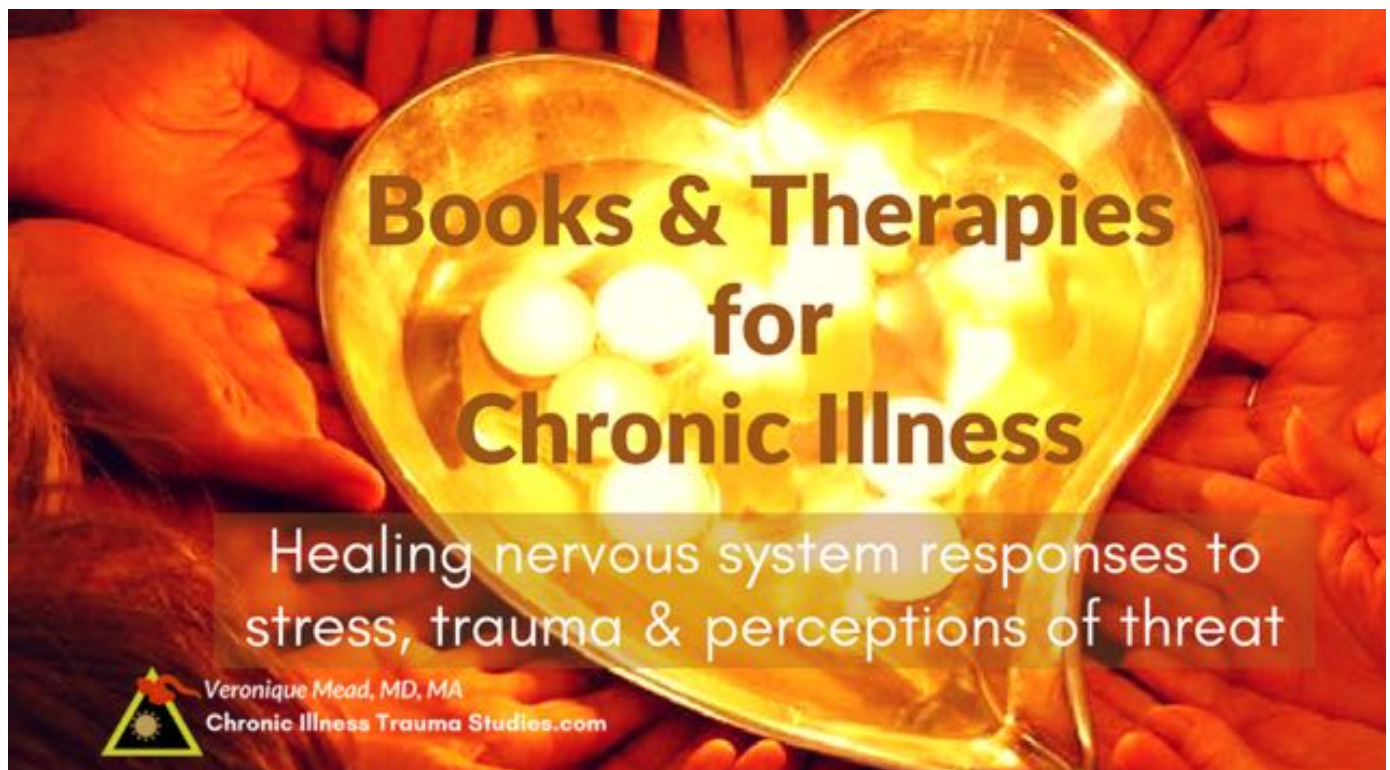


# Books & Therapies for Chronic Illness

Healing Nervous System Responses to  
Stress, Trauma and Perceptions of Threat



*by Veronique Mead, MD, MA*

Chronic Illness Trauma Studies

2018

March 28

# Books & Therapies

Healing Nervous System Responses to Stress, Trauma & Perceptions of Threat

## Table of Contents

One Page Summary	3
Introduction	4
Addressing the Perception of Threat	5
Go Slowly, Gently and Include Your Body I	7
Books	8
Books Introducing Trauma and How it Affects Us	8
Books for Working on Your Own	9
Books for Inspiration	10
Free Downloadable Ebooks	11
Healing Chronic Illness	11
Include the Body II	13
Types of Therapies for Chronic Illness	15
Trauma Therapies are Not Cognitive, Behavioral or "Exposure" Therapies	17
Therapies for General Trauma in All Age Groups	18
Therapies for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	20
Therapies for Parent-Child Relationships (Attachment / Developmental Work / Complex Trauma)	22
Therapies for Multigenerational Trauma	25
Therapies for Stressful or Traumatic Events from Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy	26
How to Choose a Therapist	28
Other Approaches & Resources	29
What's your experience been?	30
Learn more	30

# One Page Summary

## 1 Page Summary

### Types of Trauma

The types of trauma below are risk factors for chronic illness. They are often not obvious or overt.

Start with approaches or experiences you want to work on, such as a specific kind of trauma (multigenerational or childhood; abuse or loss of a parent, etc) even if you don't know which symptoms relate to it. Look for the numbers to identify books & therapies listed in the column on the right.

**Trauma** at any age, includes accidents, loss, abuse, assault, the trauma of having a chronic illness or diagnosis of life-threatening disease, etc. Approaches #1-6. **Intro to Trauma**, Read [Waking the Tiger](#), *In An Unspoken Voice* or [The Trauma Spectrum](#).

**Childhood Events**, such as loss of a parent, abuse, exposure to domestic violence, having been bullied. Includes the [10 adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\)](#). #1-7 Read [The Deepest Well](#). **For ACEs science + personal story read** [Childhood Disrupted](#).

**Developmental or Complex Trauma**, such as growing up with parents who are shaming / judging / emotionally unavailable #2 & 7; 1-8. Read [Complex PTSD Workbook](#) & [Parenting from Inside Out](#)

**Trauma in Pregnancy & Birth** such as premature or complicated birth, maternal illness or trauma during pregnancy, maternal depression, cesarean. # 8. Read [Mother Child Reunion](#), [Parent Infant Bonding](#)

**Multigenerational Trauma** in parents', grandparents' lives such as The Depression, war, bankruptcy, mental illness, suicide, chronic illness, accidents, being threatened due to race, religion, beliefs etc, **Mostly #9**.

### Approaches for Trauma

Look at types of trauma in the left column and match with related approaches below.

#### 1. Somatic Experiencing (SE)

SE [website](#) & [list of SE therapists](#). More on [SE on wikipedia](#) and in Peter's book [In an Unspoken Voice](#).

#### 2. Sensorimotor Psychotherapy

[website](#) & [list of therapists](#). Their book is called [Trauma and the Body](#).

