

## Twitter Thread by Vivid Void



**Vivid Void**  
[@VividVoid](#)



### ■ Healing PTSD: A Thread ■

**CW: Trauma, abuse, suicidal ideation**

**If you have followed me for a bit, you've probably seen me talk about exposure therapy, the 5Fs, and a little about the process of healing from PTSD.**

**I'm ready to tell my story now.**

The wound I've been healing from was from a relationship. It began as something extraordinarily beautiful, something I thought was a once-in-a-lifetime connection, and became destructive and abusive.

I loved this woman like I've never loved anyone. We had an intense spiritual bond, and made a commitment to nourish and foster one another's spiritual growth. We built and refined our practices together and created space to reflect truth to one another.

We bonded over our love of art and poetry, our shared passion for justice, and our love of nature. She was also the most beautiful person I've ever dated, a former model, and we had an unreal physical connection, with near-perfect complimentary sexuality. She was my dream partner

Partially because I was blinded by love, and because I lacked courage to risk losing her, I didn't speak up or push back against red flags when they appeared. They began as small cruelties and boundary violations. I ignored them, forgot them when we made up, made excuses for her.

Over the course of our relationship, her cruelty worsened, her need for control grew, and her rage became more and more of a threat. I stopped advocating for myself out of fear of her reactions.

I won't go into details here. The abuse was, on rare dramatic occasions, physical and sexual. But the emotional and psychological abuse was regular, and caused extensive damage to my mind and my emotions.

It got especially bad during the stressful, early days of the pandemic, and a few mos into lockdown, she spiraled out of control. Her manipulation became so desperate and heavy-handed that I could no longer deny what was happening. I put

her things on her doorstep and left.

What followed was a year of psychological and emotional torment: looping, intrusive thoughts, night terrors, jumpiness, slow and damaged cognition, my self-management and self-concept scattered, and a thick, crushing depression.

I went through a lot of questions about my masculinity and identity. A 38 year-old man, a former Marine, a successful entrepreneur, an accomplished leader. I was a psych nerd, had done yrs of spiritual work. How did I not see this happening? How could I let myself be subjugated?

I got almost no help from my culture or society, or from the counselor I was seeing, who was impatient and unsupportive when I brought my pain to him for processing. I found few resources online for men who have been abused by women.

There is a lot of support for women and for queer men who have been abused by other men. But for men in my situation, I have found next to nothing. What I did find was a deep well of societal hatred for male weakness.

It was impossible to find a new therapist in mid-2020, and I was overwhelmed by the total, dehumanizing apathy toward men in my situation, by society, by therapeutic culture, by the organizations ostensibly devoted to supporting victims.

I felt utterly, completely alone. I collapsed in grief many times from bearing the burden of my wound without the support I needed. In winter, I had an episode of near-psychotic depression, and came very close to taking my own life.

Something in me had broken. I kept repeating "Nobody cares. Nobody cares." It was my voice but I heard it like someone else's. I couldn't stop saying it. It drowned out everything else.

I did not take my own life, ultimately because I couldn't do it to my son. I have since been working on hard on loving myself and also learning to live for me, but the sheer fact of my kid's existence, and our love for each other, saved my life that day.

I eventually made it through winter, to vaccination and to connecting with friends again. I found this community, TCoT or Ingroup, whatever we're calling it this week, which has been lovely, and has helped me feel so much less alone.

In spring of this year, a friend confronted me with the fact that I was traumatized (and that I was saying a lot of hateful, bitter, wounded shit.) Here is something fucked up about trauma: your ego hides it. Even if you are familiar with it, it's hard to recognize it in yourself

So that confrontation was a revelation - and also a relief! Because \*I knew what to do.\* I had experience with exposure therapy from working through developmental trauma. I was a pro at this. I collected all my old therapy notes together and got to work.

I sought out my triggers like a terrier hunting rats, exhaustively categorizing them and collecting them in every form I could find, visual, audial, written, tactile, taste, smell, everything.

I mapped their relationships to various tensions in my body, and set out to face them: every difficult memory of abuse, every feeling of failure and shame and guilt and insufficiency - and especially inferiority - that was haunting my body and my mind.

(This the origin of my nightly tweet - you are not inferior to anyone, good night, I love you, see you in the morning. It's a tweet to myself.)

The process of healing a traumatic wound begins much like lancing an infected boil. It's extremely painful to broach it, and as soon as you do, a bunch of horrific, infected pus and nasty shit comes pouring out.

In my case, the infection was a torrent of hate: misogyny, misandry, rage, terror, self-loathing, homophobia and biphobia (self- and other-directed) and other assorted demons that were living off my wound like a parasite.

Beneath the hatred was grief. The pain of deep loss, of a beautiful part of me I'd abandoned in the face of pain, and had made hard and violent and mean instead, going against what was best and most human in me, because I mistakenly believed that goodness was what made me weak.

The fears were not me and never were. But they had attached themselves to me and were using my pain to replicate themselves, in me and in others. I fought them all, working the pain on the bag, on the pavement, in my body.

I used my 5Fs and a journal to process them, and little by little, to change my burden of fear into anger, then tears, where they could be released into spirit. (I first became a camel, then a lion, then at last a child.)

I have now been doing dedicated self-work for about two and a half months. In the last two weeks, my executive function has returned to normal. I had a brief intensification of symptoms around an anniversary, but that has passed, and my mind is calm again.

This week, I've been able to plan and schedule complex projects for the first time since 2019.

Seeing my calendar full again, my days rich in many loving contexts, work, parenting, friendship, creativity - it gives me chills. I couldn't have managed half of this in spring.

My nightmares have stopped, and I sleep through the night now. I manage my time and energy effectively again. I am now productive for most of the day instead of compulsively seeking out distractions.

I have been able to tell the full, true story of what happened, to myself and others, unbroken. I have healed. I feel better every day and the memories of loss and suffering feel farther and farther away.

I am whole again.

I am going to continue a weekly practice of facing fears and insecurities as they come up, working through them with exposure and my 5Fs. There may yet be some grief left to work through. It comes in waves and that's okay. I'm not afraid of it. Shadow is a renewable resource.

Beyond that, I have begun plans on a project I hope will one day help others recover from trauma and strengthen their self-concept so they can protect themselves and those they love in the future. I'll post more about that project as I develop it.

I'm going to start wrapping this up. If you take anything away from this, I hope it's this: there is extraordinary healing and power in courage. But finding the courage to face your shadow is not only about you: it's also a moral imperative.

What abusers do is monstrous, but they're not monsters. They're cowards. If my ex had faced her shadow and done the work, she might have healed her own trauma instead of passing it on to me. We might even still be happily in love, nourishing each other's spirits, as we dreamed.

You may not have abused anyone, but if you haven't found the courage to confront your demons and wrestle them into integration, then your fear, your rage, your inferiority and shame have power over you, and they can devastate you and the people you love.

I want to say this, and I mean it: If you are in an abusive situation, or you are ready to start shadow work, or you just feel like you need help or advice or support or held space around any of this stuff. I'm here for you. Reach out to me.

That offer stands to anyone but especially those who have been abused who can't find help, and those who know they are abusive and want to change, but don't know how. DM me anytime, for anything. I will never judge you, and I'll do what I can to help.

Thanks for reading. I love you. Please love yourself enough to be courageous, for yours and others' sake. Do the work. Confront your shadow. Don't let fear rule the one life you get. Become whole. Grow and develop into your best possible self.

Everyone is counting on you. ■