

# TMFRS

LET'S MAKE SENSE OF YER STUPID FUCKING BRAIN

## Contextualizing 2021; Redesigning 2022

And closing this chapter to open the next one

Winter 2021

### Shut down still-unprocessed memories and start your new life

Let's talk about reflecting. You know, the thing none of us really have time for. Also the thing that makes us reprocess memories so they fit into one place together, instead of shaking around like loose change in your pocket. Meaning, the way we find meaning in anything we've collected in our brains so far.

So, reflecting is something we should do, for sake of a clean brain and regularly updated sense of self. But we DON'T do, because it sucks.

It takes a lot of time. It requires being alone and undistracted. It hurts. It brings up the memories we've been avoiding. It requires us to think in big pictures AND smaller details, which often just leads to dissociation spells. And if you only get halfway through it, you're going to have open memories looping on repeat like a song you want to forget.

Well. I say, too bad. You'd better take this to completion then, because reflecting is where all the work really gets done.

I mean. Go ahead, see a therapist every day for the rest of your life. If you never reflect on what they tell you, you'll still never get any work done.

For me, the most powerful part of trauma recovery has been my time spent alone, looking back at recent events reframed by new information. Or finding cool research and spending weeks in the woods, figuring out how it applies to real life. Or realizing I've significantly changed again, and finding ways to place the alterations in some map of time-space that includes relevant experiential factors.

All of which require reflection. Peace. Quiet. A fairly silent emotional system and access to the human brain.

This is where the inner work is done. This is where those new neural connections are made. This is how memories are reconsolidated. Fucked up core beliefs are discovered and released. Personal shamings are too. This is where my story so far gets new chapters added on, instead of disjointed editors notes.

Outside. By myself. Thinking on past events in silence.

And that's why I think it's especially important to do an end of year wrap up for settling trauma brain as much as possible. Move into the new year knowing what you've seen and making some logical sense of it, so you can start with a clean slate to totally fuck up when 2022 starts throwing potatoes at you.

Clear your mental cache (or "cash?" I don't know, I might be saying it wrong), and start again with a new arbitrary designation of time. It really does help with putting history into the old information pile and coming at life with motivation and clarity.

So first thing's first... let's break down the past year, focusing on the pain points and rapid brain redirections that you've had to overcome.

But before we even get THAT far, you need to prepare your brain and body for the thrashing they're possibly about to get.

## **PREPARATION EXERCISE, EXERCISE**

Go outside. Get a lot of exercise, ON YOUR OWN. Walk in some woods, preferably. Listen to nothing, distract yourself with nothing, turn off your motherfucking phone so you aren't checking it every 2 minutes. Hint: it's two minutes later than it was the last time you checked.

Focus on the feeling of your feet taking steps, back and forth, back and forth. Feel the bottoms making contact with the rough ground through the soles of your shoes.

Think about your posture - feel your muscles as you walk, try to establish a smooth flow to their coordination. Stand up straight, practice feeling your spine reaching up directly to the sky. Feel your core engage and your spine pivot as you keep walking.

And do this... until you're worn out. Like, all the anxiety butterflies are settled. The tense spots are worked out. The annoyingly dense, active spots in your brain are unraveling. Your thoughts are releasing whatever they've been obsessive about, feelings are coming up, you might have experiential and visceral memories coming to the top of the pond.

Give it, I would say at least two hours. Take breaks if you need to.

But don't you dare re-pollute your head with your phone or anyone else's influence. This is about you, your brain, and your body having a moment with some motherfucking trees.

And yes, you need to do this. Fight against me or get with me, but this is how my processing takes place and how my trauma recovery ever began, prior to which I was not "an outdoor person." So it's what I'll always suggest. Get right with your self, separated from the distracted, anxious, consumerism of mankind. Feel, for the first time in years, maybe, what peace feels like.

Then?

Take some time to do nothing. Don't even leave the area you're walking in. Just sit in your car and think. Or don't think and just feel. Let the electrons finish their course through whatever brain areas you were igniting on your walk. Come to any conclusions you may have been drawing from that time.

And you probably want to whip out your journal to put those realizations and reminders down on paper. Right away. Because you *WILL* forget them and lose this sense of knowing, basically as soon as you re-integrate with society.

