**How Trauma Affects Decision Making**

**Purpose:**  
This worksheet is designed to help you understand how trauma impacts your decision-making processes, identify patterns that may hinder your ability to make confident choices, and develop strategies to make decisions with clarity and resilience.

**1. Understanding Trauma’s Impact on Decision-Making**  
Trauma can alter the way your brain processes information, making decision-making feel overwhelming or fraught with self-doubt. The brain’s response to trauma often involves heightened fear, a tendency to avoid perceived risks, or difficulty trusting your judgment. Recognizing these patterns is the first step toward regaining confidence in your decisions.

* Reflect on how trauma has influenced your ability to make decisions. Do you feel more hesitant, avoidant, or reactive?
* How does making decisions feel to you in high-stress situations?

**2. Identifying Patterns in Decision-Making**  
Trauma can lead to decision-making patterns like avoidance, overthinking, or impulsivity. Examining these patterns helps you understand how they show up in your life.

* Do you notice yourself avoiding certain decisions? If so, what types of decisions feel hardest to face?
* Do you find yourself overthinking decisions? What fears or doubts tend to surface during this process?
* Are there times when you act impulsively to avoid discomfort? What situations trigger this reaction?

**3. Building Awareness and Clarity**  
Awareness is the foundation of confident decision-making. By slowing down and practicing mindfulness, you can approach decisions with greater clarity.

**Techniques for Mindful Decision-Making:**

* **Pause and Breathe:** Before making a decision, take three deep breaths to center yourself. This helps calm the mind and reduce emotional reactivity.
* **Name the Fear:** Identify the fear or doubt driving your hesitation. Ask yourself, “What am I afraid might happen?”
* **Consider Your Values:** Reflect on how the decision aligns with your values and long-term goals.
* Practice one of these techniques with a current decision you’re facing. What insight did it provide?

**4. Breaking Down Decisions**  
Trauma can make large decisions feel overwhelming. Breaking them into smaller, manageable steps can make the process less intimidating.

**Decision Breakdown Framework:**

1. **Define the Decision:** Clearly state what needs to be decided.
2. **List the Options:** Write down all possible choices, even those that seem unlikely.
3. **Weigh the Pros and Cons:** Consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of each option.
4. **Take One Step:** Identify a small, immediate action to move closer to a decision.

* Apply this framework to a decision you’re currently facing:
  + Decision: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  + Options: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  + Pros and Cons: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  + Next Step: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Trusting Your Intuition**  
Trauma can erode trust in your instincts, but rebuilding this trust allows you to make decisions with greater confidence. Intuition is often a quiet voice, guiding you based on your values and past experiences.

* Think of a time when you trusted your intuition and it led to a positive outcome. What did that feel like?
* How can you reconnect with your intuition in moments of doubt?

**6. Seeking Support When Needed**  
Some decisions benefit from the perspective of a trusted friend, mentor, or counselor. Reaching out for guidance can help you gain clarity and feel less alone in the process.

* Who in your life can you turn to for advice or support with difficult decisions?
* How can you communicate your needs when seeking help with a decision?

**7. Reflection: Recognizing Progress**  
Decision-making is a skill that improves with practice and self-awareness. Reflecting on past successes can boost your confidence in future choices.

* Think of a recent decision you made. What steps did you take, and what worked well?
* What is one way you’ve grown in your decision-making abilities since beginning your healing journey?

**Conclusion:**  
Trauma may complicate decision-making, but it does not define your ability to choose with intention and confidence. By slowing down, breaking decisions into smaller steps, and trusting yourself, you can approach choices with clarity and resilience. Remember, each decision you make is a step toward reclaiming your power and creating a life aligned with your values.