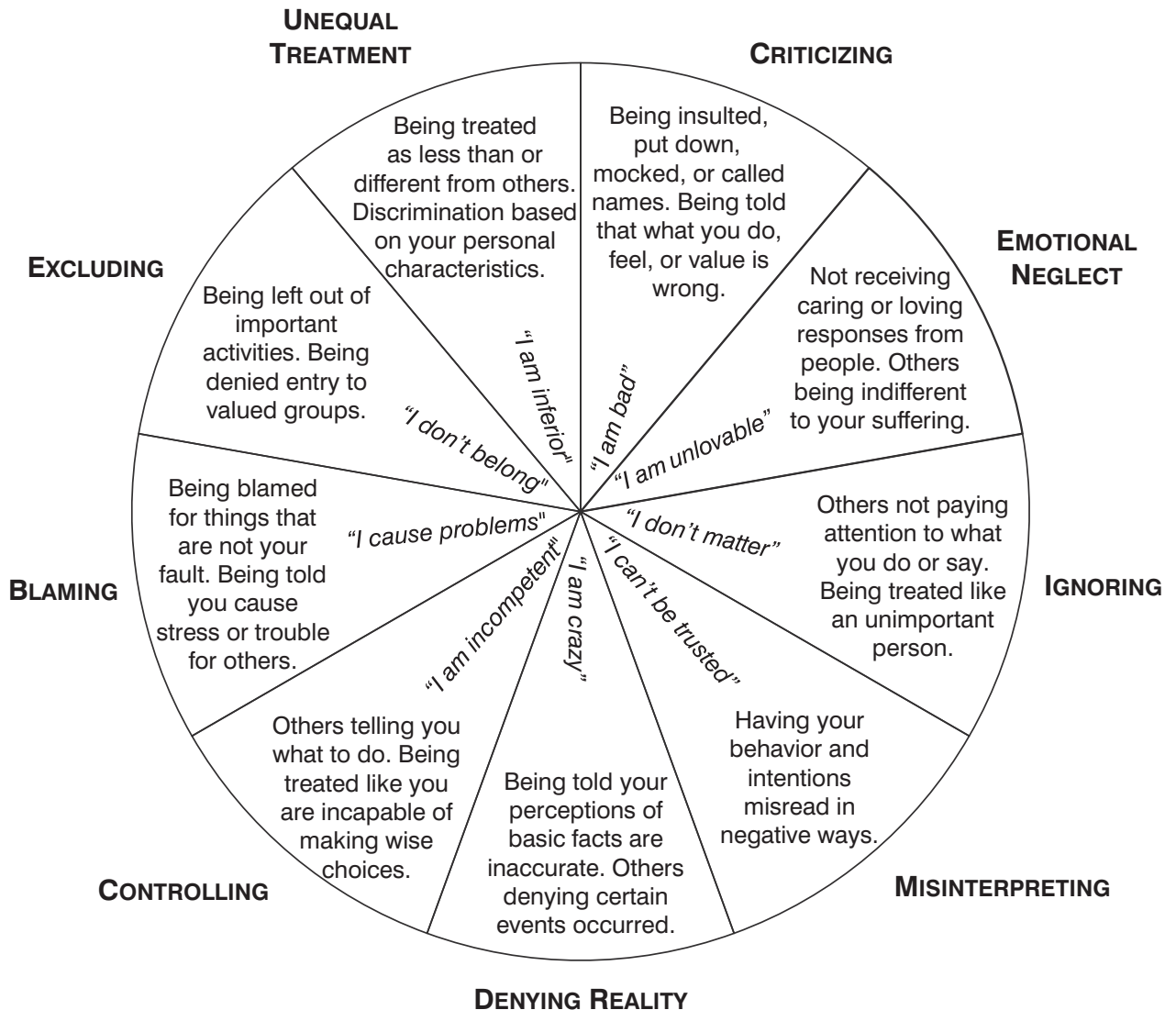


What Is Traumatic Invalidation?

