

# Secondary Wounding

Secondary wounding happens when the “helper” (teacher, parent, counselor, family member, friend) does more harm than good. Instead of feeling supported, it causes others to feel ashamed of having been part of a traumatic experience. Secondary wounding causes embarrassment about reactions during and after the experience and symptoms since the experience. It often makes a person regret asking for help.

Comments that lead to secondary wounding include:

- You are exaggerating
- It couldn't have happened that way
- You really can't remember that kind of detail
- Your imagination is running away with you
- He/she would never do that
- There are people who have it harder than you
- Consider yourself lucky
- You are still young, you will get over it
- You're overreacting
- What happened, happened – you don't need to be upset
- Well maybe if you had not...
- Well maybe if you had...
- If only you...
- You should have never...
- That wasn't very smart of you
- How many times have you been told...
- It wouldn't have happened if you...
- You must have wanted it to happen
- You must have been looking for trouble
- You need to be more careful

Secondary wounding occurs for many reasons. People who have never been hurt or traumatized have a hard time understanding people who have been hurt. They may prefer to ignore the sadness a person is experiencing because they can't manage the overwhelming feelings it induces. Helping professionals who don't take time for their own self-care may become emotionally depleted and feel burned out, resulting in comments that may cause secondary wounding. Mostly, secondary wounding is unintentional and is a result of complete lack of knowledge about what to say.

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