

**Your Trauma
Response Checklist**

**What If You're
NOT The Problem?**

LISA HILTON, CTCP-A

welcome



Welcome, I'm so glad you're here.

My name is Lisa, and like you, I know what it means to carry pain that doesn't have a clear beginning or name — the kind that lingers quietly beneath the surface, shaping how we see ourselves, others, and the world.

This eBook was born out of my own healing journey. It's a compassionate guide to help you start identifying the subtle and often invisible effects of **insidious trauma** — the kind caused by ongoing emotional neglect, inconsistent care, and unmet needs during formative years. *It comes from what didn't happen for you.*

What you'll find inside is a gentle way to name what may feel confusing.

This guide isn't about labeling yourself. It's about understanding yourself — and that's the first step toward healing with compassion, not shame.

You're not broken.
You adapted.

Lisa Hilton

what if...

... the traits you've been judged or felt guilty for are actually survival responses to trauma?

Use the checklists on the following pages to see what patterns resonate — not as flaws, but as signs your nervous system did what it had to do.

01

Fight mode

02

Freeze mode

03








Flee mode

Fight Response

Fight isn't always about yelling or physical aggression. It can look like trying to control your environment, pushing back on anything that feels unsafe, being judgmental - critical, or becoming hyper-independent. It's all about protection—but it often comes from fear, not malice. Take your time, pondering, and breathing.




Mental & Emotional

These relate to inner thoughts, feelings, and emotional defenses.

-  You feel more comfortable *thinking* about emotions than actually feeling them.
-  You tend to keep your guard up around vulnerability — even with people you trust.
-  When others get emotional, you might feel unsure, overwhelmed, or shut down inside.
-  You snap quickly or get irritated easily, especially when you feel out of control.
-  You hold yourself (and sometimes others) to really high standards that leave little room for being human.
-  Even when you're doing everything “right,” there's still a heaviness or numbness that lingers. Feeling joyless.
-  That harsh inner voice? You still believe what it says, even when it drags you down.

Relational

















These impact how you show up in relationships and how you relate to others.

-  You often feel a need to take the lead in relationships — it feels safer when you're in control or when things go your way.
-  You care deeply, but you've learned to show love through strength and structure more than softness.
-  Getting close can feel risky, so you keep a bit of emotional space — even from people you care about.

Fight Response

Behavioural

These are patterns of action or reaction that show up in daily habits, choices, and coping mechanisms

-  You're driven to succeed, often pushing yourself past your limits — because slowing down feels unsafe or pointless.
-  You pour yourself into goals or hobbies, sometimes obsessively, as a way to stay in control or avoid painful feelings.
-  You catch yourself judging or criticizing others (often a form of protection).
-  You feel safest when you're in control, one step ahead, or a little emotionally "above it all."
-  You notice a tendency to blame, complain, or focus on others' faults.
-  Feedback can feel like an attack, so you may defend, deflect, or shut down.
-  You have a hard time forgiving or letting go.
-  You've got strong boundaries yet sometimes they're more like walls, or they crumble under pressure.
-  A part of you always feels like it needs to push back or rebel, like life is something you have to fight.
-  You put a lot of energy into how you appear — your fitness, looks, status — hoping it will finally make you feel "enough."
-  You remember everything for everyone else — but often forget to care for your own needs.
-  You keep yourself busy with achievement so you don't have to feel what's underneath the surface.
-  You change jobs, hobbies, or relationships when the spark fades or discomfort builds — always chasing something that might finally feel right.
-  You come across as confident or arrogant, but inside, you may be protecting a deep insecurity.
-  You have a need to win, be right, or stay emotionally "on top."
-  When someone gets too close, you might push them away — because being seen can feel too raw or risky.

Fight Response

Physical & Nervous System

These show up in the body and nervous system as tension, agitation, or constant activation.

- It's hard to truly relax — there's a constant buzz of tension, like your body's always on alert.
- You seem to have it all together on the outside, but inside, you feel exhausted, numb, or low, and no one really sees it.
- You stay busy all the time, because slowing down means feelings might catch up — and that's overwhelming.

How are you at relaxing?










Freeze Response

When your system gets overwhelmed, freeze is your body's way of saying, "I can't move forward, and I can't run away—so I'll just stop." It can feel like paralysis, numbness, or being stuck in time. Below is how that can show up as character traits across different parts of your life.

Take your time and ponder. Breathe.

Mental & Emotional





Ways the mind shuts down when feelings are too overwhelming or unsafe to express, leaving you numb, disconnected, or stuck in self-doubt and hopelessness.

-  Emotions feel too much or not enough — you're either flooded, numb, or just flat-out "meh."
-  It's hard to name what you're feeling, let alone express it — everything stays vague or out of reach. You might even judge yourself for not knowing many emotions or even how to talk about your feelings.
-  You often feel disconnected or detached — like you're moving through life in low gear, just going through the motions.
-  There's a constant inner hum of shame or self-doubt — wondering, "What's wrong with me?"
-  Your mind spins with hopeless or self-blaming thoughts that drain your energy and motivation.
-  The inner critic is still there — but it's more weary and despairing than loud or mean.
-  Joy feels distant or elusive — like you can't access it, even when things are going okay.
-  You spend a lot of time thinking, analyzing, or fantasizing, but taking action feels impossible or too much.
-  You zone out or lose time — staring at the wall, scrolling endlessly, or feeling like hours disappear.

Freeze Response






Relational

Protective responses when connection feels risky — not from disinterest, but from a deep and unconscious fear of being hurt or misunderstood.