#### 3. EMDR

More [on wikipedia](#)

Therapist Lists [with the EMDR Institute](#) & [EMDR International Association](#).

#### 4. Brain Spotting (BSP)

Brain Spotting is [described on wikipedia](#). List of [BSP therapists](#).

#### 5. Internal Family Systems (IFS)

IFS [website](#) & a [list of therapists](#)

#### 6. Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy

[National School](#) and [list of practitioners](#). Teacher [Franklyn Sills](#) detailed website.

#### 7. Interpersonal Neurobiology

[IPNB](#) developed by many including [Daniel Siegel](#), [Al-ian Schore](#), and [Louis Cozolino](#). See their [Therapist directory](#). Learn [more](#).

#### 8. Healing Pregnancy & Birth Events

The [Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health](#) holds regular conferences, a [list of practitioners](#). Also do healing in [small groups](#).

#### 9. Healing Multigenerational Trauma

[Family Constellations](#) developed by [Bert Hellinger](#).

Read [It Didn't Start with You](#) by Mark Wolyn

Read [The Ancestor Syndrome](#), Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger.



# Introduction

The tools I introduce here include books and therapies for chronic illness that are helpful for healing the effects of stress, trauma and subtle perceptions of threat.

I never knew about them as a family doctor but have discovered these approaches for working with the nervous system since retraining as a somatic psychotherapist and specializing in working with different kinds of trauma.

I refer to therapies for chronic illness specifically because this is the focus of my blog, however the books and approaches mentioned are also helpful for mental health conditions and other symptoms including PTSD, depression, anxiety and other effects of trauma.

This does not imply that illness is "all in your head."

It's because the science is discovering how trauma influences and dysregulates our nervous systems.

And how these patterns can be repaired.

Trauma and subtle perceptions of threat influence risk for chronic illness and other problems because [life experiences interact with our genes](#) to shape long-term health. Therapies for chronic illness and other symptoms work with [brain plasticity](#) and these changes in how our genes express themselves can sometimes be reversed (Yehuda, R., et al. (2013). "Epigenetic Biomarkers as Predictors and Correlates of Symptom Improvement Following Psychotherapy in Combat Veterans with PTSD").

The approaches support a nervous system that operates from subtle perceptions of threat and are helpful whether or not you have a known history of trauma.

The modalities introduced below can be used in combination with other tools (medical treatment, medication, complementary and alternative health care, diet, mindfulness, meditation, vagal stimulation etc).

They can help you make sense of why one thing works and another does not, why sometimes an approach works for a while and later does not and more.

These therapies for chronic illness can also make other modalities more effective.

And they support healing when nothing else works.

This page gives you a sense of which approaches might be a good fit for you, offer tips on how to find and choose a therapist, and give you insights to help you find other approaches that appeal to you even if they aren't listed here.

The list comes from [research](#) I never learned as a medical doctor. I have tested and used most of the ones described here and they have [helped me make sense of - and begin to recover - from my own chronic illness](#), including understanding flares and decreasing their frequency. Clients and colleagues have made gains using them as well.

## Addressing the Perception of Threat



When you have a chronic illness it is helpful to consider the perspective that symptoms are often a body's particular way of responding to the perception of threat.

These symptoms often reflect nervous system patterns of dysregulation and states of fight, flight and/or freeze.

The perception of threat is rarely conscious.

It can be so subtle that WE don't recognize it, even though our bodies do. And it can be as simple as not feeling safe.

This perception of threat can come from

- childhood trauma
- work stress
- strain in relationships, with finances, as a caregiver

- after the loss of a parent or other loved one
- surgery and general anesthesia
- a history of a complicated birthhell
- trauma in your parents', grandparents' or other ancestors' lives
- an infection, which is a common trigger for the onset of all kinds of chronic illnesses, can be an indication of immune system dysregulation, influenced by states of fight, flight, and freeze in the nervous system

The perception of threat may link to something you experienced in the past but no longer exists in the present.

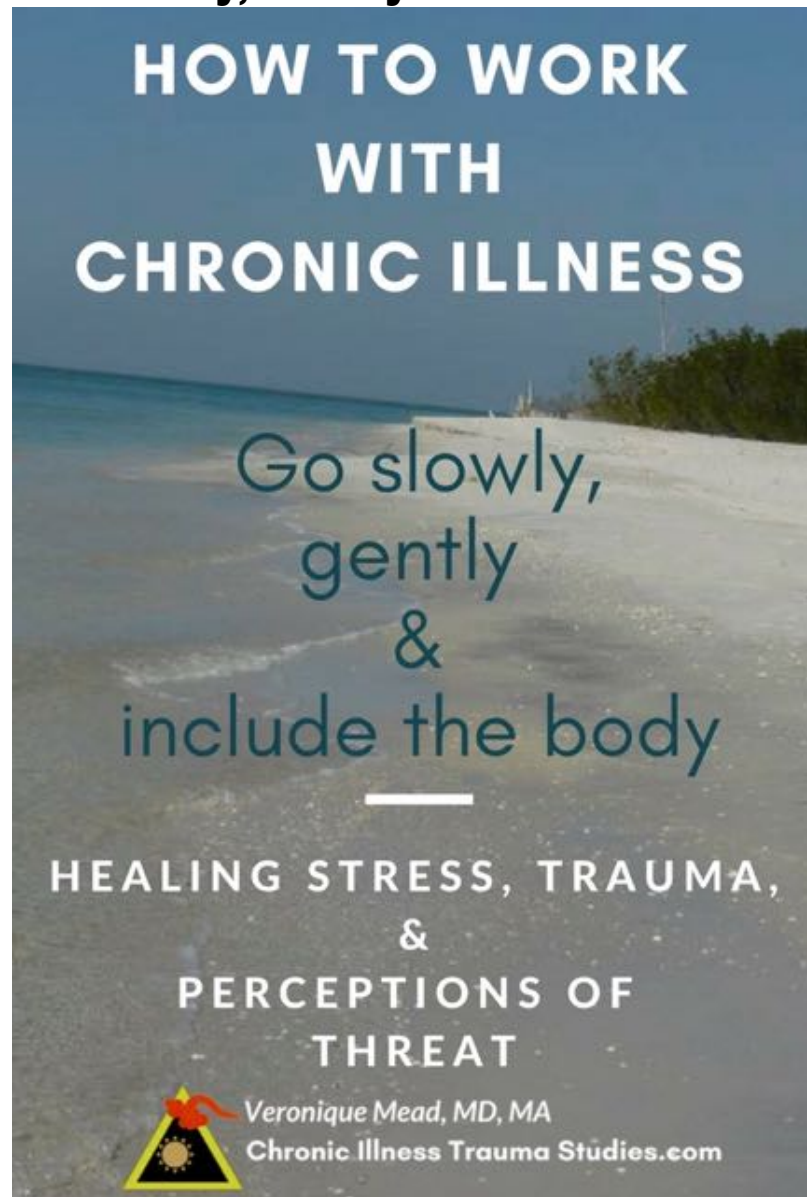
Rather than a particular thing or event that can be pinpointed specifically, however, therapies for chronic illness can focus or start with a subtle lack of safety or trust; or by identifying and working with a feeling, such as one that something bad is going to happen even when everything seems to be going your way.

