



HASHIMOTO'S PROTOCOL

Root Cause
Reflection Workbook

Dear Reader,

I'm so proud of you for taking this next step on your health journey!

Please find a quiet place that will allow you for taking time to reflect as you read and write on these next pages.

To your health!



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ROOT CAUSE REFLECTION: WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO HAVE HASHIMOTO'S

I know that Hashimoto's can make you feel like you're alone and losing yourself. Many of the symptoms can feel confusing, others downright devastating. Sometimes the list of symptoms can sound more clinical than relatable, so I asked my Facebook community of Root Cause Rebels about how Hashimoto's made them feel in their own words. Here's what they said:

- "Having Hashimoto's is like living a lie; putting on your public face for a few hours here and there after you've spent the entire day feeling like you're wearing a weighted blanket, hoping no one catches you sleeping till 10:00 a.m. and napping at 2:00 p.m. and unable to remember anything on your to-do list. You're embarrassed of yourself, and it's spirit crushing."
- "I feel trapped inside. Alone in a dark cave with my dreams, but no gas/energy to carry my dreams to the world."
- "An out-of-body experience where I don't know who I am anymore, nor how I got this way. When I'm tired, I feel like there's a weight on my body preventing me from moving."
- "I feel like I'm sitting on the sidelines of life, watching everyone else enjoy their journey, wondering if I'll ever have my zest for life back."
- "Like being a clean freak but a bum is running the show."
- "To be at the mercy of an invisible illness, no control over my mood, no understandable explanation to my family on why I'm crying in the laundry room for no reason."
- "The worst part of this disease is trying to convince doctors that I am so unwell and having them tell me to eat less, exercise more, and take an antidepressant because my TSH level is 'in the normal range.' Basically being told, 'It's all in your head. Your blood test results show you are fine. What is really going on with you is that you are unhappy in your life, nothing to do with thyroid disease.'"
- "Confusing, exasperating, numbing, exhausting. It's so incredibly hard on those who have it, as it is hard on those who love us. It's hard to explain the feelings, the desperation, the weight gain, and the lack of intimacy to those who have not experienced it firsthand. It's just hard."



ROOT CAUSE REFLECTION: WHAT WAS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE BEFORE YOU GOT SICK?

Whenever I'm working with a new client, we go through an intake process of uncovering potential triggers and exacerbating factors that have led them to a path of disease. The goal of this exercise is to identify the wrong turns so we can start making some right turns toward a path to wellness.

When I conducted a survey of my readers with Hashimoto's in 2015, I focused one of the questions on what had been happening before readers started to feel unwell. With this information, I wanted to see if we could uncover the most common predisposing triggers. Out of the two-thousand-plus responses, stress seemed to be the most common answer, but there were other elements and experiences that preceded and possibly contributed to a Hashimoto's diagnosis as well. I am sharing this list with you to help you uncover your own predisposing triggers. Readers reported the following events in their lives just before they started to feel unwell:

- 69% a lot of stress
- 23% having a baby
- 20% moving to a new home
- 17% suffering the death of a loved one
- 11% mononucleosis, caused by the Epstein-Barr virus
- 11% exposure to a toxin
- 8% extensive dental work
- 6% a car accident
- 5% remodeling their home
- 4% food poisoning (potential gut infection)
- 4% possible exposure to the bacteria that causes Lyme disease through a tick bite
- 2% breast augmentation surgery

You can see that there are a variety of predisposing factors that can ignite the autoimmune response in those who are genetically predisposed to it. While all of these triggers may seem diverse, when we take a step back, we can see that they all involve stress, toxins, or infections. From a holistic perspective, these are the three main pathways to illness.



ROOT CAUSE REFLECTION: HASHIMOTO'S ANXIETY

We know that stress, anxiety, and being high-strung can contribute to adrenal issues, but it's a two-way street. Many of my readers and clients report that the onset of Hashimoto's changed their previously calm and laid-back demeanor. One reader wrote: "After my Hashimoto's diagnosis, all of a sudden I found myself with panic attacks and anxiety. This was not me.

I went from a comfortable social butterfly to a constantly anxious person who could barely speak up in work meetings. It's like all of a sudden I couldn't cope with anything!"

In stage 2 and beyond in Hashimoto's, the thyroid is under attack by the immune system. As thyroid cells are broken down, they release thyroid hormones into the bloodstream. This causes thyroid hormone surges, or a transient hyperthyroidism. This excess amount of thyroid hormone can make us extremely anxious, irritable, and on edge. This is one symptom that is commonly attributed to Graves' disease but can also happen in Hashimoto's.

I know how awful anxiety can feel, and so I'm really excited to share that there is a way out. You don't have to feel this way forever. Everyone is different, but two of the things that have worked wonders for my clients and me are the following: supplementing with selenium in the morning and magnesium citrate at bedtime, and balancing the blood sugar with nutrition.

Do you struggle with anxiety?

Did you realize this symptom could be due to Hashimoto's?

If you were less anxious, how would that improve your life?



ROOT CAUSE REFLECTION: DO YOU FEEL SAFE?

Do you feel safe in your own home, community, body, and mind? This is a pretty deep question that goes beyond the usual health questionnaire I would give to my functional medicine clients when I first started consulting. Safety in my home, community, body, and mind was not something I considered for myself, or for others early in my journey, but I soon began to see a pattern, especially with the clients who, despite my (and their) best efforts, were not getting better.

