

A woman with long brown hair, seen from behind, stands in a field of yellow wildflowers. She is wearing a light-colored tank top and dark patterned pants. In the background, there are bare trees and a bright, hazy sky. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

# HOW BETRAYAL TRAUMA MANIFESTS ITSELF

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**BLOOM**



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# Introduction

# Introduction

## BETRAYAL TRAUMA

We expect relationships to be built on trust, love, and mutual respect. Which is why the shocking discovery of betrayal in a marriage causes feelings of chaos and confusion. Few experiences create more pain and hurt than sexual infidelity (whether virtual or physical). For the victimized spouse, sexual infidelity can create such intense emotions that the memories and trauma may remain for months or even years later. Our studies have shown that 43% of spouses continue to feel the side effects of Betrayal Trauma for more than two years.

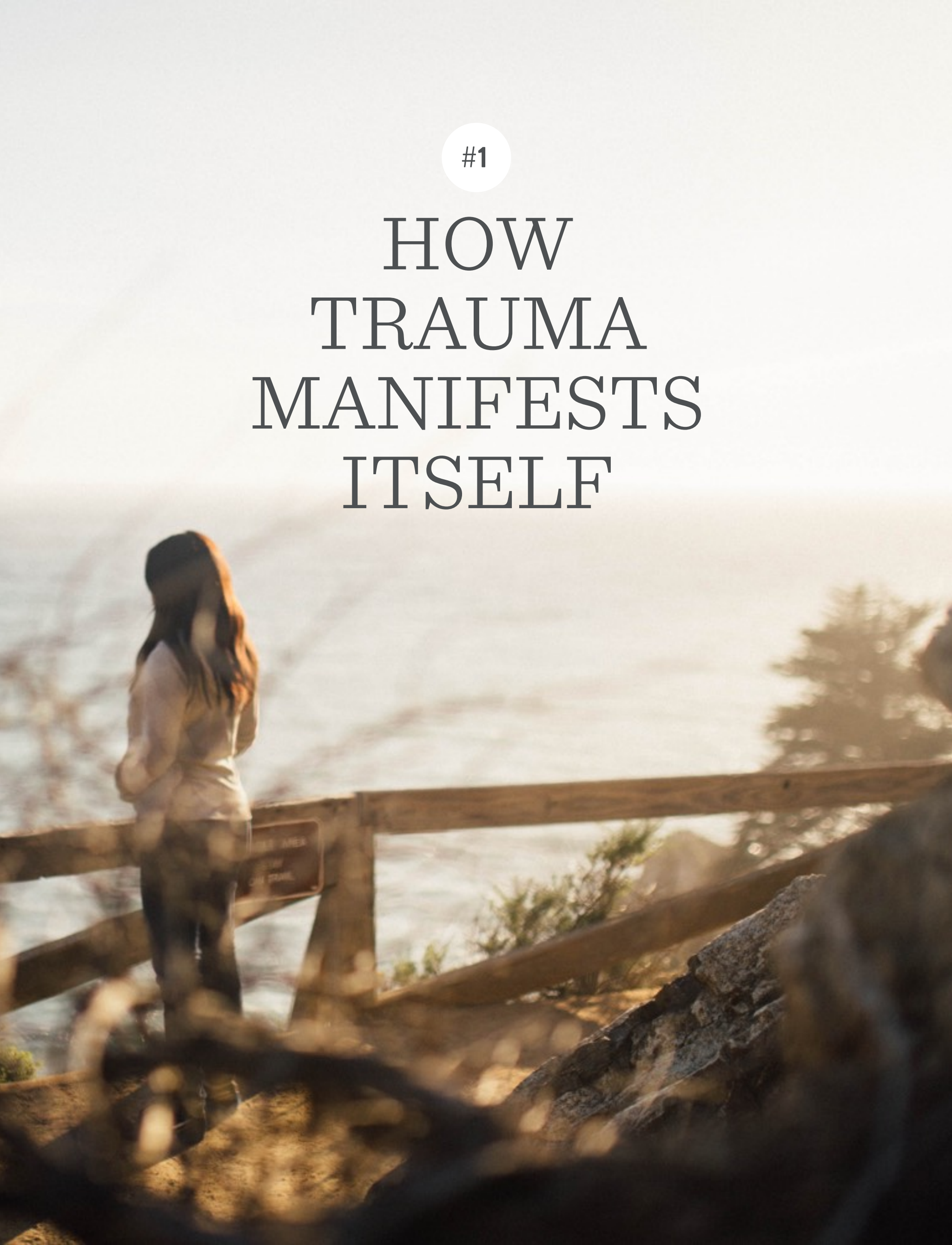
Unfortunately, there is no quick fix for healing Betrayal Trauma. However, healing is possible. We are honored that more than 800 women have shared their sacred personal stories with us. From these stories and many years of clinical work, we have learned the symptoms and characteristics of Betrayal Trauma and the best methods for healing. As you take the courageous step to begin your recovery, we want you to