You can also work with chronic illness from such a perspective by exploring current symptoms, triggers, sensitivities to work stress or to foods or odors or places, for example. Such symptoms serve as a guide.

Having a sense of not feeling secure or of impending doom and other difficult feelings is not a sign that your illness is psychosomatic. It is not an indication that you are crazy, mentally ill or that your chronic illness represents a personality flaw. Such symptoms can be triggered by getting a diagnosis of a chronic illness, the unpredictability or severity of your symptoms, as well as by other difficult life events.

These are an indication that your nervous system may be primed to be more sensitive to stress and to other triggers.

## Go Slowly, Gently and Include Your Body I



**There are many approaches for healing and working with bodily responses to the perception of threat. The therapies for chronic illness I list here work specifically with nervous system survival responses while being slow, gentle and emphasizing the importance of going at your own pace.**

**For those of you who have experienced trauma, it's not about reliving past events but about finding the health and wisdom that already exists in your body and nervous system.**

**For those of you with no history of trauma these approaches offer a way of unwinding and softening our intelligent survival responses that have become overactive.**

[\(top\)](#)

## Books



### Books Introducing Trauma and How it Affects Us

**The Deepest Well**: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity by pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris, MD is a must read. It explains how she first learned about the science of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). This awesome book is my favorite introduction to trauma and its effects on the nervous and immune system and much more. Describes the ACE questionnaire looking at 10 types of trauma and how they affect risk for chronic illness, mental health conditions, difficulty in relationships later in life and much more. She includes her story as a doctor and from her own life, how she incorporates ACE screening into her practice, and the ACEs science influences how she evaluates, treats and helps her patients.

**Waking the Tiger** and **In an Unspoken Voice**, by **Peter Levine**, Ph.D., founder and creator of the somatically based approach Somatic Experiencing (SE). I find these two books to be among the best, most helpful, readable and approachable books on trauma. Both give examples and the second includes Peter's own experience of being hit by a car and how he made sense of and worked directly with the event in his own life to prevent the development of symptoms (Levine, P. (1997). *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma and In an Unspoken Voice: How the body releases trauma and restores goodness*. Berkeley, North Atlantic).



**The Trauma Spectrum:** Hidden Wounds and Human Resiliency, by Robert Scaer, MD a neurologist who learn about trauma from Peter Levine and who discovered how much it helped make sense of mysterious illnesses, chronic pain and many chronic diseases. For anyone wanting to better understand the physiology of trauma and the changes that occur in the brain.

## **Books for Working on Your Own**

There are many activities that support nervous system regulation that you can start on your own or inexpensively with CDs, videos or online. These are helpful for working with chronic illness as well as mental health conditions and do not imply your symptoms are "all in your head."

**Healing Trauma: Restoring the Wisdom of Your Body,** by Peter Levine Ph.D. It includes an introduction to trauma and a series of gentle exercises to start on your own or with a friend or partner. It comes in **paperback and kindle formats** as well in audio download formats with a CD and can be taken as **an online course**. You can also find it at **Sounds True**.

**The Complex PTSD Workbook:** A Mind-Body Approach to Regaining Emotional Control and Becoming Whole. This book was written by colleague and fellow somatic and trauma therapist Arielle Schwartz, Ph.D. Complex trauma refers to wounds that arise in our first attachment relationships with our parents. I have not yet read this workbook but have heard wonderful things about it.

**It Didn't Start with You:** *How Inherited Family Trauma Shapes Who We Are and How to End the Cycle*, by Mark Wolynn. This is a powerful book that includes some of the science of how trauma in our parents' and grandparents' and other relatives' lives can affect our health. Mark shares stories of unexplained symptoms that were successfully addressed when understood from this context. His book also provides guidance and very specific steps for working with symptoms of all kinds even if you have no sense of trauma in your ancestors' lives.

**CFS Unravalled (Rewiring the Nervous System)**, by Dan Neuffer. While this book is about one particular illness called chronic fatigue (also known as ME/CFS for myalgic encephalitis/ chronic fatigue syndrome), **research** suggests similar patterns drive other chronic diseases, including **type 1 diabetes**, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis / disease and many others. Dan Neuffer recovered from ME/CFS by supporting nervous system patterns of regulation through many means, including diet, pacing and going slowly, and mind body practices. These are sometimes sufficient to recover from some chronic diseases. It has not been enough for me, but it's a valid, inexpensive, empowering place to start. Here's a **video of Peter's story of recovery** and an **intro** to Dan's work. I've only read his book (first edition) and have not participated in his online program given that I have my own comprehensive and similar **set of tools**.

## Books for Inspiration

[Childhood Disrupted](#) by science journalist Donna Jackson Nakazawa's includes research on [adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\)](#) and the story of how learning about this set of studies helped her begin to heal. She has a number of serious autoimmune diseases that run in the family. Donna shares links between stress, toxic stress and chronic illness, which are slightly different from the trauma perspective, but many similarities exist. Her approaches support nervous system patterns of regulation and include yoga, meditation and mindfulness practice as well as Somatic Experiencing (Peter Levine's approach, briefly described late in the book).

[The Brain's Way of Healing](#) by [Norman Doidge](#), MD offers a series of surprising and inspiring stories of people who have improved, stabilized and / or fully recovered from chronic illnesses and physical symptoms. These include blindness caused by an autoimmune disease, MS, Parkinson's, chronic pain, traumatic brain injuries and others. Most of the approaches described are not specifically oriented to healing from trauma but address nervous system changes by working with the ability of our brains and neurons to heal and recover, even years or decades after an event. This is known as brain plasticity. Some of these changes appear to be linked to patterns of survival and Doidge has compiled a fascinating theory in Chapter 3 that is consistent with what I've learned about trauma and how our bodies learn to perceive threat.

[Kitchen Table Wisdom](#), by Dr. [Rachel Naomi Remen](#) is one of my all-time favorite books. Rachel was diagnosed with severe inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) in her teens and is a story-teller extraordinaire who communicates and educates in the most connecting and moving ways. Each chapter tells a story and offers a pearl of wisdom from experiences she's had in her own life or that she's witnessed with patients as a pediatrician and with clients (half of whom are doctors dealing with burnout and a loss of meaning) when she became a counselor. Her stories offer insights into the subtle and profound effects of how life experiences can influence our health and help us on our journeys of healing.

