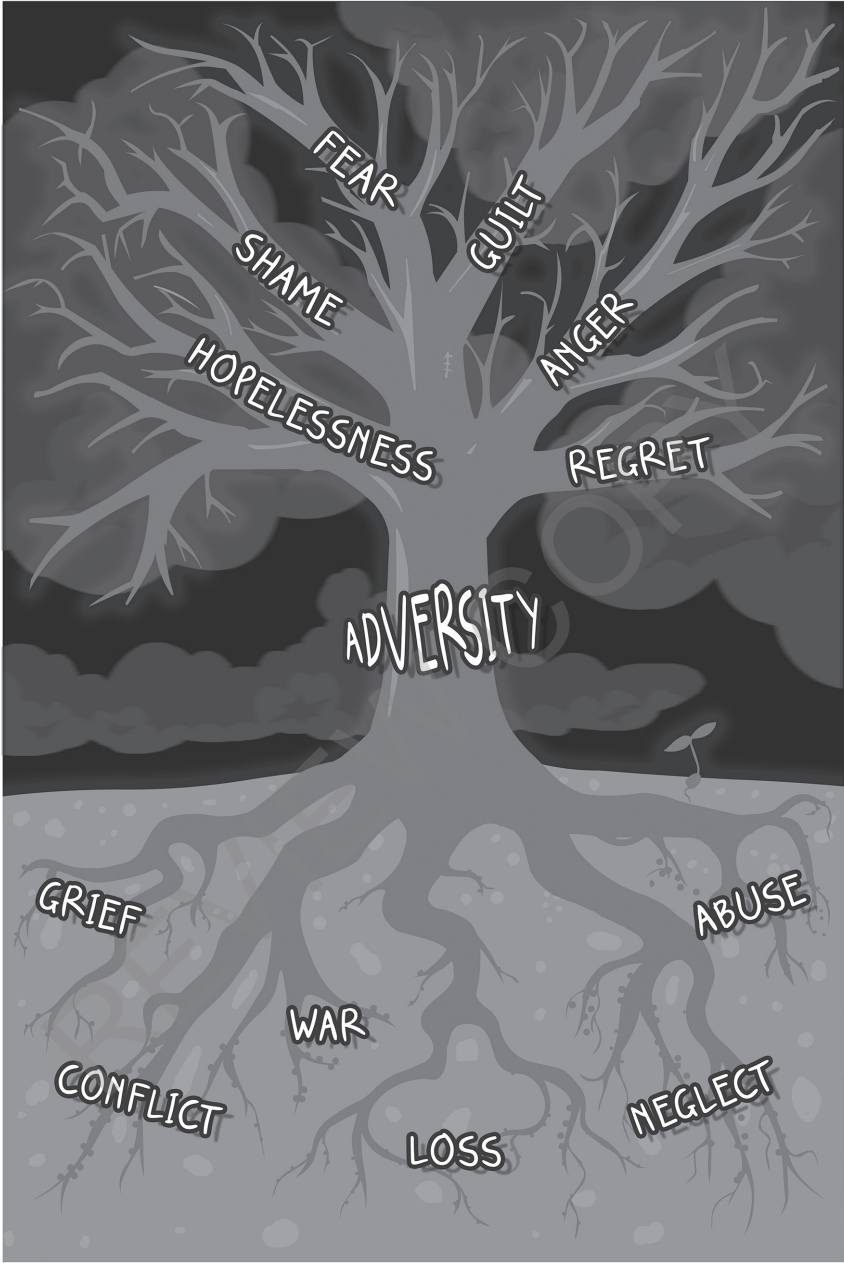
Awareness of triggers and resources

With consistent utilisation of the APEX model, clients will become increasingly aware of their triggers, their patterns of behaviour and responses that have consistently led them to their problem states, physiology, dysregulation and negative mindset. Using the steps of the APEX model gives them an opportunity to notice, pause, actively embody and choose to respond differently, purposefully and continue with mindful awareness.

