How Do I Heal After Abuse?

Resources to Help You Move Forward
After experiencing domestic violence, it may feel impossible to heal. It’s important to remember you can, and will, move forward.

Coming to a place of calm after abuse is no easy task. Survivors often experience feelings of guilt and shame after leaving an abuser, and may need to work through other emotional, physical, legal and economic challenges along the way.

This toolkit will help you find ways to heal after abuse. Inside you’ll find:

- Helpful Articles
- Recommended Books
- Checklists
- Survey Results
- Support Communities
- How to Find Help

Remember, survivors are strong, capable and perseverant. Help is out there, though, and it’s important for survivors to know they don’t have to tackle the healing process alone.
There are 440+ articles on the many facets of domestic violence from DomesticShelters.org. Here are links to those that best answer “How do I Heal After Abuse?”

**Rebuilding Your Self-Esteem**
5 ways to start feeling good about yourself again.

**From Surviving to Thriving**
4 ways to take better care of yourself today.

**Revitalize Your Spirit After Abuse**
6 self-healing ideas for your recovery process.

**Recharge, Rejuvenate & Renew**
A mind, body and spirit cleanse for survivors.

**How to Find Your Laugh Again**
Why getting the giggles can help your body heal after trauma.

**How to Keep Going After Abuse**
How to find support after leaving an abuser.
Building Resilience After Trauma
Inspiration for those feeling burdened by life’s mishaps.

8 Confidence Boosters
Improve your self-esteem by trying one of these a week.

5 Stages of Recovery
Healing comes, but it’s a process that happens in these stages.

Recovering in 8 Steps
Suggestions from going from fear and despair toward happy.

Finding Financial Footing
Ideas on how to start over financially after abuse.

Finding Financial Independence
Multiple free online resources teach financial literacy.

How Do You Find Safe People?
Looking for these three qualities will start you off on the right foot.

Starting a New Relationships
4 steps to consider taking before dating again.
Three Ways to Listen to Your Gut
Are you ignoring your intuition’s attempts to warn you of danger?

Why Survivors Should Set Goals
Escaping violence needs to be looked at long-term.

Finding Support After You Leave
Abuse survivors are prone to PTSD.

What are the Symptoms of PTSD?
List of symptoms plus how therapeutic massage may help.

Online Virtual Therapy
We try 2 internet therapy sites to see if they have healing powers.

Tapping Out of Trauma
How thought field therapy can reduce fear and anxiety.

Modifying Memories
How EMDR can help reprogram how you remember trauma.

When the Feelings Rush Back
Triggers survivors face and how to get through them.
Stop a Flashback in its Tracks
Grounding techniques can bring you back to the present.

An Emotional Safety Plan
A guide to help you on your healing journey.

How to Hide Your Address
Shielding your home address is possible in 38 states.

13 Ways to Endure Emotional Pain
Breaking free from grief and pain that can seem unending.

Should You Change Your SSN?
The pros & cons of changing your social security number.

Express Yourself
Learning to find your voice again can take work.

Volunteering to Heal
How helping others can help you.
Reading books that take the time to go in-depth can be a very positive way to learn from the experiences of others, and gain inspiration and insight on how to heal. Here are our recommended reads.

**Surviving Domestic Violence: Voices of Women Who Broke Free.** Stories of domestic violence survivors who escaped their abusers, reclaimed their dignity, reconstructed their lives, and rediscovered peace. Domestic violence doesn't just happen "out there." It happens in our neighborhoods and on our streets. It happens to women we see at work, the supermarket, and the PTA board meeting. Find encouragement and hope in the voices of these who broke free.

**I Closed My Eyes: Revelations of a Battered Woman.** Abuse happens to people who are talented, independent, confident and educated, who had happy childhoods, loving parents, to people who have everything going for them. Many will recognize the author's devotion to family that can bind victims to abusers, and find inspiration in the author's journey to reclaim a future for herself and her children.
**I’m Still Standing: Crawling Out of the Darkness Into the Light.** Mildred Muhammad describes how she and her children overcame the difficulties they faced in the wake of the negative media attention and threats from people in her community following the arrest of her husband, the DC sniper. Gritty, raw, and emotional, Mildred’s story shows her triumph over the (external and internal) systems that put her in a place of fear and isolation.

**It’s My Life Now: Starting Over After an Abusive Relationship or Domestic Violence.** After finding a way out, a victim’s difficulties are solved: life is good, they are safe, and recovery is swift. Not so fast. Survivors know that leaving does not end the nightmare. It is the beginning of an often difficult journey to healing and happiness. This book offers practical guidance, exercises, reassurance, and awareness that survivors of relationship abuse need to reclaim their lives.

**Change Your Brain, Change Your Life.** The neuropsychiatrist author offers evidence that anxiety, depression, anger, obsessiveness, or impulsiveness could be related to how structures in your brain work. Included are “brain prescriptions,” or exercises, that can help heal your brain and change your life with techniques for calming inner turmoil, curbing anger, fighting off negative thoughts, improving problem solving and more.

