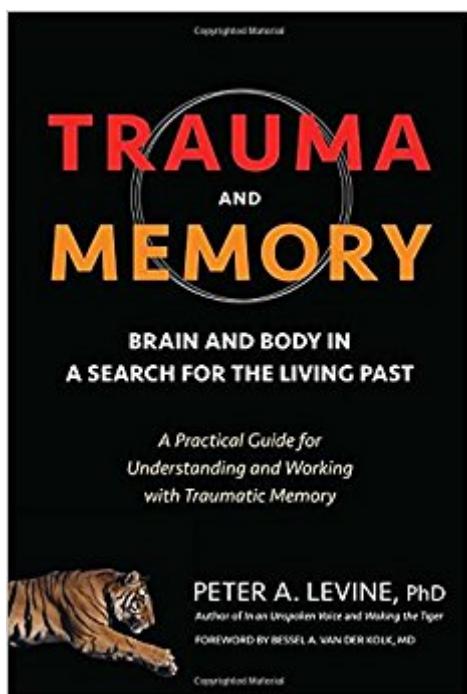


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# Trauma And Memory: Brain And Body In A Search For The Living Past: A Practical Guide For Understanding And Working With Traumatic Memory



## Synopsis

In Trauma and Memory, bestselling author Dr. Peter Levine (creator of the Somatic Experiencing approach) tackles one of the most difficult and controversial questions of PTSD/trauma therapy: Can we trust our memories? While some argue that traumatic memories are unreliable and not useful, others insist that we absolutely must rely on memory to make sense of past experience. Building on his 45 years of successful treatment of trauma and utilizing case studies from his own practice, Dr. Levine suggests that there are elements of truth in both camps. While acknowledging that memory can be trusted, he argues that the only truly useful memories are those that might initially seem to be the least reliable: memories stored in the body and not necessarily accessible by our conscious mind. While much work has been done in the field of trauma studies to address "explicit" traumatic memories in the brain (such as intrusive thoughts or flashbacks), much less attention has been paid to how the body itself stores "implicit" memory, and how much of what we think of as "memory" actually comes to us through our (often unconsciously accessed) felt sense. By learning how to better understand this complex interplay of past and present, brain and body, we can adjust our relationship to past trauma and move into a more balanced, relaxed state of being. Written for trauma sufferers as well as mental health care practitioners, Trauma and Memory is a groundbreaking look at how memory is constructed and how influential memories are on our present state of being.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“In Trauma and Memory,” Peter Levine provides insight into how memories and the brain circuits involved in maintaining these memories empower trauma to influence how we think, feel, and interact. Levine has been a heroic pioneer in explaining how the damaging emotional memories associated with trauma are locked in our body. His paradigm-shifting intervention model, Somatic Experiencing, has been at the forefront of clinical interventions focused on moving trauma-induced implicit feelings, locked in the body, into an explicit understanding. Levine explains how the intransigent and omnipotent power of the implicit memories of trauma can be diffused and transformed.

•Stephen W. Porges, PhD, author of *The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-regulation*

“Memory has many layers, and Peter Levine has contributed his own unique and powerful way of thinking about how we can understand these systems and optimize their unfolding after trauma. This book offers clinical wisdom drawn from decades of direct experience, demonstrating how a clinician •with focused attention and essential timing •can move unresolved, non-integrated memories into a resolved, integrated form that enables a coherent narrative to emerge and the individual to become liberated from the prisons of the past.”

•Daniel J. Siegel, MD, author of *Mindsight, The Mindful Therapist, and Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology*

“Only after we become capable of standing back, taking stock of ourselves, reducing the intensity of our sensations and emotions, and activating our inborn physical defensive reactions can we learn to modify our entrenched maladaptive automatic survival responses and, in doing so, put our haunting memories to rest.”

•Bessel A. van der Kolk, MD, author of *The Body keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Healing of Trauma*

“In yet another seminal work Peter Levine here deconstructs traumatic memory, making it accessible to healing and transformation. He helps us •therapist or client •move from a limiting past to where we belong: the empowered present.”

•Gabor Maté, MD, author of *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction and When the Body Says No: Exploring the Stress-Disease Connection*

“Arguably, much of our lives are spent at the mercy of the automatic brain; this is only accentuated for those who have experienced severe trauma. In writing with such depth and insight about the psychobiological dynamics of procedural memory, master therapist Peter Levine offers therapists important tools for the transformation of traumatic memory. Moreover, the writing and rich examples make this book accessible so that professionals and nonprofessionals alike can benefit from its wisdom.”

•Stan Tatkin, PsyD, MFT, founder of the PACT Institute

“With this book, Dr. Levine has made another significant contribution to the

treatment of trauma. Drawing on established neuroscience he explains, in clear and accessible terms, the various kinds of memory, their neurological bases, and their role in the treatment of trauma. This book is invaluable for clinicians wishing to improve their skills, laypeople wanting a deeper understanding of the way the mind and brain work to create and heal trauma, and scientists looking to understand the implications of modern neuroscience for the treatment of trauma by the body-oriented psychotherapies. •Peter Payne and Mardi Crane-Godreau, PhD, researchers at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College

Peter A. Levine, PhD, holds doctorates in both medical biophysics and psychology. The developer of Somatic Experiencing®, a body-awareness approach to healing trauma, Dr. Levine was a stress consultant for NASA on the development of the space shuttle project and was a member of the Institute of World Affairs Task Force of Psychologists for Social Responsibility in developing responses to large-scale disasters and ethno-political warfare. Levine's bestselling book *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* has been translated into twenty-two languages. Levine's original contribution to the field of Body Psychotherapy was honored in 2010 when he received the Lifetime Achievement award from the United States Association for Body Psychotherapy (USABP). For further information on Dr. Levine's trainings, projects, and literature, visit [www.traumahealing.com](http://www.traumahealing.com) and [www.somaticexperiencing.com](http://www.somaticexperiencing.com).