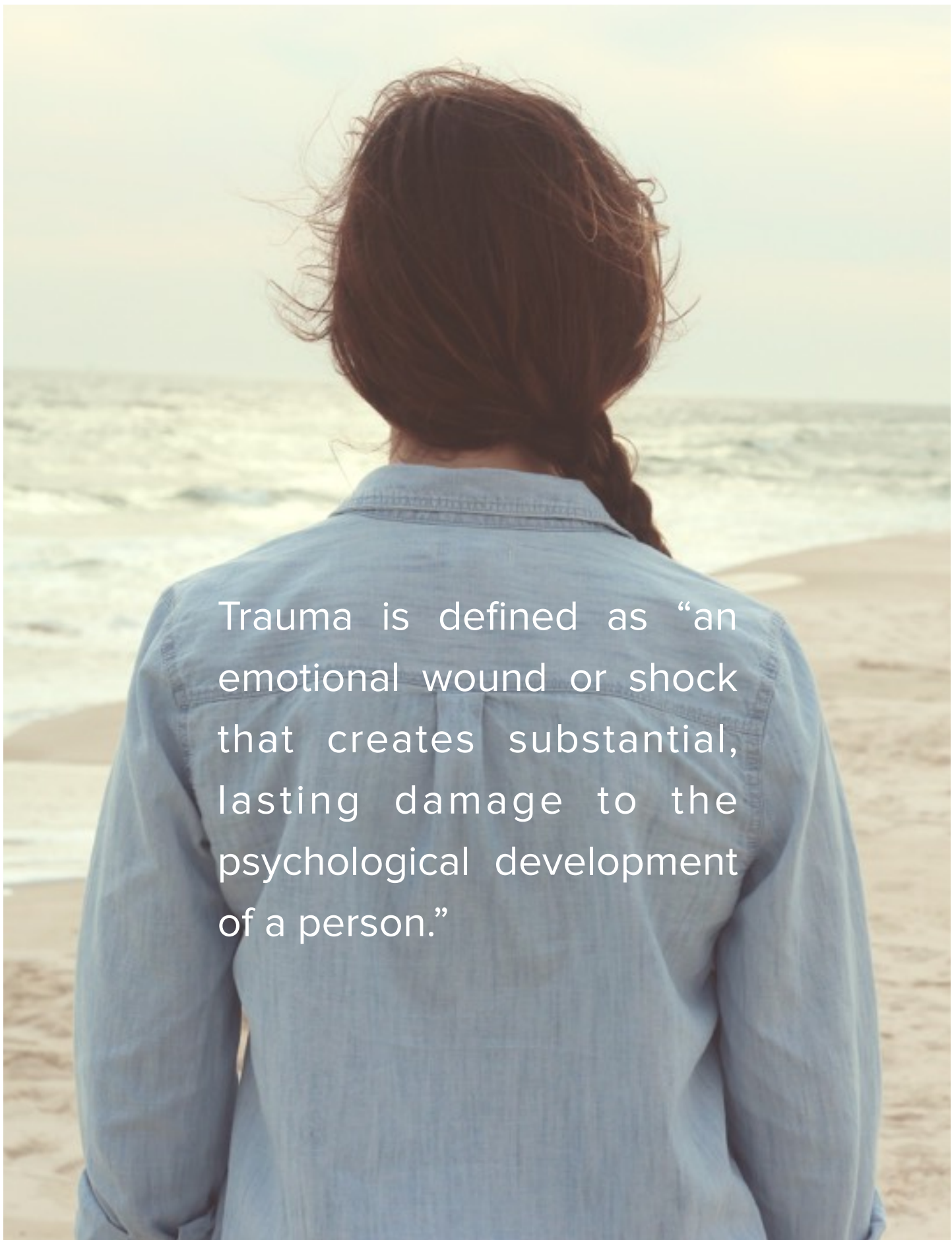
understand Betrayal Trauma, how it's affecting you, and how you can respond. This beginning is crucial to set the framework for your healthy recovery.