I recommend you *eventually* work your way back home - or wherever you feel safe, comfortable, and undisturbed. Slowly. No rush. Nothing on your mind that you "need to do." No aggression on the road. Just more silence or something novel on the radio, like music you don't normally hear or a new, chill, podcast.

And when you get there?

You're doing NOTHING. NOTHING AT ALL. Locking yourself away in a comfortable place - still NO PHONES, no TV, no distractions - and settling.

Then (and, if you ask me, only then), should you continue with the actual reflection exercises I'm about to spit at you. It'll be the most effective way to do this work. And it's a routine I would recommend you practice regularly, especially at the beginning of your recovery.

Alright. Ready to finally do this?

## **Let's begin Exercise Block I.**

### **Part I.**

So you know, get out your journal. You're going to want to write. I insist on it. Otherwise your brain will drift, you won't integrate words and experiences so readily, and you're just not going to get as much accomplished as far as cleaning up your head. Promise. Start writing more often, start feeling clear more often. Don't fight science on this, you're only hurting yourself.

Alright, so right away. Let's consider your big life changes from this past year. In particular, focus on any shifting social trends, jobs, residence, health changes. Write out any answers to these questions, or use the worksheet I'm giving you to fill in the blanks.

Here it comes.

**Did you make or lose any friends?**

**Have changes in your family structure or clan relationships?**

**Go through any breakups or big romantic life alterations?**

**Notice how your social experiences have the ability to make or break your emotions every day?**

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**Change or lose jobs?**

**Have a culture or daily duties shift at work?**

**Decide you're not a fan of what you've been doing?**

**Notice how your work impacts your mental health?**

**Move?**

**Get a new roommate?**

**Lose an old roommate?**

**Decide you absolutely cannot live with or without roommates?**

**Notice any weird trends in your home life stress levels?**

**Have any health failures or recoverations?**

**Come up with new ways to manage your daily experience?**

**Try some diets?**

**Quit some diets?**

**Fall into bad habits because of mental conditions?**

**Notice any connections between how you treat yourself and how everything we listed above was impacting you?**

Great. Let's name all the obvious surface level happenings, where physical reality was indisputably changed.

Because the next thing we need to sort though is... everything under the surface.

## **Part II.**

Now you're going to write out what you can remember about those big mental and emotional changes.

So, think of times when you were feeling high energy versus low energy.

**When were you motivated?**

**When were you stalled out?**

**When was anxiety the daily driver?**

**When did depression keep you from going anywhere?**

**When did you feel optimistic?**

**When were you too drained to have a single positive feeling at all?**

Similarly, can you remember times of (I know, scoff now) internal peace?

**Were there any moments, days, or weeks that you felt quiet on the inside?**

**Unaffected by everything around you?**

**Able to see things without having reactions to them?**

**Free of disturbance for even a few minutes?**

**On the other hand, when did you feel full of chaos?  
When were you spun around and disintegrated?  
Full of scattered thoughts?  
Running on level 11?**

And then, you might want to also consider when you were dominantly intellectual versus rooted in emotional experiences. If your brain is like mine, it fluctuates between the two rather than finding an equal balance. Shocker.

**When did you have access to your higher human mind to get organized work accomplished?  
When were you seeing the world through logical goggles?  
When did you have numbed out, limited access to your feelings?  
And, the opposite. When were you swimming in emotions and unable to string words or numbers together?**

**What was going on during all of these internal changes just described?** Start to think about the conditions and context of the times when you had these polar opposite experiences. Maybe start connecting the external changes from part one with the internal changes from part two.

You know we're going there eventually. Link up similar times with similar trends. Start tracing events to inner alterations.

### **Pt III.**

Let's dig in a little deeper to mesh both of these lists together with more details. Including, hijacking visceral, sensory memory center to bring up information we may have forgotten.

So let's look now at your sensory trends and quality of existence in the past year.

