

Overwhelmingly Intense

When an experience changes neural activity and chemistry in a way that fundamentally alters how the brain is able to store and later access “memories” related to that experience,

This **overwhelming intensity** is ultimately what results in an event being experienced traumatically due to how the chemistry of the brain and neural interactions change when activation occurs.

Because **activation** is experienced both cognitively and physically, it is impossible to understand or conceptualize trauma without acknowledgment of both the physiological systems and the cognitive processes. This is the reason it is so often said that **“the body keeps the score”**.

When the system/brain is **overwhelmed (or activated)**, prefrontal cortical and left hemisphere activity is **dramatically reduced**, meaning the **logical details** stop being processed. However, the mid-brain and right hemisphere keep functioning normally and therefore keep processing the **emotional experiences** related to the event. Therefore, the **emotional experiences** arrive at the temporal cortex without the corresponding **logical details, resulting in a maladaptive memory**.



Processing



This results in 2 significant consequences.

Firstly, **The logical details** are dispersed and lost, stored in a **fragmented state** that is either disconnected from the emotional experiences or completely out of any conscious recognition/recall (**“memory loss”**).

This includes details like:

- Date/time (relative to present)
- Location
- Specific events/details

This fragmentation or loss can be partial or total, and is also impacted by factors like head trauma and dissociation.

Similarly, later retrieval of these details can be inconsistent and incomplete, resulting in a tendency to invalidate or disregard “remembered trauma”.

The second result is **emotional experiences** are stored **maladaptively**. Since the logical details are mostly disconnected, when the **emotional experiences are retrieved the brain is unable to determine the distance from the actual/perceived threat**, therefore the experiences have an intensity like the **traumatic event** just happened or event **is currently going on**.

This includes details like:

- Emotions
- Physical sensation (touch, sights, sounds, smells, ect)
- Impact/importance
- Beliefs/feelings related to Self, Others, and The World
 - ie. “I am not safe” or “There is no point”



Similar as with logical details, it is very likely that these emotional experiences are retrieved inconsistently. Often in contexts which seem completely unrelated to the initial trauma experience,