Elicit resources and focus on strengths by asking the client about positive and empowering states, mindsets, movements, gestures and internal representations from the past or present. They can then make active decisions at a crossroads point of choice effortlessly. Another resource elicitation opportunity is to create a list of their hobbies, interests, achievements, hopes and dreams; this can be requested on your client intake form. Ask them to tell you what has been helpful to them in the past.

Below is a table that shows how to list a client's triggers on the left side and their resources on the right, with some examples. Each case study includes a list of triggers and resources for that client, which shows this strategy in use.

AWARENESS OF TRIGGERS, RESPONSES AND REACTIONS	CONNECTING WITH RESOURCES
Reactions and unresourceful states. Example: Noticing frustration and anger when driving.	Grounding, regulation and state management. Example: Park, regulate, manage state, choose calm alertness and patience.
Negative self-talk/thoughts. Example: 'I can't do this.' Noticing the location, tone, pace and quality of the thoughts and phrasing.	Grounding, regulation, acknowledge the pattern first, then change the narrative to positive and empowering self-talk and thoughts. Example: Aha, this familiar 'I can't' thinking pattern again. In a compassionate, encouraging tone, change the dialogue: 'I choose to do this', or: 'I choose to not do this.' And: 'I'm comfortable with my choice.'
Physiological responses. Example: Tense hands, curled fingers.	Grounding, regulation, empowering and positive physiology. Example: Open and soften hands.
Posture. Example: Slumping in chair with head down, shoulders drooping.	Grounding, regulation, empowering and positive physiology. Example: Sit up, feet flat on the floor, chin level, roll shoulders back and down.
Negative and unresourceful internal representations and submodalities. Example: Awareness of the location, size, shape, sensation quality of a fear response. Client describes 'a feeling in the chest that is long and jagged, moving upwards to the throat, ice-cold, fast'.	Grounding, regulation, positive and resourceful internal representations and submodalities. Example: Ask the client how they would like it to be instead. Client describes 'a pink globe gently radiating warmth' in the chest around their heart.
Location, person, or people. Example: Noticing physical tension when passing the location of an incident.	Grounding, state and breath regulation and management, orient into the present. Example: Ask the client how they would like to respond. Client describes feeling 'calm, centred, relaxed in mind and body'.



The Adversity Trauma Tree shows the potential impact or legacy of unresolved, unprocessed trauma and adverse events.

3

Roots and Branches

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.

Desmond Tutu, South African Anglican bishop and theologian

The ripple effect of trauma goes out across a person's life, their relationships to themselves and to others, and into the world around them. Their behaviours can be problematic and may be the first indication of a deep-rooted issue. With respect to this, the Trauma Trees are an illustrated concept designed to simplify a spectrum of complex, interwoven and multi-layered trauma theories and consequences into easily identifiable and relatable features.

The trees of trauma and adversity

The illustrations are a concept designed to show the potential (not literal) impact and consequences of unresolved trauma and adversity in an at-a-glance format.

Branches: These represent the obvious, the seen, the presenting issue, or the coping behaviour that a client is aware of and which they may bring to the coaching session as the issue or problem they want to change. Unwanted behaviours are often a coping strategy for a deeper issue. By recognising and coaching the symptoms, habits and behaviours alone, the cause can be overlooked. For many clients, this approach is too superficial and can prevent them from making progress, achieving their outcomes and making lasting positive change. A resourceful replacement strategy is essential.

Roots: These are symbolic of adversity and traumatising events, the possible cause or trigger for deep-rooted emotions, responses and reactions. These root illustrations are drawn from trauma theories, classifications, diagnostics and principles that are explored in more detail in Part Three. It is not the role of a coach to dig for the roots, but sometimes they become exposed naturally.

Trunk: This is a representation of the person, their life and physical body. Each case study detailed in Part Two has an individual Trauma Tree that illustrates

the interplaying factors of their life experiences, relationships and symptoms in their fictionalised back stories.

Soil: Illustrates the foundations of a nurturing and enriched childhood and life, compared to an untended and barren existence.

Environment and weather: These depict the current and recent transient influences, events and situations in life. It's helpful to consider the duration and frequency of the storms, refreshing rainfall and sunny periods over time.

