

Guilt, Shame, & Hindsight Bias

T-TIME

This morning we'll learn how to...

1. Understand guilt & shame about our traumatic experiences
2. Learn about hindsight bias and its influence on guilt/shame
3. Learn how to start weakening the hold of hindsight bias and guilt/shame thoughts

Defining Guilt & Shame

Guilt

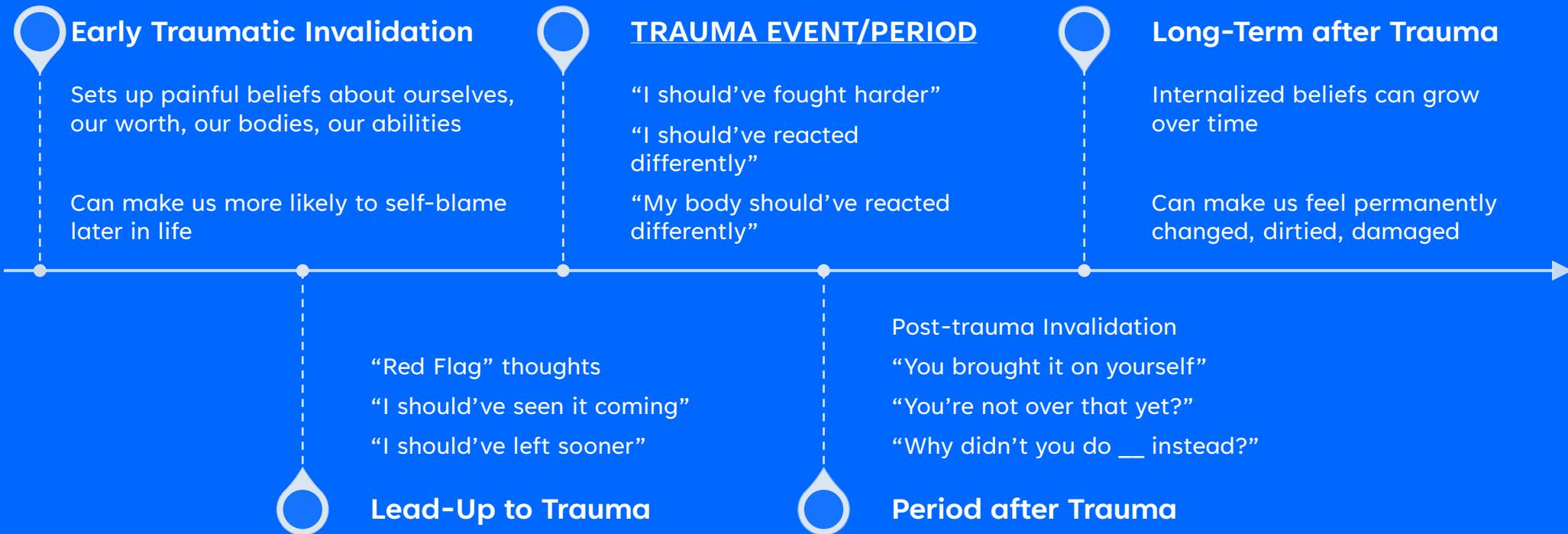
- “I’ve done something that goes against my own values”
- Urges to make it right (e.g., apologize, act differently next time)

