20+ Subtle Signs You May Be Living With Unrecognized Trauma

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Companion to Episode 209 -
When Trauma Blocks Things That REALLY Matter for Autistic Women

1. **People-pleasing at the expense of your own well-being.**
   You often say yes when you want to say no—and then feel exhausted or resentful.

2. **Being hyper-aware of others' moods.**
   You can sense tension instantly, but struggle to name or even notice your own emotions.

3. **Feeling like rest must be earned.**
   Sitting down or doing nothing brings guilt or discomfort—like you've done something wrong.

4. **Struggling to feel safe when things are calm.**
   Peace can feel unfamiliar or even suspicious, and you find yourself waiting for the other shoe to drop.

5. **Over-apologizing—for things that aren't your fault.**
   You say "I'm sorry" reflexively, even when you haven't done anything wrong.

6. **Avoiding conflict at all costs.**
   You'll twist yourself into knots just to prevent discomfort, even if it means silencing your own needs.

7. **Downplaying your own experiences.**
   You tell yourself, "It wasn't that bad," or "Other people have had it worse," even when you're hurting.

Beyond Chronic Burnout for Autistic Women
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SELF-DEFINED LIVING FOR LATE-IDENTIFIED AUTISTICS

8. **A deep fear of being "too much."**
   You constantly monitor your words, energy, or enthusiasm for fear of overwhelming or annoying others.

9. **Difficulty making decisions.**
   You fear making the wrong choice, and often defer to others—then doubt yourself afterward.

10. **Being praised for your resilience, but feel like you're barely holding it together.**
    Others see you as strong, but underneath you're chronically exhausted.

11. **Trouble asking for help.**
    You feel like asking means you're weak, a burden, or will be rejected.

12. **Feeling responsible for others' feelings.**
    If someone is upset—even when it has nothing to do with you—you feel like it's your job to fix it.

13. **Constant inner dialogue of self-criticism.**
    Your inner voice is harsh, perfectionistic, or punishing—and you rarely feel "good enough."

14. **Struggling to identify your own needs.**
    You're so used to putting others first that you don't know what ***you*** want or need.

15. **Fluctuating between overachieving and complete burnout.**
    You swing between intense productivity and total shutdown.

16. **Avoiding eye contact, vulnerability, or closeness.**
    You feel exposed or unsafe when people see too much of the "real you."

17. **Over-researching or over-preparing.**
    You spend hours making sure everything is "just right" to avoid criticism or rejection.

18. **Feeling like you always have to be "useful."**
    You only feel worthy when you're producing, helping, or being productive.

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19. **Experiencing emotional flashbacks.**
    You feel shame, panic, or dread—but can't always trace it to a specific memory.

20. **Masking pain with humor, charm, or competence.**
    You know how to "perform" being okay, even when you're deeply struggling.

2 Bonus Subtle Signs

Being praised as "low maintenance" or "easygoing."

But really, you've just learned to ignore or dismiss your own needs.

Having no memory of large parts of your childhood.

You may have blank spots, especially around emotions or certain people.

Gentle Reminder

You don't need a dramatic story or a specific diagnosis to have experienced trauma.

Trauma can be slow, quiet, cumulative.

It can come from constantly being misunderstood, unsupported, or told to hide your authentic self.

It can come from chronic invalidation or growing up without the emotional scaffolding you needed.

And you deserve support, healing, and rest… even if you were never "the one who had it the worst."

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