#1

# HOW TRAUMA MANIFESTS ITSELF





Trauma is defined as “an emotional wound or shock that creates substantial, lasting damage to the psychological development of a person.”

# Chapter 1

## HOW TRAUMA MANIFESTS ITSELF

When you are betrayed by the person who is supposed to love, respect and support you the most, your world shatters. It may feel as though the whole life of your relationship has been a lie. Many people naturally retrace their relationship's history adding in all the missing details of betrayal that they just learned.

“I am more angry than I have ever been. In fact, I didn’t know I could feel so much anger all the time, why?”

Another woman put it this way, “After having found out about my husband, I can’t sleep and I’m always anxious. When I see my husband, I want to hurt him one moment and the next I want him to hold me. My emotions are all over the place. Is there something wrong with me?”

When faced with extreme, terrifying, or life threatening circumstances, we may suffer from trauma. Trauma is defined as “an emotional wound or shock that creates substantial, lasting damage to the psychological development of a person.” Without healing, trauma may continue at high levels possibly causing psychological, physical, social, and spiritual damage.

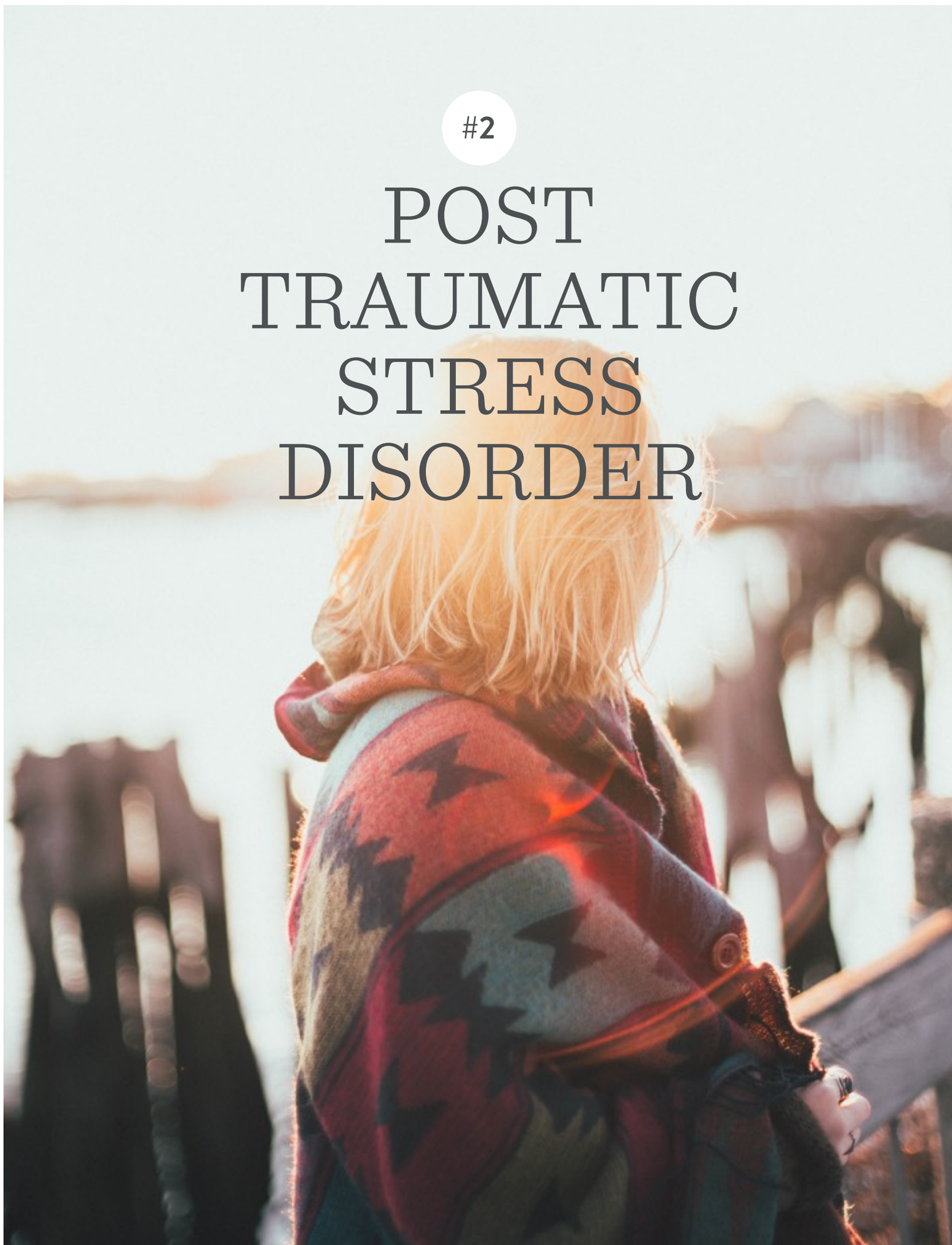
Trauma happens to people who go to war, who live in neighborhoods with gang violence, and, as we've found, people who are betrayed by a parent or spouse. Consider those connections for a few moments. It says something truly profound that your pains and fears are shared by people in extreme danger, and life-threatening situations. This is why you must not blame yourself for your feelings. Your story may feel quiet and small, but it is real.

