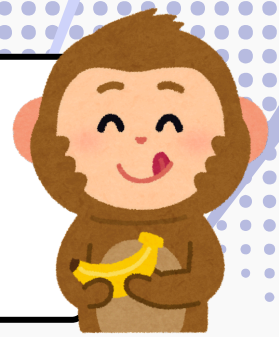


Generational Trauma

From Legacy to Liberation



THE MONKEY LADDER EXPERIMENT



A psychological experiment with the five rhesus monkeys was conducted by the researcher G.R Gordon in the year 1967.

A group of scientists put five monkeys in a cage. Inside the cage they placed a ladder with bananas at the top of it.



Every time one of the monkeys tried to climb the ladder to get the food, the scientists sprayed the other monkeys with cold water.



One more monkey then tried to get the bananas again, but the others pulled him down and beat him.



Then the scientists removed one monkey from the cage and replaced him with a new one. Having noticed the bananas, the new monkey immediately tried to get them.



But every time the new monkey attempted to climb the stairs, he was attacked. Soon, the new member learned never to go up the ladder - even though he didn't know the reason why he was beaten.



One-by-one, all five of the original monkeys who experienced the cold shower were substituted with new ones. As a result, all that was left was a group of monkeys who had never been punished for attempting to reach the bananas.



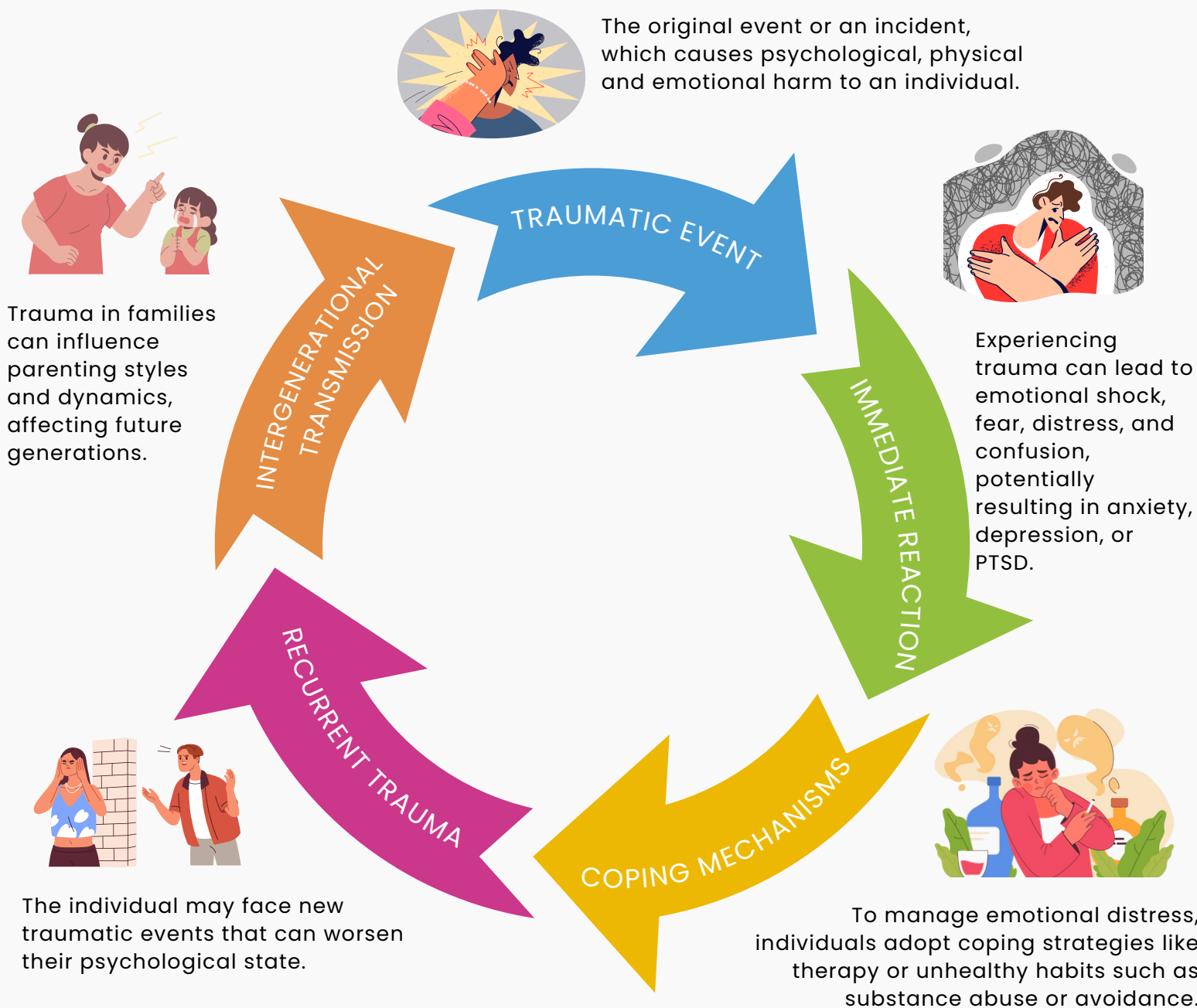
THIS IS HOW GENERATIONAL TRAUMA WORKS.