**First of all**, what sort of activities did you ENJOY at various points?

**Did you get into an exercise obsession?**

**A cooking kick?**

**A creativity hole?**

**Were you super social at some points, and more happily introspective at others?**

**What were you up to, when, how did it make you feel better or more fulfilled and...**

**Why do you think that was the case, if you consider the other relevant experiences of that time?**



**Secondly**, do you remember any encompassing “feelings in the air,” for lack of better term?

**Was there just a different *sense* to how you felt each day?**

**Or times that felt more peaceful or more anxious on a larger scale around you?**

**How do you remember those outside influences and how did they create internal changes?**

**What external changes came from those inner alterations?**

**Thirdly**, let’s consider how these both tie into default programs you were running each day.

**Did you have set routines or schedules that changed over the year?**

**Were you “feeling like a certain version of you” at certain times?**

**Were your goals and motivations altered at any point?**

**What was your brain engaging each day, and**

**How did it produce change in your internal and external environments?**

**Alright. So, Exercise One, Parts I-III, concluded. Now here's why there's a point to doing all of this.**

These are all important things to ponder, because they can start outlining mental and emotional changes you were experiencing, that you may not have really “sewn together” as causative or correlated factors. It's unlikely that you're ever “just feeling” or “just thinking” or “just acting” in a certain way - especially when those are persevering states. It's a lot more likely that something in your experience is creating a mental change, which might start viciously-cycling into dark territory or lifting you up into an optimistic state.

But it's important to pinpoint the reasons WHY, to understand what isn't working for you or where you need to do more healing.

There might be underlying lifelong trends you haven't spotted before, still churning your shit up on repeat. Noticing and naming these factors could help you understand your past better, give these past years some context, and move forward with less strain if you can make necessary alterations internally or externally.

For us, many of these points of stress will be social, revolving around “security,” or based in our own thoughts and emotions running off in historically defeating ways. Taking a look at work, social, family, and external conditions as they relate to changing internal conditions (which feed back into functional or dysfunctional behaviors, mind you) is extremely helpful for noticing the transmission of one “vibe” from experience to the next.

So, pay attention to enduring patterns. And think about how one variable might feed into the next, possibly with your own thoughts and feelings as a catalyst.

I.e. I had a horrible time at work, it made my head focus on all the ways I'm disappointing, I got stuck in a depressive spell, and shortly thereafter my relationship failed, which fed back to worsen all the other events. I stopped working out, I stopped going out, and I stopped working towards that higher goal achievement in that time.

Well, those aren't unrelated. And they were mediated, most largely, by your own brain's operations.

If you hadn't spiralled after the negative work event, you might not have wound up here. So that's where to focus your attention - why did some boss's opinion override your own? What brain programs are still jangling around in there, feeding into emotional responses that make you slip into a negative spiral? And how did those cognitive patterns then present as new external events?

Makes sense? Well, hopefully. And hopefully it'll make sense of the relevance of seemingly unrelated events this year.

**Let's move on to some Pointers for getting through this process, if you're having some hangups.**

## **POINTERS**

**Point One: Remember your Expected vs Actual lists and "Yeah, but" bridges.**

If you're hitting a ruminatory wall, with your head zipping back and forth between events you didn't expect and their meaning or fairness... you might want to hit up that "Closing background brain processes" episode and video to revisit some suggestions for closing up that gap.

Namely, creating a list of expected events and a list of actual events. Then, filling in the void in between with "yeah, but" bridges that incorporate realistic, objective, factual information to recontextualize the un-actualized happening.

It helps me, personally, to build connections that my brain seems to be lacking. There's code missing between curveballs I was thrown, so I try to force the bridging idea into my own head instead of leaving an open circuit of unsolved mystery. Give this exercise a try and repeat at necessary, until your brain sees the events as one continuous and logical story, emotions removed until they can be experienced safely.

**Second tip: Use broad picture thinking.**

If you're getting spun out by small details and obsessive spirals thinking about the past year, try to take ten steps backwards and pull your energy out of the swirling data points. They look like dots up close, but form a complete picture if you get far enough away.

So, one of my favorite tips is to pretend it's 2 years in the future and you're describing the events to someone else from that perspective. "I remember that I went to work one day, everything felt off, and then my jackass boss told me... which really fucked me up for the next

few months, as I worried about being homeless and healthcareless. It made me spiral for a while, because I felt like nothing ever worked out for me. But then things started getting better when I realized this was a temporary position, I can find a new one that fits better with my brain, and that boss was an alcoholic jaghole who wasn't going to be a good match for me, regardless."

