



Symbioses and Autonomy in relationships

**What are the consequences of a
symbiotic trauma?**

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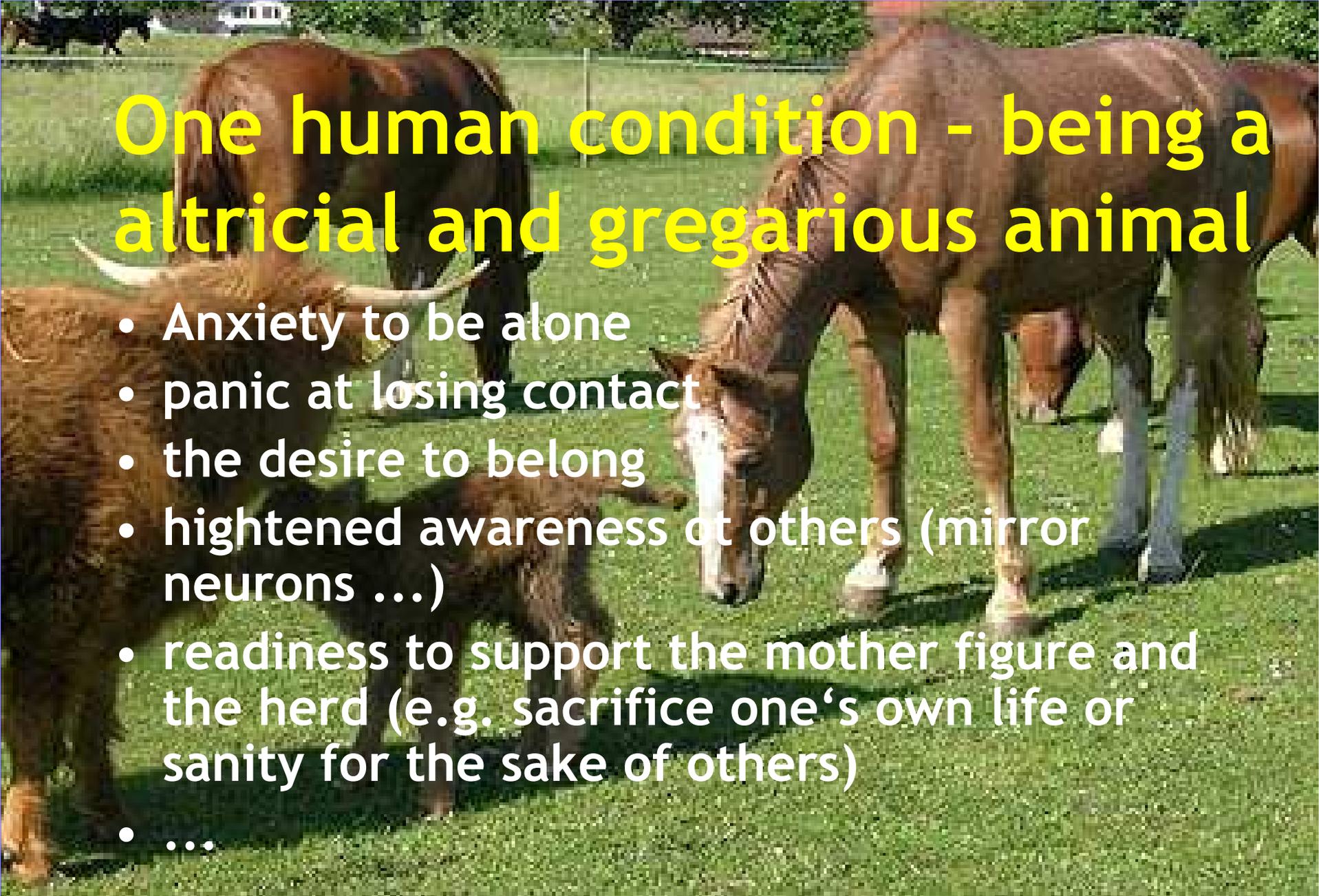


Symbiosis = Coexistence

Individuals of the same species

Individuals of different species

basic principle of nature



One human condition - being a altricial and gregarious animal

- Anxiety to be alone
- panic at losing contact
- the desire to belong
- heightened awareness of others (mirror neurons ...)
- readiness to support the mother figure and the herd (e.g. sacrifice one's own life or sanity for the sake of others)
- ...

