



The Role of Emotional Capacity in Healing Trauma




Rev. Chris M. Coursey
thrivetoday.org
THRIVEtoday



Rev. Chris M. Coursey
thrivetoday.org


Healing traumas: we remove rocks from our shoes and learn to walk again



- A and B Traumas that stunt our growth.
 - A: Painful absences are important ingredients that were missing.
 - B: Unwanted bad things that should never happen.
- Trauma is what happens when I don't have what I need to process this experience.
- Processing breaks down in the brain's emotional control center: *Attachment-Assessment-Attunement-Action-Articulate*.
- Trauma symptoms match where processing breaks down.
- Emotional capacity
 - My ability to manage what I feel. Without necessary capacity I relationally decompensate. My brain needs to be able to load the memory, feel the feelings and process the pain so I can rest.
- Emotional capacity is where relational skills fit.
 - How well I live relationally and keep relationships bigger than problems.
 - These are learned skills, the habits we use to recover when things go wrong.
 - 19 skills identified by Dr. Jim Wilder, the Life Model and brain science.


Emotional Capacity To Suffer Well

- Observations working with severe trauma:
 - People could not effectively process pain when they lacked the ability to feel the feelings associated with their pain. But, they tried very hard.
 - People felt that pain was their identity, even their inevitable destiny.
- The common counseling approach in the 1990's was to push through.
 - Relentless memory work: locate all the bad splinters and shards of glass.
 - Eventually healing will come, some day. In the meantime we search for more pain.
 - Listening prayer and connecting with Jesus made a profound difference, but it was a toss up why some could, others could not find Jesus in their pain.



Emotional Capacity To Suffer Well


- In 2001 I started training relational skills with Dr. Jim Wilder.
- Glad-to-be-together joy brought smiles and transformed lives.
- Learning to rest and quiet helped people feel calm, and brought peace.
- Practicing relational skills transformed character, corrected behavior & clarified identity. No more "white knuckling."
- Learning and growing these "character skills" provided endurance to suffer well.
- Healing took on a new lens where people create community, build joy and learn relational skills while they process pain and live life. People no longer had to wait to live life until they were healed.



Developing Emotional Capacity Provides The Strength to Persevere



Foundational Skills For Building Capacity



- Skill 0: *Activate the Brain's Master Switch*
 - Staying in relational mode is where I process pain, learn skills and stay myself.
- Skill 1: *Share Joy*
 - Glad-to-be-together joy anchors us to suffer well and stay relational.
- Skill 2: *Simple Quiet*
 - Quieting is a byproduct of healing and a learned skill which helps me catch my breath.
- Skill 4: *Create Appreciation*
 - Packaged joy helps me stay relational and recalibrates my nervous system.
- Skill 13: *See What God Sees*
 - Finding Jesus in my pain brings healing, infuses peace and leads to forgiveness.

The Relational Time-Out

- Looking away and breaking eye contact is how infants pause when their joy has peaked.
- The brain looks for comfort and connection when feeling unpleasant emotions. Ideally, upset leads to rest, comfort and connection. (Barbara Moon)
- Rest is restorative.
- Rest improves our focus.
- Rest increases our emotional capacity.
- Rest helps us stay productive and efficient.
- Rest allows us to be more resilient so we "bounce back" and better recover when things go wrong.
- Rest is the pause that allows better and deeper connection.



Rest and Simple Quiet

- Our nervous system craves this pause and the momentary refresher releases serotonin which has a calming effect on our mind and body.
- We first learn quieting because someone with the skill trains us.
- We can learn with some practice and focus.



Rest and Joy

- With practice, a pattern develops as rest creates a feedback loop, where we interact then pause, interact then pause, and these short pauses throughout the day refresh our emotional capacity.
- Low-energy rest compliments high-energy joy. Rest makes joy possible.
- The moments of pause also recharge us to keep our interactions joyful and manageable. Remove rest and we will become depressed and anxious.
- The inability to rest and self quiet increase my chances of developing a mental disorder at some point in my lifetime.



Unprocessed Pain

- One of the signs of unprocessed pain is that I have a reluctance to quiet because I don't like how I feel.
- Resistance reveals something important.
- Reactions are a bread crumb trail to identify the source of resistance.
- Lack of skill: I don't know what to expect when I try to quiet. I feel lost and confused.
- Unprocessed pain: I don't like how I feel when I try to quiet. I feel anxious, defensive and troubled.



Differentiating Skill Acquisition, Skill Strengthening and Skill Propagation

- The process of skill acquisition is different from skill strengthening and skill propagation.
- *Acquisition* is learning a new skill I do not yet have.
- *Strengthening* is when I have the skill to some degree, but I need practice to make it stronger.
- *Propagation* is spreading the skill. I demonstrate skills and I share stories of how I (and my people) use the skill.



Signs I need to quiet:

- I have a busy, racing mind. My thoughts won't stop.
- I cannot stop to calm down.
- I cannot catch my breath.
- My body is tense and my muscles are tight.
- I feel compelled to stay busy and distract myself.
- I fear slowing down.
- I feel the need to check my phone to see if anything important is happening.
- I am afraid of missing out.
- I feel the need to have a pick-me-up like sugar, spending \$\$, caffeine, surfing the web, drifting/tantastizing, etc.



Quiet Checklist

- My heart rate is calm.
- My breathing is deep and steady.
- The muscles in my (face, neck, shoulders, arms, back, stomach, and legs) feel relaxed.
- My thoughts are quiet and peaceful.
- I feel a sense of calm and peace.



thrivetoday.org

- Books, Blogs, Online Habit-Builder Courses.
- Webinars, Practice events, both in-person and Online.
- Videos of the 19 skills, example videos and more.
- Blog for mothers at: thrivingmamas.org



THRIVEtoday
skills to make relationships work