



 **N-FORMATION**

was born on March 25, 1956, in Flanders, Belgium, the second of four children and the first daughter in a family deeply immersed in business. Growing up in a bilingual world, I received both Flemish and French education, and later English, which prepared me to become an international citizen, first of Europe and then of the world. My family's life revolved around the world of large-scale business, and from a young age, I was immersed in a bustling environment of entrepreneurship and global connections.

In this world, I learned the hard way—the codes, the do's and don'ts, and what it took to be a woman in a male-dominated family business. But I was also fortunate. My father showed me the softer side of life, teaching me how to create warmth and joy in every moment. By the time I was nine, I had become aware of the powerful undercurrents of transgenerational challenges and how they shaped our family's lives, both personally and professionally.

At sixteen, I was determined to change the world. I dreamed of studying economics and finance, ready to prove myself as a woman who could thrive in a man's world. But life had other plans. At nineteen, I felt a profound calling that led me into a deep relationship with a young man from another family business. Together, we raised four sons, and I quickly found myself navigating the complex worlds of family life and business without a formal education—what I call the “university of life.” Through these years, I learned as much about myself as I did about life's challenges.



Over the years, I faced my own personal trials. Chronic health issues, psycho-emotional stress, and a quiet but relentless sense of fatigue were part of my reality. I refused to accept these as permanent limitations, though, and I was driven to search for new ways to live and thrive. This led me into the world of complementary therapies, opening my mind to new perspectives and possibilities. When my father passed away unexpectedly when I was 33, it changed me deeply. Amid the grief, I felt a strange but lasting presence of warmth, peace, and strength—a feeling that's stayed with me ever since, guiding me in ways I can't fully explain.

At 35, I took a step into the business world on my own, starting small ventures that gave me a taste of the challenges and responsibilities of being a businesswoman. It

was difficult, sometimes harsh, and left me wondering why life and business had to be so stressful. I felt that there had to be more, that life wasn't meant to be lived in constant struggle—and I was right.

At 40, my life took another turn, and I discovered a heightened sensitivity and clear-mindedness. This discovery was a revelation, connecting me to a field of knowledge I'd never imagined. With the help of mentors, I cautiously explored this new dimension, learning how to apply these insights in practical ways that brought real change to my life.

My journey led me to reconnect with an old friend, a mother whose son had suffered a severe brain injury. I spent ten years helping

her understand her son's needs and supporting her through emerging therapies that helped release her own emotional stress. I later did similar work with another mother in a parallel situation. These experiences led me to co-found Open Therapeuticum Leuven (OTL), a neurocenter where we could combine traditional therapies with new, psycho-emotional approaches to help young people with brain injuries reintegrate into society.

For two decades, I immersed myself in this work, helping families and young people heal from trauma while exploring the deeper layers of the human experience—physical, emotional, mental, and energetic. This journey opened my eyes to an even broader world of personal growth and potential, guiding people toward greater awareness and a life in alignment with their highest self.

Today, I'm taking everything I've learned and extending it beyond the neurocenter, into the realms of personal and professional development. My goal is to help others explore and develop their true potential, in life and in business, and to transform outdated paradigms into ones that bring peace, meaning, and lasting fulfillment. This is my story, and I hope that through these manuals, my experiences will inspire and support you on your own journey.

Gent, 11 of November 2024.





Chapter

01

The Challenge of Trauma





Trauma, in all its forms, is one of the most pervasive and deeply rooted challenges in human experience. Whether stemming from a single event or a prolonged exposure to distress, trauma has the power to shape our lives in ways that are often invisible to the outside world yet profoundly impactful on our inner landscapes. The effects of trauma can manifest in myriad ways—physically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually—affecting our overall well-being, relationships, and capacity to engage with life fully.

This first chapter explores the complex nature of trauma, particularly focusing on the profound impacts it can have on individuals. From severe injuries such as brain damage to more subtle, yet equally significant, life struggles, trauma presents a formidable challenge for those seeking healing and growth. However, within every challenge lies the potential for transformation.

Over three decades we have dedicated our efforts to understanding and addressing these challenges.

Our approach to coaching was forged through working with hundreds of individuals undergoing the most outstanding challenges, and, at the same time, from incorporating the views of an amazing multidisciplinary network of health professionals that strived to do whatever was needed to help. Based on this unexpected integration of knowledge, we attempt to offer, every day, a path forward that transcends conventional methods. Rooted in a deep understanding of the mind-body connection and the subtle, multidimensional aspects of human existence, our method provides a holistic framework for healing and personal growth.

Here, we will delve briefly into the essence of trauma, the barriers it creates, and the reasons why traditional methods often fall short. As we begin this journey, it is essential to understand the vast extension of trauma's impact and the importance of an approach that not only acknowledges but also integrates the full spectrum of human experience along the healing process.



WHAT IS TRAUMA?



Trauma is not just an event or a series of events; it is the lingering impact that those events have on a person's mind, body, and spirit⁽¹⁾. It disrupts the normal functioning of the brain, often leaving lasting imprints that can lead to chronic stress, anxiety, depression, and a host of other psychological and physiological conditions. In the case of severe injuries, such as brain damage, the effects can be even more pronounced, leading to significant challenges in cognitive and emotional functioning.

Yet, trauma is not confined to extreme situations. Everyday life events—loss, disappointment, failure—can also leave marks that shape our responses to future challenges, sometimes creating very long-lasting changes in our personal responses to new events. What makes trauma particularly challenging is its ability to exist beneath the surface, influencing behavior, thought patterns, and physical health without overtly revealing itself.

In addressing trauma, it becomes clear that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient. Trauma is as unique as the individuals who experience it, requiring a nuanced, compassionate, and multifaceted approach to healing. Our method recognizes this complexity, offering a tailored and integrative pathway to recovery that respects the individuality of each person's journey.

For example, a study conducted by Oxford in a trauma-informed middle school setting explored how early adolescents responded differently to similar traumatic experiences. Some youngsters exhibited symptoms of withdrawal and isolation, while others showed aggression or difficulty forming healthy relationships. This difference was linked to varying levels of emotional regulation, cognitive development, and social support. For example, one student who witnessed domestic violence remained hyper-vigilant and involved with his family conflict, while another with similar experiences developed relational avoidance and aggression in peer interactions.

(1) When we mention the concept of spirit within this manual, we use it to describe those aspects which humans perceive about themselves that transcend both body and mind, most of the time connected to invisible or intangible forces and factors beyond commonly accepted scientific logic.