Shame

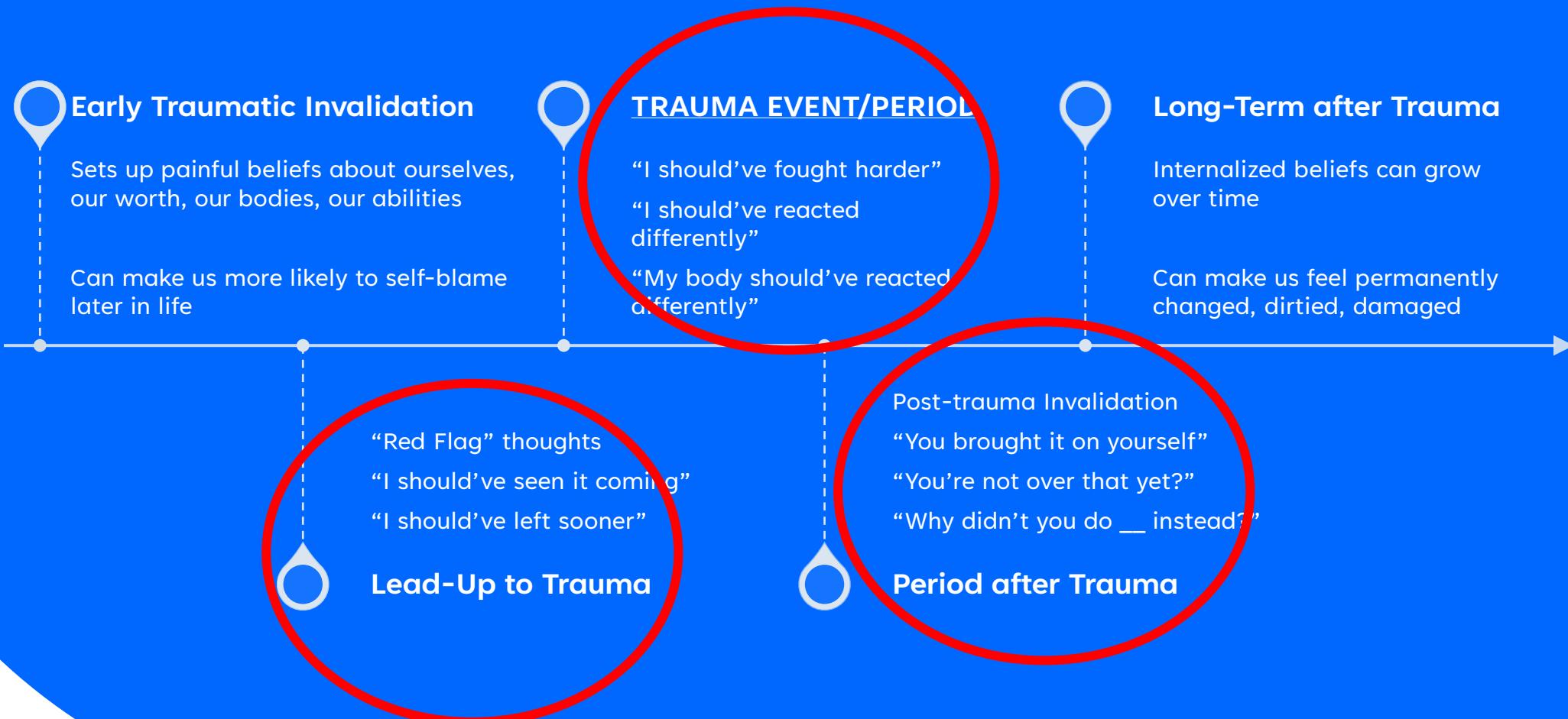
- “Something I’ve done or something about me violates others’/society’s values” (and if others find out, they’ll reject me)
- Urges to hide, bottle up thoughts/feelings, isolate

How has guilt or shame about trauma affected us?

Sources of Trauma-Related G/S



Sources of Trauma-Related G/S



How Guilt & Shame Worsen PTSD

- **Guilt and shame worsens PTSD and stops us from healing**
 - We suffer more – extra self-blame on top of core trauma pain
 - Can grow into bigger generalizations about ourselves over time
 - “There is something wrong with me”, “I deserve to suffer”
 - Makes us want to avoid thinking/talking about what happened

How Guilt & Shame Worsen PTSD

- Easier to buy what the guilt/shame messages are selling if we never evaluate the **FULL PICTURE** of what happened
- **Our Goal = Check if guilt/shame is accurate or justified**



“Was it
foreseeable?”

“Was it
preventable?”

“I should have seen it coming”
“There were signs/red flags”

What's implied:

“If it was possible to see it coming, then that means it could have been prevented.”

“And if it was preventable—and I didn’t prevent it—then I allowed it to happen.”

Hindsight Bias

“Monday morning quarterbacking”

“Hindsight is 20/20”

Knowing the outcome already in the present clouds our memory of what we actually did or didn't know in the past

Why might this be important for trauma?

Red Flags & Warning Signs

Remember, red flags are *just that*. Flags. **NOT certainty.**

Rarely the only pieces of information we're considering

Acting on hunches alone is usually not a helpful life strategy. So there's a good reason we don't always do this by default

Have you ever been faced with a red flag, or thought something bad was going to happen, and then it didn't?

Have I ever been faced with a green flag, or thought something good was going to happen, then it didn't?

How to challenge hindsight bias

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2. Was there info or experience I simply didn't have?
3. **Were some signs less obvious at the time compared to how they seem now?**

How to challenge hindsight bias

Consider other factors that guilt, shame, and hindsight bias can distract us from:

1. What kinds of other info or signals was I getting at the time?
2. Was there info or experience I simply didn't have?
3. Were some signs less obvious at the time compared to how they seem now?
4. **Before the trauma, were there reasons to think that it would not happen exactly as it did?**

Who were you with? What were you told beforehand?

Any similar times in the past that played out differently? Was there any prior experience to go on?

You can only prevent something if:

1) You knew it was going to happen

AND

2) You had the option and ability to prevent it

Golden Question:

If I knew with certainty what was going to happen when I did what I did, would I have done what I did?