Poetry and Stories About Our Human Journeys. David Whyte talks about self-compassion in this [DVD](#) and about the road we travel as humans that includes suffering in so many different guises. His description of [The Three Marriages](#) - self, relationship and work - applies to living with chronic illness and how we find our way through acceptance, courage, internal explorations and following that which calls to us most deeply.

## Free Downloadable Ebooks

I've written a series of free ebooks to help make sense of The Chronic Illness & Trauma Connection. You can find them on my [free ebooks downloads page](#).

Book 1 provides an Overview of the links and research describing the 5 different types of trauma mentioned in this post and how they increase risk for chronic illness. It includes stories of healing and recovery in asthma, inflammatory bowel disease, chronic fatigue (ME/CFS), autoimmune and other diseases. It also introduces the different types of trauma that affect risk for chronic illness and other health conditions and describes the differences between stress and trauma.

Book 2 explains symptoms commonly seen in both trauma and chronic illness. This can make it easier to recognize whether and how adverse events may be affecting you.

Book 3 introduces research explaining how the effects of trauma in chronic illness are not psychological.

## Healing Chronic Illness

I use the term healing rather than curing because the extent to which it is possible to fully recover from a chronic illness is not known. In addition, healing the effects of trauma takes time and is different for every one of us.

I use the term healing to refer to the sense of wellness, peace and ease we can experience physically, emotionally and spiritually whether or not a cure occurs.

Healing the effects of trauma is a way to begin to make sense of symptoms of chronic disease.

It also provides new insights and tools that can help reduce symptoms as well as flares, triggers, pain and more.

And healing happens as we become more empowered, whole, and find greater acceptance of our symptoms and situations, even as we continue to explore ways to keep improving and recovering.

These are all effects of healing trauma.

A few studies have shown that trauma therapies [can be an effective treatment](#) and even a cure for asthma in children.

Because the kinds of events that were treated in the studies are also [risk factors for autoimmune and other chronic diseases](#), such approaches may be helpful in prevention as well as treatment for other diseases, even as the process is slower and more complex for older children as well as for adults.

The extensive number of studies showing how trauma increases risk for many different types of chronic illness (read more in [Summary of the Science](#) and my [Chronic Illness and](#)

[Trauma Series](#)) and that some people recover from chronic illnesses of all kinds also support the role for healing nervous system patterns of dysregulation as an important new tool in our chronic illness tool kits.

Learning about trauma and beginning to heal is a way to support growing, learning and evolving on our life journeys. If we do not fully recover it is not a sign of failure. It is merely an acknowledgement of the complexity that exists within our bodies and through our experiences of life.

I have incorporated a number of [practices and tools into my daily routine](#) following years of working with my chronic illness. These have helped improve my own symptoms of chronic fatigue, IBS (irritable bowel syndrome), and asthma as a result of healing old patterns and reducing the perception of threat in my nervous system.

Working on your own is an option and can be a helpful place to start.

It's also free, can be done in your timing and in the place of your choosing.

For some, myself included, it can also be challenging.

This is in part because the perception of threat can be quite significant once we delve into it. It's also because living with a chronic illness can be an intense, scary, stressful and overwhelming experience in and of itself.

I have thus found that working with someone who can stay regulated and in the present moment, who can remain calm, curious and mindful, and who is connecting can be of great value in this type of work.

There are many therapies for chronic illness and therapists who have a well developed set of skills that are also valuable for helping us heal. The rest of this post shares more.  
[\(top\)](#)



## **Include the Body II**



**Symptoms of all kinds represent our body's intelligent attempts to maximize our survival, so this work is not simply about getting rid of symptoms. Rather, it's about gently finding other and better ways to defuse and unwind these stress responses as well as to develop resources and other, more effective, coping strategies.**

**Many symptoms are used by the body as a defense mechanism or physiological attempt to keep a lid on things that are or have been overwhelming. This is not because it's psychosomatic but because symptoms are driven by our nervous systems.**

**This can look like a prolonged experience of muscle tension that leads to chronic pain or problems with digestion, for example. Or it may also be the way our blood pressures (or blood sugar levels, or heart rates or energy levels) change as they would in states of fight or flight or freeze.**

**Working with physical symptoms involves listening to the language of our bodies.**

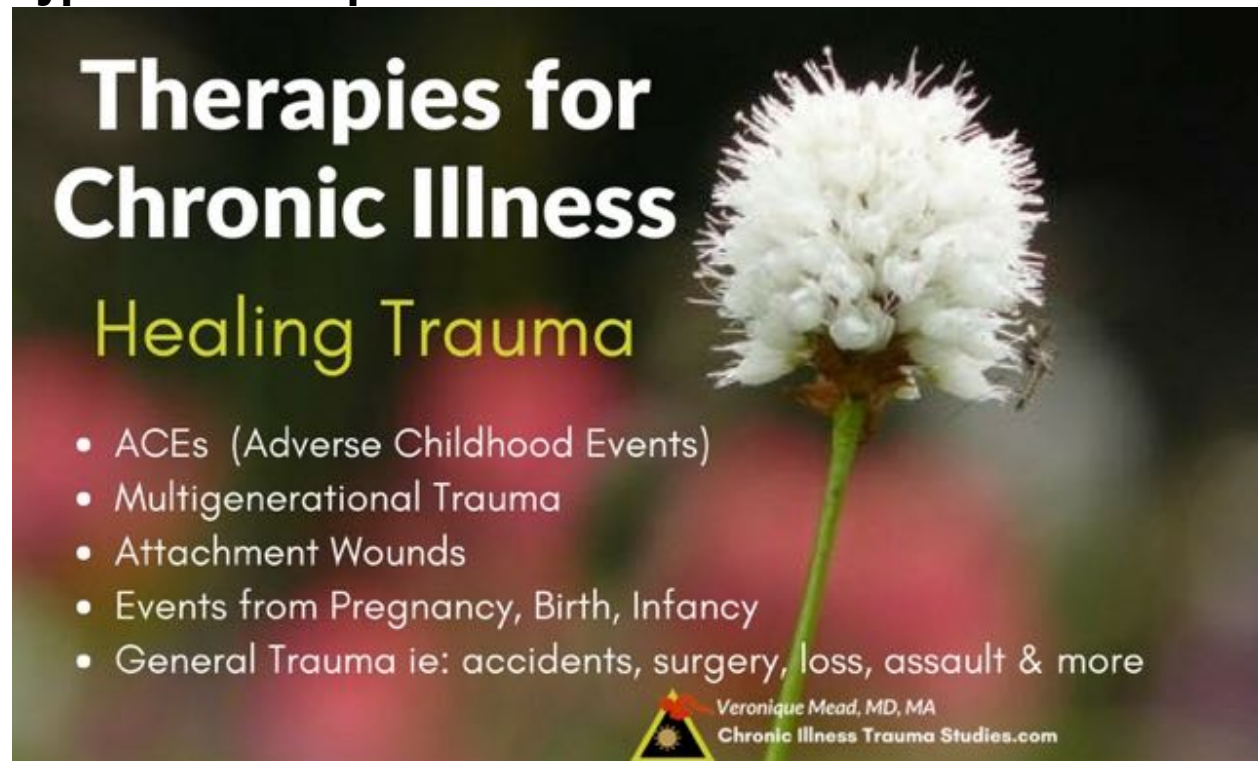
**It's about learning to listen with curiosity, self-compassion and nonjudgment.**

