

EDUCATING YOURSELF

Educating Yourself is a **Radical Understanding** skill.



**INSTITUTION
THERAPY**

Institution Therapy acknowledges that many survivors fear leaving or disobeying their Institution of Distress (IOD), especially abuse survivors from cults and organized criminal groups. For some, accepting their situation leaves them feeling as though they can never escape, further contributing to their institutionalization.

Being educated and critically observing emotional or traumatic situations can help you realize whether acting in opposition to your institution's values will actually put you in danger or you are experiencing a learned fear. This gives you the opportunity to change the way you consider your behavior. Over time, **this can neutralize the power your IOD holds over your worldview**, facilitating the process of taking steps away from your institution's way of thinking.

This worksheet outlines a method of self-education on your IOD. It requires you to have resources such as books, Internet access, or a counselor familiar with trauma. Follow the instructions to learn how institutional trauma impacts your life.

Here are some resources you can use to start:

- **Transforming the Living Legacy of Trauma** by Janina Fisher
- **The Body Keeps the Score** by Bessel van der Kolk M.D.
- **TraumaDissociation**: <http://traumadissociation.com/>
- **PsychCentral**: <https://psychcentral.com/program/trauma>

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INSTITUTION THERAPY

1. Research your Institution of Distress. What are some common experiences within your institution that may truly be traumatic?

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2. Research trauma symptoms. Which of these do you exhibit as a result of your experience in your IOD?

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3. Consider the implicit and explicit rules of your IOD. Which of these play a role in your day-to-day life?

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4. Consider your personal values and health. Is following your IOD's rules in your best interest? What do you want to do?