



Trauma-informed support for survivors rebuilding after abuse

A Quick Reflection Guide

Trauma responses are survival responses developed by the nervous system to help protect someone during stress, fear, instability or emotional overwhelm.

Many people living with trauma responses blame themselves for behaviours or emotional reactions they do not fully understand.

This guide is designed to help recognise some common trauma responses and the emotional impact they can have over time.

Trauma responses are not personality flaws.

They are often survival adaptations.

1. Fight Responses

Fight responses may involve:

- ☐ Becoming defensive quickly
- ☐ Feeling emotionally reactive during conflict
- ☐ Irritability or anger under stress
- ☐ Feeling constantly on edge
- ☐ Trying to regain control during emotional overwhelm
- ☐ Struggling to feel emotionally safe during disagreement

Our vision is to break silence and rebuild lives, for this generation and the next

hello@weareunmuted.co.uk

Registered Address: c/o RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS

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2. Flight Responses

Flight responses may involve:

- ☐ Constant busyness or overworking
- ☐ Feeling unable to slow down or rest
- ☐ Anxiety around productivity or performance
- ☐ Overthinking constantly
- ☐ Feeling guilty when resting
- ☐ Staying mentally “switched on” all the time

3. Freeze Responses

Freeze responses may involve:

- ☐ Feeling mentally paralysed during stress
- ☐ Difficulty making decisions
- ☐ Emotional shutdown or numbness
- ☐ Struggling to start tasks when overwhelmed
- ☐ Feeling disconnected from emotions or surroundings
- ☐ Wanting to withdraw or isolate when stressed

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4. Fawn Responses

Fawn responses may involve:

- ☐ People pleasing or over-accommodating others
- ☐ Difficulty saying no
- ☐ Fear of conflict or rejection
- ☐ Feeling responsible for other people's emotions
- ☐ Constantly trying to keep the peace
- ☐ Ignoring your own needs to avoid upsetting others

5. Nervous System Signs

Trauma responses can also affect the nervous system and body.

This may include:

- ☐ Hypervigilance or feeling constantly alert
- ☐ Muscle tension or exhaustion
- ☐ Emotional overwhelm
- ☐ Burnout or shutdown
- ☐ Difficulty relaxing or feeling safe
- ☐ Feeling emotionally exhausted after interaction or conflict

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Reflection

Trauma responses often develop after:

- Abusive or coercive control
- Emotional instability
- Chronic stress or fear
- Emotional invalidation
- Unsafe environments
- Long-term survival mode

Many people continue experiencing trauma responses long after the original situation has ended.

Understanding these patterns can help reduce shame and self-blame.

Important Reminder

Trauma responses are not signs of weakness.

They are often signs that the nervous system has spent long periods trying to stay emotionally or physically safe.

Healing usually involves rebuilding safety, support, boundaries and nervous system regulation gradually.

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Support & Further Resources

You deserve support that understands trauma responses with compassion rather than judgement.

WeAreUnmuted

Turning silence into understanding through lived experience.

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