**The following therapies for chronic illness access unconscious nervous system patterns that affect symptoms and operate outside of our consciousness. They do this by bringing awareness to the body and its messages, which includes making room for feelings and thoughts.**

**You can learn more about these types of body-based therapies in [The Guide to New Body-Centered Therapies](#).**

**In this kind of work, slower is faster.**

## Types of Therapies for Chronic Illness



Treating chronic illness using the types of approaches described in this post - whether to work specifically with trauma or because you have a sense that your symptoms are linked to a perception of threat - is a pretty new concept.

As a result, you may not be able to find a therapist who works specifically with chronic illness or who has experience in this area. If that is the case, look for someone with a significant amount of experience working with trauma. This might include

- more years in practice
- extra training in trauma in addition to a degree in counseling or psychotherapy
- trusts or uses the language or intelligence of the body (sometimes called a "somatic" psychotherapist" or "body psychotherapist")
- who trusts you and your body to have answers rather than having all the answers themselves
- who supports going slowly, gently and at the pace that works for YOU and for your nervous system

Ultimately, a place to start is with someone who you feel comfortable with.

Below are highly regarded approaches for healing effects of trauma that are also powerful tools for working with survival reactions, stress responses and a heightened perception of threat. I see them as extremely relevant therapies for chronic illness as well.

There are many other approaches, these are simply the ones I've been drawn to and used myself on my own journey and as a therapist.

I have grouped these into approaches for working with different types of trauma.

You'll find an example of what this kind of approach can look like and how it approaches healing and the nervous system in [this post](#).

If you have a chronic illness and no obvious or known trauma history consider starting with therapists who work with general trauma or developmental wounds from childhood. These are helpful approaches for working with subtle nervous system patterns that can help with symptoms of chronic illness:

- *General Trauma* occurring at any age, including accidents, surgery, loss, abuse, assault, the trauma of having a chronic illness or getting a diagnosis of a life-threatening disease, etc
- *Childhood Events*, such as loss of a parent, abuse, exposure to domestic violence, having been bullied. This includes but is not limited to the [10 adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\)](#).
- *Childhood Relationships ie: Developmental Wounds or Complex Trauma*, such as growing up with a parent with a mental illness or who is subtly shaming / judging / or simply emotionally unavailable; abuse; loss of a parent or sibling; foster care or adoption...
- *Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy Events* such as premature or complicated birth, maternal illness during pregnancy, maternal depression in your early life, ...
- *Intergenerational Trauma*, which may have affected parents, grandparents and other family members, even if they have passed. These include stressful events such as The Great Depression and war, bankruptcy, mental illness, chronic illness, accidents, being threatened due to race, religion, beliefs etc, and more.

Explore approaches that draw or feel appealing to you.

**\*Note:** If getting out of the house is difficult because of limitations due to your health, or if there is no one in your area to work with, you may be able to find a therapist who works by phone or internet. When treating chronic illness from a body-based perspective there are actually many ways a therapist can pay attention to what is happening in the moment and still be highly attuning, connecting and present.



Ultimately, the best guidance on how to choose an approach among those listed below comes from listening to yourself - to your heart, your gut, your intuition. What appeals to you? What draws you or excites you or makes the most sense to you? You'll know more as you listen and [follow your impulses](#).

## **Trauma Therapies are Not Cognitive, Behavioral or "Exposure" Therapies**

There are many other approaches for working with trauma and perception that can be helpful.

The key is to find a therapist with an approach for working with trauma that helps you pay attention to experiences generally outside of awareness that are not in everyday consciousness.

This is because trauma, survival patterns and perceptions of threat are held in the autonomic nervous system and are not generally accessible through words, thinking (van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, Viking) or or conscious awareness (psychologists and psychiatrists in the field of trauma are finding this based on their studies; see article by prominent researcher Rachel Yehuda, Ph.D. et al. (2016). "[What I have changed my mind about and why](#)").

Trauma therapies work with sensations, emotions, images and other experiences in the present moment. Attention is brought with nonjudgment and curiosity and the process is "titrated." This gentle process monitors our bodily responses to keep our reactions and feelings within a certain threshold to avoid and minimize overwhelm.

Because the effects of trauma are held and stored in the nervous system, approaches such as positive thinking, reframing beliefs, changing behavior (such as avoiding a thought, location, or other reminders of an event), exercise, staying busy, or "moving on" and ignoring the past are not effective tools for healing the effects of trauma (Scaer, R. (2005). *The Trauma Spectrum: Hidden wounds and human resiliency*; Levine, P. A. (2010). *In an Unspoken Voice* and Levine, P. (1997). *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*).

While cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can be very helpful with managing life with a chronic illness, coping with symptoms, identifying false or limiting beliefs or learning some of the triggers and stressors that can increase symptoms so that these can be changed, they are not designed to work with unconscious processes of altered threat perception in the brain.

Exposure therapies are still frequently used and can be helpful for some individuals with PTSD and other effects of therapy. From a trauma-informed and nervous system perspective, however, repeating exposure to traumatic events can be stressful, scary and ultimately [re-traumatizing](#). As such they can increase symptoms and associated emotions such as fear or terror.

## Therapies for General Trauma in All Age Groups

# Therapies for Chronic Illness

## Healing general trauma & events from childhood



Veronique Mead, MD, MA  
Chronic Illness Trauma Studies.com



You can get a sense of the research summarizing general trauma and how it looks in chronic illness in [this blog post](#) or in this review of how [serious life events increase](#) risk for type 1 diabetes (it will give you examples of types of events that affect risk and an idea of how much research is being done if you don't have diabetes).