What is Trauma?

Trauma is an emotional response to distressing situations and events, such as abuse, violence and or disaster. Trauma would tend to overwhelm an individual psychologically, which can lead to shock, denial, and changes in body and behavior. Trauma can result from a single event or from repeated and prolonged experiences.



Cycle of Trauma



This altered way of relating to the world is then passed down through generations, its not the traumatic experience itself that's passed on, but the response to stressors.

What is Generational Trauma?

Generational trauma refers to the psychological, biological and emotional transmission of the effects of trauma from one generation to the other.

The below case study of Reena will help us understand the concept of generational trauma better.

1

Reena's family, originally from Punjab, was affected by the 1947 partition. They were forced to migrate from Pakistan to India, facing violence, property loss, and separation from loved ones.

2

Her parents coped differently with trauma: her father felt pressure to fulfill his parents' dreams, causing stress, while her mother became fearful of instability, being overprotective of loved ones.

3

Reena faces a generational disconnect regarding her family's trauma. She aims to address past issues and promote open communication to break the cycle of trauma.



ACTS OF TRAUMA



DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THE 5 F'S TRAUMA SURVIVAL DEFENCES AN INDIVIDUAL GOES THROUGH?

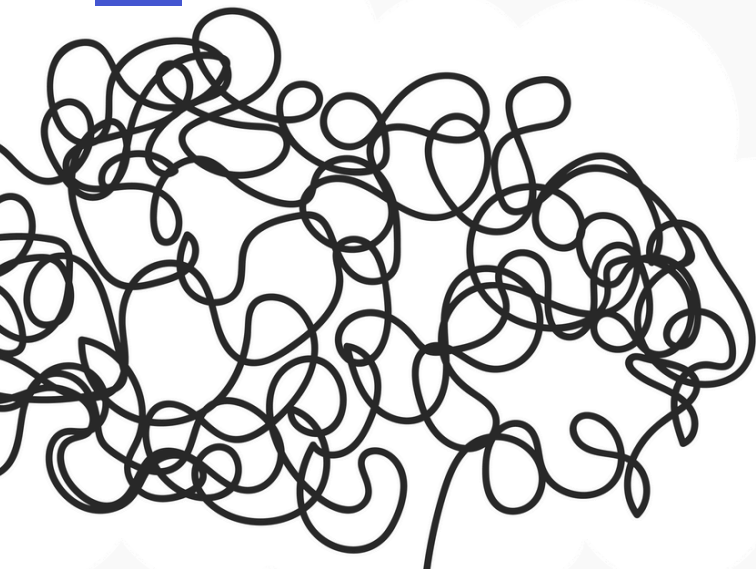
IGHT- An individual tends to confront the situation either by verbal or physical aggression.

LIGHT- The individual attempts to escape the situation.

REEZE- The individual is unable to move or act to the situation. This can be the result of overwhelming emotions and shocks.

AWN- The individual attempts to please the threat or aggressor in order to avoid the harm.

AIN- The individual may lose temporary consciousness and the system can shutdown as a way to escape the situation.



How can you recognize if someone is experiencing generational trauma?



RECURRING THEMES IN FAMILY STORIES:

You notice that stories or narratives within your family often revolve around specific traumatic events or hardships, which seem to shape the family's identity or values.



UNHEALTHY PATTERNS:

Certain unhealthy patterns (e.g.: Overcompensation or Hypervigilance) or beliefs (e.g.: Always expecting the worst) circulate within your family and affect you personally.

INHERITED FEARS:

You find yourself with deep-seated fears that seem disproportionate or unrelated to your personal experiences, possibly mirroring fears held by older family members.