Feeling unsafe keeps you from healing, as it put us in a fight or- flight mode. As I mentioned in chapter 2, a 2013 study found that the thyroid gland can sense danger and initiate the autoimmune response. Many of my friends and readers know that I am a big evolution buff, so I can't help but wonder that perhaps our minds and bodies are sending a message to our thyroid and immune system in times we feel unsafe. While I consider myself more practical than spiritual, this makes sense from a physiological standpoint nonetheless.

Overactive fight-or-flight mode, which is a response of the sympathetic nervous system, is often present in people with a history of trauma and may predispose us to autoimmune disease—our emotions set our bodies to the fight-or-flight setting instead of the rest, digest, and heal setting. I believe that Hashimoto's develops as a result of adaptive physiology. Your body wants to survive, and so it adapts to its environment. Hashimoto's becomes the body's defense mechanism for overwhelming stressors and threats. The threats could be toxins, infections, nutrient deficiencies, current stressful situations, or past unresolved emotional stressors. Hypothyroidism can play a protective role in the following cases:

- In cases of abuse, becoming hypothyroid makes us want to sleep and withdraw, where like the POWs, we have better chances of survival.
- In cases of sexual assault, hypothyroidism makes us less fertile and less attractive to potential abusers (hair loss, increased body weight, dull skin).
- The anxiety experienced due to thyroid cell breakdown may make a person more hypervigilant to potential dangers.

Research has connected physical and sexual abuse with excess weight gain later in life. It makes sense that someone who has had their physical or sexual boundaries violated would want to find ways to protect themselves. A person who was abused or felt vulnerable may feel protected by the excess weight. I believe that it's no coincidence that women are more likely to suffer both from sexual assault and autoimmune thyroid diseases.



In 2014, I attended a lecture by Erica Peirson, ND, who specializes in thyroid disorders in children with Down syndrome. She explained that more people in Ireland have Hashimoto's because the lower metabolic rate helped them survive the potato famine. Imagine that—thyroid disorders are advantageous in times of famine! This makes sense, as a person with a low metabolic rate can hold on to their body weight, fueling them when food is scarce. So if you're carrying around extra weight, thank your body for having this genius design, but also perhaps it's worth thinking about what may have convinced your body that you're going through a time of famine.

Here's the conversation that's happening inside of the body in times of stress. Immune system: "You're not safe here. This is not a good time to reproduce." Or "I'm going to help you get through the tough winter by slowing down your metabolism. This will allow you to hold on to more weight to keep you fed when food is scarce. I'm going to make you cold and tired so you don't venture out of your cave."

It may be easy for people to recognize environmental threats and physical abuse, but emotional abuse at the hands of others may also be a factor in you feeling unsafe. I know it can feel very hurtful and betraying when you realize that someone you love and trust is hurting you. But think about what your body is saying to you and why.

Alternatively, you may be someone who feels anxious, hypervigilant, and unsafe in response to normal life situations due to your past traumas. Furthermore, your own thought patterns may be contributing to your current state of stress.

I know it's not easy to make the first step toward change, but change is possible and you do not have to live this way. I don't know what kinds of traumas you have experienced in your life, but I can tell you that you are not alone and that your past does not determine your future. You can recover from your past, and you have the power to take back your health and your life! If you've suffered from severe trauma, you may want to seek treatment from a therapist. At the end of the chapter, I'll introduce you to the type of therapy I found most beneficial.

Do you feel safe?

Does thyroid disease play a protective role in your life?



ROOT CAUSE REFLECTION: CHANGE THE VOICE INSIDE YOUR HEAD

How many of us cut negative people out of our lives, say goodbye to unsupportive friends, minimize contact with mean relatives, and so on, but continue to beat ourselves up? I know I'm not alone in having been my own biggest hater and critic. These are some of the thoughts I used to direct toward myself:

"You're so dumb, I can't believe you said that in front of so and so."

"You're so awkward, people are going to laugh at you."

"You woke up late again? You're such a loser."

What I realized is that when I promised not to let anyone beat me up, "anyone" has to include me.

Let's reframe. Think of a time when you did something wrong. What did you say to yourself? Now imagine instead if this was your best friend, little sister, or daughter. Imagine she was tired from a long day of work and travel, then woke up late and missed two meetings. What would you say to her? Chances are, you'd respond in a much more loving fashion. Instead of saying, "You fool! I can't believe you did that. You're failing at life." You'd likely say, "Sweetie, sorry to hear that you overslept and missed those important meetings. I'm sure you feel bad about it already. Maybe it's a sign that your body needs more rest. Maybe you've been working too hard. Be kind to yourself and take care of yourself."

The takeaway is that it's okay to be your own best friend. Treat yourself as gently and kindly as you would your little sister or your baby girl.

Who is that person in your life that you love unconditionally (a child, friend, family member, or perhaps even pet)?



What things do you say to yourself that you would never say to the person you love?

If you treated yourself like someone you truly loved unconditionally, what sorts of things would you say to yourself instead?

**ROOT CAUSE REFLECTION:
A JOURNEY THROUGH TRAUMA**

Have you experienced traumas in your life that led you to develop negative beliefs about the world?



Do any of these traumas affect your health, well-being, or happiness?

What will happen if you don't overcome your traumas?



What is your plan for overcoming these traumas in your life?

“Today I choose to love me. Today I choose to cherish me. I will no longer attack myself, beat myself up, or be hard on myself. I deserve better. I deserve love, compassion, caring, and understanding. I will not settle for less. Today it starts with me.”