A person is silhouetted while relaxing in a hammock. The background features a sunset over the ocean with a bright sun low on the horizon, creating a shimmering reflection on the water. Palm fronds are visible in the foreground, framing the scene.

Autonomy

- Self-awareness
- Self-reliance
- Self-sufficiency
- Self-responsability
- Independence
- Inner freedom

Symbiotic necessities

- Being nurtured
- Being kept warm
- Contact with bodies
- Contact with eyes
- Being understood
- Being supportes
- Belonging to exclusively to another person

For children “safe bonding” (J. Bowlby) to their parents is fundamental for self confidence, confidence in human relations and mental health.

All their capacities can develop in a healthy way.



Symbiotically every child is doubly bonded to her mother:

passively: the emotional qualities of the mother are an imprint in the child's soul

actively: the child clings to her mother and tries to support the mother



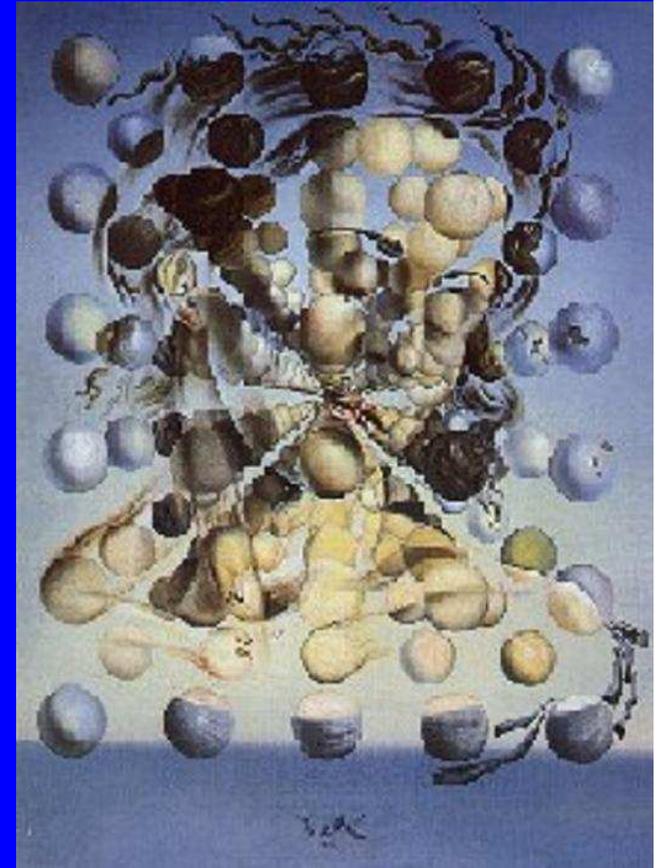
The symbiotic love of a child towards her mother is one of the most powerful emotional forces.

Love

- between child and mother always exists.
- between mother and child only happens, if the mother is not traumatized.

Trauma and parental love

- Traumatic experiences destroy the capability of parents to love and care emotionally supportive,
- because of their surviving mechanism, traumatized parents avoid deeper emotional contact with the child.



A trauma is

“... a vital experience of discrepancy between threatening situational factors and the individual’s coping capacities, that is associated with feelings of helplessness and lack of any protection, thus creating a permanent instability of the self-concept and perception of the world.”

(Fischer und Riedesser, 1999, p. 79)

