



BETRAYAL TRAUMA FIRST AID

When we have a physical injury, first aid is used to halt further harm, to enlist appropriate resources, and to expedite healing. Likewise, when we experience a psychological injury, such as an intimate betrayal, effective first aid connects us with qualified help and resources, establishes safety, and begins the healing process.


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Five first-aid responses to betrayal trauma:

1

Seek Specialized Professional Support:

Seeking out specialized professional help that knows how to respond to betrayal trauma in a qualified manner can save you time, money, energy, and health. The *Find a Specialist* tab found on www.apsats.org provides an international directory of qualified mental health providers and betrayal trauma coaches who specialize in working with this issue.

2

Seek Safety:

Betrayal trauma threatens well-being, and this is especially true when the perpetrator of the betrayal is engaging in risky or compulsive behavior. Establishing safety is an essential first step. To begin, identify three to five ways your well-being is presently impacted by betrayal trauma (e.g., lack of sleep, possible exposure to an STD, anxiety) and brainstorm doable action steps that will improve your sense of security in these areas. It is okay if you need help to brainstorm action steps. Action steps may include things like setting up an appointment with your doctor, listening to a mindfulness app before going to bed, getting tested for STDs, or consulting with an attorney.

3

Seek Connection:

Most betrayed partners experience moderate to severe isolation early on, yet connection is an essential component of long-term healing—including connection to the self. Helpful connection can involve speaking with trusted confidantes or family members, meeting with a professional support, counseling with a spiritual advisor, engaging spiritual practices, practicing mindfulness, or joining a Twelve-Step community focused on betrayal trauma (e.g., SA Lifeline Foundation meetings).



4

Slow Down:

Betrayal can be highly traumatizing and taxing. Making an intentional effort to simplify or to reduce your daily load is helpful in the early stages of betrayal trauma healing. When we are going through a stressful time, we need more rest than usual. It helps to slow life down and to reduce non-essential commitments to allow time for processing what is happening and to make room in your schedule for much-needed support.

5

Self-Care:

Along with slowing down, practicing daily acts of self-care, even if they are small acts, can make a world of difference. Acts of self-care give our nervous system and mind a chance to be soothed, nourished, affirmed, validated, reassured, and comforted—which in turn improves our ability to self-regulate and to think clearly. Self-care may also include avoiding certain behaviors, such as self-destructive behavior, toxic self-talk, or consuming drugs or alcohol to self-medicate. The body and mind have natural mechanisms for healing, but for this healing process to occur, we must not get in our own way. Being generous with self-care is a worthy investment toward healing.