



Why does trauma get trapped in the body?

When trauma is experienced, the body is alerted to begin processes that would enable a person to survive. Increased heart rate (to run away), increased blood flow (to increase clotting and healing), dilation of pupils (to focus), and increased adrenaline (to keep us moving) all make it more likely that we will be able to fight or flee from danger.

When danger has subsided, the brain tells the body to calm itself and to allow the body to release this hard-wired response. In animals, you may notice that they begin to shake. This reaction has been documented as the way for their bodies to discharge the energy of the event ([When Trauma Gets Stuck in the Body | Psychology Today](#)).

If the body is unable to flee or fight and responds by freezing, the response may never be expressed and may become stuck. Our bodies crave the release of this energy to begin healing ([14 Signs your body is releasing trauma \(psychmechanics.com\)](#)).

Please also see: Van der Kolk, B. A. (1994, January). THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE: Memory and the evolving psychobiology of post-traumatic stress. Harvard Review of Psychiatry.

What may help to release this energy?

Adapted from [14 Signs your body is releasing trauma \(psychmechanics.com\)](#)

Dr. Peter Levine has developed a method called somatic-experiencing. This is where a person is asked to notice where their body feels tense (e.g. the shoulders), embrace the tenseness, and even increase the sensation (e.g. bring your shoulders up toward your ears as high as you can), and then slowly removing all tension (e.g. lowering your shoulders and relaxing them) realizing the release of the tension. This process is then repeated several times.

When the release of energy is felt, you may experience heightened emotions, including crying. It is suggested that you notice the emotion and acknowledge that it exists. Emotional expression may be a way to release energy from a traumatic experience. Emotional expressions may include talking with someone, writing, musical, and artistic expression.

Another suggestion includes the use of physical activity for the release of energy. Helpful activities that cater to multiple levels of ability include dancing, yoga, walking, martial arts, and boxing. Finally shaking may be considered a physical activity that aids in the

