



# Understanding Trauma

Bad things happen in life, and some things become too much to handle. It becomes deeply disturbing and distressing. That is called trauma.

## What Causes Trauma?



Trauma can be caused by something someone does to you, like:

- Abuses or hurts you
- Sexually assaults you
- Commits a crime against you
- Treats you badly

Domestic violence is especially traumatic, because someone who is supposed to love and care for you hurts you.

## Trauma can also come from other things that happen in life, such as:

- A natural disaster
- An accident
- Really difficult situations, like:
  - Living in an unsafe neighborhood
  - Experiencing discrimination
  - Living with someone abusive
  - Experiencing homelessness

**IT  
ISN'T  
YOUR  
FAULT.**

## Have You Noticed?

Trauma can make you feel like you are crazy or losing your mind. But this actually is the way your body and brain help you survive.

## You may be:

- Feeling jumpy and constantly on alert for danger
- Doing reckless or self-destructive things
- Remembering things that happened when you don't want to
- Thinking non stop about what happened
- Avoiding people, places or things that remind you of what happened
- Losing interest in activities or blaming yourself
  - Detaching and feeling numb or disconnected to everything
  - Trusting people less
  - Forgetting everything that has happened





## Were you also hit or hurt in the head? Or choked? Or strangled?

This hurts your brain. It can cause problems with your thinking, emotions, and affect your body too.

### What Might Help

Recognizing how your experience affected you and calming your body and your mind can help. Domestic violence programs can help you figure out how to do this. Some ways could be:

- Write down what you notice, and consider sharing with a trusted friend, doctor, therapist, or a domestic violence advocate
- Learn more about traumatic stress and brain injury
- Breathe deeply when you feel out of control
- Give yourself time to adjust
- Find ways to feel safe
- Take control over whatever you can
- Talk about what happened to someone you trust

**REMEMBER:  
YOU   
MATTER.**

Call your local DV program or visit our website at [www.odvn.org](http://www.odvn.org) for more information.

DV Number \_\_\_\_\_



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