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# The Body Keeps the Score Summary PDF Cheatsheet —

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### ? 1. Origin of PTSD: Trauma dramatically changes a combat veteran's brain, behavior and life

Working at a Veterans Affairs clinic, Van der Kolk saw many former soldiers had strange problems with memory flashbacks, impulse control and emotional blocks. PTSD was made an official diagnosis only in 1980, which allowed these veterans to get the right treatment for their trauma.

### ? 2. General Trauma: Trauma also affects the general population far more than we thought

Later on, Van der Kolk saw familiar signs of trauma in his general patients who'd been diagnosed with depression, anxiety, etc. Research now shows adverse childhood experiences of abuse or neglect affect many people well into adulthood. But this developmental trauma is not yet an official diagnosis which makes it hard to treat.

### ? 3. Fight-or-Flight: A traumatized brain is stuck in either fight-or-flight or shut-down mode

Trauma causes the amygdala, the alarm system in the brain, to become overly sensitive to potential danger. For people with PTSD, this causes a chronic stress reaction and flashbacks. If someone cannot escape a traumatic situation, their body freezes or shuts down, maybe even long-term.

### ? 4. Treatment Challenges: Traditional therapy and medications are often ineffective at treating trauma

Talk therapy that gives someone insight into their mental distress may not relieve the distress. Because the stress response is found not in the rational brain, but the deeper emotional brain. Medications can be a lifesaver, but they can't heal the trauma causing the symptoms, so they should be used in addition to other treatments.

### ? 5. Mindfulness: Learning to "be present" in one's body is an essential skill for restoring control and healing

Traumatized people have less activity in the part of the brain related to self awareness. The first step of trauma therapy is helping them become more aware of sensations inside their body, a skill Van der Kolk labels mindfulness. If a patient can remain mindful and relaxed while recalling a trauma, their emotional brain can begin to see it as past.

### ? 6. Top-Down Regulation: Our emotional brain can be retrained through cognitive approaches like Neurofeedback and Internal Family Systems

Mindfulness strengthens a part of our brain called the medial prefrontal cortex, which can rein in the impulses of our emotional brain. Neurofeedback therapy is a different way someone can train their brain to remain in frequencies that are calm and focused. It has shown great results for PTSD and ADHD.

### ? 7. "Bottom-up" Practices: Our stress response can also be retrained through body-based practices like Yoga, Tai Chi, and massage

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The vagus nerve allows our body to communicate with our emotional brain through breathing, movement, chanting and touch. Yoga, therapeutic massage and practices such as Tai Chi all show benefits reducing traumatic stress symptoms.

**? 8. Social Connection: Restoring a sense of social bond and community is crucial for recovery**

Reconnecting with others is how most humans heal, but this can be a unique challenge for traumatized people who have been abused, neglected or betrayed by others. Their emotional maps can be reshaped through practices like psychotherapy, animal-assisted therapy, support groups or group activities like singing, dancing, theatre, martial arts or religious practices.

**? 9. EMDR Therapy: Eye-movement therapy is surprisingly effective to help process trauma**

In EMDR therapy, a patient recalls a traumatic memory while their eyes follow the therapists hand, which is moving from side to side. It sounds unusual, but studies show EMDR works very well for treating PTSD and other traumas.

**This is just a sample!**

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