



## **Part 2: How Do I Live After a Trauma?**

### **Quick recap**

The meeting featured Syrita Simmons, a licensed clinical social worker, who presented on trauma responses and coping strategies, particularly focusing on managing anxiety and processing emotional aspects after physical recovery. The session concluded with discussions about practical applications of trauma management techniques.

### **Summary**

#### **Introducing Syrita Simmons, Clinical Therapist**

The main portion of the meeting introduced Syrita Simmons, a licensed clinical social worker from Rehab Without Walls, who specializes in stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury, amputation, and long COVID patients. She explained that her company provides in-home therapy services for up to 21 hours per week and also works as a therapist at Rhapsody Counseling. The conversation ended with an invitation for questions before her 20-minute presentation on trauma.

#### **Trauma Recovery and Coping Strategies**

Syrita discussed coping strategies and the fight-or-flight response, emphasizing the importance of grounding techniques for managing anxiety, especially for those who are alone after a traumatic event like a stroke. She explained that trauma can have long-lasting effects on mental, physical, and emotional well-being, and she highlighted the need to recognize and address triggers. The group discussed the concept of fight-or-flight, with Amber explaining it as a surge of adrenaline that prompts either fighting or fleeing, and Syrita added that freezing is another common response.



## **Reframing Boston's Negative Memories**

Syrita discussed with Josh his negative association with Boston due to a past stroke, explaining that such reactions are expected after traumatic events. She suggested replacing the negative memory with positive ones through small, controlled steps, similar to how Josh reframed September from being associated with his stroke to his marriage. Shelli asked if Josh could reframe his feelings about Boston by doing something enjoyable there, which Syrita confirmed could be a helpful approach.

## **Anxiety Management and Coping Strategies**

Syrita discussed strategies for managing anxiety and trauma, emphasizing the importance of gradual exposure and coping skills. She advised Erin to take small steps when facing triggering situations, such as visiting a hairstylist, and suggested journaling as a way for Julie to process feelings associated with Christmas. Syrita also encouraged Roo to consider celebrating her survival of a stroke as a separate event from her wedding anniversary. The discussion concluded with Syrita offering advice on managing anxiety about future events, emphasizing the importance of focusing on controllable aspects and creating safety through support systems.

## **Trauma and PTSD Coping Strategies**

Syrita presented on the differences between trauma responses, PTSD, and anxiety, explaining how PTSD symptoms persist beyond three months while acute stress disorder symptoms typically fade. She shared various coping strategies including music tasks, mindfulness exercises, and breathing techniques like the 4-7-8 method, noting that these approaches can help restore the mind-body connection and manage both mental and physical symptoms. The group discussed practical applications of these techniques.



## **Emotional Recovery After Stroke**

The meeting focused on a discussion with Syrita, who provided insights on processing emotional aspects after physical recovery, particularly in the context of strokes. Participants shared personal experiences and coping mechanisms, including the use of exercise programs and support groups. The conversation also touched on the importance of celebrating small victories and the potential for continued progress beyond formal therapy.