Two “classical” types of trauma

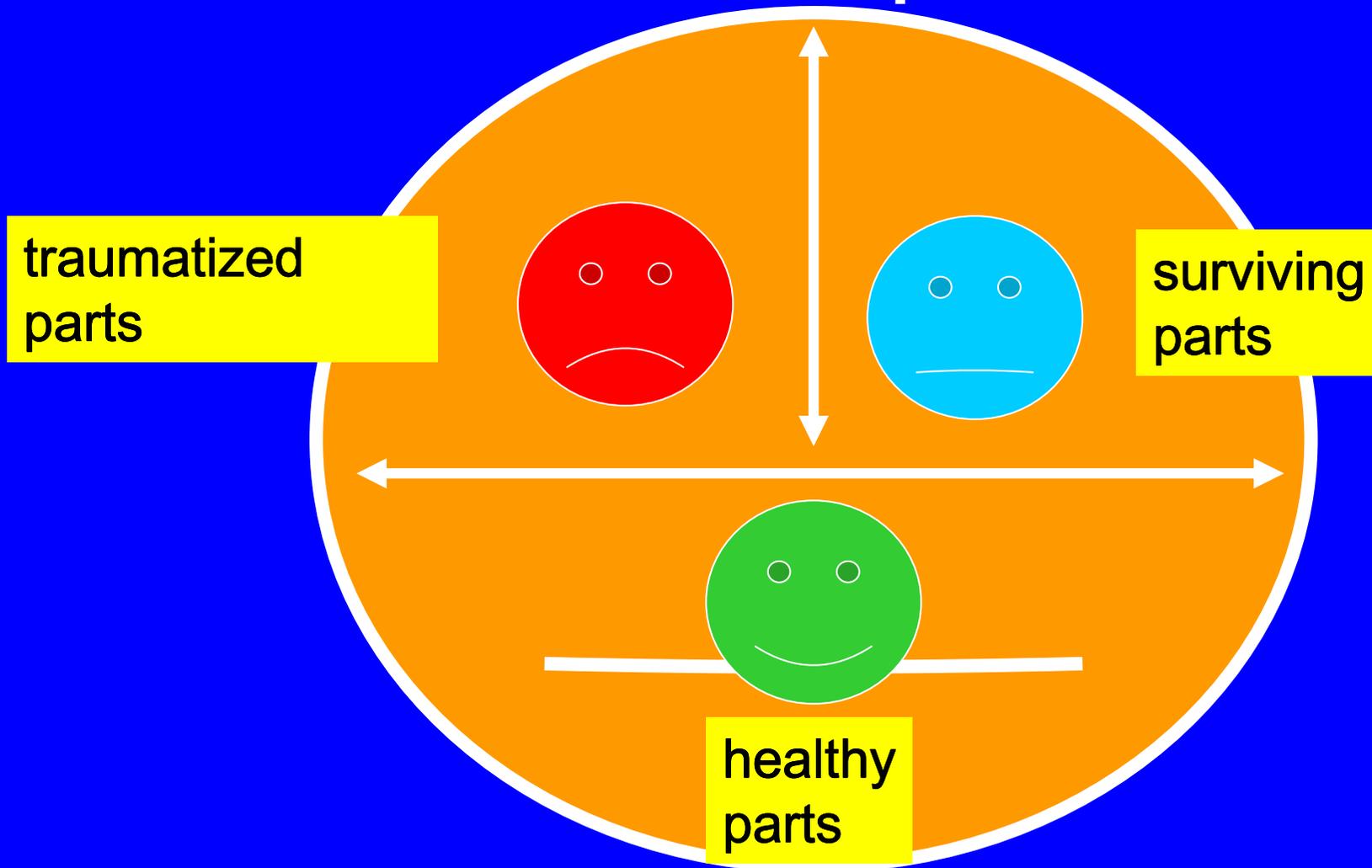


- caused by life threatening events (e.g. war, accidents, rape, natural catastrophies)
- caused by loss of a person (e.g. early death of parents, loss of children, adoption)



**When traumatised
we freeze,
dissociate
and split the
personality in
order to survive.**

Split in the personality structure after a traumatic experience

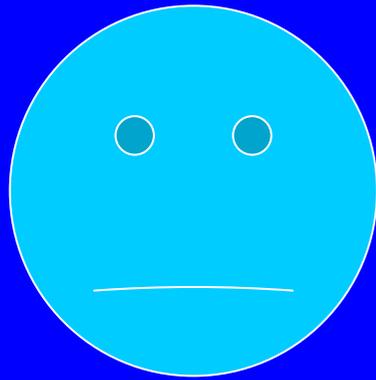




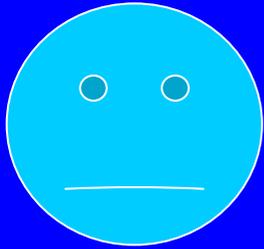
Characteristics of the traumatised parts

- store the memory of the trauma
- are always the same age as they were, when the trauma occurred
- are still engaged with the traumatic experience
- can unpredictably and suddenly be triggered





Surviving reactions
and mechanisms
protect the organism
and the soul
helping to survive a
traumatic experience.