These approaches are appropriate for all kinds of trauma including:

- hospitalizations, medical procedures such as surgery, anesthesia
- accidents
- loss of a parent
- abuse
- adverse childhood experiences (ACEs, see more in the next section)
- and much more

## *Somatic Experiencing (SE)*

Here's the somatic experiencing (SE) [website](#), a [list of SE practitioners](#) around the world, and more info on [SE on wikipedia](#).

The founder of SE, Peter Levine Ph.D, has two excellent books in addition to the one mentioned above. Both introduce the concept of trauma in a very gentle way as well as how to work with it. These are [Waking the Tiger](#) and [In an Unspoken Voice](#). His second book describes how he worked with his own symptoms after an accident.

## *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy*

Here's the [website](#) for sensorimotor psychotherapy and a [list of their practitioners](#) around the world.

Their book is called [Trauma and the Body](#).

## *EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)*

EMDR is [described on wikipedia](#); here are lists of [practitioners with the EMDR Institute](#) and [practitioners with the EMDR International Association](#).

## *Brain Spotting (BSP)*

Brain Spotting is [described on wikipedia](#). Here's a list of [BSP practitioners](#).

I loved Brain Spotting but found that, with this approach in particular, I needed to work especially slowly and with small increments of time and issues.

## *Internal Family Systems (IFS)*

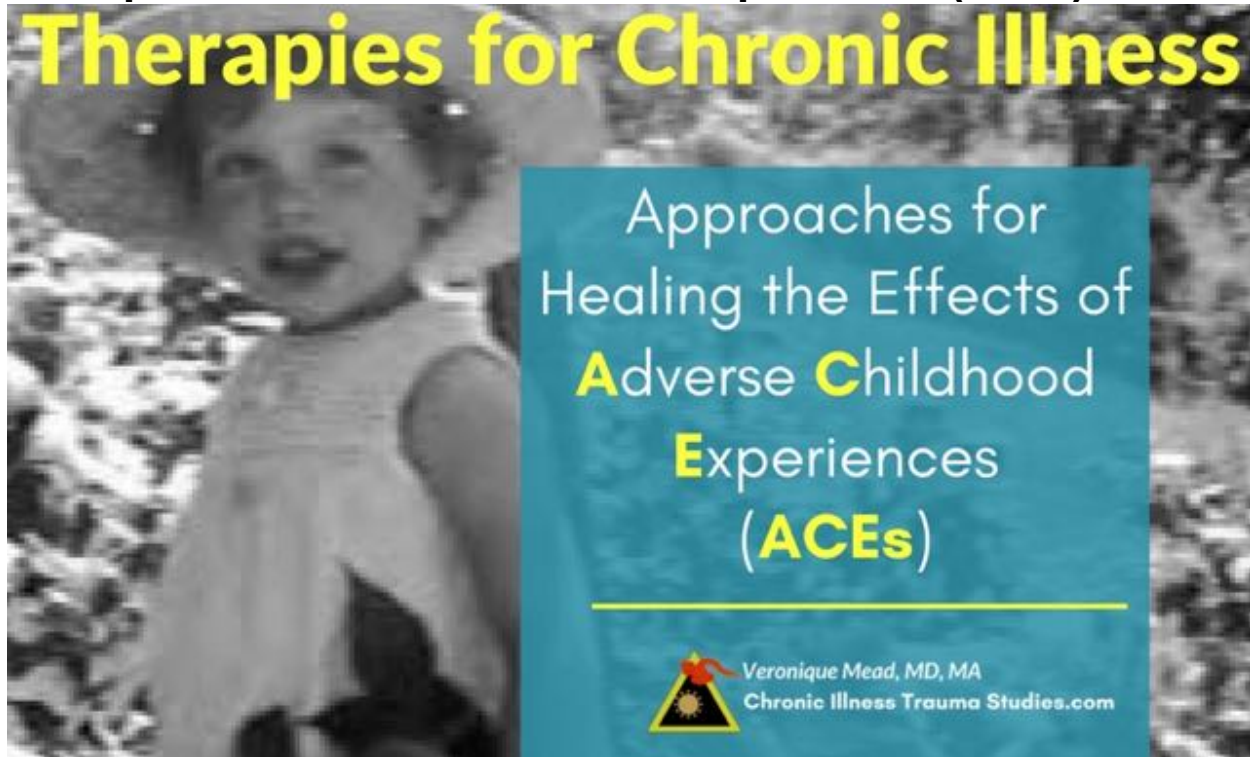
Here is the IFS [website](#) as well as a [list of practitioners](#)

## *Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy*

Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy Association of North America has a [National School](#) and [list of practitioners](#). One of their influential teacher [Franklyn Sills](#) has a detailed website.

For more information see the books listed above.

## Therapies for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) refer very specifically to 10 types of trauma that have been extensively studied in a series of studies with more emerging every year.

These 10 types of trauma, listed below, are only a fraction of the different types of trauma that can affect long-term health but are becoming more known around the U.S. and around the world because of the quick, [easy-to-take survey](#) and the studies.

Many of the effects of these and other traumas have been known for many decades, long before the first ACE study in 1998, but haven't started to become more known to some doctors, mental health professionals and in the general population more recently, including with [Oprah's segment on 60 minutes](#) in March 2018.

The 10 types of trauma known as ACEs are:

1. Physical abuse (Statistics: 1 in 3.5 Americans have experienced physical abuse)
2. Sexual abuse (1 in 5)
3. Emotional abuse (1 in 9)
4. Physical neglect
5. Emotional neglect



6. Loss of a parent from divorce or separation (loss for other reasons, including death, were not included in the original ACE study but also increase risk)
7. Violent treatment of mother (1 in 10)
8. Member of household: mental illness (1 in 5)
9. Member of household jailed (1 in 30)
10. Member of household: substance abuse (1 in 4)

The therapies listed in the previous section are appropriate for healing effects of ACEs and other traumas from childhood. Some therapists specialize in working with specific types of trauma such as sexual abuse, substance abuse, grief and loss, PTSD or depression, etc. Look for a therapist using the list of websites and directories in the section above, *Therapies for General Trauma in All Age Groups*.

You can learn more about ACEs and [increased risk for autoimmune and other chronic diseases](#) or in a post with free downloadable ACE fact sheets to use in educating your doctor, [listing over 30 chronic diseases](#) such as type 1 & type 2 diabetes, RA, MS, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, lupus and other effects of ACEs, which include fractures, osteoporosis, mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, giving birth prematurely, violence etc.

You can also download one or both of two ACE fact sheets below (one specifically for chronic illnesses, the other summarizing All effects of ACEs) to educate and inform others, such as your doctor other health care professionals, others with chronic illness, teachers, lawyers, family, friends, colleagues, social workers, and beyond.

