

# How Do I Heal After Abuse?

**Resources to Help  
You Move Forward**



# After experiencing domestic violence, it may feel impossible to heal. It's important to remember you can, and will, move forward.

Coming to a place of calm after abuse is no easy task. Survivors often experience feelings of guilt and shame after leaving an abuser and may need to work through other emotional, physical, legal and economic challenges along the way.

This toolkit will help you discover ways to heal after abuse. Inside you'll find:

- Helpful Articles
- Recommended Books
- Lists
- Survey Results
- Support Communities
- How to Find Help

Remember, as a survivor, you are strong, capable and perseverant. Help is out there, and survivors need to know they don't have to tackle the healing process alone.



There are hundreds of articles on the many facets of domestic violence from DomesticShelters.org. Here are links to those that best answer “How do I heal after abuse?”

[Rebuilding Your Self-Esteem](#)

5 ways to start feeling good about yourself again.

[From Surviving to Thriving](#)

4 ways to take better care of yourself today.

[Revitalize Your Spirit After Abuse](#)

6 self-healing ideas for your recovery process.

[Recharge, Rejuvenate & Renew](#)

A mind, body and spirit cleanse for survivors.

[How to Find Your Laugh Again](#)

Why getting the giggles can help your body heal after trauma.

[How to Keep Going After Abuse](#)

How to find support after leaving an abuser.

## [Building Resilience After Trauma](#)

Inspiration for those feeling burdened by life's mishaps.

## [8 Confidence Boosters](#)

Improve your self-esteem by trying one of these a week.

## [5 Stages of Recovery](#)

Healing comes, but it's a process that happens in these stages.

## [Recovering in 8 Steps](#)

Suggestions for going from fear and despair toward happy.

## [Finding Financial Footing](#)

Ideas on how to start over financially after abuse.

## [Finding Financial Independence](#)

Multiple free online resources teach financial literacy.

## [How Do You Find Safe People?](#)

Signs that a potential partner will be safe, kind and respectful.

## [Starting a New Relationships](#)

4 steps to consider taking before dating again.

### [I Keep Going Back](#)

Trauma bonding causes lasting attachment to an abuser.

### [Why Survivors Should Set Goals](#)

Escaping violence needs to be looked at long-term.

### [Finding Support After You Leave](#)

Abuse survivors are prone to PTSD.

### [What are the Symptoms of PTSD?](#)

List of symptoms plus how therapeutic massage may help.

### [Can Virtual Support Help?](#)

How to get the most out of online support.

### [Tapping Out of Trauma](#)

How thought field therapy can reduce fear and anxiety.

### [Modifying Memories](#)

How EMDR can help reprogram how you remember trauma.

### [When the Feelings Rush Back](#)

Triggers survivors face and how to get through them.

### [Stop a Flashback in its Tracks](#)

Grounding techniques can bring you back to the present.

### [An Emotional Safety Plan](#)

A guide to help you on your healing journey.

### [How to Hide Your Address](#)

Shielding your home address is possible in most US states.

### [13 Ways to Endure Emotional Pain](#)

Breaking free from grief and pain that can seem unending.

### [Should You Change Your SSN?](#)

The pros & cons of changing your social security number.

### [Express Yourself](#)

Learning to find your voice again can take work.

### [Volunteering to Heal](#)

How helping others can help you.

### [I Feel Guilty for Putting Him Away](#)

Your abusive partner's in jail, so why do you feel bad for him?

### [Looking Past the Good Times](#)

It's time to release the memories that make you feel guilty.

### [When Everyone Has an Opinion](#)

Some people will share judgement, opinions. Don't listen.

### [Putting Trauma Down in Words](#)

The ways journaling can help survivors.

### [Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping](#)

Ignoring your feelings is going to get you nowhere fast.

### [Starting from Scratch](#)

You had to leave suddenly and now you have nothing.

### [Is Closure Possible After Abuse?](#)

How survivors moved forward after domestic violence.

### [Trauma-Related Guilt Is a Liar](#)

You didn't cause the abuse and you couldn't have stopped it

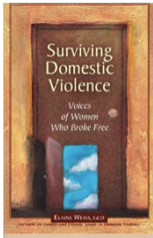
### [Stages of Recovery After Trauma](#)

Each survivor's journey is different and shouldn't be rushed.

