

Trauma and Entanglement

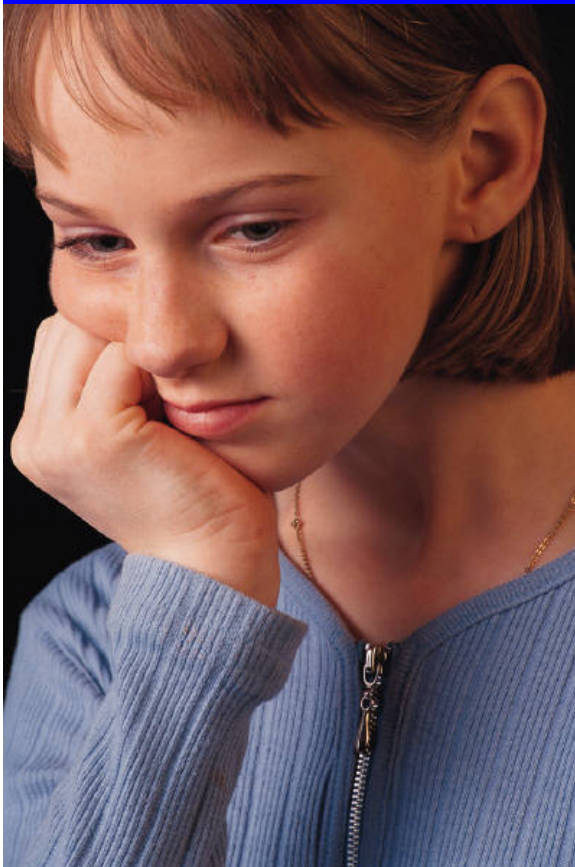


How
constellations can
help

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Classifikation of mentall illnesses



- anxieties
- depressions
- personality disorders
- schizophrenia and psychosis

hyperarousal or numbness

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Our primitive reactions dealing with our sufferings are



- denying the symptoms
- focusing directly on the symptoms
- trying to eliminate the symptoms
- consuming something to cure the symptoms (eating, drinking, smoking ...)

The alternative to struggle with the symptoms is to understand their causes.

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My basic assumption:
The background of mental illnesses in most of the cases is trauma and/or the entanglement with traumatized persons.



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, S. 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)

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Important distinction:

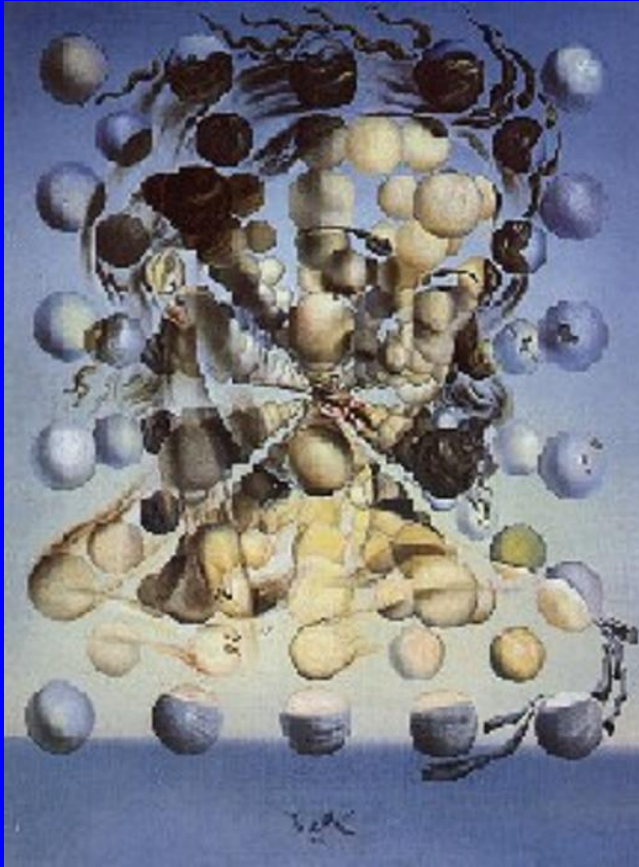
Stress means
fight or flight.