**Your Life After Trauma: Powerful Practices to Reclaim Your Identity.** Now a professional coach helping trauma victims rebuild their lives, Michele Rosenthal struggled with the effects of medically-induced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for over 25 years before reaching a full recovery. Today, she is 100% free of PTSD. She applies her personal experience and professional wisdom to offer readers an invaluable roadmap to overcoming their own trauma.
**Psychopath Free: Recovering from Emotionally Abusive Relationships with Narcissists, Sociopaths, and Other Toxic People.** Have you ever been in a relationship with a psychopath? Chances are, even if you did, you would never know it. Psychopaths are cunning charmers and master manipulators, to the point where you start to accept the most extreme behaviors as normal—even if they hurt you. Guide for survivors written by a survivor, offering hope for healing and thriving after psychopathic abuse.

**Should I Stay or Should I Go? A Guide to Knowing if Your Relationship Can—and Should—Be Saved.** Women involved in frustrating relationships will learn to tell the difference between a healthy-yet-difficult relationship and one that is really not working, recognize the signs their partner has a serious problem, stop waiting to see what happens and make their own growth the top priority, and prepare for life without their partner even as they keep trying to make the relationship work.

**The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You’re Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are.** After abuse ends, feelings of inadequacy and shame can last. The author explores these difficult emotions and places importance on accepting imperfection and vulnerability. She guides readers through a process of beginning to “engage with the world from a place of worthiness” and learning to love yourself just as you are.
Sometimes lists are easier on the mind because they are uncluttered and poignant. If you’d rather read a few items vs. articles or books, these lists are for you.

- 19 Grounding Techniques
- 18 Ways to Start Over Financially
- 29 Self-Care Strategies
- 35 Characteristics of Safe People
- 29 Types of Personal Boundaries You Can Set
- 27 Ways to Build Confidence
- 22 Signs of PTSD
- 16 Signs of Depression

After you click on a list to read, there is a handy SEE ALL button that will allow you view all of the items at once.
A lot can be gleaned from people who have been through it before. Check out the following survey results to learn from the experiences of others.

- Have you shared your story publicly before?
- How long after leaving before you started dating again?
- How many hours of sleep do you get per night?
- Have you ever used VINE to notify you of an offender’s release?
- What’s the biggest financial hurdle you’ve had to overcome?
Online forums and chat areas can help you connect with others who are in or have faced similar situations, and find support and ideas from the survivor community.

*AfterSilence.org* aims to help victims become survivors and to communicate in the recovery of domestic and sexual violence. It offers an active message board and chat room for rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest and molestation survivors. There are over 31,000 members and about 1,000,000 posts, including recent posts and many useful posts from days and months past.

*The Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center*. If you’re an American overseas, your situation is different than 99% of your fellow countryman, and this site will be a wonderful resource for you. Among the services is a 24-hour response to emails, as well as international phone options.
DomesticShelters.org Facebook Page offers one of the most active places for domestic violence survivors. You’ll find conversation, past experiences and unvarnished stories, and occasionally advice from professionals who have joined in on a topic.

Experience Project works to connect people with similar interests, needs and experience on a massive variety of topics, one of which is domestic violence. You may not run into professionals who can guide you, but sometimes finding people who have had similar experiences or offer words of encouragement is just as helpful.

Fort Refuge is a clever, grassroots site run by survivors for fellow survivors as a safe place to come together and discuss their struggles and victories in healing from various types of abuse. Though the forum and chat do not boast the same numbers as some of the larger organizations, they are one of the more active conversation places on the internet currently. They also add new content to their site regularly.
Love is Respect - National Teen Dating Helpline focuses on teen relationships and can be accessed by phone, text or live chat. It offers real-time, one-on-one support by trained peer advocates who offer information and advocacy to those involved in dating abuse. They also offer support to parents, teachers, clergy, law enforcement, and service providers.

National Domestic Violence Hotline offers confidential, private, one-on-one chats with advocates every day from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. Central Time.

OnYourMind.net is a safe and anonymous place for teens to get information and support from other teens in an online chat room, covering topics such as relationships, school, depression, stress, suicide, parents, cutting, identity and health.

Pandora's Aquarium is an online forum with around 2 million posts and over 70,000 members, and is run by Pandora’s Project, which provides information, support and resources to rape and sexual abuse survivors and their friends and family.
YesICAN offers live chats on a schedule and a forum for individuals who wish to discuss issues around surviving child abuse, parenting and domestic violence. YesICAN chats are facilitated by trained facilitators and cover various subjects including teen survivors, male survivors, female survivors, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, incest survivors, significant others and parenting.

When accessing hotlines, chats or forums from a computer, tablet, or smartphone, please remember to take the necessary precautions to keep your activities confidential from your abuser. Learn more on protecting personal affects and technology here.

Also, keep in mind that local shelters may offer in-person support groups. You can find nearby shelters at www.domesticshelters.org.
Another way to heal from abuse and begin to move forward is to reach out to local shelters regarding the ongoing support services they offer.

Visit [www.domesticshelters.org](http://www.domesticshelters.org) and type either your city and state, or ZIP code, into the search bar at the top of the page. A list of organizations and contact numbers near you will be displayed. To reach an advocate, call the hotline numbers listed. Most are open 24/7.

To speak to an advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, also 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call 1-800-799-7233 or visit [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org) where a chat service is available 7 a.m. to 2 a.m.

It’s important to know that your call stays confidential and you can always choose to remain anonymous when speaking with an advocate. To know what to expect when calling, read [this article](http://www.thehotline.org).