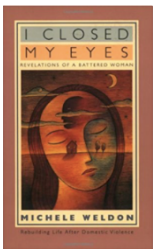


Reading books can be a helpful way to understand if you're a victim of abuse and understand the abuser's behavior.

Here are our recommended reads:



[Surviving Domestic Violence: Voices of Women Who Broke Free](#). Stories of domestic violence survivors who escaped their abusers, reclaimed their dignity, reconstructed their lives, and rediscovered peace. Domestic violence doesn't just happen "out there." It happens in our neighborhoods and on our streets. It happens to women we see at work, the supermarket, and the PTA board meeting. Find encouragement and hope in the voices of these who broke free.

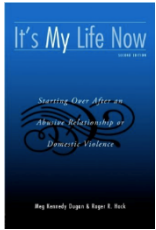


[I Closed My Eyes: Revelations of a Battered Woman](#). Abuse happens to people who are talented, independent, confident and educated, who had happy childhoods, loving parents, to people who have everything going for them. Many will recognize the author's devotion to family that can bind victims to abusers and find inspiration in the author's journey to reclaim a future for herself and her children.

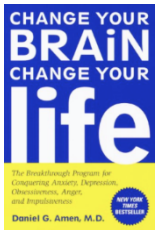




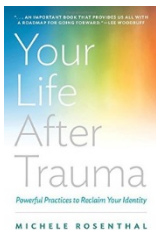
[I'm Still Standing: Crawling Out of the Darkness Into the Light](#). Mildred Muhammad describes how she and her children overcame the difficulties they faced in the wake of the negative media attention and threats from people in her community following the arrest of her husband, the DC sniper. Gritty, raw, and emotional, Mildred's story shows her triumph over the (external and internal) systems that put her in a place of fear and isolation.



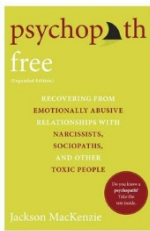
[It's My Life Now: Starting Over After an Abusive Relationship or Domestic Violence](#). After finding a way out, a victim's difficulties are solved: life is good, they are safe, and recovery is swift. Not so fast. Survivors know that leaving does not end the nightmare. It is the beginning of an often difficult journey to healing and happiness. This book offers practical guidance, exercises, reassurance, and awareness that survivors of relationship abuse need to reclaim their lives.



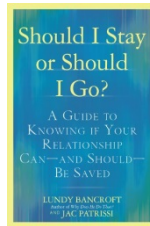
[Change Your Brain, Change Your Life](#). The neuropsychiatrist author offers evidence that anxiety, depression, anger, obsessiveness, or impulsiveness could be related to how structures in your brain work. Included are "brain prescriptions," or exercises, that can help heal your brain and change your life with techniques for calming inner turmoil, curbing anger, fighting off negative thoughts, improving problem solving and more.



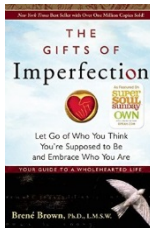
[Your Life After Trauma: Powerful Practices to Reclaim Your Identity](#). Now a professional coach helping trauma victims rebuild their lives, Michele Rosenthal struggled with the effects of medically-induced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for over 25 years before reaching a full recovery. Today, she is 100% free of PTSD. She applies her personal experience and professional wisdom to offer readers an invaluable roadmap to overcoming their own trauma.



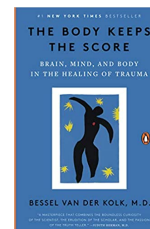
[\*Psychopath Free: Recovering from Emotionally Abusive Relationships with Narcissists, Sociopaths, and Other Toxic People.\*](#) Have you ever been in a relationship with a psychopath? Chances are, even if you did, you would never know it. Psychopaths are cunning charmers and master manipulators, to the point where you start to accept the most extreme behaviors as normal— even if they hurt you. Guide for survivors written by a survivor, offering hope for healing and thriving after psychopathic abuse.



[\*Should I Stay or Should I Go? A Guide to Knowing if Your Relationship Can—and Should—Be Saved.\*](#) Women involved in frustrating relationships will learn to tell the difference between a healthy-yet-difficult relationship and one that is really not working, recognize the signs their partner has a serious problem, stop waiting to see what happens and make their own growth the top priority, and prepare for life without their partner even as they keep trying to make the relationship work.