Trauma means
freeze or
fragment.



Trauma-Scheme

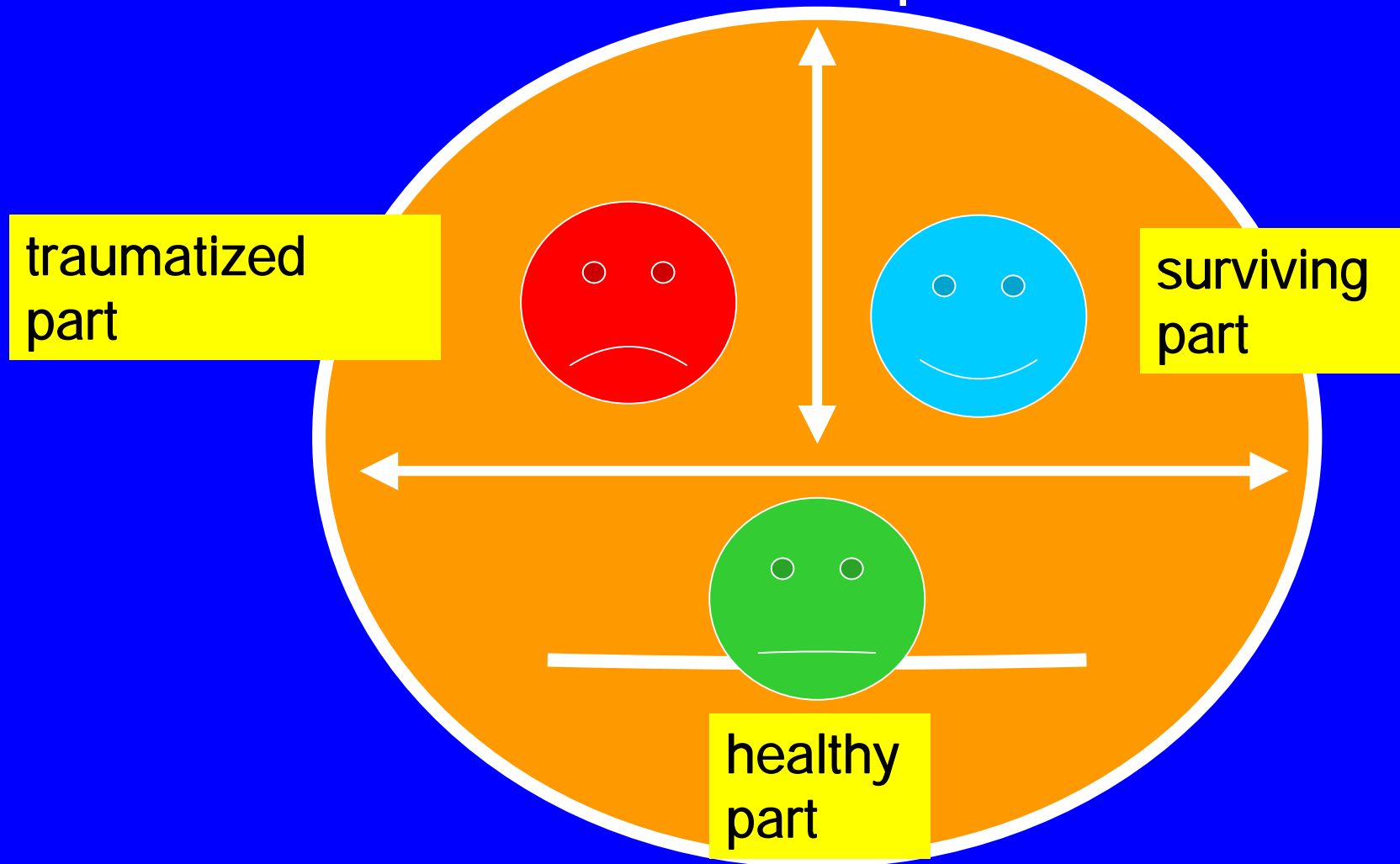
(van der Kolk 2000, S. 175)