The above can then manifest in a variety of ways, such as difficulty forming or maintaining relationships, heightened anxiety in seemingly non-threatening situations, or an overwhelming sense of responsibility or guilt.

These manifestations often occur without a clear understanding of their origin, making them particularly challenging to address.

Over time, these ingrained responses and behaviors can perpetuate the cycle of trauma, passing it on to future generations if left unrecognized and unaddressed.

When body connects with trauma - What should one do?

Our mental health is deeply interconnected with our physical well-being. This relationship, known as **psychosomatic**, means that trauma can sometimes manifest in physical symptoms or illnesses. Essentially, unresolved emotional issues may show up in various parts of our body.



5-4-3-2-1 GROUNDING EXERCISE

This involves focusing on your senses to anchor yourself in the present. Identify and mentally note:



5 things you can see



4 things you can touch



3 things you can hear



2 things you can smell

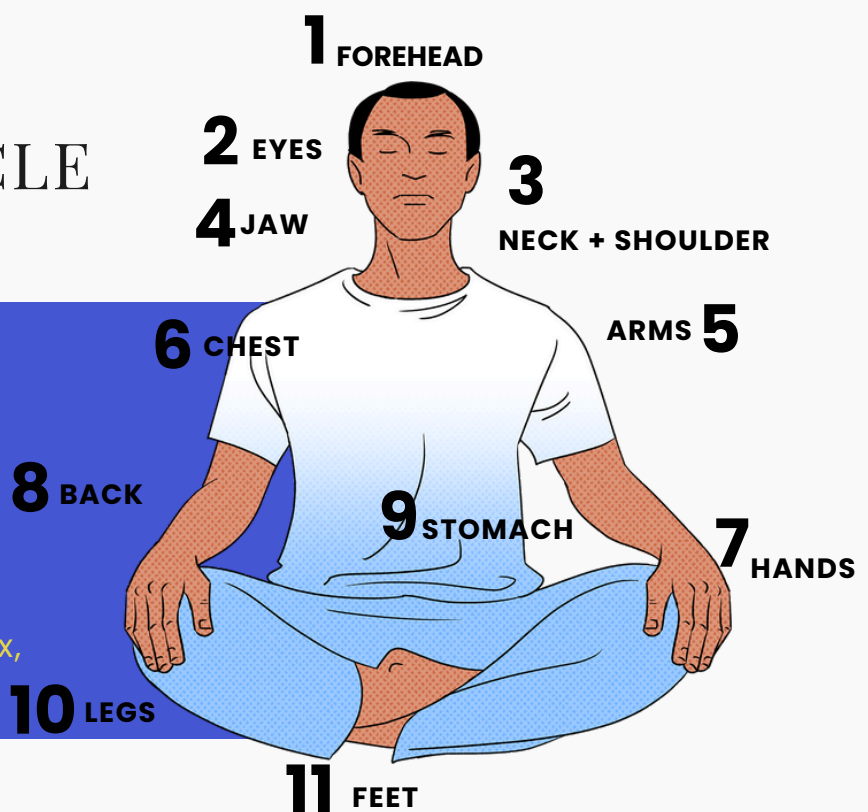


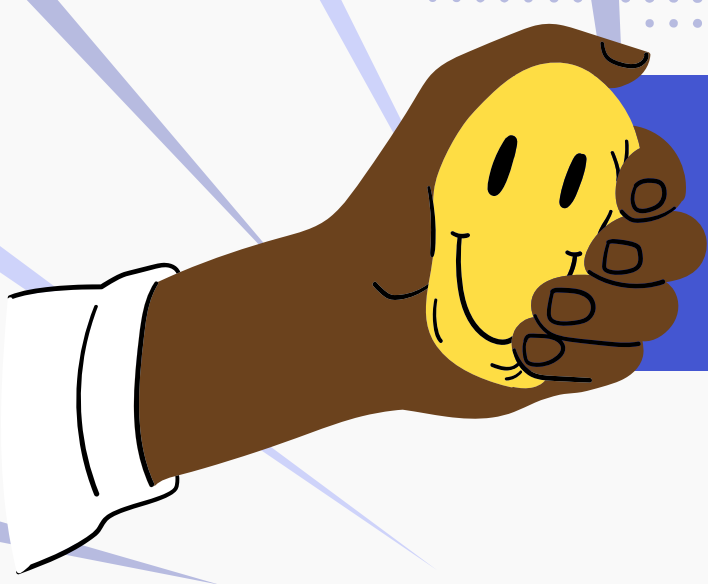
1 thing you can taste

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a technique designed to help you reduce stress and tension in your body.

