

Understanding Childbirth Trauma

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There are three main responses to trauma, two of them we are very familiar with: fight or flight. The third response is a state of immobility or freezing. According to Peter Levine, author of *Waking The Tiger*, who has been studying trauma for more than 25 years, the freezing response might be the key to understanding human trauma.

When animals are faced with a terrifying event, they instinctively respond by fighting or fleeing. In some cases the wisest reaction is to “play dead”, yet after the danger is over the animal gets up, shakes off the residual effect of the trauma and moves on leaving the traumatic event behind.

In the case of us humans, the neo-cortex (our rational brain) is so powerful and cultural conditioning so deeply ingrained that we often block our instinctive responses and the terrifying event does not get released.

It has been documented how labor can stall (“freeze”) when the woman does not feel safe. Sometimes just walking into a hospital can stall labor. In her book *Ina May’s Guide to Childbirth*, Ina May Gaskin writes about how a dilated cervix may “slam shut” when the laboring mother is disrupted either by real or perceived danger. This is a way that nature has programmed mothers to protect their infants during the process of labor and birth.

Medicalized birth with its cascade of interventions is a terrifying experience for many women. The smells, sounds, procession of unfamiliar people, vaginal exams, bright lights, lack of food, lack of ability to move instinctually and the generalized “birth is a medical emergency” attitude triggers the fight or flight response.

Pregnant and laboring women invest such great amounts of energy preparing to “fight” and actually protecting themselves and their babies from medical birth that by the time the baby is born they are exhausted and often have difficulty bonding with their babies.

When the exhausted, terrified woman is unable to “progress” the answer is often a c-section. Some women go into surgery still fighting; some are petrified with fear and grief.

Even when a person recognizes a surgery to be necessary, Peter Levine writes, on the cellular level the body still registers the cutting through flesh, muscle and bone as a life-threatening traumatic assault.

Epidurals are yet another way a laboring women can experience trauma. If the woman is experiencing pain or fear, if the people (doctors, nurses, partners, etc.) in the room are fearful themselves or impatient, the placement of the epidural becomes a traumatic experience that gets stored in the cells.

We store our life experiences in our bodies and symptoms such as depression, headaches, mood disorders, fibromyalgia, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and all kinds of disease are the way our body speaks to us.

Releasing trauma is a transformational experience. The energy that has been blocked by the

traumatic event and the life force that is invested in repressing the painful memories can be freed.

When trauma is released, our life force energy is available in the present moment to create the life we want for ourselves and our children. Every moment becomes new and creative.

Some Effective Tools

I am passionate about finding tools to facilitate self-empowerment in our return to wholeness. Just as the image of peeling an onion, trauma can be released and transformed one layer at a time.

With that goal in mind, I developed a **Group Coaching** process that supports women in Transforming the Cesarean Experience. In a four session workshop you will be guided through a series of techniques and processes to move beyond trauma in a confidential and intimate group setting.

The group energy allows for fast pace and profound changes to take place. The workshops will begin in January 2009. [Follow this link for more information.](#)

In **One-on-One Coaching** we will address together the unique circumstances surrounding your experience as they gently unfold throughout the coaching process. Each session will be aimed at meeting you where you are on any given day and assisting you to move forward remaining curious about the process.

This interaction creates clarity and moves you into action. Coaching accelerates your progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choice. [Read more.](#)

Another tool in my tool box is **CranioSacral Therapy**. CranioSacral Therapy is a light-touch approach that releases tensions deep in the body to relieve pain and dysfunction and help you find relaxing balance of body, mind and spirit. It enables you to gently transform emotional trauma by supporting the body's inner wisdom and natural healing processes. [Click here to read more.](#)

More Tools to Release the Energy of Trauma

[Tapas Acupressure Technique \(TAT\) and Emotional Freedom Technique \(EFT\)](#) are self-applied techniques, there are many practitioners that can assist you if you so choose.

[Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing \(EMDR\)](#) has been successfully used with veterans of war to treat post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and with many others for the release of trauma. EMDR should be administered only by licensed clinicians.

Intuitive Kinesiology - A system to integrate and balance the body after trauma. Myra Moyryla works in person or over the phone. Call: 906.370.7899 mmoyryla@up.net

There are hundreds of techniques, these are some I have personal experience with in releasing my own traumas.