Traumatic invalidation occurs when a person's environment repeatedly or intensely communicates that their characteristics, behaviors, or emotional reactions are unacceptable. Traumatic invalidation is typically done by important people, groups, or institutions that the person is close to or dependent on and/or may occur at the cultural level for people from marginalized groups. Invalidating behaviors can take many forms and cause people to develop a variety of negative beliefs about themselves. Often the person's responses to the invalidation are also invalidated, which leads to even more suffering.



The Impact of Traumatic Invalidation

Experiences of traumatic invalidation cause PTSD symptoms and negatively impact people's beliefs about themselves and their relationships with others.

PTSD SYMPTOMS

Traumatic invalidation results in PTSD symptoms, including intrusions, avoidance, negative changes in cognitions and mood, and increased arousal and reactivity.

• Common examples of PTSD symptoms related to traumatic invalidation include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding thoughts or reminders of invalidation | <input type="checkbox"/> Intrusive memories of invalidation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent negative emotions (shame, guilt) | <input type="checkbox"/> Distressing dreams about invalidation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being very sensitive to potential invalidation | <input type="checkbox"/> Negative beliefs about yourself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intense reactions to reminders of invalidation | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling detached from others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reckless or self-destructive behavior | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

SELF-INVALIDATION

Traumatic invalidation teaches people to invalidate themselves in ways that are similar to how they were invalidated by others. These self-critical thoughts occur frequently and often lead to intense feelings of shame and self-hatred.

• Common examples of self-invalidation include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Judging or criticizing yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking your reactions are not valid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treating yourself as if you do not matter | <input type="checkbox"/> Blaming yourself for problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calling yourself names | <input type="checkbox"/> Assuming you will do things wrong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ignoring your own needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimizing things you do well |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking you should be different than you are | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

NOT TRUSTING YOURSELF

Another painful outcome of traumatic invalidation is that it teaches people to doubt themselves and believe they cannot be trusted to make wise choices. Often people will feel as if they do not possess any inner wisdom and must rely on others to tell them what to do.

• Common examples of not trusting yourself include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking you do not have a wise mind | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding taking on responsibilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basing your behavior on what others do | <input type="checkbox"/> Doubting your perceptions of reality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling unable to do things on your own | <input type="checkbox"/> Making your reactions match others' |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asking others to make decisions for you | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

(continued)

UNREALISTIC STANDARDS

Traumatic invalidation often teaches people to hold themselves to strict and perfectionistic standards that are not realistic and lead them to constantly feel as if they are failing or not good enough.

- Common examples of having unrealistic standards include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having strict rules for your own behavior | <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking you must do things perfectly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holding yourself to others' high standards | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimizing the difficulty of tasks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trying to appear flawless | <input type="checkbox"/> Harshly criticizing yourself for errors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frequently feeling like a failure | <input type="checkbox"/> Setting unrealistic goals for yourself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding activities that you are not good at | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

PERVASIVE INSECURITY

Traumatic invalidation often results in a pervasive sense of insecurity in relationships. People often expect that others will reject them and have difficulty trusting and feeling safe around people.

- Common examples of pervasive insecurity include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expecting people to reject or hurt you | <input type="checkbox"/> Trying hard to please people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changing to fit what you think others will like | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty trusting other people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like you can't rely on other people | <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent fears of abandonment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asking for reassurance that you are liked | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling on guard when around people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assuming your presence is unwanted | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

FEELING INVALID

The experience of being broadly and frequently rejected often threatens people's psychological integrity and makes them feel as if they are not a valid, reasonable, or legitimate person.

- Common examples of feeling invalid include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Believing you are inherently bad | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling different from everyone else |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking you should not take up space | <input type="checkbox"/> Questioning your own humanity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like you do not fit in anywhere | <input type="checkbox"/> Believing you should not exist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking something is innately wrong with you | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling invisible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like you do not matter | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |