



THE BRUISED HEART

FROM EMOTIONAL
TRAUMA TO SPIRITUAL
TRANSFORMATION

VINCENT SCHRODER

Copyright © 2020 Vincent Schroder

www.vinentschroder.com

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-0-9981284-3-6

Dedicated to Isana

a living dream
who
screams,
laughs sky high,
who feels
life's immensity
with intensity
and
meets cosmos
clear-eyed
with
fear-shattering
wonder

Table of Contents

Mia	1
Ultimate Trauma	3
Busy	9
Fight-Flight & Mia	11
Right-to-Right	15
Proto Self	19
When All Goes Well	21
Left-Right Glitching	23
Dr. Iain McGilcris	27
Frontal Lobes & Inhibition	29
Facetime	41
I understand	43
Garden of Eden & Trauma	45
Story Flares	47
Trauma-to-Transformation	53
Mama Trauma	55
Cult-y	59
Potential	65
Mia, Continued	71
Articulating an Ultimate	81
Oversensitive	85
The Classical Continuum	87
Normative & Ipsative	91
Hitting Top	95
Positive & Negative Symptoms	99
Emotional Neglect & Shame	103
Blends & Reversals	105

Diagnostic Systems & Higher Stages	109
Crisscross & Paradox	113
Words	117
Bungee Cord.....	121
College Kid	123
Therapy	125
Loneliness	129
High Functioning	131
Implicit Knowledge.....	133
Help-Rejecting.....	135
Separation Distress	139
Natural Intensity.....	141
Traumatic Depression.....	147
Emotional Neglect & the Mother Matrix.....	153
First 100 Years	161
Fold.....	169
Tortoise & Hare	173
Tree Rings	175
Codependence, Counterdependence	177
Tahlequah & Trauma	181
Chelsea – A Counselor’s Perspective	183
Perfect Storm	191
Play.....	195
Inmaps	199
Subpersonalities	203
Developmental Inmaps	205
Inmaps in Action	211
APPENDIX.....	219
Bibliography	229

*When we met, Mia was unglued, losing it.
Shaking, begging, inconsolable.*

Mia

This young woman whom I'd just met in the waiting room began shaking and weeping as soon as we entered my office. Her words came out in short, confusing bursts. She seemed half out of control and half amazingly brave. Like she had no choice but to convulse, cry and try but fail to make sense. And at the same time, like she had waited forever to reveal the depths of some hidden pain.

Along with my own fear and overwhelm, I sensed that Mia was finally, very bravely just going for it. That there was nowhere for her to hide. That she no longer could bear to hide. I did not know really, certainly did not know her. Feelings and intuitions just kept flowing in me. I wanted to run but knew better.

*Mia's trauma was as intense as it was old.
It was as incessant and demanding as she was
intelligent and sensitive. Trauma fuels spirit's expansion.*

This to-be client's emotional pain (by whatever name, anxiety, panic, stress) was tearing her apart. The intense weeping, sometimes heaving, full-bodied crying, continued over the next several sessions. Just being near was unbearable. Mia would dip in and out of some excruciating memory. A few details emerged. But even without these, the emotional meaning was clear.

There had been some past incident where Mia had blacked out and later learned that she had punched and attacked her boyfriend. "What is wrong with me?" she asked over and over, demanding yet terrified to know. Tears streaming, close to panic, she would plead, "Tell me what to do, tell me what to do."

THE BRUISED HEART

Therapists are privy to many strange and heartbreaking stories. Our training does not necessarily provide the sort of priestly level these confessions seem to deserve. I personally feel this inadequacy and a profound obligation to recognize how sacred such moments are. What's now called emotional dysregulation is so often perfused with amazing and terrifying depths.

I remember a young man sharing, having never told anyone before, that he had suddenly seen the face of his abusive father on another person at a bar. I recall Jack's blank look as he explained how he had exploded in rage, severely injuring this person. While talking, I sensed how after he realized what happened and even now, he was watching it all as an outsider. This added another dimension to his sense of horror and shame.

And another person, Jessica, could not have been more apologetic and self-effacing. She answered questions, not quite realizing how much she'd been wounded. Her mother had always been extreme, she explained. As a child and teen, Jessica would not be allowed to even have her own opinions or thoughts. She was regularly commanded to answer detailed questions about her ideas or plans or understanding. Her mother then turned her answers against her, often while yelling that she was stupid, foolish, naïve, selfish, ungrateful, a joke, irrational, clueless.

Although she would agree this was not healthy or normal, Jessica did not see the connection to the current-day people and events that deeply concerned her. She could hardly keep up with her own effort to outline the whirlwind of terrifying interactions, fears and disappointments.

Jessica recognized there was something connected and unhealthy to her years back home; at the same time, she felt there was no real reason to discuss it. That was then. The time's past. Aren't all parents a little weird? Didn't she just need to get over it and not complain about it?

Ultimate Trauma

An emerging framework for emotional damage, dysfunction and healing, improves options for patients such as Mia, Jack and Jessica. Each experienced multiple ‘adverse childhood experiences’ (ACEs). In the 1990s, data on ten common ACEs was gathered from 17,000 adults.ⁱ The more ACEs, the higher the risk of mental health and health problems in adulthood. Like nothing before, the research put trauma on the map. Harsh childhood experiences, the results showed, contributed to every negative outcome one might name. The more ACEs, the more depression, suicide attempts, STDs, substance abuse, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, imprisonment and broken bones. The more ACEs, the shorter the lifespan. The destructive power of these factors has been declared a public health crisis.ⁱⁱ

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- physical, verbal, sexual abuse
- physical, emotional neglect
- parental mental illness, substance use, divorce (death, abandonment), incarceration, and/or domestic violence

The term “trauma” is routinely used for these adverse experiences. The general idea of trauma as a wrecking ball is obvious. But the specifics are not. Getting yelled at and hit by a parent checks the bad box. But what about not getting hit but never getting hugged? Subsequent interdisciplinary, international research has led to more nuanced models of “developmental trauma”. Presently, there is a move toward “trauma-informed” therapeutics, including counseling, medical and educational approaches.

THE BRUISED HEART

Leaders in this effort, Bessel van der Kolk, Bruce Perry and Patricia Crittenden, for example, have identified the critical role of the *timing* of adverse events and, also, the importance of *protective* factors.ⁱⁱⁱ A clearer picture has emerged with respect to trauma's power to destroy lives. Dr. Perry reports that (statistically) a terrible first two months of life is worse than a good, subsequent dozen years!

Adverse events early in life have an unfair disadvantage. They cascade across time and across the spectrum of development from body to mind. From resting heart rate, fine motor control to speech development, all the way up to self-concept. Kids become anxious. School performance suffers. Later as adolescents, they hang with the wrong crowd. No real surprises then what adulthood might have in store for them.

Fortunately, the picture is not quite as complete or bleak as it first appears. 'Relational health', the power of teachers, grandparents, coaches, and others to mitigate the negatives has proven to be a sort of unfair advantage, working in the other direction. As Dr. Perry puts it, "Your history of connectedness is more powerful than your history of adversity".^{iv} He and his colleagues advocate for the power of caring presence, even if just for fleeting moments, and say that this needs to be contextual—embedded in short bursts in the child's life rather than once a week in a therapy office. The brain changes, he explains, with small, persistent experiences of someone stopping to connect. Dr. Perry goes one more step—and this falls in line with my preferred term, 'ultimate trauma'. The data, he explains, points to a further profound and paradoxical upside to trauma/adversity.

"The irony about adversity is its actually something than can ultimately lead to forms of wisdom and compassion that are hard to get to without having had adversity." - Dr. Bruce Perry

The dichotomy *trauma* and *treatment* (disorder and therapy, symptom and symptom reduction, and all similar frameworks) can and must be transcended in any courageous, comprehensive effort to relieve suffering. If we carefully follow the evidence, at some point in higher stages of functioning, the notion of ‘healing’ is less and less applicable and (Buddhism’s mainstays, which Dr. Perry also cites) *compassion* and *wisdom* are more fitting.