It helps to take some of the sting out of recollecting events. It helps to contextualize happenings into larger pictures. And it helps to simplify the story without all of the emotional or survival system detours. Plus, it reminds you that "this too shall pass." Someday, it WILL be two years into the future, and I bet you'll just be laughing about what a dipshit your boss was. Or your ex was. Or your entire family was.

With new experience comes new perspective. So, just skip the line and reframe it like you've already moved on. This tool has saved my ass a lot of times.

### **Another way to use a broad perspective is Point III - to take an outside view.**

Just straight-up pretend it wasn't YOU who experienced these things, if it's too painful or critical to recognize your experience from inside your self. Focus only on observable facts or make a character to go through 2021 for you. It really helps with information integration without the triggerings or inner critic shitfests that can derail you here.

The most effective way I've found to do this? Well, one... you can make an avatar. Gotta whole episode about that, releasing right about now.

Another powerful move? Pretend you're talking to your best friend, and THEY'RE describing the events of your year to you.

Would you ever tell them "seems like your fault, you can't do anything right and you're fundamentally flawed"? "You'll never be happy and you don't deserve to be, because you're disgusting"? "Of course that didn't work out for you, because you always fuck shit up and create problems for everyone"?

NO. YOU REALLY FUCKING WOULDN'T.

Or, else, you're a pretty bad person, actually, and I'd rather you didn't listen to this show.

But I don't think that's the case.

So, pretend your friend had your recent experiences.

**What would you say to them?**

**How would you see it, from your position on the outside?**

**What extra information would you relay to them?**

**How would you comfort them or help add logic to their struggle?**

Do that. For yourself. I know, it's lame. But it's REALLY FUCKING RELIEVING and EFFECTIVE. Plus, no one ever has to know that you \*gasp\* showed yourself an iota of compassion while doing a silly imagination exercise. This is for your brain only.

So, do it.

And that should help a lot with seeing things through realistic lenses, while saving your soul from a month of self-hating internal narratives.

Which is good, because we're on to the next possible exercises for reflection.

## **Exercise Grouping II. Make that autobiographical, historical, account happen.**

**Exercise Pt I.** Map out the past year.

So, again, you're going to be writing here. Get a big, blank piece of paper or several. Give yourself time, room, and space from other folks.

Then list out all the months of the year in a vertical line. January through December, on the far left side of your page, moving from the top to the bottom, with plenty of room in between.

Great. Here's 2021, right in front of you.

Now place all the events we talked about earlier into this monthly timeline. And include any other relevant events or details you can possibly remember.

Go through, month by month... stay calm... and revisit each month as deeply as you can. Think about what was happening inside and outside.

**How did you feel.**

**What were you doing.**

**When did the unexpected happen.**

**When were there major shifts.**

**How did the events in one month lead into the events of the next.**

**When were you compensating for recent happenings?**

**When were you just *buried IN THEM*.**

**When did you shut down, when did you rise up.**

**How did you handle each challenge.**

**What positives also need to be recognized.**

Make a story out of your year. Make it cohesive. See how things are connected, from the outside and inside. And give your present day experience context, now that you really take it all into consideration.

This is an exercise that will probably take you an hour or two, minimum, if you're reflecting fully. So give yourself plenty of space to revisit the year. Tie up loose ends. Stop feeling like you're swimming in fucked up details that still have you reeling.

And when you're semi-satisfied with how 2021 is looking, as a logical storyline...

**Exercise Part II:** Write out the years leading up to 2021. How many of them? Well, I don't know, when did events that snowballed into this past year first begin?

**Did you start a relationship in 2018 that ended in 2021?**

**A job?**

**A living situation?**

**Trauma recovery therapy?**

**Trace the big events and underlying energies from this past year back as far as they need to go, and focus on those broad, sweeping patterns. Think about emotional and thought-program trends from THOSE time periods, and how they may have led to dysfunctional outcomes because they were dysfunctionally driven before you knew any better.**

Give this year more context. Know how you got here and why things took place, if you really give everything a fair evaluation with as much insight as you can access today. You'll find a lot of self-forgiveness, understanding, and future direction in this activity.

And then... we want to move ON, instead of looking backwards.

