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# Complex PTSD: From Surviving To Thriving: A GUIDE AND MAP FOR RECOVERING FROM CHILDHOOD TRAUMA



## Synopsis

I have Complex PTSD [Cptsd] and wrote this book from the perspective of someone who has experienced a great reduction of symptoms over the years. I also wrote it from the viewpoint of someone who has discovered many silver linings in the long, windy, bumpy road of recovering from Cptsd. I felt encouraged to write this book because of thousands of e-mail responses to the articles on my website that repeatedly expressed gratitude for the helpfulness of my work. An often echoed comment sounded like this: At last someone gets it. I can see now that I am not bad, defective or crazy – or alone! The causes of Cptsd range from severe neglect to monstrous abuse. Many survivors grow up in houses that are not homes – in families that are as loveless as orphanages and sometimes as dangerous. If you felt unwanted, unliked, rejected, hated and/or despised for a lengthy portion of your childhood, trauma may be deeply engrained in your mind, soul and body. This book is a practical, user-friendly self-help guide to recovering from the lingering effects of childhood trauma, and to achieving a rich and fulfilling life. It is copiously illustrated with examples of my own and my clients' journeys of recovering. This book is also for those who do not have Cptsd but want to understand and help a loved one who does. This book also contains an overview of the tasks of recovering and a great many practical tools and techniques for recovering from childhood trauma. It extensively elaborates on all the recovery concepts explained on my website, and many more. However, unlike the articles on my website, it is oriented toward the layperson. As such, much of the psychological jargon and dense concentration of concepts in the website articles has been replaced with expanded and easier to follow explanations. Moreover, many principles that were only sketched out in the articles are explained in much greater detail. A great deal of new material is also explored. Key concepts of the book include managing emotional flashbacks, understanding the four different types of trauma survivors, differentiating the outer critic from the inner critic, healing the abandonment depression that come from emotional abandonment and self-abandonment, self-reparenting and reparenting by committee, and deconstructing the hierarchy of self-injuring responses that childhood trauma forces survivors to adopt. The book also functions as a map to help you understand the somewhat linear progression of recovery, to help you identify what you have already accomplished, and to help you figure out what is best to work on and prioritize now. This in turn also serves to help you identify the signs of your recovery and to develop reasonable expectations about the rate of your recovery. I hope this map will guide you to heal in a way that helps you to become an unflinching source of kindness and self-compassion for yourself, and that out of that journey you will find at least one other human being who will reciprocally love you well enough in that way.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Pete Walker is a licensed Marriage and Family psychotherapist with degrees in Social Work and Counseling Psychology. He has been working as a counselor, lecturer, writer and group leader for thirty five years; and as a trainer, supervisor and consultant of other therapists for 20 years. Pete lives and luxuriates in family life with his wife and nine year old son in the San Francisco Bay Area. He enjoys his art work, gardening, hiking, and reading to his son. Pete also holds certificates in supervision from The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and from The Psychotherapy Institute in Berkeley. Pete is a "general practitioner" who specializes in helping adults recovering from growing up in traumatizing families, especially those whose repeated exposure to childhood abuse and/or neglect left them with symptoms of Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [Cptsd]. He has a great deal of recovery from his own Cptsd, and his professional approach is highly enriched by his own 40 year journey of recovering. Pete's articles on a multimodal approach to treating Cptsd have been published in a number of therapy magazines and websites. His therapeutic approach is eclectic and Relational [Intersubjective]. He guides the therapeutic process with values that include empathy, vulnerability, authenticity and mutuality. Pete's first book The Tao of Fully Feeling: Harvesting Forgiveness Out Of Blame, is also available through , has been acclaimed by many therapists, recovery websites and clients as a powerful, compassionate and pragmatic tool for guiding recovery.

This book is brilliant, insightful, enlightening, compassionate, validating, nurturing, and very healing. Pete Walker's COMPLEX PTSD, from Surviving to Thriving, is the BEST, by far, of the countless

