

WAKING THE TIGER

HEALING TRAUMA



PETER A. LEVINE

WITH

ANN FREDERICK

Waking the Tiger

Healing Trauma

The Innate Capacity to Transform

*

Overwhelming Experiences

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Peter A. Levine, Ph.D.
with Ann Frederick

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*What people in the Medical, Science, and Health fields
say about Waking the Tiger*

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Every life contains difficulties we are not prepared for. Read, learn and be prepared for life and healing.

Bernard S. Siegel, M.D.

Best-selling author of *Love, Medicine & Miracles*,
Peace, Love, and Healing

Fascinating! Amazing! A revolutionary exploration of the physiological effects and causes of trauma expands our understanding of the human mind and human behavior experientially. His ideas on how to resolve and heal traumas seem almost unbelievable in their simplicity. He shows us clearly that trauma can be healed and resolved. It is not a life sentence. It is a must read for professionals and lay people alike. Understanding and healing of trauma may very well save humanity from its path of self-destruct.

Mira Rothenberg, Director-Emeritus

Blueberry Treatment Centers for Disturbed Children, author of *Children With Emerald Eyes*

This book is enormously rich in evocative ideas in one of the most significant areas of all our lives. It is superbly reasoned, passionate and makes beautifully easy reading. Levine's work is full of wide-ranging implications, rock solid science and clearly expressed ideas. It is a most important book. Quite possibly a work of genius.

Ron Kurtz, Author

The Body Reveals and *Body-Centered Psychotherapy*

Waking the Tiger introduces Somatic Experiencing, an original and scientific approach to the healing of trauma. The treatment approach is rooted in an understanding of the bi-directional communication between our thoughts and our physiology. Levine effectively argues that the body is healer and that psychological scars of trauma are reversible but only if we listen to the voices of our body.

Stephen W. Porges, Ph.D.

Professor of Human Development and Psychology,

University of Maryland research scientist studying

the neurophysiological basis of emotional regulation, stress, and health.

A compelling, almost lyrical trip through the labyrinth of trauma, blending evolutionary insights with pragmatic clinical practice. One cannot help but be drawn into Dr. Levine's theory of traumatization and transformation a vital contribution to the exciting emerging science of mind/body interaction in the treatment of disease.

Robert C. Scaer, M.D., Neurology

Medical Director, Rehabilitation Services,

Boulder Community Hospital Mapleton Center,

Boulder, CO

Levine knows how to move beyond trauma by engaging the bodily process that should have happened, rather than merely reliving what happened.

Eugene Gendlin. Ph.D.
developer of *Focusing*

Peter Levine has remained at the creative edges of healing, plunging courageously into unknown territories. He has always been consistent in developing an understanding of trauma, its grounding in body tissues, and its healing. This is a book long awaited by students of the healing process.

Don Hanlon Johnson. Ph.D.
Author. Professor of Somatics
California Institute of Integral Studies

Levine's work uncovers the real cause of Traumatic Stress Disorder, thus making it obvious why the usual psychiatric and psychological methods of treating trauma are limited. His approach allows us to "access the problem at physiological roots through the felt sense. The wisdom of the felt sense gives us at once the instinct of an animal and the intelligence of a human being. Lacking either, we are doomed to repeat our hostilities until none of us remain. With the two working together we can move forward on our evolutionary path and become more truly humanable to use all the capacities that are oursable to perceive and enjoy our worldable to bring our children into a world that is relatively safe."

Dolores La Chapelle, Director
Way of the Mountain Center
Teacher of Deep Ecology, skiing, and Tai Chi

I find Peter Levine's work very exciting, because he offers the means to deal effectively with the deep trauma frequently present in the cases of hostages, bombing victims, and other victims of terrorism (and their families, who often become victims themselves). In my work with the State Department, and later, as a consultant on terrorist incidents, I learned that one needs a special mix of patience, compassion, and understanding. Clinically sound procedures are needed to identify the layers of traumatizing experience that may be involved, and to help the victims heal by peeling them away. Anyone who must deal with such trauma cases should read this book and seek Peter Levine's help. He does not pretend to present a formula, but he knows and explains the critical pathways.

Terrell E. (Terry) Arnold
Ex-Deputy Director of the Office of Counterterrorism.
US Department of State
Author of *The Violence Formula*

To my parents, Morris and Helen, I give thanks for the gift of life, the vehicle for the expression of my work, and for your continued full and unequivocal support from both sides of the physical plane. To Pouncer, the Dingo dog, who has been my guide into the animal world as well a constant companion: at the age of seventeen, you continue to show me the vital joy of corporeal life.

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To Richard Olney, and Richard Price, who taught me what little I know about self acceptance, and to Ida Rolf for her inspiration and catalysis in forming my identity as a scientist-healer. To Dr. Virginia Johnson, I thank you for your critical understanding of altered states of consciousness.

Theoretical teachers include Ernst Gellhorn, who informed my neuro-physiological thinking, and Akhter Ahsen, who helped consolidate my vision of the "undifferentiated and welded unity of the body and mind."

I thank the many friends, particularly Amy Graybeal and Lorin Hager, who have helped me with the book.

Thanks to Guy Coheleach for kindly allowing me to use his passionate and masterful animal artwork.

Finally, I humbly thank Medusa, Perseus, and the other powerful forces of the body unconscious, for informing my archetypal field of being.

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*If you bring forth that which is within you,
Then that which is within you
Will be your salvation.
If you do not bring forth that which is within you,
Then that which is within you
Will destroy you.*
from the Gnostic Gospels

For more than a quarter of a century-half of my life-I have been working to untangle the vast mysteries of trauma. Colleagues and students often ask me how I can possibly remain immersed in a subject as morbid as trauma without completely burning out. The fact is, in spite of having been exposed to bone-chilling anguish and "terrible knowledge," I have become passionately engaged and nourished by this study. It has become my life's work to assist in the understanding and healing of trauma in its many forms. The most common of these forms are automobile and other accidents, serious illness, surgery and other invasive medical and dental procedures, assault, and experiencing or witnessing violence, war, or a myriad of natural disasters.

I am endlessly fascinated with the subject of trauma, with its intricate relationship to the physical and natural sciences, to philosophy, to mythology, and to the arts. Working with trauma has helped me to comprehend the meaning of suffering, both necessary and unnecessary. Most of all, it has helped me to fathom the enigma of the human spirit. I am grateful for this unique opportunity to learn, and for the privilege of witnessing and participating in the profound metamorphosis that the healing of trauma can bring about.

Trauma is a fact of life. It does not, however, have to be a life sentence. Not only can trauma be healed, but with appropriate guidance and support, it can be transformative. Trauma has the potential to be one of the most significant forces for psychological, social, and spiritual awakening and evolution. How we handle trauma (as individuals, communities, and societies) greatly influences the quality of our lives. It ultimately affects how or even whether we will survive as a species.

Trauma is traditionally regarded as a psychological and medical disorder of the mind. The practice of modern medicine and psychology, while giving lip service to a connection between mind and body, greatly underestimates the deep relationship that they have in the healing of trauma. The welded unity of body and mind that, throughout time, has formed the philosophical and practical underpinnings of most of the world's traditional healing systems is sadly lacking in our modern understanding and treatment of trauma.

For thousands of years, oriental and shamanic healers have recognized not only that the mind affects the body, as in psychosomatic medicine, but how every organ system of the body equally has a psychic representation in the fabric of the mind. Recent revolutionary developments in neuroscience and psycho-neuro-immunology have established solid evidence of the intricate two-way communication between mind and body. In identifying complex "neuro-peptide messengers," researchers like Candice Pert have discovered