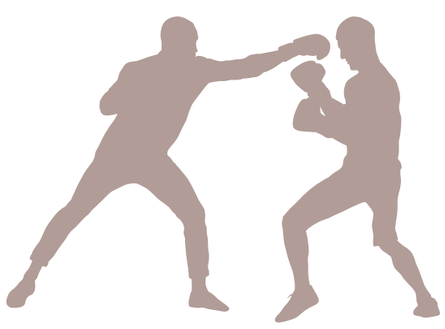
SLEEP & TRAUMA

HOW DOES TRAUMA AFFECT MY BODY AND SLEEP?

Your body releases chemicals when you experience a disturbing or distressing event (**trauma**). These chemicals heighten your body's sympathetic nervous system into a state of:

FIGHT

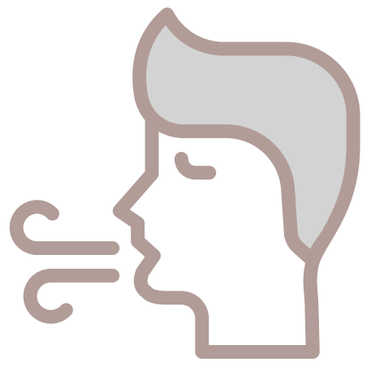


FLIGHT

FREEZE

When your body is in one of these states, your heart rate, breathing and senses heighten and are "on guard."

Your body can return to its resting state, after being "on guard." But, trauma can make the chemicals last longer. This can keep your body in a heightened state as if it still needed to prepare for action.



When this happens, your body feels that the threat is still there. Even though the threat has gone away, you are unable to rest or connect with your body.

Sleep may no longer feel safe.

If you have experienced a distressing event, you may not be getting enough sleep or quality sleep. This is because your body and mind are working hard to cope, understand and heal from the event.

This can lead to exhaustion.

You may find that your sleep routine may become erratic, you have nightmares, night-wakings, and/or restless sleep.

HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY SLEEP?

ACCEPT THAT SLEEPING PROBLEMS ARE COMMON AND NORMAL AFTER EXPERIENCING TRAUMA

Your nervous system is doing what it is designed to do. After a trauma, your body is focused on staying alert and protecting you.

Try to not get upset or frustrateat yourself for not being able to sleep the same way before the trauma happened.

These skills take practice and do not change your sleep overnight. Don't give up right away if you aren't seeing results.

CREATE A SENSE OF SAFETY OR FEELING "SAFE ENOUGH"

Experiences that made you feel unsafe may trigger hyperarousal and PTSD. It is important to do everything you can to create a sense of safety in your current life. Safety can mean physical, mental and emotional experiences.

What does safety mean for you? It could be sleeping on the couch, your car or next to someone you trust like a partner or pet. It could even mean imagining or creating a safe place in your mind. You can remember or imagine a place or time where you could relax and not worry.

HAVE SOME TIME AWAY

Sometimes sleep can be improved by taking time away from your daily routine. Being away from everyday triggers can have a huge impact on your stress levels and your quality of rest.

Sleep in another room. Take a vacation. Go visit a friend or family member. Any of these can give your body some much needed respite.

MANAGING NIGHTMARES

Restless sleep, night wakings, and nightmares are common after trauma. You can try journaling about the nightmare. Describe the negative and positive belief surrounding the nightmare and re-write the ending.

If you need assistance with managing nightmares, it can be helpful to see a therapist. You can also meet with a prescribing provider to see if medications might be helpful.

EXERCISE

Extensive research has shown the benefit of exercise on your body. Exercise is also beneficial when you process trauma. Exercise can help with the hyperarousal and help you reduce stress.

Try starting with small, pleasurable movements for 5 minutes a day!

Talk to your medical provider before starting any exercise routine.

REST WHEN YOU BODY TELLS YOU IT NEEDS IT

It is common to feel tired immediately after experiencing a trigger or trauma.

Relaxing and resting for brief periods throughout the day may help with fatigue.

Take short naps (15-45 minutes) when you can.

CREATE A CALMING BEDTIME ROUTINE

Sleep experts suggest removing TV or cellphone screens before you go to sleep.
If you have experienced trauma, this may be difficult to do.

The noise from an electronic device may actually make you feel a sense of safety. Try to experiment with which stimuli helps your body feel more relaxed. It could be a TV, reading a book, taking a bath, etc.

ARE YOU READY TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP AND RECOVER FROM TRAUMA?

CONTACT EMBODIED WELLNESS TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

Embodied Wellness, PLLC

SOMATIC AND EMDR THERAPY IN MICHIGAN

References https://sleeprestoreapp.com/10-sleep-tips-for-ptsd-sufferers/
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https://www.glendale.co.us/DocumentCenter/View/18/Sleep-Tips-for-Trauma-Victims?bidId=