-  You crave space and solitude — not because you're antisocial, but because being around people feels draining or overwhelming.
-  There's this quiet ache, like you're just getting through the days while life moves on without you. You don't feel like you're truly living your life.
-  When things get tense, you shut down or go quiet — conflict makes you freeze, not fight.
-  You've learned to blend in and stay small — it feels safer not to be seen too much or take up space. You're comfortable being in the background. You may call yourself shy.

Behavioural






Often showing up as procrastination, avoidance, or feeling stuck and unmotivated.

-  Getting started feels impossible — even small tasks feel like huge mountains, and procrastination seems your go-to for certain projects.
-  You regularly cancel plans or avoid commitments, not because you don't care, but because it all just feels like too much.
-  You feel stuck or like you're falling behind, no matter how much you want to move forward.
-  It's hard to organize your thoughts or finish things. It's hard to prioritize things and stick with them and follow through.
-  Finding work that fits — or keeping it — is a struggle.

Freeze Response

Physical & Nervous System

How you adapted for survival and safety showing up as fatigue, tension, or numbness.

-  Your mind goes blank when trying to speak or move — like the connection between thought and action just shuts off.
-  You're often exhausted or low-energy, even after rest — just getting started can feel like climbing a mountain.
-  You feel safest curled up in bed or on the couch — mornings feel harsh, and the day ahead can feel too big. You're not a 'morning' person.
-  You're either tired but wired or completely overtired — rest doesn't always feel restful.
-  Your body feels heavy, frozen, or unwilling to move — like your nervous system is hitting the brakes without asking.



What you're seeing is not dysfunction, it is self-protection. Your nervous system is still trying to keep you safe, long after the danger and neglect has passed. Please remember that the brain is built through experience. With gentle support, these traits can soften or lessen. Your brain needs to believe that 'you've got this' and the past is truly over - and that takes time and consistently positive interactions with others.

Flight (Flee) Response

The flight response isn't just about physically running—it can show up in your body, your thoughts, your behaviour, and even your relationships. Below is a breakdown to help you see where this response might be showing up in different parts of your life. *Take your time as you ponder on these character traits. Remember to breathe.*



Mental & Emotional

Showing up in the mind as persistent worry, guilt, or fear — as if staying alert could somehow prevent something bad from happening.

-  You feel caught in cycles of worry, guilt, or fear of doing something “wrong”
-  You tend to imagine worst-case scenarios or being told you're “overreacting”



Relational

These traits can lead to inconsistent boundaries and a strong focus on managing others' emotions to feel safe and accepted. These can lead to acting out the Fawn response.

-  You care deeply about others, but you often find yourself unsure where to draw the line — your boundaries might shift depending on how safe you feel.
-  You're constantly tuned in to the emotional tone around you, almost instinctively monitoring others' moods to avoid tension or stay connected.

Physical & Nervous System

Leading to hypersensitivity, scattered focus, and a sense of restlessness or disconnection.

-  You feel extra sensitive to the energy, tone, or mood of others (a form of nervous system hypervigilance)
-  You have struggles with focus, forgetfulness, or mentally “checking out” under stress

Flight (Flee) Response

Behavioural

These behaviours often involve staying busy, escaping through distractions, or avoiding anything that feels too demanding or risky.

- ☐ You find yourself coping through distraction-based behaviors like bingeing, hoarding, or compulsive shopping
- ☐ You notice you avoid responsibilities, conflict, or decision-making when feeling overwhelmed
- ☐ It is easy to escape into daydreaming or fantasy to feel a sense of safety or control

**A gentle reminder that these
character traits that were developed
were designed to protect you –
to keep you safe.**



you're not
broken, you
adapted

If you saw yourself in the checklists throughout this eBook, please know this: what you're dealing with isn't a personal failure or a flaw in who you are.

More often than not, it's the hidden impact of complex, insidious trauma—especially the kind that begins in childhood, through lack of attunement, neglect, or emotional absence. It's easy to forget just how deeply the past can reach into the present.

This isn't about blaming, it's about understanding.



When the Past Still Lives in the Present

These quiet, powerful wounds don't just fade with time. They shape how we see ourselves, how our nervous systems respond to stress, and how we show up in relationships, community, and the world.

Therapy can be a powerful part of the healing process—but it's not the end of the story. Many survivors ask, "Now what?" once therapy sessions are over. Healing keeps going.

It's an ongoing, courageous return to yourself—rebuilding trust in your body, your voice, and your worth. It's about gently unwinding the patterns shaped by pain and survival and slowly creating a life that feels safer, more connected, and truly your own.

an invitation

Join us for a gentle, validating conversation that offers a compassionate path forward.

In the masterclass, *What if You're Not the Problem*, you'll be met with understanding, encouragement, and the kind of support that reminds you—you're not alone. You'll take away some hope and learn of healthful ways to keep on going.

Wednesday, June 18 @ 12 noon Pacific. The Zoom link will be emailed to you 1 hour before the masterclass begins.

You choosing to show up for yourself matters.
Your healing is real, it's possible, and you are so worth it.



Thank you for showing up for you.

By signing up for this masterclass and taking time to explore the pages of this eBook, you've done something powerful:

You chose reflection over avoidance.

Curiosity over criticism.

Compassion over shame.

That matters.

It's not always easy to look at the hidden patterns we carry — especially when they've been with us for so long. But here you are, gently unraveling what's not yours to hold, and continuing along the healing journey — coming home to yourself.

Lisa Hilton

AUTHOR EDUCATOR TRAUMA & RESILLIENCE SPECIALIST



www.hiltoncoachingconsulting.com

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