

SURVIVAL KIT

When in panic mode, go through the checks to see whether you have really dealt with the problems, or were running away from them.

Remember that you **always have a choice**. Remember that sometimes it's just easier to think you don't. But you are not a slave to your brain nor a total victim of PTSD.

✓ *Anterior Judgment*

Your brain on PTSD is not your friend. It makes anterior judgements for you, pre-fabricated labels of people, events and things around you. Before you even get the chance to think straight, it impedes a rational and more objective outlook that isn't based on the traumatic experience. Learn to observe your brain on a day to day basis. Observe what it thinks about the surrounding world and challenge it when you notice these thoughts aren't true.

The things that trigger you –specific sounds that send you flying into anxiety or anger –exist by themselves and on themselves. They are not happening on purpose, or just to mess with your head. There is no agenda with them. Besides that, *whether they intend to do anything or not at all, is not the point*. Ultimately, these fleeting sounds, comments and other things are not of importance in your life.

When people gaze at you they do so for their own reasons. Their reasons are only important to them, and they are no to be given any attention or energy. When people either stand really close to you or stumble into you at the supermarket, they are not doing so because of you. They do so because they're absorbed in their own worlds, not because they decided to walk into you. Don't take it personally.

✓ *Correct the Crash Course*

Correct your thinking process by changing your responses to triggers. For instance, when images in your head or other triggers come around, do not think "no", "I don't want this", "go away" or "leave me alone". All of that would be allowing yourself to act like a victim again. Watch. Feel. Smell. Try not to rationalize it by thinking "this is not real". Instead, leave your brain out of it altogether. Remember to continue breathing.

Do not try to force change what's happening, by either running away from it, getting enraged at it, or attempting to bend the illusions that your mind conjures. There is no other way but to acknowledge that this is happening to you, even if it is making you feel disheartened. There is no other way to deal with this, other than looking the ugly PTSD monster straight in the eye. Look in it's ugly eye! Show it that you will stand on your two feet, that you will not be blown away just by it blowing against your wall. Show it that you believe in yourself.

✓ *Correct Obsessive Compulsive behavior*

The moment you feel that you need to obsessively control everything, is the moment that you are actually feeling that you have lost your grip on things. It is the moment where you feel scared, threatened, and so go into a defense thing where everything (and I mean everything) must be scrutinized and punished when it doesn't do exactly what you want it to do. It might be very difficult or impossible to change this when you feel this way.

So working on the fear, by relaxing, is the best way to deal with it. But when you are in it, try to correct your response to it. Try not to give in to the urge to wipe your hand after you touch something. Try not to give in to the urge to lash out in an extreme way. And if things don't go exactly as you planned them, try not to give in to the urge you punish yourself or something else for it. If you give into OCD, you make it more real than it really is.

Controlling behavior happens because you believe some things are a threat to you. If you cannot yet believe that they are not a threat, then make an attempt at ignoring the things that set you off. Ignore something that would normally infuriate you, like something falling on the floor. These things do not deserve any attention. They are not important in life.

✓ *Trust me, I'm your pilot*

When random rage kicks in, try to just notice it, but do not let it take over control. Remember "*Don't Panic, Trust your Pilot*". Remember you are the pilot. **You are not the rage**, neither are you anxiety or grief. You exist separately from these emotions, unless you identify too closely with the emotion. You can observe them and allow them to be (don't shove them away), maturely, with calm and reservation.

When the fear kicks in, do not act on it. Instead sit down or stand still, and breathe. Fear is another automated response that has nothing to do with the present. Hug yourself or talk to yourself like an adult. Tell yourself that it's alright. You are here now, the traumatic event has long gone, the people who caused it not present in this moment. This moment is the only one that matters.

"**It doesn't matter**" should be your punchline. In your core, your inner kid believes stongly that everything is the matter, so it is up to you to stubbornly believe that this isn't true. Sounds and events that would provide a trigger normally, do simply not matter at all. And because of it, they lose all power they had before. They happen, but you hardly notice them: they are just normal things in the everyday background.

✓ *Mind your muscles.*

Fear and anxiety will tend to make you walk more shroudedly, to hold your shoulders up, to be tense. This affects your emotional reaction to the world. So unclench! Make yourself

physically bigger. Extend your arms, shake your shoulders loose. Babble some random nonsense words. Try to make yourself laugh.

Try to assume a stance of confidence rather than a stance of being beat. Everyday, try to notice how your posture is and why it is like that. When you sit, sit straight. When you walk, look up at the sky. Look at other people and at what's happening around you, rather than turning inward on yourself. Breathe in... breathe out. Don't force it or try to breathe in an exaggerated way –just observe it and make it last a bit longer than you usually would.

✓ *Things just are.*

Some things just are. Like the smoke from hot tea. Or smoke from an incense stick. Or leaves fluttering through the air. The light of a candle. The bathrug. Feathers. Rocks. Try to just touch them, run them across your face. The touch on your own skin can be a difficult one, because you don't want to be touched by anything when you're on red alert. However remember that this is not the past. Touch doesn't equal violation.

You need to set straight the mechanism in your mind that equals touch to violation and crossing of boundaries. They are your hands. Make them your own! Claim them back! Do the exercise where you take a bath sponge and reclaim every inch of your skin. Breathe in while you tense your muscles and feel the life running through different parts of your body. Your own presence in them. It can be hard to really exist, but that's the only way to stop being afraid.

✓ *Intrusive Images*

In the case of images, it's telling you "*you are being observed. The minute you make one slight mistake, they will take delight*", "*they were right about you*". Try to distinguish in your brain between the images, and the fears that they awaken in you. Observe this fear. And breathe. Look around you. Remember the reality of it, the touch of it. Listen to any sounds around you and use them to re-connect with this moment. Be fully awake.

