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Could Past Trauma Be Running Your Life?

> Ever notice how a small comment can throw you off for days? Or how the urge to be "good" makes you swallow what you really think? You may be reacting to the present with a nervous system that is still guarding against the past. This short guide shows how trauma quietly shows up in everyday life, and why it is not a flaw in your character.

1. A QUICK CHECK-IN: DO YOU RECOGNISE YOURSELF?

Three questions to sit with before the checklist:

1. **Criticism.** Think of the last time something stung: a critical remark, a cold tone. What did you do in the first few minutes? What did you notice in your body? How did the rest of the day go?
2. **Pressure and conflict.** Recall a recent moment when someone close to you, or a boss, pushed hard or flatly disagreed. What did you feel in the first second, and what did you want to do? What did you actually say and do? And in the hour after: did you replay the conversation, get angry, apologise, bury yourself in tasks?
3. **Childhood.** Picture yourself as a child or teenager in the moments when you were about to get in trouble: shouted at, told off, punished, rejected. What did you do to stay safe? What worked best?

Be honest with yourself: how many of these do you live through regularly?

1. The mental replay
After a conversation you spend hours rerunning it, hunting for mistakes, with a strong urge to apologise even when you did nothing wrong.

2. Panic or freeze
A sharp tone, an unanswered message or a passing remark feels like a threat to your body: racing heart, shame, fear.

3. Background guilt and shame
Guilt whispers, "I did something wrong." Shame says, "There is something wrong with me, I'm broken." You want to hide from the world.

4. Fear of being seen
Saying no, voicing an opinion or taking up space feels frightening. It's easier to fit in and avoid the risk of being rejected.

"If you recognised yourself in several of these, you may be living with the effects of psychological trauma."

2. WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON?

At some point, in childhood or in a controlling environment, being your real self was not safe. You were punished, shamed or turned away for it.

To get through, your nervous system learned one of a few protective strategies: **fight or flee, freeze, or please**. You learned to adapt and to make yourself smaller. And along with the feelings you had to hold down, you pushed a part of yourself down too.

3. MY OWN STORY, AND WHY SELF-HELP TECHNIQUES ONLY GO SO FAR

I don't know trauma and controlling environments only from textbooks. I spent 10 years in a high-control group (a cult) and rebuilt my sense of self from the ground up. That experience taught me how deeply people adapt to survive, and how gently we need to come out of it.

Many of my clients had already tried gratitude journals, breathing exercises and meditation before we met. These are genuinely useful. They help you calm down when you are overwhelmed. But they don't change the automatic reaction itself, and here is why.

That reaction didn't appear out of nowhere. Once, around particular people, it kept you safe: go quiet, please them, get away, or fight back. You didn't invent it. You learned it in relationships. A journal or a breathing count can't play the part of another person who responds to you differently.

That is why the reaction changes in relationships too: when you are with someone you can be yourself around, and nothing bad happens. That gives you a new experience, not just new information.

> **Worth remembering.** Self-help works, but it has a limit. The urge to protect yourself switches on automatically, before you have time to think. It was learned around people, so it softens most easily around people you can trust.

4. A QUICK TOOL FOR RIGHT NOW: THE 5-4-3-2-1 RESET

If anxiety or shame is flooding you at this moment, bring your attention back to your body:

Look around and name

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel (clothes, floor)
- 3 sounds you can hear
- 2 smells and 1 taste

Add a slow breath

- In for 6 seconds
- Hold for 4
- Out for 8
- Hold for 4

The long exhale tells your nervous system: "No danger here. You're safe."

Take the next step towards yourself

Every trauma leaves its own mark: some people freeze, others please endlessly. If you would like to know which protective pattern runs your life most, and how to start coming back to yourself, message me on Telegram **@krilovaorg** with the word

PATTERN

I'll ask you three short questions and send you a personal voice message about your pattern. It's free.

This guide is for education only and is not a diagnosis. If you are struggling right now, please contact your local emergency services.