[\*The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are.\*](#) After abuse ends, feelings of inadequacy and shame can last. The author explores these difficult emotions and places importance on accepting imperfection and vulnerability. She guides readers through a process of beginning to “engage with the world from a place of worthiness” and learning to love yourself just as you are.



[\*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma.\*](#) Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, one of the world’s foremost experts on trauma, has spent over three decades working with survivors. He uses recent scientific advances to show how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers’ capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control, and trust.



Sometimes lists are easier on the mind because they are uncluttered and to-the-point. If you'd rather read a few items vs. articles or books, these lists are for you.

- [19 Grounding Techniques](#)
- [18 Ways to Start Over Financially](#)
- [29 Self-Care Strategies](#)
- [35 Characteristics of Safe People](#)
- [29 Types of Personal Boundaries You Can Set](#)
- [27 Ways to Build Confidence](#)
- [22 Signs of PTSD](#)
- [16 Signs of Depression](#)

To view all list items at once, click the SEE ALL button located below the list text.



A lot of lessons can be taken away from people who have been through it before. Check out the following survey results to learn from the experiences of others.

- [Have you shared your story publicly before?](#)
- [How long after leaving before you started dating again?](#)
- [How many hours of sleep do you get per night?](#)
- [Have you ever used VINE to notify you of an offender's release?](#)
- [What's the biggest financial hurdle you've had to overcome?](#)
- [Which of these at-home methods helped you heal from trauma?](#)
- [How long did it take to feel like a strong, empowered survivor?](#)
- [As a survivor of abuse, what term do you prefer?](#)



**Online forums and chats can help you connect with others who are in or have faced similar situations and find support and ideas from the survivor community.**

[AfterSilence.org](https://www.AfterSilence.org) aims to help victims become survivors and to communicate in the recovery of domestic and sexual violence. It offers an active message board and chat room for rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest and molestation survivors. There are over 31,000 members and about 1,000,000 posts, including recent posts and many useful posts from days and months past.

[Pathways to Safety International](https://www.PathwaysToSafety.org) If you're an American overseas, your situation is different than 99% of your fellow countryman, and this site will be a wonderful resource for you. Among the services is a 24-hour response to emails, as well as international phone options.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Page](#) offers one of the most active places where domestic violence survivors. You'll find conversation, past experiences and unvarnished stories, and occasionally advice from professionals who have joined in on a topic.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Group](#) is a private group designed to be a safe space for domestic abuse victims, survivors, advocates and others affected by abuse to support one another through meaningful dialogue and helpful insight.

[Fort Refuge](#) is a clever, grassroots site run by survivors for fellow survivors as a safe place to come together and discuss their struggles and victories in healing from various types of abuse. Though the forum and chat do not boast the same numbers as some of the larger organizations, they are one of the more active conversation places on the internet currently. They also add new content to their site regularly.

[Love is Respect - National Teen Dating Helpline](#) focuses on teen relationships and can be accessed by phone, text or live chat. It offers real-time, one-on-one support by trained peer advocates who offer information and advocacy to those involved in dating abuse. They also offer support to parents, teachers, clergy, law enforcement, and service providers.

[National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) offers confidential, private, one-on-one chats with advocates every day 24/7.

[OnYourMind.net](#) is a safe and anonymous place for teens to get information and support from other teens in an online chat room, covering topics such as relationships, school, depression, stress, suicide, parents, cutting, identity and health.

[Pandora's Aquarium](#) is an online forum with around 2 million posts and over 70,000 members, and is run by Pandora's Project, which provides information, support and resources to rape and sexual abuse survivors and their friends and family.

When accessing hotlines, chats or forums from a computer, tablet, or smartphone, please remember to take the necessary precautions to keep your activities confidential from your abuser. Learn more about how to stay safe online [here](#).

Also, keep in mind that local shelters may offer in-person or virtual support groups. You can find shelters in your area at [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org).





## Another way to determine if you're experiencing abuse is to contact a trained domestic violence advocate near you or through a national service.

To search for domestic violence program staffed with trained advocates, visit [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) and type either your city and state, or ZIP code, into the search bar at the top of the page. A list of organizations and contact numbers near you will be displayed. To reach an advocate, reach out directly by calling the phone number listed. Most are open 24/7.

To speak to an advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, also 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or visit [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org) to chat online.

It's important to know that your call is confidential and you can choose to remain anonymous when speaking with an advocate. To know what to expect when calling, read [this article](#).