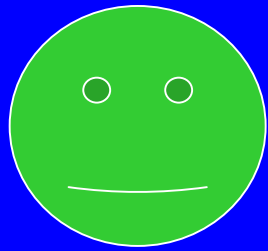


- hyperarousal, being overwhelmed by panic, rage and pain
- avoidance behavior
- numbing
- attempts to overcome numbing

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Split in the personality structure after a traumatic experience





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



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 parts
protect the
organism and the
soul and help 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

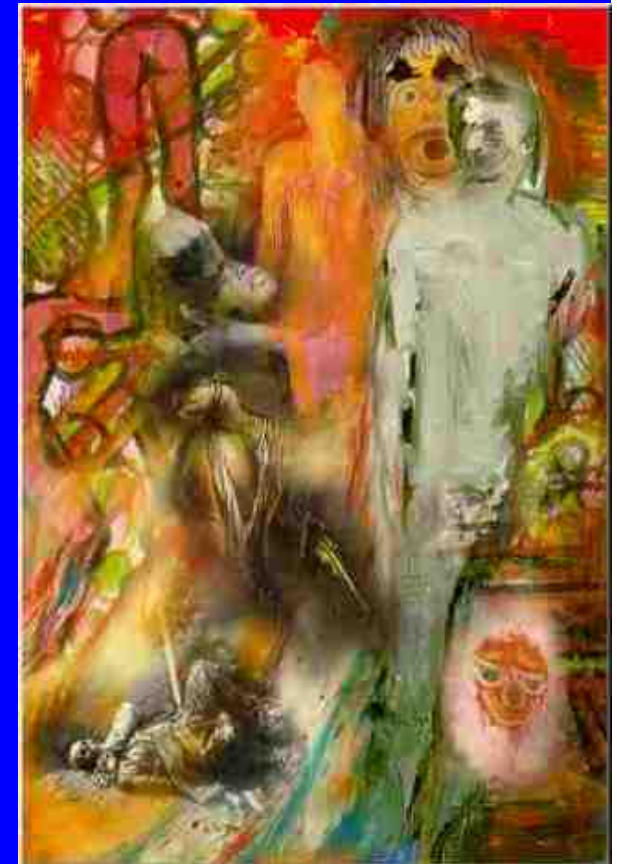


Surviving parts are
a mirror
of the traumatised parts.

The more extreme the trauma
experience, the more extreme
is the development of the
personality structures that help
to survive.

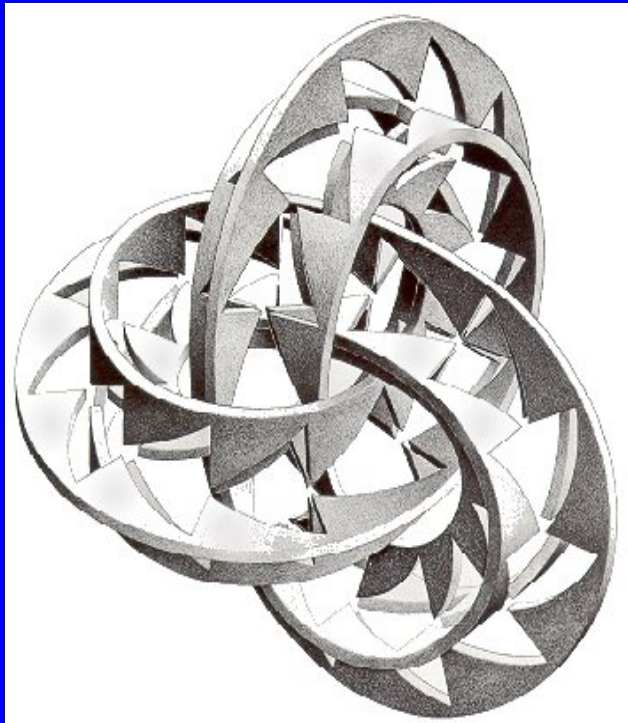


In the long run surviving parts increase the risk to suffer another trauma.



