

## Repeated Trauma Exposure – Coping with Wise Mind

- **Revictimization**
  - Studies show that prior trauma predicts subsequent trauma
  - Different reasons why this might happen:
    - **Feel like we can't trust ourselves/our gut**
      - Told feelings were wrong as part of trauma
      - We're used to blocking out emotions
    - **Radar can be uncalibrated after being hurt**
      - Not sure what/who is safe or not
      - Being hurt starts to feel like the "norm"
      - Not feeling sure if it is OK to say no or set a firm boundary
    - We may have **negative beliefs about ourselves with which abuse/mistreatment feels consistent**, such as "I am worthless," "this is what I deserve," or "I won't do better than this"
      - Along with this, periodic – even if fleeting – **expressions of affection or commitment may be highly reinforcing** in the setting of past trauma and/or abandonment
    - **We avoid (and thus miss) thoughts/emotions that serve as warning bells/red flags**
    - We may put ourselves in risky situations as a "**do-over**" (to see if we can get a different outcome)
  - **To be clear, abuse is NEVER the victim's fault**, but we want to be aware of why revictimization happens so that we can learn from what happened and protect ourselves in the future.  
  - What do we do about this?: **WISE MIND**
    - 3 states of awareness
      - **Rational Mind**
        - All rational.
        - The Downside: may overlook gut feelings and warning signs
      - **Emotional Mind**
        - All emotional.
        - The Downside: can lead to always avoiding, including when you may not be in danger
      - **Wise Mind**
        - A balanced combination of both Rational Mind and Emotional Mind
        - The Upside: gives us awareness of all the signs coming from our environment and within ourselves (our thoughts, emotions, bodily reactions, "gut" feelings)
    - Questions to ask ourselves in **Wise Mind** to determine safety and motivation for setting or not setting a boundary:
      - Rational
        - What is my environment?
        - Who is the person/what have they done before?
        - Is this a situation linked to a specific trigger, memory, or stuck thought?
        - Are there any elements present of boundaries/I have a right to... that I notice myself dismissing/blaming myself/saying I don't deserve?
        - What would a trusted support or therapist say?
      - Emotion
        - What emotions do I feel in my mind and body? (scared, sad, hurt, disrespected)
        - Do I have an urge to protect myself?
        - Does this feeling remind me of past times I've been unsafe?