Focus on each muscle group one by one, starting from the forehead down to the toes. Tense each area for 5 seconds, then slowly release and relax, letting go of all tension.



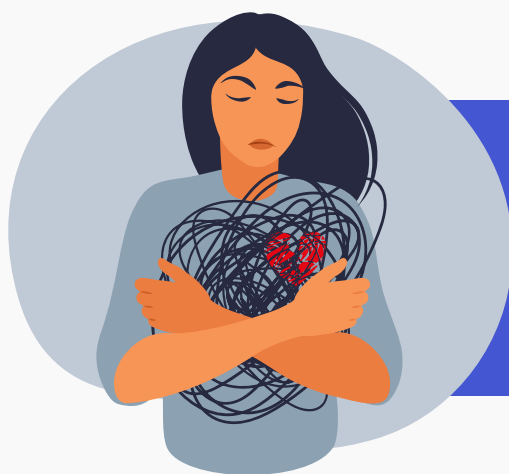


ENGAGE THE SENSES

Use grounding items like a stress ball, a textured fabric, or scented oils to help bring you back to the present moment.

MOVEMENT

Engage in gentle physical activities like walking, stretching, or yoga to reconnect with your body and release built-up tension.



Breaking the Cycle: The Path to True Freedom

- ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRAUMA**
- PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION AND MINDFULNESS**
- EDUCATE YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY**
- BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM**
- SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP**
- ESTABLISH HEALTHY BOUNDARIES**
- FOCUS ON PERSONAL HEALING**
- STAY COMMITTED TO THE PROCESS**

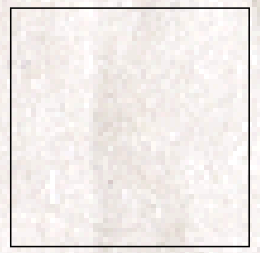
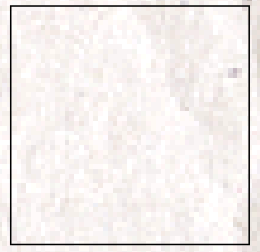
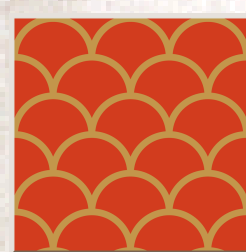
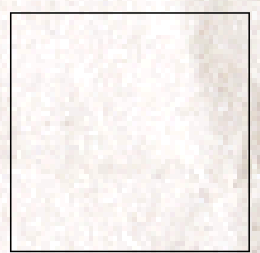
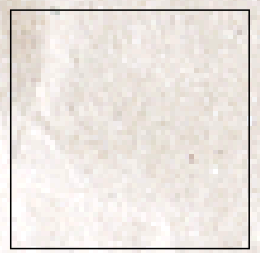
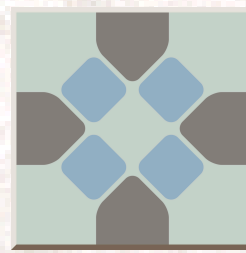
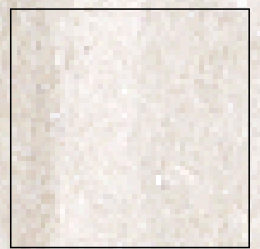
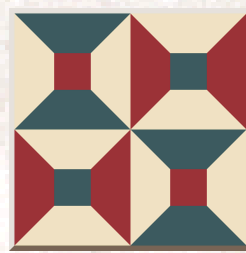
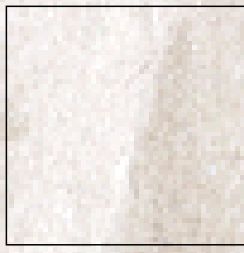
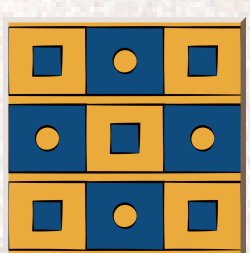
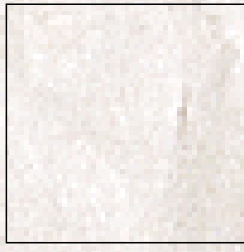
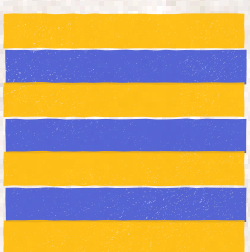
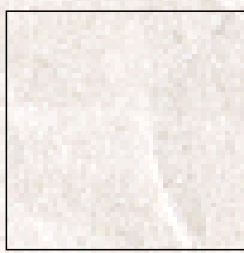
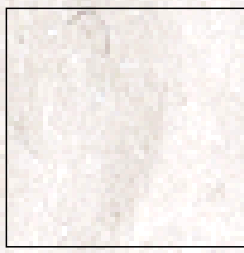
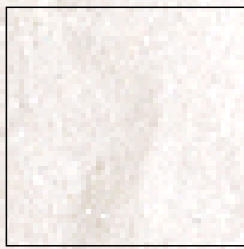


