

**The shock of a traumatic event — whether it's war, natural disaster, violent crime, or accident — is often so severe that victims feel the need to suppress their feelings. But attempting to suppress painful memories and emotions only makes things worse...**

The emerging acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) is particularly well-suited to treating victims of trauma because it recognizes that experiential avoidance — attempting to suppress painful memories or feelings — is counterproductive. In *Finding Life After Trauma*, the first book to adapt ACT principles into a self-help format for those suffering the effects of trauma, psychologists and ACT experts Victoria Follette and Jacqueline Pistorello first help readers learn to accept the unpleasant feelings they associate with past experiences.

Follette and Pistorello also explain why strategies that attempt to have trauma victims “control” their negative feelings can have severe long-term consequences, such as substance abuse and chronic anxiety, especially when the attempts at control result in the avoidance of normal activities and situations.

Instead, *Finding Life After Trauma* encourages readers to develop psychological flexibility and a willingness to embrace “clean” painful experiences that are a necessary and unavoidable part of living. By committing to live in ways that really matter to them despite their painful experiences, readers move beyond problems with past trauma. In the end, they will discover that life after trauma was very much worth the bumps and scrapes they received on the way to living it.

**FOR AN INTERVIEW REQUEST OR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:  
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**Finding Life Beyond Trauma:  
Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Heal from Post-Traumatic Stress  
and Trauma-Related Problems, by Victoria M. Follette, Ph.D., and Jacqueline  
Pistorello, Ph.D., Foreword by Steven C. Hayes, Ph.D.  
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## **The Myths Surrounding Trauma**

### **Myth 1: Traumatic Experiences Are Uncommon**

The reported prevalence of trauma is startling, with over 70 percent of the adult population experiencing trauma at some point in their lives (Breslau 2002).

### **Myth 2: If People Were Just Stronger, They Could Get Over Trauma**

Although the severity of problems or symptoms can vary from individual to individual, no one can completely avoid trauma or completely protect himself or herself from the consequences of traumatic experiences.

### **Myth 3: Traumatic Experiences Mainly Happen to Women**

A common myth is that noncombat trauma only happens to women. We know that this is not the case. According to the National Comorbidity Study (NCS), over 60 percent of the males surveyed reported at least one potential trauma, with many of them reporting experiencing two or more types of trauma (Kessler et al. 1995).

### **Myth 4: Men Are Rarely Victims of Sexual Trauma**

Rates of sexual abuse of young boys or adolescents vary from 4 percent to 16 percent depending on the population studied, data collected, and the definitions of sexual assault or abuse (Dong et al. 2003). Males are most often sexually assaulted by other men (although women can sexually assault men too), and the perpetrators are often authority figures or strangers. Furthermore, many men do not disclose their sexual trauma to anyone, which can fuel shame and isolation.

### **Myth 5: Only Really Severely Distressed People Would Benefit from Help**

There is no one truth that will be accurate for everyone. . . Some people will find that [their] symptoms tend to resolve over time, while others will decide to seek treatment immediately. Part of our goal in this book is to help you to look at what is true for you and to choose a direction that fits your unique needs and goals.

## **About the Authors of *Finding Life Beyond Trauma***

**Victoria M. Follette, Ph.D.**, is a clinical scientist with a special interest in the etiology and treatment of trauma-related problems. She is professor of psychology and chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Nevada, Reno. Dr. Follette's clinical work is focused on survivors of interpersonal violence, and she examines the use of acceptance-based behavioral therapies in the treatment of this population.

**Jacqueline Pistorello, Ph.D.**, earned her doctorate in clinical psychology at University of Nevada, Reno and completed her internship at the Brown University Consortium. She specializes in two behavioral approaches: acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), and she has pioneered the conduct of these approaches to college counseling center settings.

In collaboration with Victoria Follette, she has been applying ACT and ACT-informed approaches to the treatment of trauma survivors, particularly child sexual abuse survivors, since 1989.

## **Suggested Interview Questions**

1. Could you explain what a traumatic event is? What are some examples?
2. What are some of the effects of trauma?
3. What are some of the myths surrounding trauma?
4. What is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)? Why is it effective in treating those suffering the effects of trauma?
5. What is acute stress disorder (ASD) and how does it differ from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)? What are some symptoms of each?
6. In your book you say "avoid avoidance". Why is that important?

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