

Appendix A

Struggles Faced by Adults Healing from Childhood Trauma

- **Feelings of Shame and Guilt:** As survivors, we are often left with the residue of feeling we were responsible for the trauma. The goal is to understand that we are not to blame and use self-compassion to address the negative self-talk and self-perception.
- **Inability to Trust Others:** Abuse and betrayal leave an imprint that others are not to be trusted. Instead of constantly fearing being hurt, we must seek to build safe relationships and discern who we should and should not trust.
- **Emotional Dysregulation:** Many of us struggle in the management of intense emotions such as anxiety or sadness. We must use strategies that help us self-regulate to express feelings more effectively.
- **Low Self-Esteem:** As survivors, we often feel unworthy of love or happiness, which often leads to avoidance. Instead, we need to begin working on those affirmations and sticky notes. Doing so cultivates feelings of self-love, acceptance, and self-respect.
- **Triggers and Flashbacks:** Triggers remind us of trauma memory, while flashbacks seem to place us in the middle of the memory of the event. Either way, the feelings are fearful. We need to manage the impact of these struggles by practicing mindfulness techniques (triggers) and developing grounding techniques (flashbacks).
- **Misplaced Boundaries:** Most survivors struggle with establishing healthy boundaries with others. This could lead to us becoming people-pleasers, overcommitting ourselves, and even seeing others violate our personal space or needs. We have to learn how to establish boundaries and to say no.
- **Relational Pitfalls:** Trauma leads to a fear of intimacy, difficulties with trust, and even repeating toxic patterns from the past. We must learn how to connect with others healthily.
- **Avoidance:** We tend to numb emotional pain with substance use, work, food, etc. Instead, we should seek support and develop healthy coping mechanisms.
- **Unresolved Anger:** Unexpressed anger from past trauma can develop into feelings of frustration or even rage. We must learn creative and healthy ways to process anger and seek to understand the underlying cause.
- **Find Meaning and Purpose:** Trauma leads us to disconnect from our true selves, our passions, our goals, etc. We must explore who we are and what we want in life to move past the haunting shadows of our past.