

Ownership:

Taking appropriate responsibility for the effects of the trauma today improves our dignity and relationships.

Taking ownership is empowering! It helps us access the power that we have to make a difference. Over time we learn to give voice to what needs to be spoken. This can be deeply healing for those who were compelled to keep silent about traumatic events. The Ownership Principle is about stepping up—taking responsibility for our healing.

First, we need to realize that our reactions to trauma are common to others who were traumatized. Given our histories, it is understandable to experience:

- Shock, numbness and confusion
- Excessive vigilance
- Increased reactivity
- Intrusive recollections
- Anger and resentment
- Guilt
- Physical complaints
- Withdrawal, isolation and avoidance
- Fear, anxiety and panic
- Pessimism
- Disorganization
- Distraction
- Sudden temporary upsurges of grief
- Isolation

Taking responsibility for the effects of the trauma gives us the power to address them. It allows us to heal such destructive effects as over-responsibility, alcoholism, or sex addictions. The concept of appropriate responsibility is vital here. We are NOT responsible for what others have done to us. Being sexually or physically abused as a child, for example, was not the child's fault. As we gain awareness, we can learn to let go of the victim-hood of our past and take ownership for our current lives.

Taking appropriate responsibility also means doing so with self compassion: refraining from blaming or shaming or otherwise internally condemning ourselves. Besides treating ourselves with respect and dignity, we extend respect toward others, realizing that they are responsible for their own healing. We may need to make amends to ourselves and others, for ways we may have acted out destructively in the past, or otherwise caused damage.

As we realize the trauma's impact and own our capacity to heal we're able to decide to change our lives. By nourishing and growing our authenticity, our relationships with ourselves and others improve. Through awareness we can choose thoughts that build self-love and confidence. Focusing our attention on the present keeps us grounded and supports our ability to live our lives today to the fullest.

Vital Cycle: The more authentic we are the more we improve our dignity and relationships. The more we improve our dignity and relationships, the more authentic we are.