



# **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

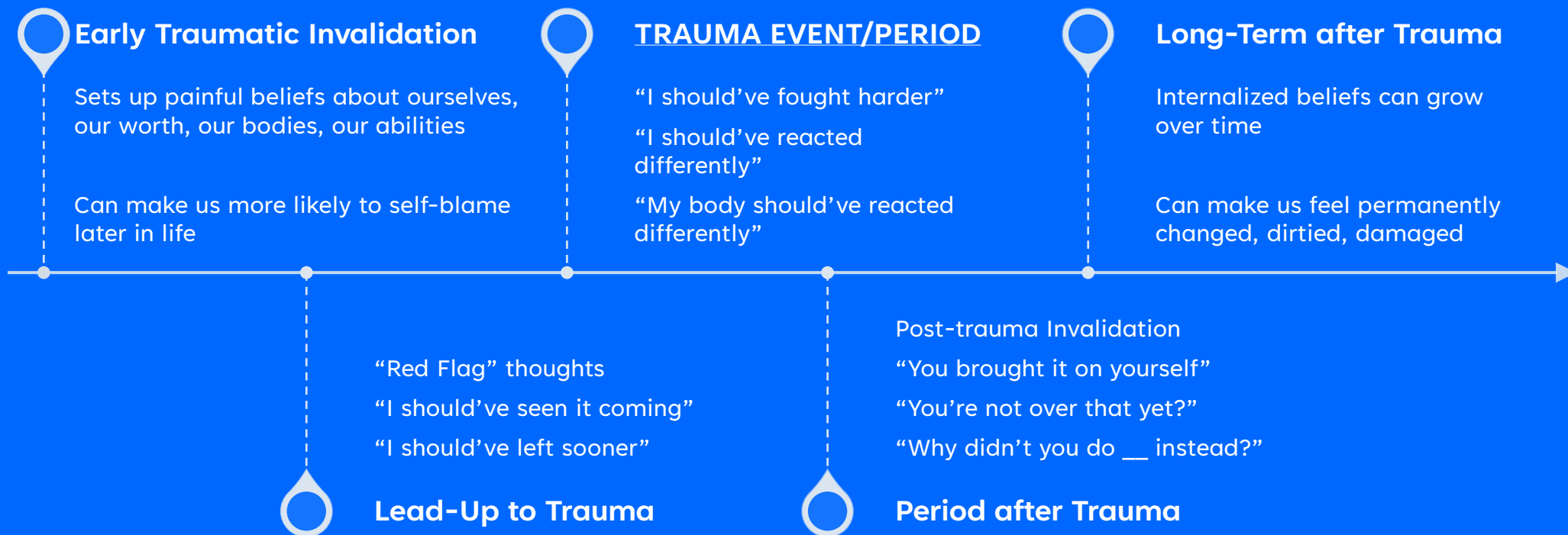
- “I’ve done something that goes against my own values”
- Urges to make it right (e.g., apologize, act differently next time)

## 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



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# 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

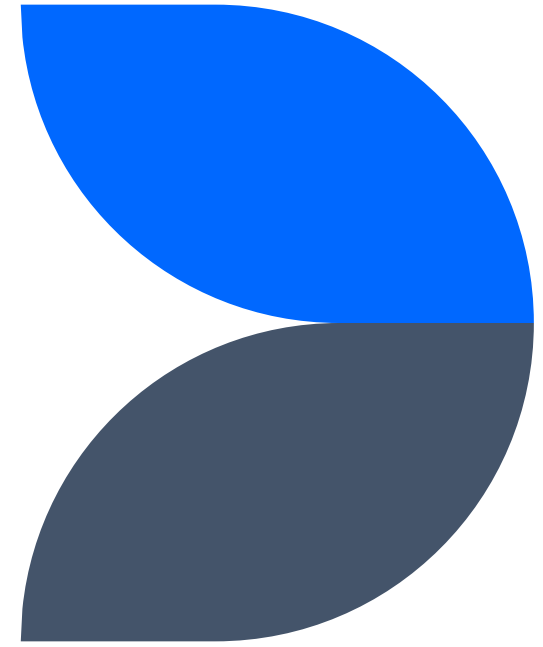
# How Guilt & Shame Worsen PTSD

- 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?**

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- 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:

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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?

**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? ”