ACTIVITY - BREAKING THE PATTERNS THROUGH PATTERNS

Examine the texture closely, then recreate it in the empty box next to it. Once you've drawn the texture, use your creativity to color the pattern.

HOW CAN THIS ACTIVITY HELP IN HEALING THROUGH TRAUMA?

The activity will help in promoting mindfulness, expressing emotions through non verbal outlet, creating sense of control and building resilience and getting equipped with a health coping mechanism while facing anxiety or intrusive memories.



My father always had a deep fear of water, rooted in a traumatic experience from his past. As a child, he witnessed his cousin drowning in the ocean at Gokarna Beach, which left a lasting impact on him.

This experience made him extremely cautious with us as kids, as well as with my nieces. He was so protective that he wouldn't even let us dip our feet in the water at the beach.

Although I've inherited some of that caution, I've also worked hard to confront those fears and now work closely with water bodies.

My grandmother strongly believed that eating papaya could cause miscarriages or problems with the menstrual cycle, so she avoided it and didn't allow any women in the household to have it either.

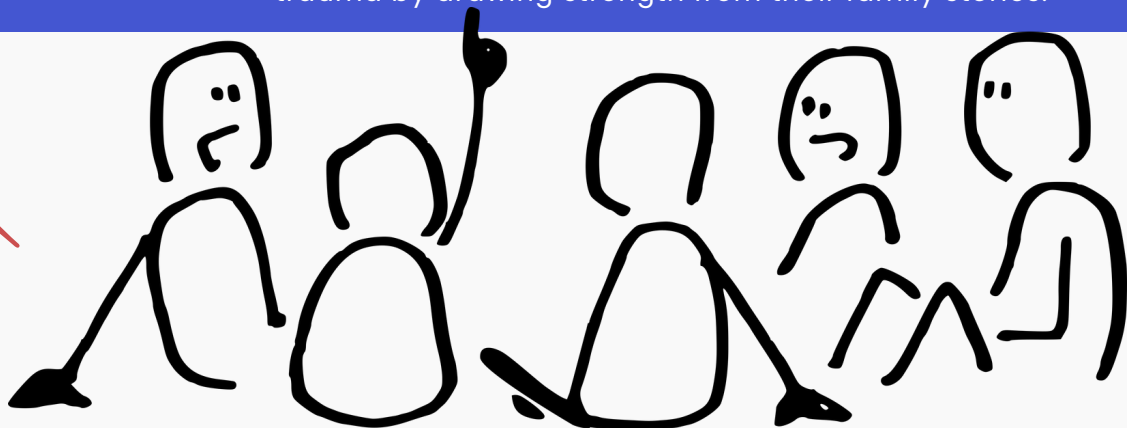
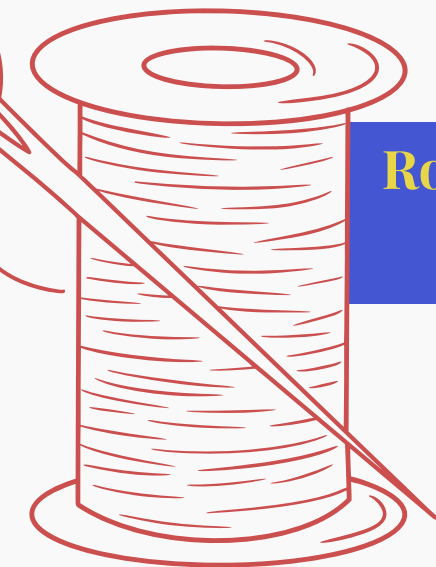
As a result, my mother never ate papayas, and in our generation, papayas are never brought into the house.

While we understand the origin of this belief, the fear has been passed down through the generations.

