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# Relate NI

**SUPPORTING A  
LOVED ONE WHO  
HAS EXPERIENCED  
TRAUMA**

Relationships: The **Golden Threads** That Hold Mental Well-Being Together

# Supporting Someone with Trauma

#WECANRELATE

When in a relationship with someone who is or has experienced trauma, whether it's a partner, friend, or colleague, it can be a rollercoaster. We can often feel the desire to 'fix' things for them, help them through this, and get them the help and support they need. While this is a wonderful and beautiful thought, the reality can be very different.

We must first consider that person, their thoughts, their desire to get support and help, and their needs at this time. We all react to trauma differently, we all cope with the aftermath differently, and we all view the world differently. As much as our wish for them to go along with the thought of 'fixing' them is coming from a good place, we must remember that it is up to them to take that first step forward if, and when they are ready for it.



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# Supporting Someone with Trauma

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Quiet often we find people believing that once they start working on their trauma, the floodgates will open, and there's no going back. This can be daunting and an easier solution is to suppress it, bury it, carry on about our lives, and ignore that dark cloud following us. But what then becomes of that relationship? Of that trauma, and the inevitable impact it has on us?

Trauma has a way of rearing its ugly head from time to time, triggers occur, and our mind takes us back to that time(s). Understanding this is important to understanding that person in our lives that have been affected by trauma. Understanding this is important to understand how we can navigate that relationship. Understanding this is important to understand how we are feeling and what we are thinking while supporting that person.



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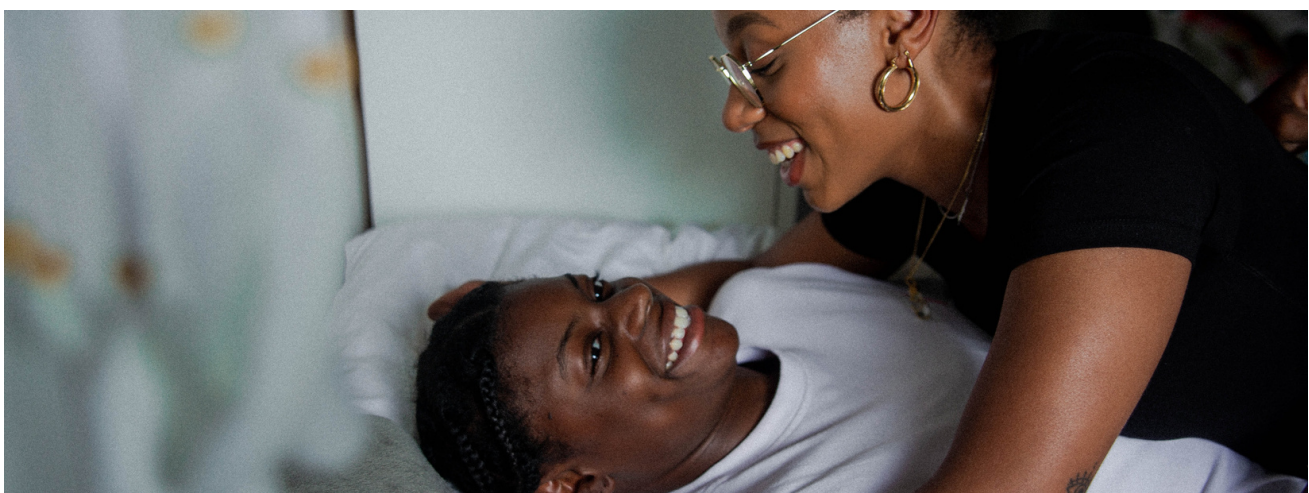
# SO, WHAT CAN WE DO TO SUPPORT THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCES OF TRAUMA?



- ✓ Listen – give them the safe space to talk, to open up, to discuss – a simple response during conversation “Yes, I understand what you are saying” “ah-ha...” or nodding your head.
- ✓ Don’t judge – allow them to freely express their emotions and thoughts without judgment – avoid responses like “I wouldn’t have done that!” “You should have said this!” etc
- ✓ Don’t apportion blame – such as saying things like “You shouldn’t have been there” or “Why did you get so drunk?” Remember that they are the victim.
- ✓ Understand the difficulties – it’s hard to open up to someone, acknowledge this and thank them for letting it be you! E.g. “Thank you for telling me, that must have been difficult”



- ✓ Support when ready – let them know you can signpost them for help and support without badgering e.g. “I know the numbers for helplines if you would prefer to speak to a professional or somebody else with experiences of what happened to you, if you ever want them, just ask.” This gives them the control to get support if/when they are ready
- ✓ Take care of you! – it can be tiring/exhausting to have a relationship where trauma/aftermath of trauma, is present. Remember to look after yourself in the process. E.g. Take a night with friends, see a movie, go for a walk, take a bath etc. Let’s not forget that hearing about trauma can have its impact on you too!
- ✓ Give them space – sometimes people just need space and time to process their thoughts or need time alone. Allowing this shows respect.
- ✓ Ask for understanding/explanation – people react to trauma in different ways, so asking for guidance in understanding shows you want to learn and still be there to support them e.g. “When you feel overwhelmed and walk away, would you prefer for me to follow you?” or “How do you feel when this happens?”



# WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

**we can Relate**



A challenging aspect can be how an individual reacts/their moods and emotions. They may be presenting with anger, rage, frustration, or aggression, alternatively they may be sad, upset, or numb etc. they may also have moods swings.

Understand that you cannot control this, but you can get advice and support for yourself to help navigate this difficult situation.

Relate NI have a range of services, including relationship counselling for couples, individuals, families, children and young people, which might be an effective intervention to support you to move forward after Trauma.

For more information visit

**Relateni.org**