Just as amazing, this scientific supposition (or spiritual truth), that suffering opens to higher spiritual capacities, is not limited to elite levels of functioning. This possibility of great compassion and wisdom, if true, is not relegated to monks on mountains seeking higher states of clarity. It is hard to imagine anything redeeming about child abuse or a panic attack, of course. But without leaving wiggle room for experiences and expressions of trauma having, in some mysterious fashion, a vast ‘silver lining’, all models and approaches to treatment may be in error. Friends and clinicians alike may rush in too knowingly, too eagerly. We may go against, not with nature. Efforts to help someone deal with brokenness and distress may be limited or misguided when this deeper backdrop (this spiritual dimension of trauma, and what I call ultimate trauma) is lacking.

Perry and his colleagues’ neurosequential model was developed collaboratively, over decades, with tens of thousands of survivors of abuse and neglect. A basic tenet is for therapies to begin at the lowest brain level impacted by adverse childhood experiences, which from bottom-up are: brain stem, diencephalon/cerebellum, limbic and cortex. If one shoots too high, lower (more primitive and fundamental) survival mechanisms go untouched or are made worse.

Imagine the life of a child soldier made to kill a family member to prove his bravery or, of course, be killed. You’ve probably seen photos. These images are closer than one might think when a person’s physiology has been repeatedly ratcheted up, early in life, by emotional trauma and an absence of love.

THE BRUISED HEART

Typical talk therapy may aim too high. People know how they should behave or think. They already want to calm down. At these higher levels, they dream to let go of their anger, fear or negativity. Their sick of suffering. But their deep self rages on and/or is severely disconnected. A truly trauma-informed approach starts with the raging and/or numbed out soma.

Repetitive, patterned experiences of safety trump short bursts of well-intentioned therapy. Wounded souls often need less, not more. The larger space of less, you could say. Their bodies are tapped out. Any chance of improvement starts with the body—with connecting evocatively, safely with the body—a major theme in this book. Small shifts in the totality of a person's 'outward' life do the same. For a child, this might involve ways teachers and parents back off a little around transitions and cognitive demands to process feelings or explain why one is angry. A caring grandfather, there between the storms, was this for one client.

Researchers of 'post-traumatic growth' discovered that soldiers and bereaved parents had unexpected insights as they recovered. Some referred to how the terrible experience opened their spirit in ways that would otherwise not have happened, how relationships were now more vivid and valued. They may feel a deepened gratitude for life and a stronger sense of a spiritual connection to their world. Many find a new purpose in helping others. Some ancient ideas and practices stand ready to meet the science of trauma as it rounds this curve.

“When we direct our attention toward our suffering, we see our potential for happiness. We see the nature of suffering and the way out. That is why the Buddha called suffering a holy truth. When we use the word “suffering” in Buddhism, we mean the kind of suffering that can show us the way out.” - Thich Nhat Hanhvi

The basic notion of ultimate trauma builds on how the emerging science of trauma is increasingly aligned with ancient, perennial truths regarding wisdom, compassion, liberation and enlightenment. In *Buddha's Mom*, I explore how both sides—both trauma and awakening—are linked to fuller view of attachment.^{vii} A working premise is that we are all traumatized. That trauma permeates life. But that the potential for radical healing is just as unbounded. For Buddhists, attachment is the cause of suffering. For trauma specialists, loving attachment is protective and healing. One might ask then, to whom was the Buddha most attached? How did his human attachments shape his ultimate discovery, for example, that attachment leads to suffering? I tried very carefully in *Buddha's Mom* to engage this mystery. I attempted with everything in me to discern and articulate the interwoven and ultimately singular nature of 1) biological, maternal attachment and 2) the attachment at the heart of Buddhism.