It's a deep sense of abandonment, feeling utterly lost, with no direction or understanding of how to find someone who vanished without warning. This experience has been passed down through generations in my family, where loved ones have abruptly left home, never to return. My grandfather's death is something I'm still grappling with, even after eight years. I've noticed that I've inherited this tendency too, whenever I'm overwhelmed or troubled, the urge to run away and never come back feels almost instinctual.

Roots and Threads of My Memories

Volunteers share how they break the chain of generational trauma by drawing strength from their family stories.



When I was a child in a typical middle-class family, I observed my older brother being punished harshly by our parents for his mistakes. He never spoke up or defended himself, likely out of respect and fear. As a kid, I saw this and felt that, when my turn came, my parents should at least hear me out before resorting to physical punishment. I would get frustrated and wonder how to express to them that I didn't want to be hit, but I never managed to do so. Over the years, I've noticed a change. Now, with my nephew, things are different. He stands up for himself and doesn't face the same kind of discipline we did. It's fascinating to see how attitudes and approaches have evolved over generations.

I've always believed that I should be able to live independently without relying on a man. Reflecting on my family's history, I see a pattern. My grandmother married, settled down, and built her own house, while my grandfather moved into her home. My mother followed a similar path, with my father moving into her house as well. This legacy has influenced me deeply. I'm grateful for the independence my grandmother and mother instilled in me, and I strive to be self-sufficient. However, both my grandmother and mother faced challenges due to their inter-caste marriages, often feeling isolated from their in-laws. They chose to create their own homes where their husbands joined them. Sometimes, I find it difficult in relationships because I expect my partner to move into the house where I live with my parents. This belief also leads me to discourage my younger sisters from relying on men, which occasionally strains my relationship with them.



Expert's Dialogue : Ipsita Chatterjee

Healing from intergenerational trauma is crucial because the unresolved pain and negative patterns from previous generations can significantly affect your mental and emotional well-being. If not addressed, this trauma can manifest in mental health struggles, unhealthy behaviors, relationship struggles, and emotional distress that continue to impact your life and the lives of future generations. By focusing on healing, you break this cycle, creating a healthier, more positive environment for yourself and those who come after you. It's about reclaiming your peace, improving your relationships, and ensuring that the burden of past traumas doesn't continue to weigh on your future.

It starts with focusing on yourself, especially in our cultural context where family ties are strong and traditions are deeply rooted. It's easy to feel the need to change the older generations, but real healing begins with understanding and taking care of your own mental health.

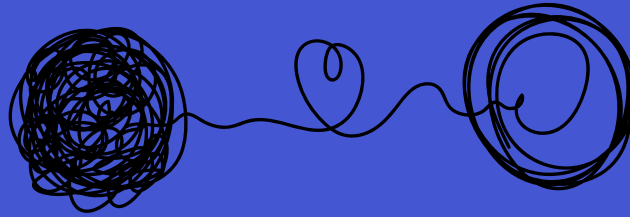
Therapy can be incredibly helpful in recognizing how past traumas have influenced you and in figuring out how to heal from them. It's important to acknowledge that some relationships, like those with parents or grandparents, might stay complicated. Setting clear boundaries with them is crucial to protect your well-being. However, this doesn't mean you have to cut off from your roots entirely unless you choose to. Instead, it's about maintaining those connections in a way that doesn't harm you further.

By focusing on your healing, you not only help yourself but also prevent passing on that trauma to the next generation.

This process is about creating a healthier, more balanced approach to relationships and life, ensuring that you can move forward in a positive way while still honoring where you come from.

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Just a Call Away



PROJECT MUMBAI IS HERE FOR YOU!

If you or any adolescent you know is experiencing any mental or emotional distress, kindly call on Project Mumbai toll-free mental health helpline number:

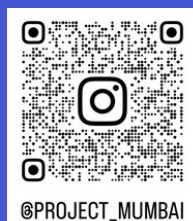
SAMVAAD – A Helpline for Adolescents **1800-102-4040**

This helpline is active from 8 am to 8 pm, seven days a week and is handled by counsellors with varied expertise.

In case of any mental health related concerns, please feel free to reach us on mentalhealth@projectmumbai.org

- **ICALL HELPLINE (GENERAL COUNSELLING)- 02225521111 (MON-SAT, 8AM-10 PM)**
- **HUMSAFAR TRUST (LGBTQIA+)- 0226673800 (MON-FRI, 10 AM-8PM)**
- **ARPAN (CSA)- +91-9819086444 (MON-FRI, 9AM-6PM)**
- **AASRA (SUICIDE PREVENTION)- +91-9820466726 (7 DAYS A WEEK, 24 HOURS)**

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