When you are betrayed by the person who is supposed to love, respect and support you the most, your world shatters. It may feel as though the whole life of your relationship has been a lie. Many people naturally retrace their relationship's history adding in all the missing details of betrayal that they just learned. This process is jarring, especially when the details from the spouse come in pieces. It can make you feel as though the rug is constantly being pulled from under you.

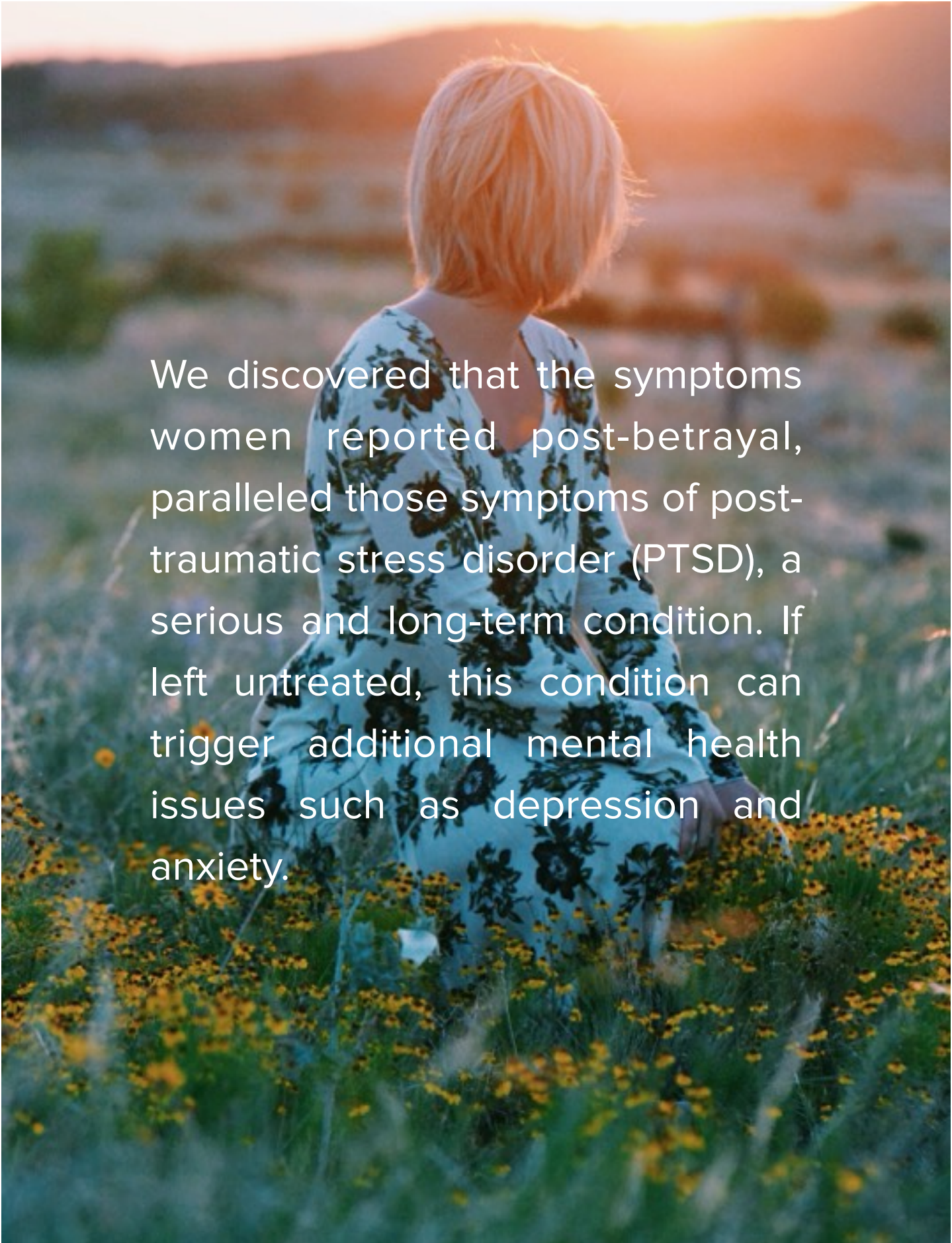


#2

# POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER







We discovered that the symptoms women reported post-betrayal, paralleled those symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a serious and long-term condition. If left untreated, this condition can trigger additional mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

# Chapter 2

## POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Most women don't recognize that they are experiencing Betrayal Trauma.

Emotional ups and downs are expected, and the paradoxical experience of anger coupled with a desire to connect is common. These feelings create confusion and pain, resulting in polarized emotions and possibly making you feel out of control at times.

Most women don't recognize that they are experiencing Betrayal Trauma. Many times the trauma and desire to fix their husband's problems can be so great that they overlook the feelings of chaos within themselves.

After listening to hundreds of women's stories, we have a greater understanding of the breadth of suffering that women like you experience. To create our healing model, we also needed to know each person's specific needs. By analyzing written assessments, we were able to see if the individual experiencing betrayal was suffering from trauma, and if they were, which aspects of trauma were inflicting them most.

In 2005, I wrote an assessment. This was one of the first assessments, if not the very first, that looked at trauma that stemmed from a spouse's sexual behaviors. Since that time 10 years ago, thousands of people have completed our assessment.

The results have been stunning—and alarming. After poring through the data, it has become clear to me that thousands of women and men are suffering deeply due to their partner's sexual behaviors outside of their relationship. Here are some categories, questions and results from our research:



### **Fear and Questions of Safety**

1. I feel violated due to my partner's sexual behaviors.

- Never (2.87%)
- Occasionally/rarely (9.86%)
- About half the time (9.65%)
- More often than not (25.05%)
- Always (52.57%)

### **Relive the Event/Experience**

2. When my partner tries to get close to me or we are sexually intimate, I cannot help but question whether my partner is thinking about me or things he/she has done.

