



Why the Mind Keeps Replaying What Hurts the Most

September 2026



Dear friends,

If you have ever lain awake while your mind ran the same painful scene again and again, you know how exhausting it is. Many people who have lived through trauma ask some version of the same question: *Why can't I just stop thinking about it?*

It's important to know that there's nothing wrong with you, and your brain is not malfunctioning. It's trying to protect you.

During a traumatic event, the brain's threat-detection system, centered on the amygdala, takes over. The prefrontal cortex, which helps us organize experience into a coherent story with a beginning, middle, and end, goes partially offline. As a result, traumatic memories are often stored differently from ordinary ones. They stay fragmented: an image, a sound, a bodily sensation, without the context that tells the brain *this is over*. So, the memory stays "open." The brain treats it as unfinished business and keeps returning to it, hoping to make sense of what happened, prevent it from happening again, or find the thing it should have done differently. This is why replaying can feel so compelling, and why it often brings guilt, shame, and "what if" thinking along with it.

Reminders, also known as triggers, can then pull us back in. When they do, the body reacts as though the danger is present, with a racing heart, tension, and a surge of fear, even when we are perfectly safe.

Most of us try to push the memory away. It makes sense, but suppression tends to make intrusive thoughts more frequent, not less. The memory never gets the chance to be processed and filed as something that happened *then*.

The good news is that the brain is remarkably adaptable, and effective treatments exist:

- Trauma-informed therapy models such as CBT and DBT help people examine the beliefs that formed around the trauma ("It was my fault," "I'm not safe anywhere") and gradually process the memory in a supported way.
- Narrative Therapy allows clients to rewrite their stories and differentiate the person from the issue that is causing pain and strife.
- EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) uses guided bilateral stimulation while a person briefly recalls the memory, helping reduce its emotional intensity.
- Prolonged exposure therapy carefully and gradually approaches trauma reminders, so the brain learns they are no longer dangerous.
- Somatic and body-based approaches address the way trauma lives in the nervous system, not just in thoughts.
- Grounding skills, such as slow breathing, naming five things you can see, or feeling your feet on the floor, help bring you back to the present when a memory surfaces.

The modality is based on our clinicians' assessment of whether the trauma is "stored in the body" or if the person can articulate the trauma. That helps determine whether to utilize strategies for talk therapy, somatic approaches, or both.

Healing doesn't mean forgetting. It means the memory loses its power to hijack the present. It becomes something you remember rather than something you relive.

It can feel intimidating to bring these thoughts into the open because we may worry they will become overwhelming. I want to assure you that trained therapists will walk you through the healing process at a pace and level of intensity that works for you, so you'll be safe and feel at peace.

All my best to you always,

Maria

Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW
President and CEO



FEATURED ARTICLE

How Can Parents Talk to Teens About Suicide?

For many parents and caregivers, talking with a young person about suicide can feel uncomfortable or intimidating. It is natural to worry about saying the wrong thing, making the situation worse, or bringing up a topic their child was not already thinking about. Even with those concerns, creating space for open, direct conversations can help a young person feel supported and more comfortable sharing what they are experiencing.

In recognition of Suicide Prevention Month, Laura Cummings, LCSW, CCDDP-D, Adolescent Clinical Supervisor, joined 97.3 WZBG to share practical steps parents and caregivers can take to talk about suicide, help keep a young person safe, and recognize when additional support may be needed.

[Continue reading](#)

More stories for you to enjoy:



A Father's Journey with Family Recovery Coaching

Read George's honest story of how Family Recovery Coaching helped him support his son while navigating the challenges of caring for his own well-being.

[Read the story](#)



The Room Is Not the Treatment

What if the real measure of treatment isn't what gets covered in the room, but what becomes possible afterward?

[Read the story](#)



Youth Suicide Deaths Are Declining in Connecticut. What's Making a Difference?

Our Director of Prevention and Family Services explores three prevention efforts helping more young people reach support.

[Read the article](#)



The Zero Suicide Framework

Our Commitment to Prevention and Care

Learn how McCall is strengthening suicide prevention through an organization-wide commitment to safer, compassionate care.

[Read the article](#)



GRANTS & GRATITUDE

The McCall Funding Committee is excited to announce recent financial support extended to our organization. We're extremely grateful for the generous gifts that will help further our mission.

Expanding Addiction Treatment Using the Nurse Care Manager Model

Thank you to the Grayken Center for Addiction Training & Technical Assistance for providing training and accommodations for five McCall staff members in April 2027.



OUT-AND-ABOUT WITH MCCALL

Another Meaningful Overdose Awareness Day



On August 31, our community came together to remember lives lost to overdose, support those impacted by substance use, and stand together in hope.

We're thankful to the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force for hosting the Overdose Awareness Day Vigil and Resource Fair, and to everyone who took part in such an important evening.

Every year this event reminds us of the strength of community, the importance of connection, and the shared work of preventing overdose and supporting recovery.



The "Award-Winning" United Way Kickoff Breakfast

McCall Staff joined local organizations at the United Way of Northwest Connecticut Campaign Kickoff Breakfast to celebrate the start of another year of supporting families and communities across the region.

This year's Oscars theme added a little extra fun, with each organization choosing a staff member to take on the role of celebrity server. A special shout-out to our very own "Hilary Swank" from Million Dollar Baby for representing McCall!



The Waterbury Chamber Health Care Council Awards

The Waterbury Regional Chamber Health Care Council presented its 2026 Organizational Excellence Award to The Modern Woman Health and Wellness Center in Wolcott!

As last year's recipient, McCall was honored to pass the torch. Congratulations to the TMW team on this well-deserved recognition!



A Grand Slam for Prevention

Staff from our Prevention and Family Services Department attended the 2026 Prevention Summit at Dunkin' Park in Hartford.

The annual event brings together prevention professionals from across Connecticut for conversations on emerging trends and strategies in substance use prevention, community health, and coalition building.



Marketing Ships Up to Unbound

Our Marketing and Development team represented McCall at UNBOUND in Boston, where they spent several days learning, connecting, and exploring new ideas in marketing and communications.

The conference offered fresh perspectives on how we can strengthen our marketing efforts, including this email!



Have a moment to leave us a Google Review?

We're grateful for every review, comment, and piece of feedback we receive from our clients and staff. If you've had a positive experience with us, we'd love for you to take a moment to share your story by leaving us a review. Your feedback helps others learn more about the care and support we provide.

[Leave your review here](#)



58 High St. Torrington, CT 06790
mccallbhn.org | 860.496.2100

