

How seemingly small disturbing events create future problems

Bad thing happens that is overwhelming. This is especially true if there is fear or shame.

The Emotions are intense at that moment and the event “feels” like a huge thing. This is important because later in life we may look back and determine that they don’t seem like they were such a big deal.

It’s important to remember that we don’t have to undergo a major trauma such as a father’s death or a car accident to develop symptoms that last for years. Shapiro, Francine (2013-03-26). Getting Past Your Past: Take Control of Your Life with Self-Help Techniques from EMDR Therapy (p. 14). Rodale. Kindle Edition

Learned memories usually stored by hippocampus in sequence and logic so we can reflect back on learned skills strategies and we use this learned memory to make sense of things happening in the present moment.

Because the event had strong emotions, the amygdala takes over and stores the memory apart from other learned memories.

It stores the memory with the affect/emotions feeling as strong as the time of the event as well as the negative thought/belief the event causes us to experience.

It also stores the event with all of the right hemisphere elements like processes we may have been engaged in at the time, sensory elements, and seems to gather near other negative emotions. Any of these elements can become triggers in the future for the event even though we are unaware.

Awareness of anything in the outside world comes through our senses (sight, smell, touch, hearing, taste) into working memory. This automatically links into a wide range of memory networks in the brain to help us understand what we are perceiving. Shapiro, Francine (2013-03-26). Getting Past Your Past: Take Control of Your Life with Self-Help Techniques from EMDR Therapy (p. 20). Rodale. Kindle Edition.

The stronger and/or more frequent the event, or other events that feel similar and carry the same negative belief, the more entrenched these memories become as well as other similar episodes and memories that cluster around them.

These negative beliefs distort how we experience and feel about current events and are one of the primary sources of discomfort and misery. These core beliefs don’t get shared with other learned experiences and times that challenge the core beliefs with successful experiences and positive beliefs.

All of our learned experiences that have been digested and processed live in the left hemisphere which handles memories in such a way that they are open to recall and have the sense of awareness that something is being remembered.

Because the amygdala is always in protective mode, anything that is similar triggers the amygdala to find ways to defend against feeling the same way. This leads to an avoidance strategy that becomes something of an intrinsically implicit process.

They begin to build something of a subconscious defense barrier around them that attempts to stop the negative belief from coming up. This often leads to impulsive behaviors in efforts to avoid the stress associated with the memory. Often, the behaviors actually will reinforce the negative belief and create additional disturbances.

When an unprocessed memory is triggered by similarities in the current situation, since the memory contains the distressing emotions, beliefs and sensations of an earlier time, we experience the world in a distorted way. Even though we may be 30, 40, 50, 60 years old or more, it's as if we are holding the hand of our young self, and it's telling us what to do. Shapiro, Francine (2013-03-26). *Getting Past Your Past: Take Control of Your Life with Self-Help Techniques from EMDR Therapy* (p. 75). Rodale. Kindle Edition.

Have to find ways to identify these events and “digest” them in order for them to have shared experiences with memories and learning we are aware of in order for them to be resolved and to have the negative self-beliefs addressed.

What about major trauma memories we know have happened and continue to pop up as images and ideas even though we try really hard to avoid them?

Same kind of idea except this isn't as much detective work

The real work is finding ways past the defensive barriers we have created to allow ourselves to open these things up again.

We have all types of ways we try to avoid looking at these things and some people are very adept at “burying” these events through staying really busy, doing high risk activities, substance use, and other ways

Even though we can sometimes bury these ideas under our awareness, the triggers keep firing in the background keeping our bodies on hyperalert and reminding us of the negative beliefs about ourselves we initially formed at the time. These negative beliefs over time become a perceived sense of identity and all positive elements we may experience in the future are minimized or discarded because they don't align with the core beliefs we have developed about ourselves.

Again, much of this happens because the memory got stored apart from other memories that have taught us adaptive ways to process information so they become learning experiences and get stored in the background with our other memories.