**Part III of this exercise block:** Instead of writing out the past few years... Write out 2022.

"How, you're not a mind reader or fortune teller," you say?

Yeah, well, in a way you are.

Whatever you think is going to happen this year is likely to happen, if you limit your mental and emotional world to only allow those predictions.

So, broadly, thinking big picture... **what are the common seasonal trends?**

**What months are often hard for you?**

**What times are already consumed by obligations that you feel unhappy about?**

**What do you need to be on the lookout for, and what time periods are often fruitful for you?**

Get a rough idea how climate, holidays, and social obligations are laying out the landscape for the upcoming calendar year already. Or notice trends in your brain and body that depend on your seasonal lifestyle.

It'll give you time to prepare and plan. Or, just reasons to be less surprised when everything goes to shit around May, but you know you're probably going to be socially swimming again by August.

If you reflect on enough years, you'll probably see some of these atmosphere- and obligation-driven patterns. So you don't have to be surprised when they happen AGAIN.

AND, this is the perfect time to start setting your (sorry, lame word alert again) intentions for 2022.

**When are you naturally energized?**

**When are you going to take an internal nosedive?**

**When can you get the most work done?**

**When will you need to focus more on support and friendships?**

But to take this effort even further...

To make 2022 really COUNT for something. To make it different than it has been. To make it an important year in the story arc of the life you WANT to live... let's move on to Exercise Block III.



**EXERCISE GROUPING III:**

Enough with the past. Let's get moving forward, towards becoming your desired "Self."

You know what we talk about a lot these days - sorry. It's recognizing who you are now versus who you want to be versus all the things holding you back from that actualization. Most of which, will be old traumatic memories and brain patternings. So, you know, things we honestly want to move AWAY from, to live IN SPITE OF, rather than continuing to be defined by some other humans' bullshit. Right? Right.

Again, you might want to use an avatar for this portion. Externalize the experiences and steer the ship from safer grounds. Hit up that bonus episode to hear the discussion on why this seems to be a PFC workaround.

But, however you want to view your self, in order to leverage 2022 for your Self's purposes...

**Part I. Take inventory**

Write out a list.

What do you have NOW?

What areas of life are "covered?"

What are the states of things?

What's going in your direction?

And which of these areas of life are most important to you?

So, you might list out: Career, family, friends, health, hobbies, home, local area, love, mental health, aspirations... things like that. Plus, whatever areas are particular to YOUR life and what you deem important.

And then, take inventory. How are each of these categories *going for you*?

If the answer is “not great,” then make a new list.

**How do you WANT each of these areas to be characterized?**

**What’s missing?**

**What needs fixing?**

**What are you still working on?**

This part can be super painful... but it can also be really optimistic. If you focus on what you DON'T have, looking backwards and projecting forwards, it's going to be depressing. If you focus, instead, on what you CAN have, looking forwards and asking “why the fuck not, everything is possible and yesterday means nothing about three years from now,” it can be a very energizing and clarifying exercise.

So I recommend that approach. Look FORWARDS and tell yourself you have no idea what's going to happen, so why *couldn't* it be X, Y, and Z if you start working towards them?

## **Part II: Note discrepancies.**

So, the important next step here, being... now that you know where the gaps are between what you have and what you want... to NAME the differences and break them down into smaller parts.

So ask yourself...

**What's the discrepancy between current inventory and ideal inventory?**

“I want a happy partnership and I don't have one.”

**Well, why is there that discrepancy, taking all our brain-patterning and trauma-looping knowledge into consideration?**

“I never learned what healthy relationships looked like, and I’ve gotten sucked into some toxic ones so far.”

**What steps repeatedly trip you up, in accomplishing what you want?**

“I get anxiously attached and lose my autonomy, the other person takes advantage of this, then the relationship gets tumultuous and more psychotoxic for everyone to stay in it.”

**What’s the context of that estimated “failure,” in the broader context of life, with other variables taken into account?**

“Talking to my family and being in a chaotic job add drama and upset to the relationship, as if we needed that.”

**So, altogether, what’s been causing the delay in getting what you want?**

“My attachment patterns and daily mental health create a lot of challenges, but I also connect with people who aren’t well balanced, mentally healthy, humans, themselves. Then I’m torn apart when the relationship doesn’t last. I want a better relationship, but I have other steps to get there.”