- Never (2.66%)
- Occasionally/rarely (11.53%)
- About half the time (15.96%)
- More often than not (27.05%)
- Always (42.79%)

### **Avoidance**

3. I avoid sexual contact with my partner since discovering his/her behavior.

- Never (11.66%)
- Occasionally/rarely (24.89%)
- About half the time (23.32%)
- More often than not (23.77%)
- Always (16.37%)

### **Negative Self Evaluation and Mood**

4. I feel like my partner acts out because I am not good enough.

- Never (9.89%)

- Occasionally/rarely (21.61%)
- About half the time (23.22%)
- More often than not (23.22%)
- Always (22.07%)

### **Emotional Arousal (e.g. Anger, Irritability)**

5. After discovering my partner's sexual behaviors, I find that I am increasingly angry in response to my partner.

- Never (2.10%)
- Occasionally/rarely (17.06%)
- About half the time (23.13%)
- More often than not (34.58%)
- Always (23.13%)

### **Duration of the Disturbance**

6. How long have you been experiencing the symptoms described in this assessment (e.g. recurrent thoughts, feeling anxious, being afraid)?

- Less than one month (3.77%)
- 2-3 months (4.95%)
- 4-6 months (5.42%)
- 7-12 months (10.85%)
- More than one year but less than two (16.51%)
- More than two years but less than five (25.47%)
- More than five years (33.02%)

Bloom specializes in Betrayal Trauma. If you or someone you know is involved in an unfaithful relationship and needs help, Bloom may be a valuable resource for you.

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

### **Distress or Impairment in Social, Occupational, or Other Important Areas of Functioning)**

7. It has become difficult for me to fulfill important roles (that of employee, parent, etc.) since discovering my partner's sexual behaviors.

- Never (11.53%)
- Occasionally/rarely (26.82%)
- About half the time (30.35%)
- More often than not (21.88%)
- Always (9.41%)

In reviewing the data above with many other responses, it became clear to me that the PTSD criteria model was a legitimate way to look at responses to infidelity and other sexual behaviors outside the marital bond. Betrayal trauma due to a partner's sexual behaviors is common, and the symptoms are real. And, If left untreated, this condition can trigger additional mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

