



# Pause & Find Strength

## Stages of Recovery After Trauma

Every survivor’s journey to healing is different and shouldn’t be rushed

For those who have lived through the trauma of an abusive or violent partner, they may expect an instant sense of relief once they’ve escaped, a calming peace after they shut the door on that chapter of their lives. Instead, what they can experience is sometimes completely different. Instead of tranquility, they may feel anxious. Instead of joy, they may feel guilt. Or, they may feel nothing at all. This, say therapists, is normal. They are emotions that come with the stages of recovery after trauma.

“Trauma recovery looks different for everyone,” says relationship therapist Amie Piekarz, LSW. “Sometimes, clients feel like there is something wrong with them, or that they are ‘failing’ at recovery because they read books and can’t relate to how others have coped.”

The Three Stages Might Look Like This

**Phase One: Safety and Stabilization.** Trauma survivors tend to feel unsafe in their bodies and in relationships with others. They may struggle with regulating their everyday emotions, which they may not associate directly with the trauma. It may take months or even years to regain a sense of safety.

**Phase Two: Remembrance and Mourning.** This is when survivors may begin to process the trauma, assigning words and emotions to it to help make meaning of it. This process is best undertaken with a trained counselor or therapist. It’s important to mourn the losses associated with the trauma and give oneself space to grieve and express emotions.

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## Upcoming Summer Events!

### Self Defense Class

Provided by Karate Built

**August 4, 2023**

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Location: 6469 28th Street SE,  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

There will be no charge for Selah participants.

This class is open to ages 12 and up but no childcare can be provided for those younger than 12.

Please send your RSVP to [sharim@selah-empowers.org](mailto:sharim@selah-empowers.org) to reserve your spot!

### Movement for Healing

Led by Kristi Henderson, Yoga Instructor

**August 22nd, 2023**

6:30 - 8:00 pm

Location: Heritage CRC  
3089 84th Street SW, Byron Center,  
49315

This is a FREE Selah-sponsored event!

**Childcare will be available!**

### Summer Picnic!

**August 31, 2023**

Lawn Games for Kids! Bonfire!  
Held at Heritage CRC  
3089 - 84<sup>th</sup> Street SW,  
Byron Center, MI 49315

Hotdogs, fixings and dessert provided but you are welcome to bring a dish to pass. Bring your lawn chair(s)!



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## Upcoming Classes

### LEVEL ONE—JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING

These classes will help bring clarity and validation to what you are experiencing.

Online Only: 10—11:30 am, Wednesdays

Online and In-person: 7-8:30 pm, Wednesdays

To receive the online link, please contact Selah via email at: [selah.empowers@gmail.com](mailto:selah.empowers@gmail.com)

#### AM Classes

**July 26:** Abuse and Faith Issues

**August 2:** Self Esteem

**August 9:** Special Topic

**August 16:** Special Topic

#### PM Classes

Characteristics of Abusers -I

Characteristics of Abuser -II

Cynthia Rathburn, Legal Advisor

Lisa Dean, Financial Advisor

### FACILITATORS



Vicki Williams



Carol Bosch, LMSW



Shari Murdock



Misty LaFree, LLPC



Shirley Ritsema



Marge Lucas, MSW

#### Greeters



Kim Diekevers  
& Kayden or Karly or Lettie  
Trained Therapy Dogs

#### Childcare



Elisabeth Richards

### LEVEL TWO —STRENGTH FOR THE JOURNEY

These classes focus on finding the strength needed as you make decisions for your situation.

This week we dig into Chapter Two, Welcome to the Table of our new study material, *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*, by Lysa TerKeurst! She describes this book as “a journey where you’ll discover new ways, healthy and helpful ways, to process pain”. Lots of great information and insights waiting for us. Looking forward to walking this journey with each of you!

Online and In person: 7-8:30 pm, the same dates as Level One.

To receive the online link, please contact Selah via email at: [selah.empowers@gmail.com](mailto:selah.empowers@gmail.com)

More Info ...

Selah  
EMPOWERS

[selah.empowers@gmail.com](mailto:selah.empowers@gmail.com)

(616) 510-6305

[selah-empowers.org](http://selah-empowers.org)



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**Group Agreement:** We ask that everyone read the Group Agreement attached to the email. Attending the classes means you have read and agreed to the group agreement.

**Childcare:** Please let us know ahead of time if you will need childcare, however, we know schedules change, so if you don't get a chance to let us know before class that will be fine, too.

**Safe Environment:** We want to provide a confidential and safe environment for everyone to share and receive support. We also recognize that some material covered in this group is sensitive and can be triggering. Please practice healthy self-care and let us know if you are feeling overwhelmed or need to speak privately.

**Selah is grateful to be partnering with these local counseling centers:**



## How Can We be in Prayer For You?

In Selah online and in person classes, facilitators often extend the opportunity for participants to share a prayer request. These are anonymously passed along to a team of individuals who are



committed to praying over Selah, it's leaders and most especially for Selah participants. If you have a prayer request you would like to

submit, please feel free to do so by dropping an email to [shirleyr@selah-empowers.org](mailto:shirleyr@selah-empowers.org). Your email will be handled with confidentiality, care, and covered in prayer!

To locate a food pantry near you search: <https://www.feedwm.org/findfood/> (active link at end of this email).



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**Phase Three: Reconnection and Integration.** Here, survivors recognize the impact of the victimization they experienced, yet begin to believe that trauma is no longer a defining principle in their life. They begin to redefine themselves in the context of meaningful relationships, create a new sense of self and create a new future. In some instances, they may find a mission through which they can heal and grow, such as mentoring or becoming an advocate for others.

## **Remember, Recovery Takes Time**

Unfortunately, healing from trauma—no matter if the abuse lasted a few months or a few decades—is not an overnight process. In fact, "getting over it" may never be a part of a survivor's recovery. Abuse can have a lifelong impact, but the severity of its effects can be lessened by getting help.

If a survivor tries to rush the recovery process and not really "do the work" so to speak, they may end up continuing to deal with issues from the trauma—anxiety, depression and an increased risk of being a target for an abuser again, among them. There can be a lot of self-judgment about how long the process of recovery takes, so she works on validating every survivor's unique experience.

"What's amazing to witness is that ultimately, everyone truly does have what they need inside of them to recover, it just may take a bit of help to get there."

Compiled from: <https://www.domesticshelters.org/articles/after-abuse/stages-of-recovery-after-trauma>