## Books

[The Deepest Well](#), by pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris with stories and science

[Childhood Disrupted](#), by science writer Donna Jackson Nakazawa with science, her story of improvement from autoimmune diseases and others' stories

[Through the Shadowlands](#), a memoir by mathematician and journalist Julie Rehmeyer, who shares her journey with chronic fatigue syndrome as well as research and studies in mold toxicity; also provides a glimpse of childhood ACEs and developmental / attachment / complex trauma (see next section)

[My Beloved World](#), a memoir by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor which includes her diagnosis of type 1 diabetes in childhood and provides a poignant example of ACEs and multigenerational trauma

You can download two free fact sheets in my [ACEs Fact Sheet post](#).

## Therapies for Parent-Child Relationships (Attachment / Developmental Work / Complex Trauma)



Experiences that fit into this category include some of the most subtle types of trauma, which often get normalized and overlooked. They can be extremely subtle and shape the way our nervous systems learn to perceive threat and respond to stress. Here's an [introductory blog post](#) on this topic.

Consider this approach if:

- you felt alone, unseen, or unheard as a child,
- you did not feel a sense of connection or a loving, nurturing, supportive environment in childhood (even if you were well fed and clothed and cared for in material ways),
- you had to take care of your parent(s) or sibling(s) emotionally, physically or in other ways,
- the way to connect with your parent(s) was to suppress your own needs, opinions or feelings,
- there was no one you could talk to and share your deepest feelings when you were growing up,

- there was rarely or never any repair after a parental outburst or verbal attack,
- your relationship with your parents is strained or stressful,
- you have had difficulty in your relationships as an adult (lack of closeness; multiple marriages, separations or divorces ...),
- you have strong negative beliefs such as feeling unlovable / unworthy / to blame / overly responsible / a failure / unsafe, ...

These examples are indications that early relationships have had some impact on you, whether in a way that was traumatizing or that affected your perception of threat. Learn more about relational trauma in a blog post, "[When your ACE score is Zero](#)".

Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, IPNB practitioners and Prenatal and Perinatal Therapies (see below) are especially helpful for the healing the effects of experiences such as those described above.

### *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy*

Here's their [website](#) and a [list of their practitioners](#) around the world.

Their book is called [Trauma and the Body](#)

### *Interpersonal Neurobiology*

[IPNB](#) was developed by leaders in the field including [Daniel Siegel](#), [Allan Schore](#), and [Louis Cozolino](#) and has a [therapist directory](#).

You can also learn more about IPNB on [this site](#).

### **Books:**

[Parenting from the Inside Out](#) (this book will give you an idea of attachment trauma even if you aren't a parent)

[The Complex PTSD Workbook](#): A Mind-Body Approach to Regaining Emotional Control and Becoming Whole By Arielle Schwartz, Ph.D.

[The Development of the Person](#): by psychologist Alan Sroufe, primary investigator of the prospective Minnesota Parent-Child study, now over 30 years long and effects of attachment disruptions and wounds

[Kitchen Table Wisdom](#): pediatrician Rachel Naomi Remen's personal stories growing up provide glimpses of the subtleties of complex trauma / attachment trauma and are

interwoven with her experiences of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), which was diagnosed in childhood and her healing work with clients as a counselor

**Lab Girl:** a memoir by research scientist Hope Jahren, Ph.D. who develops bipolar disorder, offering another glimpse of what attachment disruptions in childhood can look like

**Wish You Happy Forever:** What China's Orphans Taught Me About Moving Mountains, an adoptive mother's story of how she used the science to change how orphans were raised in China and how extensively children can respond to a loving, nurturing environment



# Therapies for Multigenerational Trauma

These therapies for chronic illness address the effects of trauma or hardship that occurred in your ancestor's lives, which can be transmitted [epigenetically](#) to [affect your health even if you never experienced trauma yourself](#) (Yehuda, R., et al. (1998). "Relationship between posttraumatic stress disorder characteristics of Holocaust survivors and their adult offspring." [Full Text](#)). This [blog post](#) introduces some of my multigenerational history of trauma.

## *Family Constellations*

[Family Constellations](#) is an approach to working with multigenerational trauma developed by German psychotherapist [Bert Hellinger](#), who was forced to serve in the German army during World War II, was captured and made a POW in Belgium, and escaped. His approach often uses a small group format and can also be done individually. I have found this work to be very body based and therefore amazing at accessing information that is outside of your awareness.

[Hellinger's website](#) offers links to find practitioners. His work is also referred to as Hellinger work, Family Constellations or Systemic Constellations.

## Books:

[It Didn't Start with You: How Inherited Family Trauma Shapes Who We Are and How to End the Cycle](#), by Mark Wolyn is a powerful book that includes some of the science, shares stories, and provides guidance and very specific steps for working with the effects of multigenerational trauma. His work draws from Hellinger's approach (see below).

[The Ancestor Syndrome](#), by Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger, offers remarkable information and stories that helped me identify some of my own multigenerational trauma that I hadn't recognized. As with other trauma work, it is helpful to go slowly and to read it in small doses. You can also read a [description of the author's work in transgenerational psychotherapy](#).

[My Beloved World](#), a memoir by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor which includes her diagnosis of type 1 diabetes in childhood and provides a poignant example of ACEs and multigenerational trauma

## Therapies for Stressful or Traumatic Events from Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy



These approaches work with trauma from prenatal life, birth, infancy, and very early childhood. Learn more in two blog posts: an [introduction to early risk factors](#) in type 1 diabetes followed by more detail and an example of [how these therapies work](#) for kids with asthma who have the same risk factors. This will give you insights into how similar approaches can work for adults. Both posts are relevant regardless of the kind of chronic illness you have, since the research is similar for chronic disease and mental health conditions.

The [Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health](#) holds regular conferences, has lots of information on its website and a [list of practitioners](#) from around the world who specialize in this area.

Many therapists will have a specific focus in this field, such as working primarily with children and families, or working mostly with babies or adults around their prenatal experiences. Many also work with subtle patterns people develop from early relationships with parents and other adult caregivers.

