

# Overcoming Childhood Trauma

*A workbook to help you recognize and process trauma in your life so fantasies are identified, reality is accepted, and relationships stop producing painful memories.*

Chaplain Rick Johnson



## **PREFACE**

Modern technological advancements in brain chemistry, scanning, and imaging have certainly facilitated a deeper understanding of the effects of trauma on brain development and healthy emotional adjustment. While the recent increased focus on trauma by both the medical field and the social sciences are welcomed responses, correctional chaplains serving incarcerated and dependent youth and adults have long known that childhood trauma severely damages and debilitates.

Those traumatized by abuse and neglect are hypervigilant. They constantly scan their environment for danger. Unrelenting alertness to danger makes sitting still and the ability to focus impossible. When safety and security, the two necessary building blocks for one's normal development, are absent, survival becomes life's primary goal. The result: a joyless life filled with fear and anxiety that validates the truism, "What the mind forgets, the body remembers." Trauma says, "You are not safe here and you never will be safe. Stay alert at all times or suffer the consequences." When danger becomes the chief focal point, survival becomes the mission statement for life.

Not all trauma is physically induced. The trauma of loss itself can create persistent, deep seated grief and sorrow. This trauma says, "Don't get too emotionally close to anyone or you will get hurt." The result: a life relationally deprived. Loneliness becomes the sad consequence of a life where danger and survival rule the day. This life welcomes the comfort drugs, alcohol, and mere physical pleasure might provide.

Chaplain Rick Johnson has been up close and personal with the effects of trauma. In his more than three decades of personal counseling with incarcerated youth and adults in juvenile facilities, jails, and prisons, he has observed that far too often the deep, core issue of trauma is not addressed by the criminal justice system. Chaplain Rick's workbook is timely. Now is the time for those providing correctional ministry to become aware and competent in diagnosing and addressing trauma as they counsel and disciple.

God had a complaint during the time of the prophet Jeremiah that might apply to His people today. God's complaint: "They dress the wound of my people as if it were not serious" (Jeremiah 6:14a-NIV). This book is Chaplain Rick demonstrating to God, "I do take the wound of your people as if it were serious." Now you can take the same steps to provide deeper healing to sin-sick souls living in a sin-sick world.

Let the deeper healing begin!

Chaplain R, Steve Lowe-President and Founder, Pacific Youth Correctional Ministries



## INTRODUCTION

The reason you hold this workbook is either because you have experienced childhood trauma or you want to help someone who has. This is not a book to read but a workbook to complete. A workbook is something you work on either individually or with another person. Many of the youth I work with have gone through the workbook with me one on one and it usually takes six sessions to complete. If you are working through the workbook individually and feel overwhelmed, please find someone to talk to.

To work through this workbook means you will:

- Ask God for understanding before you begin
- Concentrate on what you read
- Meditate on each of the Bible verses
- Answer each question honestly
- Listen to what God will tell you
- Put into practice what you learn

I wrote this workbook not to help you understand childhood trauma but to help you do something about it. You will be surprised at how quickly the material will get you thinking about serious issues and challenge you to apply scripture to your life. Much has been written to define and explain childhood trauma so that is why I only have six pages that talk about the problem. My goal was to focus on the solution.

Be honest about the trauma in your life, identify your fantasies, accept reality, and begin to build healthy, meaningful relationships. Childhood trauma is overcome as your traumatic memories are replaced with memories that come from experiencing a meaningful and healthy relationship with God and with other people.

Rick Johnson



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is Trauma .....	Page 1
Why is There So Much Trauma .....	Pages 3
Measuring Trauma .....	Pages 9
Recovering From Trauma.....	Pages 13
Replacing Your Victim Mentality .....	Pages 17
How to Forgive Your Offender .....	Pages 25
Love is God's Medicine.....	Page 29
How Relationships are Formed.....	Pages 31
Healthy Relationships.....	Pages 35
Conclusion .....	Page 45
Appendix: Action Steps.....	Page 47

---