Go through, spot the differences between what you’ve got and what you want. And then try to use your history to understand WHAT your holdups are. What’s been stopping you - realistically and with context in mind - from achieving what means the most to you?

Be kind to yourself and keep brain patterning / prior learning in mind.

**And then Part III: Take MF action.**

**Part III: Make your life in 2022.**

What are the logical stages to accomplish what's missing from your personal inventory?

Time to break the solution up into smaller pieces and make actionable plans for 2022, Fuck.

For example: if unhealthy personal patterns are still the thorn in your side... you might 1) get into trauma therapy 2) spend more time alone, building your life experiences, hobbies, and emotional regulation skills 3) find new interests that get you out of the house and encourage new social associations 4) go on trips alone, near and far, to make yourself an interesting and autonomous human that would attract an equally interesting and autonomous mate.

**Look at each discrepancy between wanted and actual.**

**Break down the problem into smaller bits.**

**Dream up ways that (you know you've heard advice on this before) you could make improvements in your mental health, physical health, work, social connections, and lifestyle.**

**Get *particular* about literal BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS you can take. And come up with action items that you can fulfill on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.**

Seriously, don't just make broad statements.

You'll get zero help from half-assed ideas like "exercise more." Define what that means. "I will get up and go for a hike every morning for half an hour."

"Journal more often." NO. "I will journal for an hour at the start and end of each day."

"Stop being so socially needy and reactive." NO. "I will spend more time on my own, in a wide variety of experiences such as exploring A, B, and C, in order to build up my personal resilience and self-reliance, so I don't worry so much about everyone else's opinions because I'm happy with my own."

**Get granular.**

**Make plans.**

**If you're not listing specific *behaviors*, keep going until you are.**

**Set daily intentions.**

**Develop routines to make them happen.**

**And keep thinking about that future you, who's undefined by the present day circumstances, because there's no reason you can't elicit major change every single day for the rest of your life.**

You just have to know how to get started. Which means you need to know the problems.

And then figure out the answers, in the most actionable, miniature, consistently achievable, ways possible.

It's not about what you *haven't done so far*. It's about *what you realize you're capable of doing now*. Your personal power is contained in turning TOWARDS changes you want to make, not looking backwards at the state of things when left unexamined.

Every day after that turning point will be a little better.

**WRAP UP**

If all of this is sounding challenging to even break into, I have one last tip, trick, suggestion for closing up 2021 and leading into 2022 with a positive start.

Final suggestion to get right with yourself as soon as possible? Ask yourself two simple questions.

**Who do you WANT to be?**

**How are you going to make it happen with daily actions?**

For real. If you were designing your Self; your personality, your lifestyle, your surrounding context, your daily behaviors, your relationships, your intentions, your purpose.....

**Who would you be?**

Don't shut down. Just consider it.

Even if you can only think about this right now in a few ways because it can be overwhelming, such as "who do I want to be, FOR my spouse?" or "FOR my kids?"

What are your answers?

You want to be patient, kind, compassionate, understanding, accepting, emotionally stabilizing, etc? Great.

**Well, what holds you back from those goals right now?**

**List the inner and outer circumstances that complicate your best intentions.**

**And, then, what can you start doing now to change those things?**

**How can you move closer towards being who you know you are?**

**How do you embody the identity you want to step into, even in tiny, easily accessible right now, ways?**

Maybe you slow down your reactions by breathing for a second before you respond. Maybe you take more time to be alone and process work events before you walk in the door. Maybe you eat better and drink less, so you're less physically uncomfortable as a daily baseline.

***Decide what the person who you want to be would do... offload them as a character outside of yourself, if needed... and then, decide to start taking those actions. Every day.***

And, if you're *really* on this motherfucking path to recovery... journal about your progress as you do it. Every day. One of the easiest ways I've found to stay on track is to write two lines a day, describing my behaviors.

WAS I the person I aim to be today? Well, it's pretty easy to see. Good job, you're living in line with your Self identity.

