

## THERAPIES AND TREATMENTS

There are a number of therapies and treatments that can help alleviate the symptoms of trauma after a difficult birth. Some therapies have been shown to be effective. It is also important to find the right therapist to be able to engage, trust and build a relationship.

Therapy can help you process the memories of your traumatic birth in order to reduce the feelings of distress, fear and anxiety related to childbirth. If you are a parent this can help increase your sense of confidence as an individual in your own right and as a parent with your new baby. If you are a member of staff involved in birthing this can also help you in your work to regain your professional confidence.

Trauma focused therapies are not just about following an approach, but also about developing a strong relationship with your therapist to feel safe and secure. Some holistic approaches are also outlined below.

Speak to your GP, Health Visitor or other health professional who can refer you to NHS therapy services. If there are long waiting lists you may want to consider seeing a private therapist. Although this can be a large financial commitment many therapists will offer reduced rates. It is always important to check that therapists are properly qualified and registered. Trauma work usually requires weekly sessions over several months.

### Here are some of the main forms of therapy available:

- Cognitive Behavioural therapy (CBT) – this is a NICE recommended therapy for PTSD and trauma which works by identifying and challenging negative thoughts in relation to the traumatic experience, processing memories and reducing unhelpful strategies/behaviours
- Eye Movement Desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) – another NICE recommended therapy for PTSD and trauma which works by focusing on unprocessed memories in order to move them into long-term processed memory and developing coping strategies.
- Compassion focused therapy – to address feelings of guilt and shame experienced in connection with past trauma and to help clients to become kinder and more compassionate with themselves
- Short term or longer term psychoanalytic psychotherapy can be helpful to make sense of the trauma at a deeper level and why it has taken hold of you.
- Somatic therapies – More of a focus on how the body reacts during a traumatic experience and how to lower the body's arousal level when focusing on a traumatic event
- Antidepressants may be prescribed. The most common ones for PTSD and trauma symptoms are Paroxetine and Sertraline.

## There are also a number of other strategies you might find helpful:

- Psychoeducation – learning about how birth trauma affects your brain and body and why you have the symptoms you do
- Grounding techniques – learning to bring yourself back to the present if you are experiencing a flashback or distressing images
- Learning relaxation and breathing techniques to help lower your body's reaction to the trauma
- Writing down your birth story, feelings or letters to key people in the process (midwives, partners, doctors) which can help make better sense of your experience
- Drawing or painting your experiences as a way of healing
- Speaking with empathic others about the birth
- Focusing on your wellbeing through such things as yoga, massage, eating well, going for walks
- Joining a birth trauma support group to be able to share your experiences
- Writing a letter of complaint to your hospital
- Taking advantage of a debriefing service at your hospital where you can review your medical birth notes with a midwife

### FURTHER READING



#### Websites:

- Birth Trauma: Make Birth Better, The Birth Trauma Association, Unfold your Wings
- Psychoeducation and grounding work: [getselfhelp](#)
- Finding a psychologist or psychotherapist: The birth trauma association, The British Psychological Society, The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, The Counselling Directory
- Support groups: The Birth Trauma Association has a facebook group

#### Books:

- Birth Trauma (Kim Thomas), How to Heal a Bad Birth (Melissa Buijn and Debby Gould), Trauma is Really Strange (Steve Haines), Why Birth Trauma Matters (Emma Svanberg)

Finding a psychologist or psychotherapist: The Birth Trauma Association, The British Psychological Society, The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, The Counselling Directory