

How to Do Phase One

Phase One: The Written Component

To begin the TRT process, we must first identify the trauma. This is done by recalling the traumatic incidents caused by the identified perpetrator and writing each incident down on a separate sheet of paper. The incidents may be written in any order. It is not necessary to write them in chronological order. The order in which you recall them is fine.

Phase one describes the actual trauma causing event or events in writing. There are five basic rules to follow in completing a Phase One writing. These are called rules rather than guidelines because it is very important that the writer follow these exactly in order to experience the resolution of the past.

Rule 1 **The perpetrator of the trauma is addressed in second-person language, “you,”** rather than by name or in the third person.

Example: “We were sitting in the living room and **you** became angry. **You** picked up a lamp and threw it at my head.”

Using the third language (he/she/they) distances the writer from the emotion and reality of the incident. Using the person’s name would make it seem as though we are writing a letter to the person. This is a narrative **about** the incident, not a letter expressing feelings **to** the perpetrator.

Rule 2 **Always write in the past tense** no matter how recent the incident feels or occurred. By writing about the event as history you begin the process of actually putting it behind you.

Example: We **were** sitting in the living room and you **became** angry. You **picked** up a lamp and **threw** it at my head.”

Rule 3 At the beginning of the narrative, **record the approximate time and place** the incident occurred. This can include the exact date and location, or the season, grade of school, approximate age, any defining facts that can be recalled.

Example: “We had been married two months. We were living in an apartment in Chicago. We were sitting *in the living room* and you became angry. You picked up a lamp and threw it at my head.”

Rule 4 This is an explanation of what happened. **Write a factual description of the incident with as much related detail as possible.** Philosophy, opinions, and rhetorical explanations should not be recalled.

Rule 5 **Write how you felt about the incident at the time.** Write your feelings simply, without couching them in terms of “you made me feel...”

Example: “I felt *scared* and *angry*.”

The perpetrator has caused the trauma which elicited your feelings, but writing them as “you made me” gives even more power to the perpetrator. It is important to take ownership of your feelings in order to end the repression that has been taking place possibly for years.

Putting all the rules together, a phase one incident writing will look like this:

It was in 1982, and we had been married for two months. We lived in an apartment in Chicago. We were sitting in the living room, and you became angry. You had been drinking beer and had probably had seven or eight beers. You picked up the lamp and threw it at my head. I screamed at you and ran toward the bedroom. You called me a bitch and chased me. You grabbed my arm and slapped me. I picked up a statue next to me and hit you in the head. You stumbled back and fell on the couch. After a few minutes you started laughing, then got up and left the house. I felt hurt angry and scared.