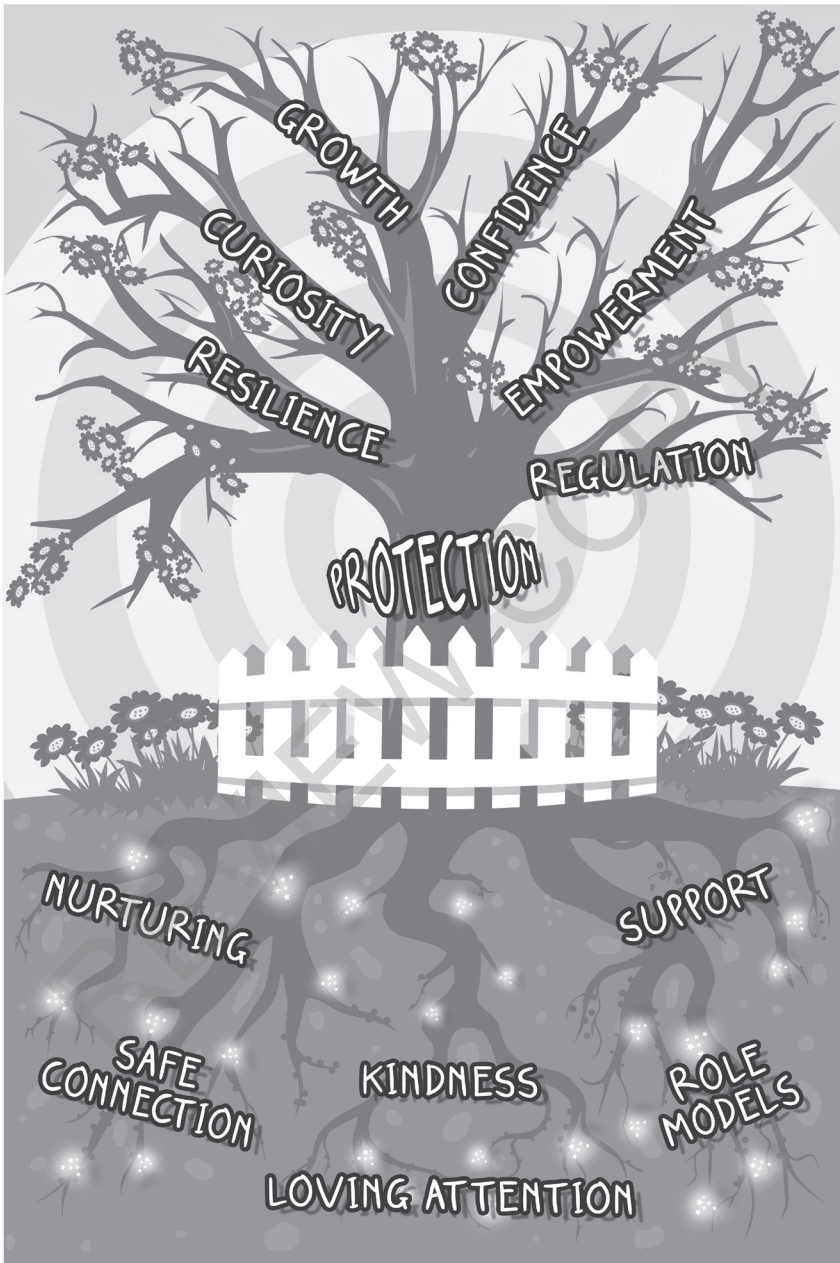
Seeds and seedlings: These are symbolic of a child growing up in the same environment as their parents or caregivers, and the care, nurturing and protection they receive. Many dysregulated, traumatised parents raise children in unsafe, chaotic environments. If interventions and changes aren't made or issues remain unaddressed, there's a high risk of the cycle continuing into the next generation, known as transgenerational or intergenerational trauma.

Post-traumatic growth – roots and branches of protection and hope

By focusing on positive change, regulation skills, autonomy and behavioural modification, coaching and facilitating change work can generate a measurable impact and build resilience. Having a sense of purpose, identity and connection are all fundamental areas for coaches to focus on with their clients. Growing up in the care of loving, safe, kind, nurturing caregivers is a powerful protective factor, as is having a strong role model. Coaching can help create personal development and growth, increase insight and perspective, and enable clients to learn new skills and strategies to fill the gaps in their early development, with self-management techniques and capabilities, engaging their connection to their inner power and desire to change and evolve.

