

Symbioses and Autonomy in relationships

Love under the pressure of trauma

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A large fish, possibly a groupers, is shown in profile with its mouth open, swimming over a rocky seabed. Several smaller blue fish are scattered around it. The background is a clear, blue-green underwater environment.

**Symbiosis = Coexistence for
a mutual benefit**

basic principle of nature



One human condition - being a herd animal

- panic at losing contact
- the desire to belong
- heightened awareness of others (mirror neurons ...)
- readiness to sacrifice one's own life or sanity for the sake of the herd
- ...

Symbiotic needs

- Being nurtured
- Being kept warm
- Contact with bodies
- Contact with eyes
- Being understood
- Being supported
- Belonging to somebody



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 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.

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

A tropical sunset scene with a person's silhouette on a hammock. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the water and sky. The person is lying in a hammock, their legs crossed. The background shows a calm sea and distant mountains under a warm, orange sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Autonomy =
independence
self-reliance,
self-sufficiency,
self-responsability**

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

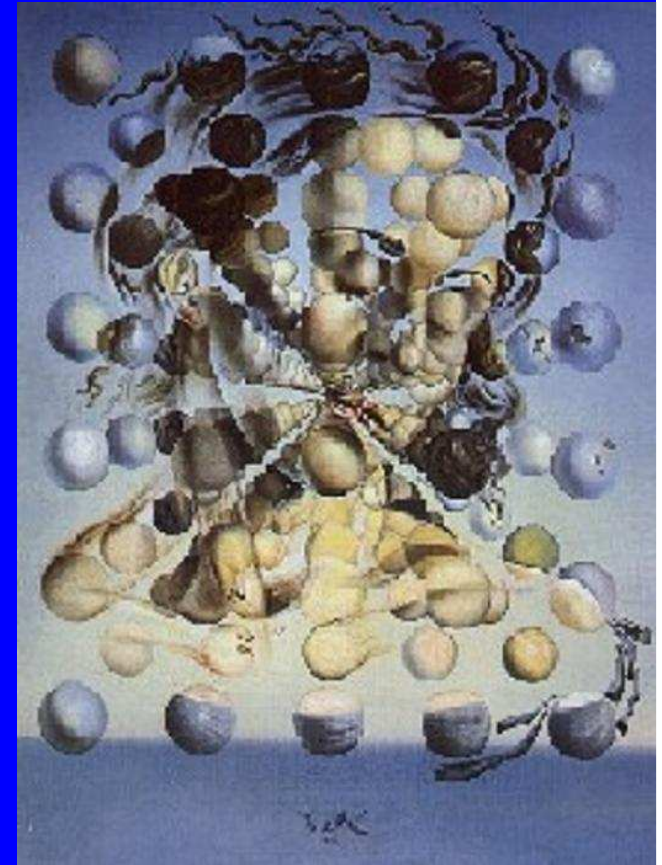
For children “safe bonding” (J. Bowlby) to their parents is fundamental for self confidence, confidence in human relations and mental health.

Their love capacities can develop in a healthy way.



Trauma and parental love

- Traumatic experiences destroy the capability of parents to love,
- because of their surviving mechanism, they 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

