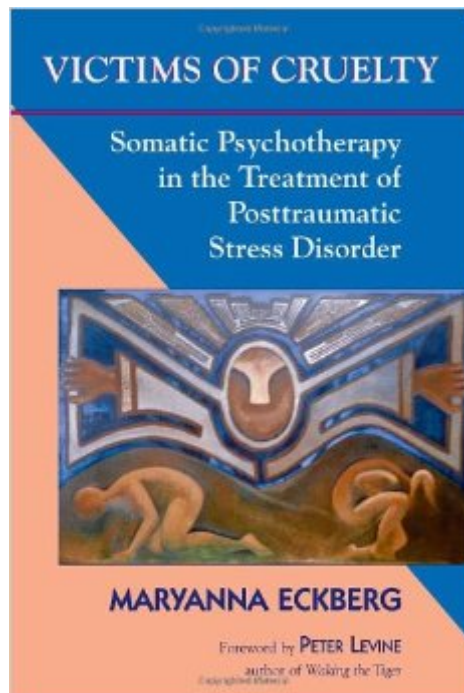


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# Victims Of Cruelty: Somatic Psychotherapy In The Healing Of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder



## Synopsis

In *Victims of Cruelty*, Maryanna Eckberg incorporates work with Vietnam veterans (the first to be diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder) and the Chowchilla kidnapping victims. This personal testimony of how people can heal after trauma is also a professional book describing the effects of personal and political repression and how we can liberate our bodies and minds from terror.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (7 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I read "Victims of Cruelty" as both a client and a student of Somatic Experiencing<sup>®</sup>, at the recommendation of my SE therapist. Eckberg gives some clear and fascinating insights into the value of somatic therapies for sufferers of PTSD, with a particular emphasis on her own specialty, victims of political and other forms of torture. The explicit conclusions she draws are hopeful and uplifting. The implicit conclusion, however, is not. As a student of the work, I found the book less technical than I would have hoped--it seems aimed at a lay audience, and yet the emphasis on fairly unusual and extreme forms of trauma makes it too specialized for general interest or "self-help." Eckberg mentions but does not elaborate on the specifics of her clinical methods. As a client of the work, I found the book distressing and even frightening: one of Eckberg's most haunting and memorable client cases, and then Eckberg herself, developed cancer at the successful conclusion of trauma therapy, and both eventually died of it. The book, published after Eckberg's death, seems to say that a natural outgrowth of recovery from a lifetime of PTSD is to find peace and then die. This would NOT be a message I'd want to give clients struggling to recover from trauma. "Victims of

Cruelty," therefore, stands as an interesting narrative of one woman's journey as a trauma victim and a healer, but failed to teach me much as a healer and actually detracted from my work as a client.

I have a vast collection of PTSD books on my shelves and I have to say this is one of the two best books on PTSD I have ever read. (The other one is *Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The Responsible Treatment of Complex Post-Traumatic and Dissociative Disorders*, by James A. Chu). Maryanna's story is the closest I have ever come to reading my own story! I related to so much of it that I underlined or highlighted more than half of her story. It was incredibly validating to find out that someone else had experienced the same things as me, including all of the dissociation. And it was inspiring to hear that she had found ways to recover. I highly recommend this book to anyone who has endured severe trauma and wonders if anyone else has ever experienced anything close to what they have experienced. You just might find yourself relating to her story, too!

*Total Healing to the Limits of Living: A Sourcebook for Awakening and Engaging the Healing Energies of the Tree of Life* I bought this book because I was so impressed with Maryanna Eckberg after a conversation I had with her twenty years ago. She seemed quiet, knowing, and in tune with the people she was working with. When I finally bought the book, I was more than impressed. She has written a brilliant review of her healing methods. She makes it quite obvious that in most cases, the only way to treat trauma is through bringing awareness back into a numbed consciousness. Her approach is respectful, allowing the client to follow their own unfolding as they are ready. The story of Maryanna's own trauma is heartbreaking, but encouraging in that she eventually found her way out of it through bioenergetics and other body-centered approaches.

This is the best book on PTSD I have read. I found the spiritual and psychological insights uplifting. It is a powerful read. As the previous critic stated, it is not a "technical" book with exact somatic therapy techniques listed. I did not find it extremely upsetting that the Author and one of her most important clients had passed away, death is an inevitable part of life. Although I appreciated how the Author explained her own experience of recovery -- this was at first overwhelming to me. It took longer to integrate this for me. For this reason I would not necessarily recommend it to a recovering client of PTSD. However, I think the examples she used to demonstrate her experience with clients were fine because although you might not relate to their exact situation this is helpful to distance yourself yet still be conscious of how tragedy can strike anyone.

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