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The entanglement with traumatized persons produces two new types of trauma



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

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



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Reactions to the loss of a bonding figure



1. fear and panic
2. protest and rage
3. grief and resignation

Transgenerational aspects of trauma

- Traumatisation destroys the bonding capacity of parents.
- The contact with a child triggers their traumatized parts or activates their surviving parts.
- In his symbiotic state the child cannot distinguish between his own identity and the trauma of his parents.



Mental illnesses in many cases are „bonding disorders“ .

The splits in the personality structure of parents perpetuate in the personality structure of their children.

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Trauma of bonding part 1

Traumatized
Parts of the child

rage



anxiety



pain



grief



shame



feeling
guilty

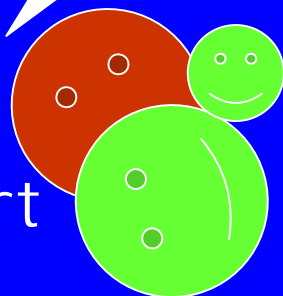


illusionary
love

symbiotic surviving
part of the child

Adaption to mother
Compassion with her

Traumatized part
or the mother



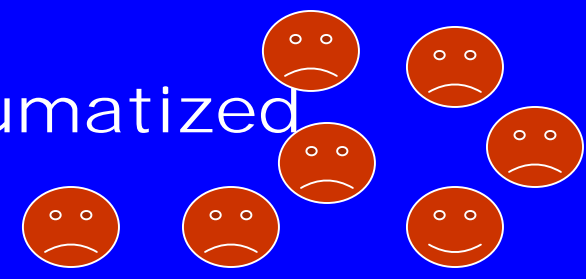
Mothers surviving part

healthy part



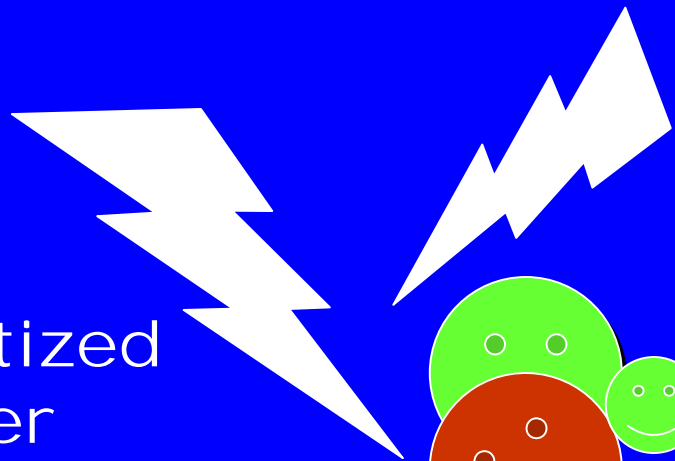
Trauma of bonding part 2

Childs traumatized
parts



anxiety, rage, pain,
grief, love, shame,
feeling guilty

Traumatized
part after
sexual
abuse
pain,
disgust,
shame



symbiotic
Surviving part
compassion
with the father

Split of the father



Surviving part
after sexual abuse

healthy
part



idealising the father

Principles of my psychotherapy also applied in constellations

- Focusing on trauma and bonding processes
- Having a multigenerational perspective
- Acknowledging the surviving mechanisms.
- Strengthening the healthy parts to help them in the confrontation with own traumata
- Leading the symbiotic parts out of entanglement

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Constellation work needs

- Trust in a group of people
- Confidence in one own's healthy parts
- Trust in the facilitator

