

## Exhaustive Chronic Conditions May Result From Stored Trauma, Here's How to Release It

Past trauma may explain some of your otherwise unexplainable symptoms.

Just as painful memories are stored in the brain, other experiences also become trapped in the body, according to experts. When these experiences are traumatic events that had an overwhelming effect on us, we may not even remember them, but our bodies do.

“If you are experiencing strange symptoms that no one seems to be able to explain, they could be arising from a traumatic reaction to a past event that you may not even remember,” Peter Levine wrote in “Waking the Tiger.” Mr. Levine is a psychologist with a doctorate in medical and biological physics.

### How Does All of This Work?

When faced with a threat, the body activates the fight-or-flight stress response, a survival mechanism that puts the body into a high-energy state to either confront or flee from the danger. Ideally, this surge of energy gets discharged through action. However, Mr. Levine says that if one cannot fight or flee, this energy can become trapped in the body long after the traumatic event. He calls it “frozen residue of energy.”

This is more likely to occur if you had no way to protect yourself or escape from the traumatic experience, according to Arielle Schwartz, psychologist and author of “Therapeutic Yoga for Trauma Recovery.”

This perspective is only a theory, but it provides a useful framework to understand and deal with a common experience.

The trapped stress can manifest as various physical issues years later, including headaches, digestive problems, chronic pain, hyperarousal, insomnia, mood swings, fatigue, weakened immunity, hormonal imbalances, musculoskeletal issues, severe premenstrual syndrome, and asthma.

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“If someone had certain adverse childhood experiences or early traumas—also known as a high ACE (adverse childhood experiences) score—they typically are 600 percent more likely in adulthood to develop chronic exhaustive illness,” Elaine Wilkins, founder of The Trauma-Informed Wellbeing Coach, told The Epoch Times. Ms. Wilkins uses a coaching method that recognizes how past trauma manifests in a client’s present experiences.

Ms. Wilkins said it is frustrating that the acute disease model focuses on treating symptoms instead of addressing the root cause of symptoms.

“Years back, when I was in a lot of pain, I was offered antidepressants, sleep medication, and pain medication, but no one asked me what was going on in my life,” Ms. Wilkins said.

“Thankfully, the health care model is starting to change, and many practitioners are realizing that they need to start supporting patients biologically, psychologically, and socially.”

### **The Body’s Cry for Help**

Dr. Gabor Maté, a distinguished physician and author of “When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress,” explores how unresolved emotions can manifest as physical discomfort, pain, tension, and even debilitating illness.

“When we have been prevented from learning how to say no, our bodies may end up saying it for us,” Dr. Maté wrote.

For some people, the stresses of life have a cumulative and debilitating effect that can lead to different diseases and conditions. In other cases, past traumas leave a powerful imprint that can “teach” a person unhealthy behaviors, such as chronic worry or escapism.

Various strategies and tools are available to help people overcome these lingering survival patterns.

### **Somatic Experiencing**

One approach gaining traction in both clinical and holistic settings is somatic experiencing.

This body-oriented therapy, developed by Mr. Levine, aims to restore a sense of regulation and safety by releasing trauma from the body.

Trapped energy can be released and discharged through gentle movements such as vibrating, twitching, and slightly trembling muscular tissue, Mr. Levine says.

These methods can help to re-pattern the body, he says, and support healing.

In “Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma,” Mr. Levine explains how wild animals rarely experience trauma. After a life-threatening event, they shake to release adrenaline and cortisol. This process helps their nervous system return to a normal, balanced state. Mr. Levine said he uses this phenomenon to treat human trauma more effectively.

## **Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises - TRE**

A practical way of “shaking out trauma” is through [Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises](#) (TRE), developed by David Berzeli, a renowned expert in trauma intervention and conflict resolution. This technique helps release lingering trauma in the body by using gentle vibrating and shaking that calms the nervous system and promotes healing.

[A study](#) published in Psychology early this year found that TRE led to “a significant reduction in symptom severity as well as the number of symptoms,” among a group of traumatized East African refugees.

“It was concluded that TRE is an effective means of improving the trauma-related symptoms in East African refugees,” the study reads.

A [pilot study](#) published in the Journal of Traditional and Complementary Medicine in 2021 also tested TRE on patients with multiple sclerosis with promising results.

“Decreases were seen in the mean scores of all nine self-reported day-to-day symptoms as well as stress level, while sleep quality mean score increased,” the researchers reported.

TRE and other somatic-based therapies can be done at home or used as therapeutic modalities when working with a therapist.

## **Somatic Practices and Psychotherapy**

Lidalize Grobler, an educational psychologist with more than 10 years of experience, often works with people who present physical symptoms due to stress or trauma. In those cases, she uses different forms of somatic practices, such as eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, TRE, somatic experiencing, and brain-working recursive therapy.

“Patients can experience more functionality, find a sense of equilibrium, and life can become free again” when trauma has been processed in this way, Ms. Grobler told The Epoch Times.

## Mind-Body Practices

Modalities such as dance therapy, yoga, and tai chi offer opportunities to release stored energy and reconnect with the body through breath awareness, body-mind connection, and mindful movement.

Notably, 10 weeks of [yoga practice](#)—in hour-long weekly sessions—seems specifically effective at reducing post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms for patients who failed to respond to any other treatment or medication, according to a paper published in *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*.

Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, a pioneering psychiatrist and the author of “*The Body Keeps the Score*,” highlights the effectiveness of “age-old, nonpharmacological approaches” such as deep breathing, martial arts, drumming, and chanting in helping people shift out of fight-or-flight responses. These practices can be done at home and are easily accessible to most people.

## A Solid Support System

Dr. Van der Kolk also stresses the importance of a good support network, which can be an antidote to trauma and a powerful protection mechanism.

Patients tend to recover best in the presence of others, such as therapists, religious communities, loved ones, families, and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, as these provide emotional and physical safety, free from judgment or shame.

“Trauma cannot be ignored,” Mr. Levine wrote in “*Waking the Tiger*.” It is deeply rooted in people’s primal biology, which has allowed us to survive. The only path to liberation is renegotiating and transforming our traumatic experiences, he wrote.

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