

# Getting Stuck in Emotional Immaturity Due to Trauma

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Emotional immaturity is the result of getting stuck in emotional development due to trauma. What you experience as trauma is unique to you. Whether or not you experience an incident as traumatic depends on the kind of support you received while coping with it. What feels traumatic to one person, may not be experienced that way by another. How an event is perceived is a relative personal experience.

## **Love and Security are Lacking When You get Stuck**

Getting stuck happens when you did not receive enough feelings of love and security while you were going through the traumatic events. You felt terrified, lost, humiliated, ashamed, guilty, small and there was no one there who comforted you or showed you that they were on your side. So it started to feel too scary to continue to take those emotional risks necessary for future growth. You experienced deep hurt and fear and no one was there to help. You began to create a protective shell around you, especially around your heart. While your body grew, the shell hardened from more painful experiences you didn't get any support for. As you got older it became more constricting and your inability to cope with life in a healthy manner became more evident.

## **Types of Trauma**

So what type of trauma leads to getting stuck emotionally? Trauma can be a physical event such as an earthquake, flood or fire. It can be the result of a single incident or a prolonged period of physical, sexual or emotional abuse. It can be the death of a close family member or friend or the chronic illness of a parent. It can also be a much less dramatic event, such as moving to a new place and not feeling like one belongs or being bullied or shamed by peers. It is estimated that 75% of American adults have experienced a traumatic event. A 1998 study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente of 17,000 middle-class Americans showed strongly that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) significantly contribute to negative adult mental and physical health. ACEs effects 60% of Americans. New studies continue to affirm this. To read about the study click on this link: [article](#).

What determines if you got stuck due to trauma is the support that was given to you at the time of the trauma. The support that was needed to help you feel that you were safe in continuing to grow and take emotional risks. Having an adult there that helped you feel safe and secure versus scared and alone was the key to the difference between getting stuck or continuing to blossom and grow.

When I went through Amate Growth Work myself with Dr. Martha Horton I had assumed I had gotten stuck when I was eight years old. This was my age when my family changed countries for the second time and moved to the United States from Austria. However, in my work with Dr. Horton I was surprised to find an earlier trauma that hadn't seemed as significant to me, but it was actually an experience of deep shame. My mom had secured swimming lessons for me in Communist Poland, which was quite an accomplishment, as pools were very limited in Poland at the time and it was very hard to gain entry. I had practiced swimming with my family quite a bit and was told I was a great swimmer.

On my first day the swimming coach asked me to show her how I swim and had me swim across the pool. I happily got in and proceeded to swim doggie paddle across the olympic-sized pool. Then I heard the coach scream, "who let this child into my pool! this child can't swim, get out of my pool!" I was shocked, as I thought I had done great! Nobody had told me I was supposed to swim some certain way! The coach made me get out of the pool and walk all the way over to the other side where the kids that didn't know how to swim were standing. I remember how huge the pool seemed then and how long this walk was. Most of all I remember the deep feeling of shame I felt. I was six years old and this is the first time I began to experience anxiety. On Tuesday nights, the night before swimming lessons, I would lay awake thinking about swimming the next day. I would go over what had happened to me and would feel very afraid. I didn't talk to my mom about what had happened because I felt protective of her. I knew how hard it had been to get those lessons and I didn't want her to feel bad. I also did not feel like she would be able to do anything about it. After all, the parents were all afraid of the swim coach, too.

The incident with the swim coach was seemingly minor, however the incident was "traumatic" to me. Six years old was where I got stuck. I got stuck because I did not receive the love and support during and after the incident that I needed to feel it was safe to continue to grow. As a result of this "stuckness" I developed a feeling that I did not belong, that I was a failure. I felt that even if others approved of me, they didn't know that beneath the surface I really couldn't do anything. I felt I would soon be exposed.

### **Unhealthy Coping Strategies**

When you are emotionally immature you look like an adult on the outside and you have the intellect of an adult, but you respond to life with the emotional tools of a child or adolescent. When you are living in a protective shell, you will often turn to unhealthy coping strategies. What unhealthy coping strategies you utilize depend on your genetics, environment and your innate energetic typology. Addictions to drugs, alcohol, prescription medications, food, work, sex and pornography are among those unhealthy coping strategies. Some become as perfect as they can be and get every degree available, but still don't feel good enough. Others turn to work and have great success, but never feel like they

can take a break because it will all come crashing down the moment they take away their attention. Still others have a string of unsuccessful relationships, waiting for the perfect one who will finally fulfill them.

What all of these unhealthy coping strategies have in common is the deep down feeling of not being good enough, lovable enough. There is also the feeling that the world is a scary place with no one there who will keep me safe.

### **Reaching Emotional Maturity Through Amate Growth Work**

Amate Growth work is a comprehensive personal growth and healing program. It is the work of Dr. Martha Horton based on her own healing journey and discovery of how to heal herself and grow up in adulthood. I met Dr. Horton while living in Aspen, CO. I was quickly inspired to learn the method from her and go through the healing journey myself. You will learn how to heal those traumas that got you stuck and prevented you from growing emotionally when you undertake the Amate Journey. You will heal your Inner Child and help him or her grow up into a healthy Inner Self. In the process called "Inner Work," you will learn to re-parent yourself. The actual meaning of "loving yourself" will become clear to you. You will re-connect with your "Inner Guidance." Inner Guidance is that still small voice inside that protects and guides you to live the life you were meant to live. For tips on how to effectively parent your children so that they don't get stuck, check out this article on becoming an effective father: [article](#).

For more information on emotional immaturity and Amate Growth Work, read Dr. Martha Horton's book, "The Seashell People, Growing Up in Adulthood" <https://www.amazon.com/Seashell-People-Growing-Up-Adulthood/dp/087131620X>.

To heal your pain, let go of unhealthy coping strategies and go through this amazing transformational process contact Dr. Eva A. Malanowski, Psy.D. at 303-242-7824.