In this book, I lean much more into the secular, clinical side of this trauma-to-transformation dance. These ideas are not mine. Most are from brilliant researchers whom you'll soon meet. Some were half-baked notions. All of these became clearer in my work with many creative, courageous, traumatized clients, more of whom you will also meet should you read further. Through this, a model of 'ultimate trauma', one that bridges the secular/spiritual divide, seems poised to make a contribution. This model:

- 1) provides a more precise explanation for everyday stress and pathways to healing based in human evolution and physiology;
- 2) incorporates advances in the traditional, now outdated fight-flight view of anxiety;
- 3) resets the most common presenting problems (e.g., anxiety, depression and relationship-based conflict) in a more unified, integrative framework;

THE BRUISED HEART

- 4) proposes a more sensible approach to diagnostics;
- 5) reduces unhelpful, artificial distinctions between providers in the helping professions and their patients/clients;
- 6) helps explain why many “high functioning” people are also highly impaired and anxious;
- 7) clarifies why some people are unable or unwilling to help themselves, are ‘their own worst enemy’, and do not take advantage of resources;
- 8) places trauma in an ‘ultimate’ context (e.g., of ultimate healing, growth and spiritual transformation).

If you think being busy is intense, try stillness.

Busy

Just about every “How are you?” meets with the nebulous catch-all, “Busy!” Everyone is “so busy!” But is not the “first world” supposed to be first in the luxuries of life? Free time, discretionary income? What about being it *first* in fun and leisure? The ubiquitous *busy* claim often masks suffering and stymies healing. Why is slowing down and letting go so weirdly difficult?

Busy is a tricky little word. Generally, people mean *too busy*. An excess of tasks. But “busy” can be a sly way of bragging, a cover for being so in demand one can barely keep up. Some are busy but “excited,” or alternatively “stressed out” or “freaking out.” Regardless, busy refers to pressures which distract from the now. *How are you?* “Busy, but not bad for a Monday... can’t wait for the weekend.” We are all busy *and* complaining as if we want to slow down. But mysteriously when pressures and deadlines are met, they are soon replaced with a fresh set. “Yes, but I still...”

Busy is fight-flight’s persona, its social face. It’s a way of saying almost nothing while masking psychological depths and forces. Forces we feel, fear, love, and can’t grasp.

We are *busy at leisure*. With social media, we report moments partially experienced and partially handed over to Snapchat and Instagram. Many first-worlders could “settle for less.” But like with salt and sweets, we are driven by our biology to push for more. More things, more experiences, more education, money, friends, likes, retweets. We push for work that is more challenging, satisfying, with better pay and benefits. Like carp that grow as big as their pond allows, we get busy filling the space of our lives. An “OK” boyfriend or girlfriend, apartment, car, education and job will not do. We need someone that completes us, a view of the ocean and a perfect meal.

THE BRUISED HEART

While more traumatized than most, Mia was no different with regards to being busy. On one side, busy is conflated with legitimate “high functioning.” Mia was a high achiever to be sure. She’d completed intensive AP classes in high school, lots of extra-curriculars, and was accepted at a prestigious university. There she’d completed many demanding courses, while working part-time and squeezing in exercise and campus clubs. On paper and on Instagram, she had a nice boyfriend and the couple did a lot and had many friends.

All this, the busyness, academic successes and the good-on-paper boyfriend, was also true of Alexandria.

Even after a year of therapy, Alexandria would surprise herself (and me). Eruptions of sadness could be triggered by topics we both thought we’d already discussed and worked through.

For many, busyness is a robust defense. It masks and modulates emotional distress. Alexandria routinely bounced between surviving career demands and her intense self-imposed social schedule. Still, there are many hours in a day, and in truth, Alexandria also coped with boredom, with lots of empty browsing social media and playing repetitive games.

Anxiety is framed as a direct function of being too busy, but often boredom and an incapacity to handle ‘down time’ is part of the chicken-egg feedback loop. Each of boredom, busyness and anxiety fuels the cycle, which in total is a defense against deeper, tougher emotions. This can persist for years and successfully prevent a descent into trauma. But avoidance of the heart of darkness is also an avoidance of its beauty and power. Busyness prevents movement through these exotic lands into the light.

Ultimate trauma, the model at the heart of this book, endeavors to offer a reset. It seeks to help unstick busyness and reveal how anxiety is an inner calling. It seeks to show how other stopping points are just waystations, for example, how ‘fight-flight’ is another partial truth.

There's no magic pill. It's more magic than that.

Fight-Flight & Mia

As most everyone knows, fight-flight is shorthand for the *sympathetic* or activated side of the autonomic nervous system. The other, “rest-digest” and relaxation side, is called the *parasympathetic* nervous system. (Think “parachute,” gently floating back to earth, restoring order or homeostasis.)