I was disappointed by this book. I was so pleased to see a book on trauma and memory, that I jumped to buy it, but though it starts out well, discussing the different forms of memory (declarative, episodic, emotional, and procedural), it soon narrows down into a consideration of only procedural memory and only a subset of that. Then it discusses his method of Somatic Experiencing and give case studies; it becomes clear that the discussion of memory is mainly to support his discussion of SE. Indeed, everything is centered around SE, not memory, including his criticisms (which sometimes made me cringe) of other therapists and researchers. So if you're looking for an interesting and clearly written account of SE, here it is, but if you're looking for a broad and objective account of traumatic memory, this isn't it. In case you'd like to look elsewhere, I can recommend the good (but much too short) discussion in *The Body Keeps the Score* (two chapters), the two interesting books by Lenore Terr (somewhat dated now), and the excellent web site:  
<http://www.jimhopper.com/memory/>

As a survivor of severe trauma I cried my way through the first part of this book, as the way I

experience life somehow felt so validated. Peter obviously truly understands the territory and helped me to understand my own reactions and memory challenges better. I would recommend this book to anybody working with trauma survivors and trauma survivors themselves. There is so much misinformation around out there with regard to memory processes, and Peter has written a really clear explanation of the different types of memory and the issues around whether or not they are reliable. This book also has a very clear explanation of how to use the SIBAM model and pendulation to help someone to complete thwarted survival and orienting responses from the past, and even just on a first quick read has better empowered me to be with the sensations in my body. Thank you Peter, for being the pioneer you are and for bringing what you have learnt so clearly into the world through your writings.

Excellent way to access all the different memory systems and make sense of early life experiences without indulging them further - or getting re-traumatized. Great sense of integration that came with putting together all the fragments.

Thank you, Dr. Levine, for a book written in layman's language regarding how trauma is embedded and encoded in our physiology. As an EFT Practitioner and EFT Trainer, this book gives me another option for reading for my students who are just starting out on their healing journey. You, Dr. Scaer, and Dr. van der Kolk have all done a wonderful service writing books for those with early traumas. Sherrie Rice Smith, R.N. (Retired) [EFTforChristians.com](http://EFTforChristians.com)

What do you do when ÄfÃ¢ Ä ¬Ã Å“talk therapiesÄfÃ¢ Ä ¬Ã Â• donÄfÃ¢ Ä ¬Ã ä„¢t work? Could it be because your traumatic experiences are trapped deeper in the mind, in emotional and procedural (body) memory? In this groundbreaking book, Peter Levine, the creator of Somatic Experiencing, applies his 45 years of clinical experience with trauma survivors to the investigation and understanding of traumatic memory. Whether you are a healer or a survivor, this book is incredibly useful. I was especially drawn to the chapter ÄfÃ¢ Ä ¬Ã Å“The HeroÄfÃ¢ Ä ¬Ã ä„¢s Journey. ÄfÃ¢ Ä ¬Ã Â• Using case examples, Levine explains the processes that a survivor must go through, especially the push and pull of integrating traumatic memories into a narrative conception of self. (Having been born prematurely, I was deeply moved by his work with a child who had a medically difficult birth, and showed signs of trauma). The body holds on to our traumas, seeking resolution from those moments when our nervous systems were overloaded and our survival instincts could not respond adequately at the time. Like the heroes and

heroines of myth, we must embark on a dark and mysterious journey into the deepest parts of ourselves. Healing, the boon of the journey, is not for the faint of heart. Throughout, though, Levine emphasizes the inherent drive for survival, even flourishing, inherent in all beings (and he even backs it with neuroscience!). Survivors are not “victims,” nor “failures.” The body may act as if a survivor has failed, trapping him in a feedback loop of trigger and response. But ultimately, we survived. We will triumph. Thus Levine writes about survivors with great warmth and encouragement. For me, this book explained so much of my own healing journey, and why certain therapies and modalities have not worked. Reading it, I have since contacted several practitioners of Levine’s methods -- I am ready to. The way to healing is not in cognitively understanding a trauma, but in reconsolidating a memory of it such that we access our inherent healing resources, and are released from the pain of the events. Levine writes, “In the critical time period of recall there is an opportunity to prevent [a memory] from reconsolidating in the original maladaptive form. This is done by introducing the new empowered bodily experiences” Reconsolidation is a profound opportunity to transform traumatic failure into embodied success (p. 144). The thought alone is empowering. Your habitual responses don’t have to trap you forever. Your own instincts to survive and thrive are your ticket to release. On your hero’s journey, Peter Levine, and the many practitioners he is trained, can be your guide. Blessings on the journey.

I love love love Peter Levine’s books! This is another great book to add to my collection!

Intriguing and informative. Levine has given the reader access to cutting edge science in an engaging and touching format. The book flows and draws the reader ever deeper into pondering the wonder of memory.

One of the very best books on trauma I ever read

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