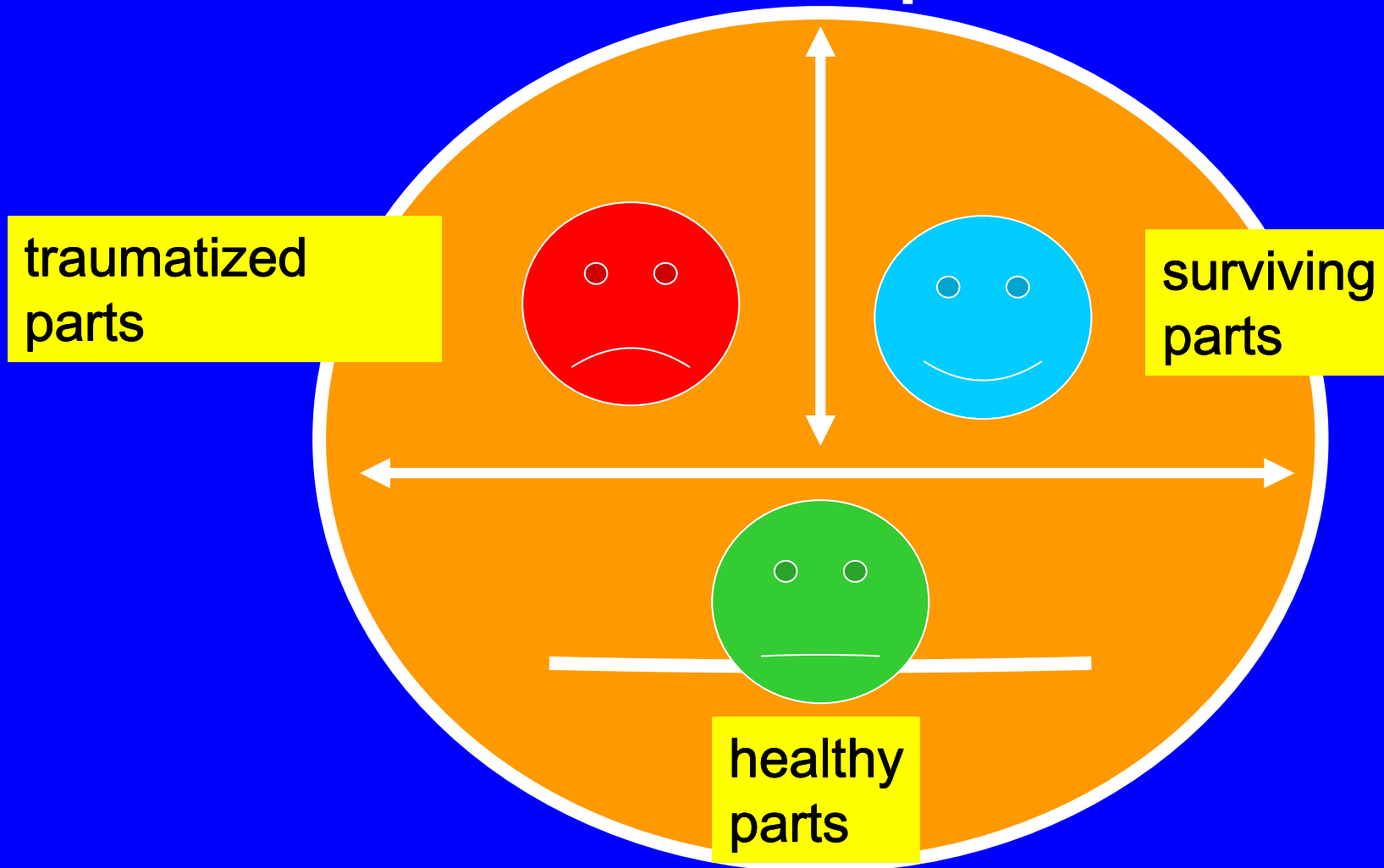


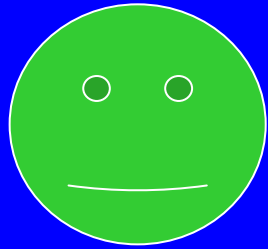
- caused by life threatening events (e.g. war, accidents, rape, natural catastrophies)
- caused by loss of a person (e.g. early death of parents, loss of children, adoption)



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

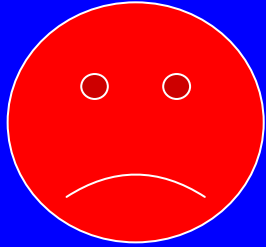
Split in the personality structure after a traumatic experience





Characteristics of the 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

The symbiotic entanglement with traumatized people 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 within the bonding system)

„Symbiotic trauma“

A child is helpless and incapable to get a stable and safe emotional contact with his mother.



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

- idealising the mother
- repressing and denying one's own trauma
- identification with the surviving mechanisms of the mother
- identification with the traumatized parts within the mother

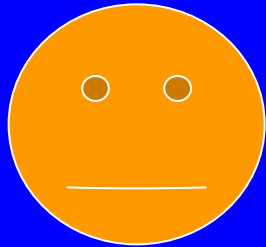
Consequences of a symbiotic trauma for a child

- 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
- repeating symbiotic entanglement in other relationships



Characteristics of a symbiotic entanglement

- clinging and adhering
- hiding one's own vulnerability
- anger, hate and violence in a relationship
- no real selfesteem
- always looking on others
- love illusions and love delusions



Characteristics of love in healthy parts of the personality

- knowing that love can be developed by oneself
- clearly saying „Yes“ or „No“
- supporting the autonomy of the other
- respecting borders and limits
- taking responsibility
- no sex without love
- no sex with children
- no lies
- ability to distinct between reality and illusions
- willingness to free oneself from symbiotic entanglements
- loving oneself

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

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



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Literature

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