

Working with Complex Dissociation

The phase-orientated approach and the importance of the stabilisation stage.

presented by
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national survivor-led charity for dissociative identity disorder
and similar complex dissociative conditions



About First Person Plural



- * Only national survivor-led membership charity in UK which specialises in working for and on behalf of people who have dissociative identity disorder or the DID-like dissociative disorder not otherwise specified
- * We do this through.....
 - * providing information resources,
 - * delivering training and raising awareness
 - * facilitating mutual support
 - * working in partnership and collaboration with other relevant organisations
e.g. ESTD-UK, TAG, TST, The Pottergate Centre for Dissociation & Trauma, CWP NHS FT
- * established 1997

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Learning Objectives



- * **To raise awareness of dissociation**
- * **To introduce the dissociation continuum and the spectrum of dissociative disorders, including dissociative identity / multiple personalities.**
- * **To introduce links between other trauma-related mental health conditions and complex dissociative disorders**
- * **To introduce the phased orientated model of psychological treatment for DID**
- * **To provide an understanding of the importance of the stabilisation stage of phase orientated treatment.**

What is “DISSOCIATION” Brainstorm



What does the word mean?

**What other words / phrases mean
the same as or similar?**

**When you say someone ‘dissociates’
what do you mean?**

DISSOCIATION : a definition



- instinctive, natural, adaptive & universal to all humans*
- a psychological & physiological survival or coping response*
- used when an experience is perceived to be too distressing, painful, traumatising, life-threatening, or even simply over-stimulating*

DISSOCIATION – a definition (2)



- ❑ *enables the different aspects of that experience (e.g. thoughts, sensations, feelings, perceptions, sense of body, sense of self, behaviours and memories) to be stored and kept separate from each other and possibly fragmented*
- ❑ *minimises awareness of the effects of the experience in its entirety*
- ❑ *to support focus on the stimuli and tasks necessary to safely complete, survive or manage the experience in a way that minimises immediate harm; or to physically escape, if escape is possible*

DISSOCIATION

If it's natural – what's the problem?



*Your sense of identity, your perceptions of reality and your sense of continuity of time, experiences and life depend on your thoughts, sensations, feelings, perceptions, sense of body, sense of self, behaviours and memories etc being **mostly** connected to each other thus, when dissociation is used frequently to survive multiple and/or complex traumas over an extended time period, particularly during early childhood (when the brain and personality are developing), the separation and fragmentation of the various aspects of so many experiences shape the developing neural pathways in such a way that your sense of who you are, how you experience your 'personhood', your memories and access to them, together with the way you see things around you, can become chronically fixed in a disjointed, fragmented (i.e. dissociative) pattern and ultimately this can become maladaptive*

DISSOCIATIVE EXPERIENCES or SYMPTOMS?



- * **Dissociative Experiences Exercise One**
 - * *As far as the time for this exercise allows look at each of statements 1 - 28. Don't worry if you don't get through them all.*
 - * *Tick the box to the LEFT of a statement if it describes an experience you have had as an adult*

IGNORE the five columns to the right

Types of Psychological Dissociative Experience/Symptoms



- * **Depersonalisation**
- * **Derealisation**
- * **Dissociative Amnesia**
- * **Identity Confusion**
- * **Identity Alteration**

Depersonalisation



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- * **feeling detached from own experience, from self, body, part of body or mind;**
- * **out of body experiences;**
- * **feeling alien;**
- * **watching own life as if watching TV;**
- * **feeling unreal, acting a part, robotic;**
- * **observing flow of thoughts in mind as independent from self, not doing one's own thinking;**
- * **feeling puppet-like, like a cardboard cut-out**

Derealisation



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- * **world around person seems unreal and/or unfamiliar;**
- * **objects seem distorted, seem smaller or bigger than actually are;**
- * **sense of spacey-ness;**
- * **looking at the world through a fog;**
- * **feeling cut off from immediate surroundings;**
- * **sense of being trapped inside a large glass jar;**
- * **objects seem cartoon-like, two dimensional, dream-like;**
- * **don't feel you know familiar people;**
- * **sense of being just a spectator at strange and meaningless events, which others describe as your life**

Dissociative Amnesia



- * **more than ordinary forgetfulness;**
- * **time loss; not noticing the passage of long periods of time; frequently missing short periods of time;**
- * **inability to remember significant life events e.g. birth of child, wedding, traumatic incidents etc.**
- * **fluctuations in ability to remember particular skills or knowledge etc**

Identity Confusion



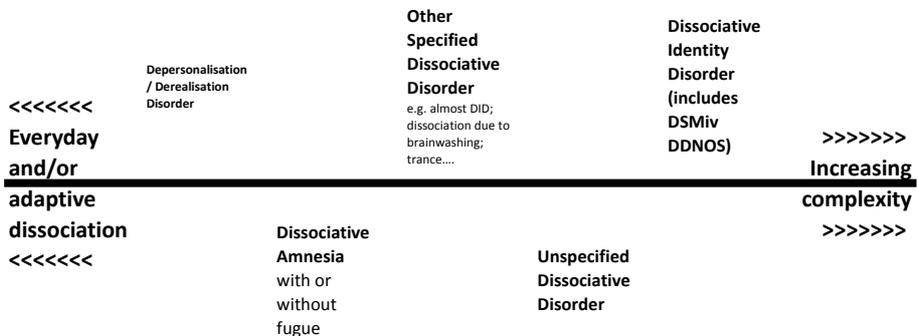
- * **feeling uncertain, in conflict or puzzled about who you are;**
- * **a continuing struggle inside to define yourself in a consistent and coherent way**