Characteristics of the surviving-parts

- constructing and guarding the split
- denying and suppressing the trauma experience
- avoiding
- controlling
- compensating
- producing illusions
- producing new splits





Characteristics of the healthy parts of our personality

- capable of regulating feelings
- genuine empathy
- ability to make safe bonds
- resolving bonds if necessary
- ability of self-reflection
- self-responsibility
- love of truth
- realism
- optimism and basic confidence
- strong enough to confront traumatic experiences

The symbiotic entanglement with traumatized people produces two extra types of trauma



- Trauma of bonding (being rejected by the person one needs to bond to)
- Trauma of confusion in a bonding system (caused e.g. by murder, sexual abuse, incestuous relations within the bonding system)

**Traumatized parents
produce a psychic field in
which their children suffer
from a “Symbiotic trauma”.**

**The child is helpless and
incapable of getting a
stable and safe
emotional contact with
his parents.**



Characteristics of the traumatized part in a symbiotic trauma

- despair that there is no love from mother
- deep loneliness
- panic to die
- suppressed anger
- suppressed sadness

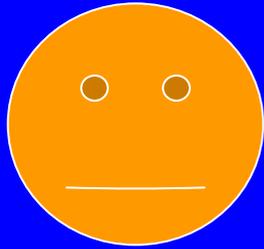




Characteristics of the surviving parts in symbiotic trauma

- Fighting to get into contact with the parents
- idealising the mother or the father
- identifying with the surviving mechanisms of the mother/father
- repressing and denying one's own trauma
- identifying with the traumatized parts of the mother/father





Healthy structures within a child

- Own lifepower and energie
- Own strong will to live
- Healthy basic needs
- Joy to move and exercise the body
- Joy to play
- Joy to learn and solve problems
- ...



Consequences of a symbiotic trauma for a child

- no capacity to distinct between own feelings and those of the mother
- not living one's own identity
- mental illnesses like hyperactivity, depressions, psychotic states
- lifelong symbiotic entanglement in relationships



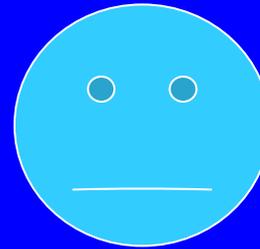
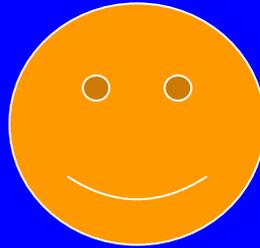
Characteristics of a symbiotic entanglement

- always looking to others
- distraction from own problems
- clinging and merging
- weight of expectations on others
- anger, hate and violence in relationships
- illusions of love

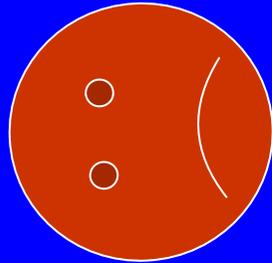
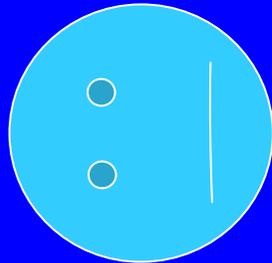
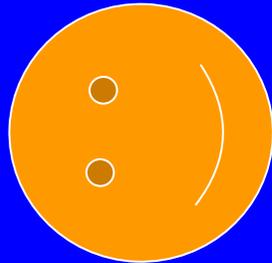


Who is interacting with whom?

Person A



Person B



HP/HP	HP/SP	HP/TP
SP/HP	SP/SP	SP/TP
TP/HP	TP/HP	TP/TP

Constructive und destructive types of symbioses

- Equivalence
- Giving and taking is in balance
- Empathie and love
- Seperation is possible
- Dominanve and submission
- Exploitation
- Anxieties and aggressions
- Seperation is forbidden

Autonomy - true or pseudo ?

- Self-reliance in relationships
- Accepting support if necessary
- Confidence in others
- Realistic self-assessment
- Isolation and withdrawel
- Anxious to be dependend
- Distrust
- Presumption

Five most important steps in psychotherapy

- giving up illusions
- withdrawing from symbiotic entanglements
- understanding the split in one's personality
- acknowledging the traumata that happened
- integrating traumatized parts

Important distinction in psychotherapy

- **Disintegrate** traumatic structures that are incorporated by symbiotic entanglement with the parents
- **Integrate** one's own splits in the personality structure

Literature

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