books I have read on the subject of trauma, since my own PTSD was (finally) correctly diagnosed in 2003. I told my daughter, who was recently accepted into a Master's program to fulfill her dream of becoming a therapist, that Pete Walker's COMPLEX PTSD is my new self-help "bible." I plan to buy several as gifts. The first one will go to my awesome daughter. Not only has the existence of Complex PTSD been ignorantly denied by many in the psychiatric professions, those of us who suffer with this grievous psychological injury are often misdiagnosed with a wide range of stigmatizing mental illnesses, as Pete Walker discusses in the first chapter of this book. Throughout more than four decades of desperately seeking therapeutic help, I have been given a long list of various psychiatric labels. My childhood trauma and subsequent dissociation was so severe that my initial label, at the age of 14, was schizophrenia. I was given that diagnosis in 1967, more than a decade before Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was an official psychiatric label. Numerous doctors and therapists have told me over the years that I was badly misdiagnosed, because I am not at all schizophrenic. Of course I wanted to believe them, because who likes to think that they were ever psychotic? However, through my research in preparation of writing a memoir about my experience, I have come to the conclusion that I was, indeed, schizophrenic for two of my teenage years. Pete Walker's book is the first modern day authoritative publication I have read which acknowledges that in its severest form, Complex PTSD can cause an extremely traumatized child to develop schizophrenia. He is exactly right. But the good news is that even the most severely shattered psyche can heal ~ maybe not 100%, but close enough to live a mostly normal life. I am living proof that this is true. Today I am in my early 60s and happily married to my best friend, a Chaplain who is a Vietnam veteran with combat-related PTSD. (We put the FUN in dysfunction!) Although I am now a great-grandmother, I am still actively and enthusiastically learning, growing, and healing from my long-ago developmental wounds. I am deeply grateful to Pete Walker for writing this book. I highly recommend it to anyone who has been psychologically wounded by early childhood trauma or neglect, or for anyone interested in helping people with CPTSD. Yes, Complex PTSD is "real," regardless of what the DSM gurus say; just as PTSD was real back when "shell shock" and "hysteria" were the in-vogue labels. People with Complex PTSD aren't crazy, or bad, or weak, or lazy, or inherently/genetically defective, nor are we "whiners who don't want to let go of the past" ~ we are simply ordinary people who have been grievously psychologically injured, and it is not our fault. Having a PTSD reaction to extreme trauma is NORMAL, just as it is normal to bleed if you are stabbed. You don't berate someone for bleeding when they have been stabbed, not if you have any compassion; you call 911 and get them the care they need to facilitate their healing. \*\*\*Treat PTSD with CARE: Compassion, Acceptance, Respect and Empathy/Encouragement. \*\*\*My husband and I

have both been berated for having PTSD, because "the war is over" and "your childhood is over" so therefore we ought to "stop living in the past." Having PTSD is painful and debilitating enough, without also being SHAMED for it. For most of my life, my inner critic bought into this terrible shame and self-blame. I beat myself up emotionally for years, berating myself for my inability to "forgive and forget, live in today, and just get over" the traumas that occurred during my developmental years. Is there anything more miserable than hating yourself? I don't think so. But I don't hate myself anymore because in recent years, scientific studies using modern brain-imaging technologies have found that severe trauma literally changes the shape and function of the brain, in both humans and animals. Other brain imaging studies have found that, thanks to neuroplasticity, the injured brain can also heal with proper treatment. PTSD and CPTSD are real, physically verifiable injuries. These injuries don't just "go away" when you try not to think about them. Berating a person for having PTSD because their trauma happened a long time ago is no less ignorant and cruel than chastising someone who is paralyzed from the neck down for not getting up and going to work, because the car crash that crushed their spine happened decades ago. The traumatic event may have happened in the distant past, but the injury it caused is still PRESENT. Yet there is healing available, which you will find in this wonderful book. Here is a big great-grandma (((HUG))) for anyone reading this who needs and wants one.

As one of many who managed to survive prolonged abuse and neglect throughout childhood by means of various clumsy self-preservation strategies, I've read dozens of good, useful, informative books on the subject, all of them helpful. I've learned that it is possible to heal the pain and that life can and does get better if you pay attention to your inner reactions and learn to respect your deep, completely justified need for and right to self-love and self-care. I am grateful to all of the researchers, therapists, authors and fellow survivors who have shared their understanding, insights, concepts and methods to help the rest of us on our journey toward bearable, even pleasant, lives. But of all the books I've read on the subject, Pete Walker's *Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving* does the absolute BEST job of mapping the recovery process from the survivor's perspective. I had gained useful knowledge and understanding from Mr. Walker's website, but this book puts it together in such a clear and orderly perspective that I can now see (and feel) how far I've come and, more importantly, which issues I need to tackle next -- and how to tackle them -- in order to more fully reclaim my birthright as a human being. I cannot recommend this book highly enough. It is invaluable for survivors, therapists, and, I

believe, for friends and loved ones who want to understand us. It explains us so well. Thank you, Mr. Walker, for writing this.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who thinks they might have complex PTSD (cPTSD) or PTSD. I have gained more insights from this book than I thought it was possible to get from one book. Every page is full of useful information. For me, honestly, this book reads like it is my autobiography. I have been reading self-help books for years but this is my new #1. Not only are there insights into what has caused the cPTSD issues, but there are many tidbits on how to help yourself learn to get out of it. Regarding causes of cPTSD, it is similar to PTSD but also quite different, though of course there is some overlap. PTSD often has some underlying trigger event or events, such as a violent experience involving crime, accident, injury/death or sexual abuse. However cPTSD, focuses more on an underlying childhood full of neglect, abandonment, constant painful criticism from parents, and so on. For anyone who is suffering right now from lack of self-confidence, continually feeling "not good enough," any kind of panic or anger in social situations where you want to hide, run away, or bury yourself into work so much that everyone calls you a workaholic, I would recommend getting this book and reading chapter 8 first. Chapter 8 is "Managing Emotional Flashbacks" and has a great summary of tips on recognizing a flashback and helping you figure out what to do to recover while in one. The ideas about getting rid of both the inner critic (where you criticize yourself) and the outer critic (where you criticize others and push them away) are invaluable. As is the whole book!

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