

Then & Now: 'Echoes' From the Past

By Dr Laura France, Clinical Psychologist

For those of us living with the impact of adversity and trauma in our history, a key trigger for dysregulation is when our bodies and minds struggle to tell the difference between feelings and sensations that are 'echoes' from the past and feelings and sensations that belong in the here-and-now.



Imagine that, as a child, you were on a school trip at a busy attraction. Somehow, you become separated from your school party and you find that you are lost. As you look around, you can't see any of your school friends or the adults that are leading the trip. The more you look, the more lost you become. You become tearful, hot and panicky. You start to feel nauseous and dizzy. When you are found by one of your teachers, it takes a long time for the feelings in your body to settle down.

Now imagine that, as an adult, you're out for the evening, at a pub, club, show, gig... whatever it might be. And you realise that you have become separated from your friends. You don't have a signal on your phone. You notice, as you look around for your friends, that feelings of panic are starting to rise in your body. You start to feel tearful, hot and panicky. You notice that you are getting dizzy.



These feelings and sensations could be 'echoes' from the past and might not belong in the here-and-now.

The following process can help you to orient your mind and body to the here-and-now. This can often be very regulating, as you only need to manage feelings and sensations that belong in the present time.

Ask yourself: What are the differences between then and now?



THEN

Then I was a child and I didn't know how to keep myself safe

NOW

Now I am an adult and I have more knowledge and more resources

THEN

Then I was a child and I could not have got home independently

NOW

Now I am an adult and if I can't find my friends, I can get a taxi home

THEN

Then I was a child and being out, away from home, by myself was something I didn't have experience of

NOW

Now I am an adult and I have a lot of experience of being out in public on my own

Use this technique if you ever notice that your emotions and the sensations in your body feel **ESPECIALLY** powerful and overwhelming. It might be that something that has happened in the here-and-now has woken up an old memory and all of the feelings that go with that memory.