

What My Bones Know: A Memoir of Healing from Complex Trauma

By Stephanie Foo

Chronic emotional harm reshapes the nervous system, identity, and relationships. Lived experience is blended with neuroscience, psychology, and trauma therapies to illustrate that trauma responses are not personal failures, but adaptive survival strategies. Healing is framed as learning how to feel safely, reconnect relationally, and live with greater truth and self-compassion.

Therapeutic Orientation

Trauma-informed, attachment-based, somatic and nervous system-oriented frameworks; integrates EMDR, mindfulness, relational repair, and psychoeducation

Key Concepts

- Complex trauma is relational and cumulative, often arising from chronic emotional neglect, abuse, or instability rather than a single event
- Trauma responses (hypervigilance, emotional reactivity, dissociation) are protective reflexes, not character flaws
- Emotions are functional signals
- Talk therapy alone may be insufficient for trauma that is preverbal, dissociative, or stored somatically
- Grounding and mindfulness help interrupt dissociation and restore present-moment safety
- Because trauma is relational, healing requires safe connection, repair, and mutuality in addition to self-regulation

Practice Ideas

- Notice emotional reactions as information rather than evidence of being “too much” or “broken”
- When activated, gently orient to the present using sensory grounding (touch, sound, temperature)
- Experiment with external anchors (describing surroundings, naming colors, feeling contact points) to interrupt dissociation
- Reflect on whether self-regulation has become survival-only, and where co-regulation or support might be needed
- Observe patterns of over-apologizing, withdrawal, or self-punishment as learned responses rather than truths
- Journal prompt: What does my nervous system seem to be protecting me from right now?
- Journal prompt: What would repair look like in this moment (for a particular relationship)?

For Clients

This book may be helpful if you:

- Identify with complex trauma, emotional flashbacks, or chronic relational pain

- Feel confused by intense emotional reactions that seem disproportionate or sudden
- Struggle with dissociation, shame, or self-blame
- Want language that validates your experience without minimizing harm

What it's not:

- A step-by-step trauma treatment manual
- A quick or linear healing story
- A replacement for trauma-informed therapy

For Therapists

- Offers a powerful narrative explanation of complex trauma that can reduce client shame
- Useful for psychoeducation around triggers, emotional flashbacks, and nervous system responses
- Highlights limits of insight-only approaches and the importance of embodied and relational work
- Memoir format may feel intense or activating for some clients
- Less structured guidance

Clinical Takeaways

- Reframe trauma symptoms as adaptive survival strategies
- Emphasize grounding, safety, and embodiment before narrative processing
- Normalize grief for the childhood or relationships that were never available

Recommendation

Recommended for adults with complex trauma histories, attachment wounds, or chronic shame, particularly when paired with trauma-informed therapy that emphasizes nervous system regulation, relational repair, and compassion-based approaches.