
TRAUMA & RECOVERY

Marriage After Trauma

How past wounds show up in your relationship and how to heal together.

Boundary Agreement Resource Library

Dr. Hines Inc. | boundaryagreement.com

This guide is a coaching resource, not therapy or counseling.

Trauma Does Not Stay in the Past

Childhood abuse. Neglect. Abandonment. Sexual assault. Combat. Loss. These experiences do not disappear when you say 'I do.' They show up in how you fight, how you love, how you trust, how you parent, and how you respond to stress. Your partner may be dealing with a version of you that was shaped by something that happened long before they met you.

Hypervigilance in relationships.

Always scanning for danger. Reading into tone, body language, silence. Interpreting neutral behavior as threatening. Exhausting for both partners.

Avoidance of vulnerability.

Trauma teaches you that vulnerability is dangerous. So you build walls. Your partner feels shut out, and you feel safe but alone.

Triggers and flashbacks.

Something your partner says or does activates a trauma response. You are not reacting to them. You are reacting to a memory. But in the moment, it feels like the same thing.

Difficulty with trust.

If someone who was supposed to protect you hurt you instead, trust does not come naturally. Your partner has to earn something that other people take for granted.

Shame and self-blame.

Trauma survivors often carry shame that is not theirs. It affects self-worth, which affects how they show up in relationships.

For the Partner of a Trauma Survivor

It is not about you.

Their reaction may be directed at you, but it is about what happened to them. Do not personalize it.

You cannot fix it.

Your love is important. It is not therapy. Encourage professional help and be patient with the process.

Learn their triggers.

Not to walk on eggshells, but to understand what is happening when they suddenly shut down or escalate.

Take care of yourself.

Secondary trauma is real. Supporting a partner through trauma recovery is exhausting. Get your own support.

EXERCISE: The Safety Conversation

For trauma survivors and their partners. Go slow.

What do I need my partner to know about my past?

What triggers should my partner be aware of?

What does my partner do that helps me feel safe?

What does my partner do (unintentionally) that triggers me?

Am I currently getting professional support? If not, what is in the way?

What is one thing we can do together to make our home feel safer?
