

22 Is memory work is right for you?



If you are working through *The Warrior Within*, these two exercises and further useful information to help you in your recovery can be found on pages 80-85. The second exercise assumes you have completed exercise sheet 1 **Starting an activity journal**.

Many survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) have unclear or fragmented memories of the abuse. You could have only partial memories, no memories at all or full recall. Experiences and memories that are suppressed can result in flashbacks, intrusive memories or nightmares. There is considerable debate about to what extent it is necessary to recall all memories. Focusing on full memory recall can create more pressure on you. Only you can decide how much detail you wish to remember. These two exercises will help you decide.

Reflect on your goals

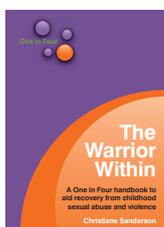
Take some time to reflect on your goals for recalling memories:

- Are you plagued by intrusive memories, flashbacks and nightmares?
- Do you want to improve the quality of your life?
- Do you need confirmation of your abuse?

If so then processing and integrating memories may be invaluable as long as you do it at a pace that suits you.

Assess whether memory work is right for you

To assess whether memory work is for you, make a list of the advantages and disadvantages in your journal. Your list of advantages might include the desire to improve the quality of your life by reducing intrusive memories, flashbacks or nightmares; to feel more in control; to undo the freeze response and release trapped energy; to clarify what happened; to give meaning to your experiences; to legitimise what happened; to change the way you think about yourself; to reduce self-blame; to understand the impact of CSA and trauma; or to restore reality and perception. Your list of disadvantages might include decrease in your quality of life; destabilisation if you cannot remember; sense of failure or shame; or feeling paralysed or trapped by your need to remember. Do add any other advantages and disadvantages you can think of. Reflect on these to help you decide.



The content of this exercise sheet is based on *The Warrior Within: A One in Four handbook to aid recovery from childhood sexual abuse and violence* by Christiane Sanderson

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