

## BEFORE & AFTER THINKING EXERCISE

### OVERVIEW

The following exercise is to be used in conjunction with our book, “*What Is PTSD? 3 Steps to Healing Trauma*” for best effect. Please visit [www.WhatIsPTSD.com](http://www.WhatIsPTSD.com) for additional resources.

### GOAL

The goal of the *Before & After Thinking Exercise* is to help you break through the barriers that may be keeping you from remembering, and telling, your story. Avoiding and numbing in the second cluster of traumatic symptoms is very common among people who place their history in *before* and *after* boxes. The exercise below helps you to integrate and blur the line between the two so you can ultimately let the trauma become part of your history, a distant memory, rather than the event that ultimately and entirely defines your life.

### TIME OUT

Always reflect on your inner state and notice if you need a break from the exercise to find your inner calm.

### MATERIALS AND LAYOUT

Pen or pencil, timer, and the form we have provided on the following pages.

**PATH TO COMPLETE**

1. Describe what you were doing before your traumatic event, i.e., were you working? Going to school? Married or dating?

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2. Now describe yourself after your traumatic event. How did you change? Did you return to work or school? Did you have the same relationships?

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3. Describe your moods before your traumatic event. Were you suffering from any depression or anxiety, etc.? What was happening for you emotionally?

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4. Now describe your moods following your traumatic event:

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5. What were you like as a teenager (or younger if you are a teen now)?

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6. What personality trait did you like about yourself as a younger person that you would like to reclaim now?

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7. Do you still have the personality trait? If not, why? Do you feel that the trauma has taken it from you?

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8. What sort of things made you happy, angry, sad, or frustrated before your traumatic event?

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9. After the trauma, what makes you happy, angry, sad, or frustrated now?

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10. How easy is it for you to *recover* from these feelings? Is this different from before your traumatic event?

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11. Do you feel there is something that your trauma has *taught* you? What is it and how can it help with problems you may encounter now and in the future?

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