Blossom: Some people grow, transform and flourish despite or even due to adverse or detrimental life circumstances and situations. Coaching and change work increases protective factors that can develop resilience and the ability to bounce back after adversity.

Fruit: These are the outcomes and ripple effects of making positive changes, increasing awareness and developing new protective factors. The client



The Tree of Protection introduces protective and mitigating factors, post-traumatic growth and resilience.

benefits from making consistent positive and empowering changes, practising regulation and self-nurturing skills daily, which can improve wellbeing, sleep, quality of life and relationships.

Trauma and adversity can be powerful motivations for change, transformation and reinvention. Not everyone who experiences trauma and adversity is or remains traumatised, nor does everyone develop PTSD. Some people experience a spark of life, an awakening to possibility, optimism and increased resiliency. This is known as post-traumatic growth.

Survival of near-death experiences can create a sense of being alive that's invigorating, empowering and confidence-building, creating new beliefs such as: 'If I can get through that, then I can get through anything', and: 'It's time to really live my life. It was nearly over, and there are so many things I haven't done, seen or said.' Many people gain a greater appreciation for life and find joy in the small things, become aware of the wonder of nature and show gratitude for what they have. Trauma can be a doorway to spiritual growth, strengthening a person's faith and catalyst for hope.

Trauma and shared experiences with allies can increase empathy, compassion and deep understanding of others. People can draw strength and wisdom from adversity. Some subsequently reach out to support and care for, sponsor, mentor and coach as they have a lived experience of similar challenges. A new perspective can be gained about life's mini-niggles, stress and day-to-day challenges. Profound despair can build resiliency and generate a sense of hope for change and reform. Post-traumatic growth can emerge from adjustment to and acceptance of what happened.

Trauma-Informed Coach – TICO models

The GROUNDED, APEX and, as we will see in due course (in Jason's case study and chapter 12), the PRESENT models are all developed and refined to integrate core protective factors and autonomy into daily life activities. Coaches can be a model of safe connection and nurturing presence, as they facilitate client's increased self-regulation, build resilience, self-efficacy, self-awareness and choice.

“Definitely a book for all coaches who want to deal with the truth of the unexpected.”

Sue Knight, NLP Master Trainer and Author.



In this practical and comprehensive book, award-winning coach and trainer Joanna Harper shares her integrative, trauma-informed, client-centred approach to coaching.

You will benefit from the insights and carefully crafted models developed from her many years of coaching clients in crisis and delivering quality training courses.

You can learn from the wisdom, understanding and compassion that Joanna has gained by overcoming her personal trauma challenges, as well as her extensive professional experience and ongoing commitment to training, study, personal practice and professional development.

The Trauma-Informed Coach book is an ideal companion to Joanna’s highly praised, signature Trauma-Informed Coach programme, created as personal and professional development training for coaches and practitioners.

Find out more about Joanna Harper at

www.integratetraining.co.uk








As a coach or practitioner your focus is always on facilitating your clients to flourish, thrive and believe in their potential.

But what happens when past traumas and emotional injuries prevent them from making progress in the here and now? How do you respond?

In this indispensable and highly practical guide, master coach Joanna Harper shares her experience and expert knowledge to equip you with the crucial awareness and skills you need to competently manage even the most challenging of client situations and experiences.

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-  Put trauma awareness at the core of your coaching practice
-  Feel confident that you're dealing with trauma supportively
-  Handle the distressing emotions and painful memories that past traumas can surface
-  Know when to refer clients to other services or professionals
-  Focus and draw on your client's existing resources and strengths

Whether you're newly certified or already an experienced coach or practitioner, by being trauma-informed and in possession of these forward-thinking, empowering skills, you'll always know the most appropriate measures and suitable ways to advance when past experiences are preventing your client's progress.

"This important book is an invaluable roadmap for compassionately navigating a route to solutions when issues are driven by past traumas. Highly recommended!"

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