[Myrna Martin](#) supports adults in the process of healing from perinatal events in a [small group formats](#). She brings her experiences as a nurse, child and family therapist, mother of premature babies, and craniosacral therapist to this work. Her birth process workshops include 6 to 8 individuals and take place in supportive, safe settings over 3 or 4 days. I've done 6 or 7 (or more?) of these workshops as well as a 2.5-year training with Myrna and it

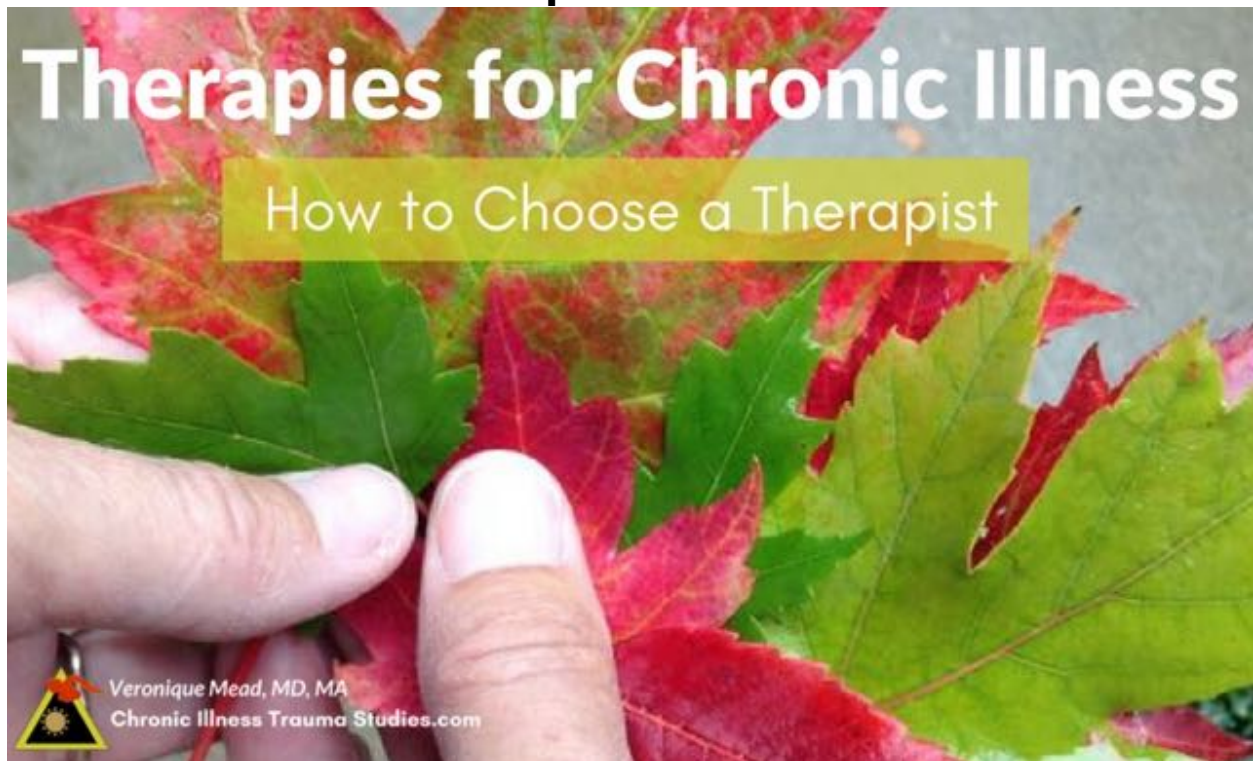
has been among the most life transforming for me - both in terms of symptoms of fatigue and back pain, as well as in my relationship life, among other areas.

### **Books**

[\*\*The Mother and Child\*\*](#) Reunion by Antonio Madrid, Ph.D. (here's a [blog post about it](#))

[\*\*Parent Infant Bonding\*\*](#) by Marshall Klaus and John Jnell (or the earlier version [Maternal Infant Bonding](#) by Marshall Klaus and John Kennell, both pediatricians). I've only read Maternal Infant Bonding and found it to be brilliant. The research since then supports what they found.

## How to Choose a Therapist



**Just as it can take time to find a doctor who specializes in your chronic illness, who treats you with respect and who is also knowledgeable and nonjudgmental, it can take time to find a therapist who is a good fit for you.**

**Give yourself that time.**

**Interview or simply talk with a few therapists before deciding (many offer a free initial consultation by phone or in person).**

**Some ideas of what to aim for when looking for a therapist include the following:**

- **has many years of experience in working with trauma**
- **has completed the full training in their specialty**
- **has done and / or is still doing personal work with their own issues, trauma, perceptions of threat**
- **has good boundaries**
- **feels like someone you can trust and feel safe with (this can take time to figure out but should seem possible at first blush)**

- is responsive if you need to talk about your experiences of therapy, such as if you have symptoms or side effects after sessions etc
- is flexible, nonjudgmental and committed to helping you hear your own voice (rather than having all the answers themselves about what you should or shouldn't do)
- is attuning to you and your needs as well as to your pace, rather than theirs etc

## Other Approaches & Resources

There are many ways of beginning to heal the effects of trauma. Most of them work with the nervous system in some way rather than purely through talking or cognition or will power. There is no particular one that is the best fit for everyone. You'll find a number of approaches for healing the brain whether or not you have a history of trauma, such as described in [The Brain's Way of Healing](#).

Some people, such as holistic therapist [Aoife Brown](#), have had great success in reducing symptoms using [energy healing](#) such as sound, emotional freedom technique (EFT), the Emotion Code and others. Many people incorporate movement practices such as [yoga](#), tai chi, chi kung and other practices that inherently support nervous system states that help create greater calm and groundedness. I've greatly appreciated other tools as well, including [art therapy](#), for example, with someone who is "trauma-informed" and familiar with how trauma can show up in subtle ways as well as who is familiar with working with the nervous system from their modality.

Other places to look include browsing through the over 1600 comments left on [this post from the ACEs Too High website](#), which focuses on adverse childhood experiences (ACE). Many readers describe modalities they have found very helpful. You'll also find a list of therapies and supportive resources on [David Baldwin's Trauma Pages](#), along with a lot more information about trauma.

The important thing to note is that symptoms are not always as solid or fixed as we think. And there are many ways of supporting change and bringing more options and ease into our lives. Follow your intuition and look for resources and therapies that feel like a good fit for you.



## What's your experience been?

Have you had any successes with approaches to healing overt or subtle perceptions of threat?

Has any particular approach been helpful for you? Are there any not mentioned above that you've found especially helpful (if so, please include them in the comments for others to know about as there are many ways of healing the effects of trauma).

Have you discovered ways to decrease your symptoms or sensitivities to stress and triggers or other chronic illness-related experiences?

I'd love to hear about it.

You can leave a comment on the [blog post](#) or email me [veronique@chronicillnesstraumastudies.com](mailto:veronique@chronicillnesstraumastudies.com)

## Learn more

*You can learn more about the different types of trauma in this [summary of the science](#) post. Or about [adverse childhood experiences](#), [attachment / developmental](#) trauma, [perinatal risk factors](#) and [multigenerational trauma](#). I also describe the different types of trauma that [helped make sense of my chronic illness](#) (ME/CFS) in my personal story.*