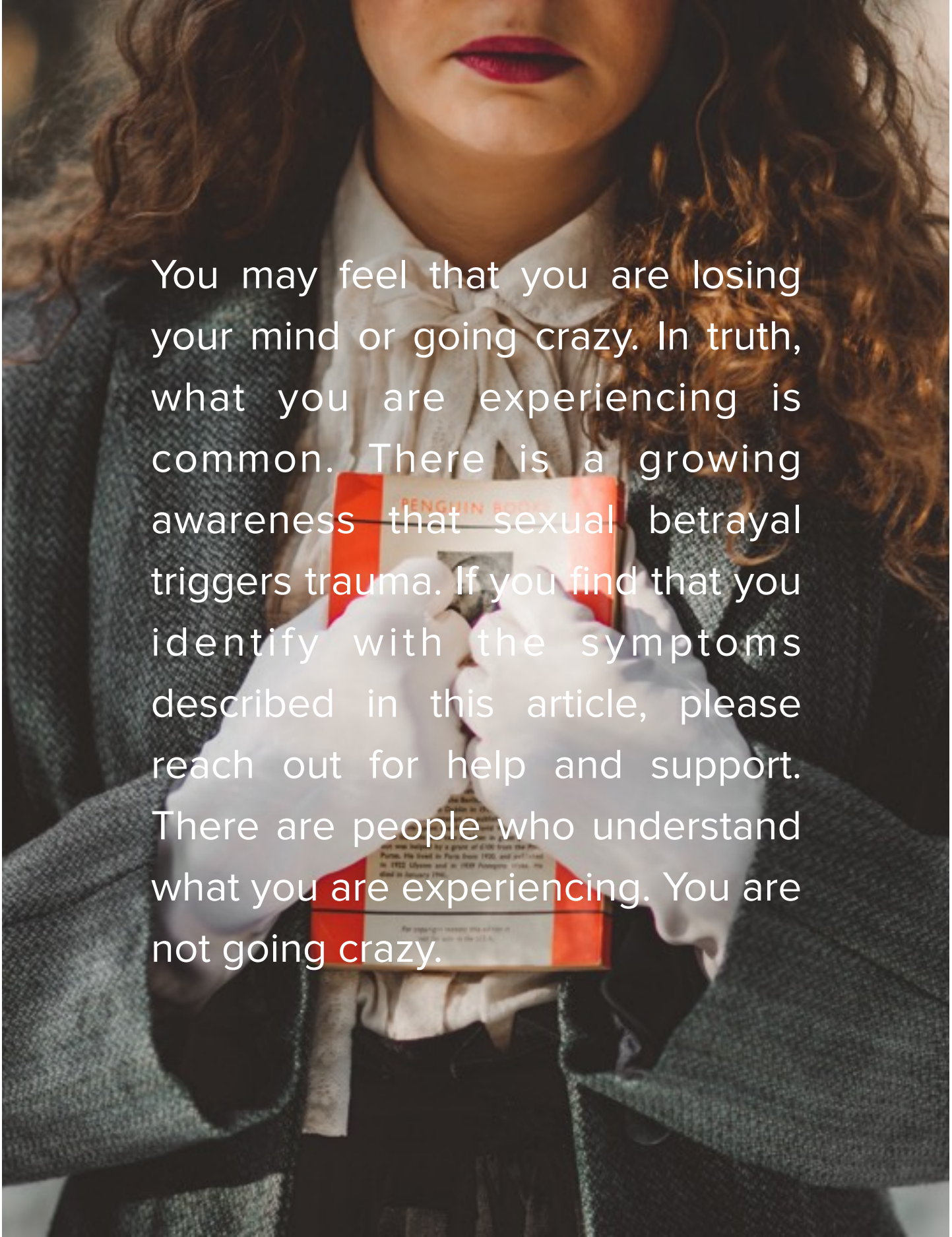




#3

# SOLUTIONS FOR SEEKING HELP



A close-up photograph of a woman with curly brown hair and red lipstick. She is wearing a grey tweed jacket over a white blouse with a large bow. She is holding a small, vintage Penguin Books book with a red spine and cover. The book's title is partially visible as 'PENGUIN BOOKS' and 'The...'. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.

You may feel that you are losing your mind or going crazy. In truth, what you are experiencing is common. There is a growing awareness that sexual betrayal triggers trauma. If you find that you identify with the symptoms described in this article, please reach out for help and support. There are people who understand what you are experiencing. You are not going crazy.



# Chapter 3

## SOLUTIONS FOR SEEKING HELP

Self-expression can be very therapeutic both for the artist and the receiver. If you would like to draw, paint, take a photograph, make a sculpture or find a stock photo of what trauma symbolically looks like in your life, we encourage you to do so. Get creative! Send a snapshot of your artwork to [hello@bloomforwomen.com](mailto:hello@bloomforwomen.com) with a short explanation and we'll anonymously post it to our Facebook page. This helps others to see that they are not alone.

Fortunately, we now see a growing number of people who specialize in understanding and treating trauma. Experts such as Bessel van der Kolk, Peter Levine and Pat Ogden are educating us on how to better understand and treat trauma. Their guidance provides a great model for treating betrayal trauma. For example, we now know that trauma is largely stored in the body and may best be resolved through using our senses (sensorimotor therapy). For this reason, yoga and meditation can be effective tools in healing from trauma.

If you feel you need help, we recommend that you consider the following:

1. Education
2. 12-Step Groups
3. Professional Help
4. Reach Out to Others
5. Yoga

### Resources

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### Additional Reading

- Ways Betrayal Trauma Alters the Mind and Body
- The Power of Journaling
- How Excessive Adrenaline And Cortisol Can Damage The Body
- Beginning to Respond to Betrayal Trauma

# About the Author



Dr. Kevin Skinner is the Clinical Director at [Addo Recovery, LLC](#) and has been serving individuals for 18 years. He has created online assessments for more than 250,000 individuals that center on relationship intimacy and pornography addiction. These assessments serve as a helpful guide to people working toward recovery.

Dr. Skinner's newly developed Compassion Model is a therapy style that helps people develop greater compassion. It changes how individuals feel about themselves and others and is a great healing tool for