BETRAYAL TRAUMA

When trust, dependence, and harm collide

M2M RECOVERY PROJECT
PEOPLE | PURPOSE | A STRONGER TOMORROW

THE DEFINING CONDITION | BETRAYAL TRAUMA THEORY, JENNIFER FREYD (1994)

Betrayal trauma occurs when harm is caused by someone - or an institution - that a person depends on for care, protection, resources, or survival.

THE CORE CONFLICT

DEPENDENCE
I need this relationship or system to survive.

→

BETRAYAL
The person or system violates trust or well-being.

→

PROTECTION
Awareness may be blocked to preserve functioning or attachment.

This response can be understood as a survival adaptation - not a personal failure.

WHERE BETRAYAL TRAUMA MAY OCCUR

CHILDHOOD ABUSE
Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse by a caregiver on whom a child depends.

INSTITUTIONAL
Betrayal by a school, military, law-enforcement, justice, or healthcare system.

ROMANTIC
A partner violates trust or crosses the agreed boundaries of the relationship.

HOW THE MIND MAY RESPOND

DISTANCE FROM THE HARM
A person may dissociate, block information, or have difficulty consciously processing and remembering experiences that threaten an essential relationship.

SEVERITY MATTERS
The degree of betrayal can affect how the experience is processed or remembered.

POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED IMPACTS

- DISSOCIATION
- POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS
- SUBSTANCE USE
- OTHER MENTAL-HEALTH SYMPTOMS

UNDERSTAND THE ADAPTATION | RESTORE SAFETY | REBUILD TRUST