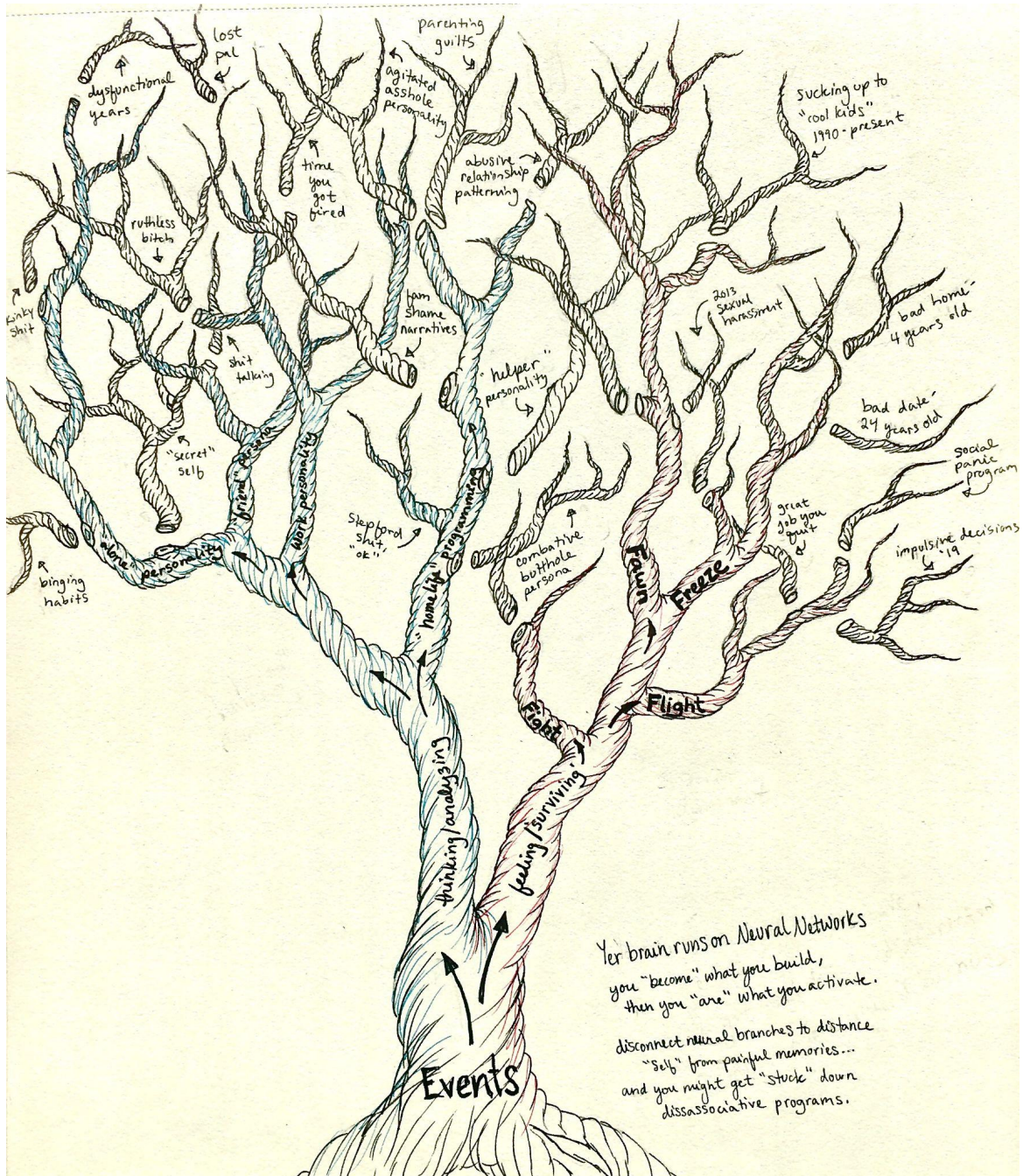
DID I slip up or let some things fall through the cracks? Well, now I know what to be mindful of tomorrow.

Simple. Nowhere to hide. And nothing to be confused or unclear about. You're in control of you. And you're in control of this new year.

Just be sure you leave your history behind you, and choose to feel less freaked out about the future in front of you.

You DO have control, but only over your Self.

So, be the one you want to be.



Cheers to a rough year, completed.

Hail Archie, Messenger of 2021.

And here's to 2022, Motherfucker.