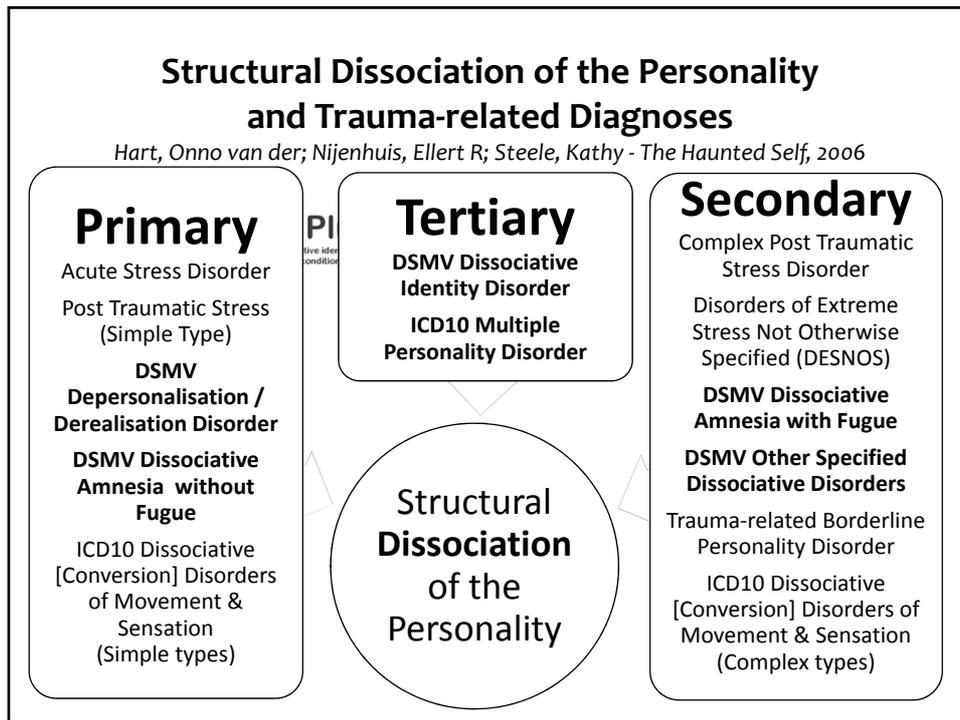
Identity Alteration



- * no consistent sense of self;
- * shift or switch in the 'you' you believe yourself to be which may include significant consistent changes in behaviour which are observable by others..
 - * e.g. speaking in different voice; having a different posture and/or facial expression, sudden change in mood;
 - * using a different name; behaving in ways not consistent with the age or gender of the body
- * identity switch is experienced as loss of control of yourself to someone else

DSM-V Dissociative Disorders





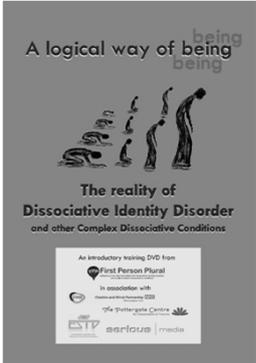
Complex Dissociative Disorders [Tertiary Structural Dissociation of the Personality]



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A Logical Way of Being

The reality of Dissociative Identity Disorder and other complex dissociative conditions



Chapter 3 Dissociative Identity Disorder



Brief break to stand and stretch

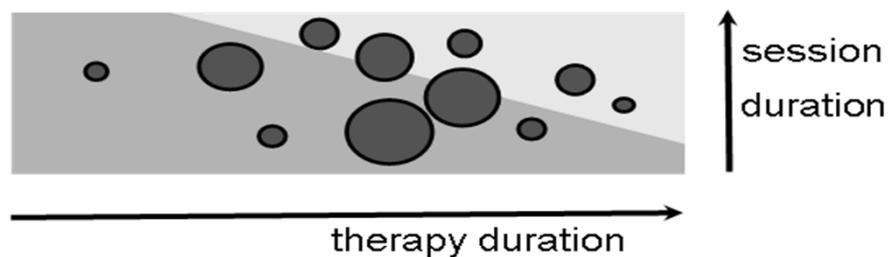


Introducing phase-oriented psychological therapy for D.I.D. (and other complex trauma survivors)

The interaction between the 3 phases of therapy can be represented by:

- ▲ stabilisation
- trauma focused work
- ▲ consolidation

*Taken from Kennedy, Angela :
The principles of a model of
recovery from trauma based
dissociation. Used with
permission*



The Stabilisation Stage of Phase Orientated Treatment for D.I.D. and other Complex Trauma Survivors

- INTRODUCTION

- **CHAPTER 1 –
Stabilisation**



- CHAPTER 2 –
Working
through Trauma

- CHAPTER 3 –
Consolidation
and Integrated
Living

- CHAPTER 4 –
Hope

- CHAPTER 5 –
A Partner's
Perspective



Final Questions, Debrief and Discussion