The images, are just images. Just like bad dreams just happen, but can't hurt you. They are repeating for some reason, but they are a mere reflection of what happened. There is no point in engaging with them, tricking yourself into believing that they are real. Because they are not real, not in this moment. And you can not change what happened in the past.

You owe it to yourself to **be the person that you are now**. You owe it to yourself, to not be that victim anymore. And if you are that victim then at least also be the adult that catches you when you fall. Allow yourself moments of weakness, but then be sure to calm yourself down the way a loving parent would do –do not lay a guilt trip on yourself or seek to punish yourself for it. You would be repeating the past.

✓ *Beating nervousness*

Observe yourself. Are you tense, do you lock yourself up in your home, are you scared of other people, or nervous? Scratching, biting, nervous laughter or irritability are all signs of nervousness that could lead up to something worse. Time to GET OUT. **Get out of the house.** Change your focus.

We spend way too much time being distracted by things. We walk around and we see stuff, but we don't take time to really walk, to really see. To lay down under a tree, and listen to the wind rustling in the leaves. Here are some things that you can do more mindfully:

1. Go geocaching
2. Listen to a guided relaxation
3. Go to a body of water
4. Watch the clouds
5. Learn something new
6. Rest your legs up on a wall
7. Watch the stars
8. Fly a kite
9. Call a friend
10. Meander around town
11. Eat a meal in silence
12. Take a bike ride
13. Go for a run
14. Pet a furry creature
15. View some art
16. Make some music
17. Color with crayons
18. Massage your muscles
19. Volunteer some place

✓ *Leave the Comfort Zone*

When you are somewhere and you feel like you're wasting your time and you should go home, ask yourself a couple of questions. First off, would you **really** use this time better if you were home? Wouldn't it just be **hiding**? You can make good use of your time wherever you are. If you feel like you are wasting it, then you are probably not really living it. Don't wait for life to happen in your safe zone. It won't.

The wish to return to the safe zone is completely natural but also very tricky. Going back to the safe zone all the time and not getting out of it, not challenging yourself, works the wrong way. It makes you lock yourself up and aggravate all your symptoms, it makes you play it easy and not do anything about it. The longer you don't take any measures to cure PTSD, the harder it will be to do so in the first place.

It isn't hard to confront post traumatic stress or fear. You need to **just do it**. You can be happy outside of your comfort zone. Try to challenge yourself, maybe at specific times in a day if that feels safer. Take off those headphones with brown noise and listen to your surroundings. Go outside. Get something done. Do not allow yourself to be glued to your computer screen constantly, it narrows your world and your mind down.

✓ *This is not a test*

One of your biggest motivations not to do anything is that you feel life is putting you through some evil test. Which if you fail, you will be an utter loser. Or it will be proven that you are indeed worthless or some other crap they told you all those years long ago. But all of this is not a test. Your every move is not being watched and scrutinized, and it's quite okay to make errors and not feel horrible about it.

Nobody is scribbling stuff down about you as you walk around. Nobody is judging you, and those who may be are not worth paying any mind. You don't have to be amazing or awesome. In fact you do not need to prove anything. The things you do, you do them for yourself. The challenges you take, and the things you allow yourself to enjoy, are a gift to yourself. They are not a weakness towards some abstract entity that is following you around.

✓ *Living in spite*

A lot of the things you do, are because of pain. You still cannot accept what happened in the past and you are still trying to change it somehow, or find some way to make it right somehow. But more pain does not correct past pain. More anger does not correct past anger. More obsessive controlling behavior does not correct the obsessive controlling behavior of your parents. Continuing in the same exact line will not make it better, **ever**. Nothing will change it. Forward is the only way.

The hatred, the spite, the pain inside may be keeping you from wanting to do any of the above. May have you thinking "*why should I make the effort, nobody has ever made any of those efforts for me*". But you owe it to yourself to be the first person to start doing this for you! Who are you avenging by staying inside and moping? Who are you avenging by choosing to go through the same suffering over, and over and over? You need to start loving yourself.

✓ *Discovering the truth*

Agressors, specially if they are our own parents, are strange folks. Kids listen to their caretakers, they listen more than any flawed caretaker could ever realize. When they listen, they listen truly and with their whole hearts. Caretakers who haven't got their own lifes in check, who are frustrated about their own existence, can take it out on their children. By

wishing they hadn't been born, and by wishing they were dead. By grudging them the fact that they are alive at all, like my parent did towards me. By blaming them for the fact that they are so unhappy that they want to kill themselves or their spouse.

If you were that kid, you will believe that they are right. You will believe that you are to blame. You will believe that you had no right to exist, and you will hate yourself for making their lives miserable. You might hate yourself to the point where you want to hurt yourself as much as your caretaker did, you might want to commit suicide and believe the world will be better off that way. Possibly you have no ability to trust that this world needs you.

Whatever they told you, whatever they were feeling towards you –those were all LIES. It was you who decided to come into this world. And if you survived up to this point, it was also you who trusts your own strength enough to keep fighting. Try and develop your own thoughts, instead of just copying the emotions and thoughts of your aggressors. Give yourself a chance to prove all of it wrong. Give yourself a chance to be happy.

✓ *Develop patience*

Personal growth is great, but you are still in the middle of it. Do not endure any horrors when you are not able to handle them well and when you know, that they might escalate into something unmanageable. Stay well aware of your fears on the one side, making sure to challenge them –but also try to remember yourself and be kind on yourself.

Do not flip when things are not happening immediately. There is a difference between having a reaction of being annoyed, just like any other normal person would, and freaking out completely. It is okay to be mildly annoyed by stuff, if you are able to let go of the irritation afterwards, and not keep it piled up inside.