Psychotrauma and the Trauma of Love

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A trauma is

"... a vital experience of discrepancy between threatening situational factors and the individual's coping capacities, that is associated with emotions of helplessness and the lacking of any protection thus creating a permanent instability of the self concept and the conception of the world."

(Fischer und Riedesser, 1999, S. 79)
A life experience becomes not only stressful but traumatic if we face a mortal risk, and are incapable of dealing with it with the help of our stress programs.

Our stress programs make the situation even worse.

Therefore we end up in a state of helplessness and agony and the stress programs have to be stopped.
A trauma is an injury of

- the physical body
- the psyche
- the social relations

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The traumatic process

- traumatizing situation
- experiencing the trauma
- short-, medium- and longterm consequences of a trauma
Consequences of a trauma in general

- hyperarousal and hypervigilance
- extreme anxiety and panic
- permanent feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, sadness
- numbing of all feelings
- intrusions of the traumatic situation in the mind
Consequences of a trauma in general

- Avoidance behavior
- Feelings of unreality
- Depersonalisation
- Dissociation
- Somatization
- Hallucinations
- Losing bonding capacities
- Losing the healthy I
- Losing the healthy way of wanting and willing
The most significant consequence of a trauma is the splitting of the personality and an inability to manage bonding relations without stress.
The Trauma-emergency- mechanism consists of:

• Immobilization
• Freezing
• Dissociating
• Splitting in the psychic structure

• It helps us to survive.

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Splits in the personality and identity structure after a traumatic experience

- Traumatised parts
- Survival parts
- Healthy parts

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Psychotrauma as Shocking Trauma

- Trauma of existential Threat (being involved in a life threatening event)
- Trauma of existential Loss (losing a person to whom one is bonded)

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Psychotrauma as a Relational-Trauma

• Trauma of Love (being rejected by the person one needs to bond to)

• Traumatization of a bonding system (perpetrator-victim-dynamics in a bonding system caused by violence, incest or murder)
Traumatization by Natural Forces

Traumatization by Human Violence

Traumatization of Sexuality

Early Trauma

Traumatization of Love
Characteristics of the healthy parts of an adult personality

- clear and realistic perceptions
- capable of regulating all one’s feelings
- good contact with oneself
- ability to make safe bonds and to dissolve bonds if necessary
- capable of true self-reflection
- self-responsibility
- love of truth
- optimism and basic confidence
- true autonomy
- strong enough to confront even the memory of past traumatic experiences
Characteristics of the survival parts of the personality

• constructing and guarding the splits in the psyche
• denying trauma experiences
• suppressing the traumatised parts
• avoiding memories of trauma
• controlling oneself and others
• looking for compensations
• creating illusions
• producing new splits

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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**
• they want to be **released**
Every type of trauma is combined with a specific set of symptoms
- physical
- emotional
- rational,
- social.

The different types of trauma are correlated with typical ways of surviving strategies.
Trauma and parental love

- Traumatic experiences destroy the capability of parents to love,
- because their surviving mechanisms avoid deeper emotional contact with the child.
- Thus creating a “Trauma of Love” for their children

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What „Love“ means

• Having desires to be loved
• Developing the capacities to love
„Love is an art to transfer emotions of love into a loving behavior without the need to give up oneself.“

(Jesper Juul 2013, S. 76)
Love

• Love originally is an emotion towards the mother and the father
• Can be developed to an adult form of emotional attitude towards others
• Healthy love means empathy and supportive actions for others without loosing oneself
• Healthy love is different from falling in love
The central loving process for every human is the bonding with the mother.
The bonding with the mother becomes the role-model for all other relations involving high emotions. (John Bowlby).
The patterns of childhood bonding experiences are repeated

- In couple relationships
- In the relation with own children
- In friendships
- In relationships at work
- In the relation between clients and therapists
Falling in Love

• Intense feelings of affection, intense longing for this feelings to be answered, butterflies in the belly, heartbeating, soft knees
• Obsessive thinking at the beloved person, permanent fear of being rejected, depressivness, bad dreams, low self-esteem, bad mood
• Narrowed consciousness, perceiving the loved person much more positive than she really is
• Still no trust in the other person, no openness and sincerity, no readiness to take over responsibility for the other person
• Increases the willingness to have sexual intercourse
• Increases the willingness for monogamy
• Is lasting between seven month and some years
Healthy psychic structures of a child, even there is a „Trauma of Love“

- Own life force
- Own will to live
- Healthy basic needs
- Joy to move
- Joy to play
- Joy to learn
- Openness, creativity
- ...

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Characteristics of the survival the “Trauma of love“

- Struggling with the parents to get their love
- Idealising mother and father
- Identifying with the survival strategies of the parents
- Wanting to rescue the parents
- Merging with the traumatised parts of parents or grandparents, mixing up with the trauma of the former generations
- Denying one's own trauma

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Immediately stop to follow me!

Hören Sie sofort auf, mir nachzulaufen.

Aber... ich liebe Sie.

But... I love you.
Illusions of Love

- I can love whom- and whatever I want
- If your love is strong enough, the beloved person will also love you
- All parents love their children
- Being loved can be reached by pressure or money
- One can save another person by loving him/her
- Love heals all wounds
- Love is forever
- ...
Characteristics of the traumatised part in a „Trauma of Love“

- Desperation that there is no love from the parents
- Feeling abandoned and extremely lonely
- Terrified it has to die
- Suppressed rage
- Suppressed mourning
- Extreme withdrawal
- Tendency to give up

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Healthy or entangled relations?

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Characteristics of love in healthy parts of the adult personality

- clearly saying “Yes” or “No” in love relationships
- respecting boundaries and limits of partners
- taking responsibility for the partner only as far as necessary
- supporting the autonomy of the other
- ability to distinguish between love reality and love illusions
- willingness to free oneself from symbiotic entanglements
- sex is connected without love
- no sex with children
- no lying
- ability of loving oneself

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What can we do overcome the „Trauma of Love“ and to gain healthy relations?

- Taking our own traumas serious
- Overcoming the splits in our psyche
- Moving forward with the help of „Constellations of the Sentence of the Intention“ step by step
- Becoming fully oneself
- Investing no longer life energy in destructive relations
- Enjoying healthy love relations
My books in English

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