

Toxic Relationships And The Power Of Trauma Bonds

Have you just escaped from a toxic relationship, or maybe you're trying to break free from one but you just can't seem to cut the cord?

Maybe you're asking yourself why you stayed so long. All the signs were there, why didn't you leave sooner?

And now that you're out you have this feeling of panic and you're scared you've blown your chances at happiness. And even though you know it was a terrible relationship you keep getting sucked back in or feeling like you just can't let go.

You feel stuck in this pitiful cycle of drama, pain and destruction and you don't know why. And you're scared that you're destined to keep repeating this pain and that you'll never break the cycle.

Toxic relationships are incredibly destructive mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. If you've experienced one you're not alone, and it's not your fault.

It is however your responsibility to do something about it so that it NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN.

Toxic relationships have a bad habit of repeating.

And before long we're convinced that we must be deserving of such bad treatment. After all that's what we've had drummed into us by the person we've been in a toxic relationship with.

But that's never true.

No one deserves to be in a relationship where love, respect and human decency are lacking.

This kind of treatment is not because of who you are; it's a projection of the damage and pain in the person you're in a relationship with. It's also a marker for what you've agreed to tolerate according to your past experiences.

If you look back you'll see that you missed the red flags. And that you continued to stay and endure the toxicity is indicative that you have unresolved emotional wounds and subconscious patterns that you need to break free from.

You need to ensure that you don't keep repeating this pattern of pain.

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In order to break the cycle you must discover why you became so entangled in such a toxic relationship in the first place.

One of the biggest reasons we get stuck in toxic relationships is because we become addicted to the feelings of pain and trauma we're experiencing.

This is what's known as a **trauma bond** and it keeps us sticking around long after we should've left.

Trauma bonds are deep rooted attachments to destructive people and relationships which involve a dramatic roller coaster cycle of devastating emotional (and sometimes physical) pain, anguish and confusion; all in the name of love.

We tell ourselves that it's love, but it's not, because love doesn't create that kind of pain. We think that we're addicted to the person and that we can't live without them, but actually what we've become addicted to is **the cycle**.

Trauma bonds flourish in relationships where there's a lot of intensity, complexity, inconsistency and never actualized **promises**.

It's the very inconsistency and intensity of the relationship and the repeating cycle of love/abuse, love/abuse, love/abuse that causes the bond to form. We're then continually *off balance* as we try and get back to the good feelings.

Trauma bonds are common with alcoholics, addicts, narcissists, serial cheaters and abusers.

Having felt the good feeling and telling ourselves that it's love, now that it's gone we become obsessed with getting it back. We just want to feel the love again and have things back to how they were, how they're meant to be.

But the good feeling is always short lived and we're always chasing it.

Trauma bonds keep us hooked even after the relationship has ended. We can feel powerless to move on and just can't seem to forget about the person. We day-dream about them, wondering what they're doing, if they're thinking about us and what would it be like if only things were different?

No matter how badly they've treated us, (and often the worse the treatment the more we're bonded) we still find ourselves missing them.

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Everything in us screams to let go but we just can't seem to move on. On the surface it doesn't make much sense. But then nothing really does until we go deeper.

Trauma bonds happen at a mental, emotional and physical level. This is why they're so hard to break.

We become **mentally** blinded and consistently think about the person on a loop. We obsess, over analyse and become addicted to the mental thought processes that the relationship feeds. We can't seem to switch our thoughts off.

We also become **emotionally** addicted to the extreme feelings we get from the relationship due to the initial stages being very intense and setting the scene.

We can think we've found the one who fits; we can't believe they're so like us. However this is often merely a strategic mirroring process that hooks us into the fantasy that we've found our soul mate. **This is our high.**

And then comes the low. We quickly become enmeshed in the roller coaster of confusion, fear, anxiety and stress which is counter balanced by the intense love and connection.

We flit between hurt and happy and we're always trying to get back to happy.

We also become **physically attached**. When we go through extreme stress our body releases various chemicals which it then becomes addicted to.

For example when we're dealing with the abusive part of the cycle and we're under emotional stress our bodies release adrenalin and cortisol hormones. And then, when we come back to the intense *making up* or feeling loved stage, our body releases dopamine.

The body familiarizes with and becomes addicted to the *adrenalin/cortisol/dopamine* pattern. Like all addicts we come to rely in it.

So now you're mentally, emotionally, and chemically dependent on the cycle of love/abuse. And this is what's keeping you stuck to the person you're trying to break free from.

Acknowledgment is the always first step to breaking the cycle, so now that you can see what's really happening, you can consider yourself well on the path to freedom.

Failing to acknowledge what's going on however will keep you attached. And this is the key to breaking trauma bonds; we need to real and honest. The fantasy of the relationship and what we wish it was is holding the trauma bond in place.

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Over time we convince ourselves of all sorts of fantasies about the relationship that on closer inquiry aren't actually real.

We also convince ourselves that things aren't actually as bad as they really are. In truth they're worse.

So we need to get real.

The fantasies keep us from breaking the bond and if we're going to be free of this cycle and be available to finding a loving, happy, healthy relationship then we MUST be willing to STAY REAL.

So what does that involve?

There's a process to breaking trauma bonds and part of that process is to call out all the bad behaviours of your ex/partner and see them for who they are, right now.

NOT who you think they are. NOT who they told you they are. NOT who you wish they could be.

There will be a long list of fantasies you've created around the relationship and each one is keeping you tied to it.

As you learn to let go of each of the fantasies, truth works its magic and the bond weakens.

If you follow the process very soon all that's left is the cold, hard reality that you've been in a toxic, destructive relationship with an emotionally damaged, unavailable and possible narcissist who will never be able to love you, or be deserving of your love.

Understanding why and how you became so attached is also necessary because only then will this relationship cease to have any power over you. In fact you will be amazed and how happy, relieved and committed you are to walking away and to never finding yourself in this same cycle again.

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