

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?