Helping people to restore some semblance of control (tamp down the sympathetic via the parasympathetic) is important in an emergency room. But elsewhere, caution *against* caution may be advised. The relaxation or parasympathetic response may be either hero or villain.

*Clearly Mia's fight-flight response was raging.
But my intuition was not to help her calm down.*

Mia's case is instructive in this regard. Unbearable emotional torment is the *inside* of an unhinged fight-flight state. This sort of inner hell is qualitatively that of a prey animal under attack. Or that of someone being violently accosted. Yet Mia was also, fleetingly, sharing this experience with me. She was in fight-flight, but not fighting or fleeing.

Such a highly intense, precarious state teeters between danger and opportunity. Fight-flight is *implicitly protective*. But in emotional trauma, there's all manner of misperception. For Mia, the situation was especially desperate. Fight-flight was no longer cutting it. She was on the verge of a further, possibly psychotic regression.

Fight brims with self-righteousness, with demands that others acknowledge blatant unfairness, stop, change, etc.. To Mia, therapy was for crazy people. It validated what her mother had always said, that she had some deep-seated problem. So walking in was a sort of collapse, a giving up of any effort to push back. But for her, there might be no floor, no bottom. On the other side, *flight* and all the panicky, desperate avoidance was no longer working. It had not prevented this moment. Her mother was right. Something was broken.

THE BRUISED HEART

A loving heart validates fear but not all of its contents.

People drink, mope, suffer alone and avoid these moments of truth. In the midst of hyperventilating and weeping, Mia expressed the fear that she had harbored for years. That she was in fact crazy. And that someday some sort of professional would confirm this.

Ancient, barely integrated shame feels like some inner, insane, monster about to break out.

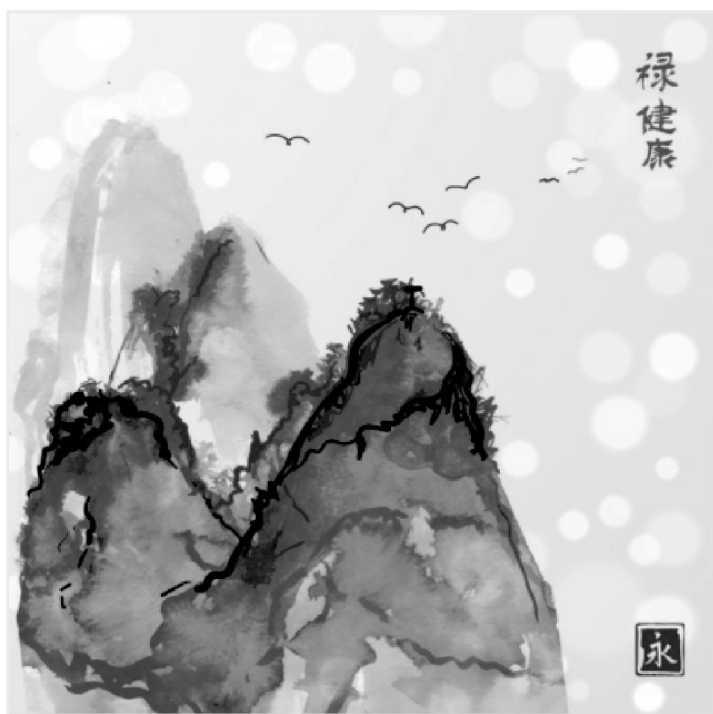
Mia was taking an enormous risk exposing her perceived insanity. Risk-taking may be equal parts desperation and courage. It can be important to give both their time on stage. “So, you’ve had this fear for a long, long time?” helped stretch the moment. She was exposing her pain, terrified yet open to a deeper connection. At its core, the pain was very old and fast reassurance would inadvertently dismiss its depth and power and limit her recovery.

In those first weeks, there was lots of loud, intense weeping and hyperventilating. Her crying could be heard up and down the hallway. It would have been easy to ‘redirect’ and reassure, and I did at the margins. But helping someone to go deep into their agony in a safe container has the most leverage for transformation. There was no need to avoid this moment.

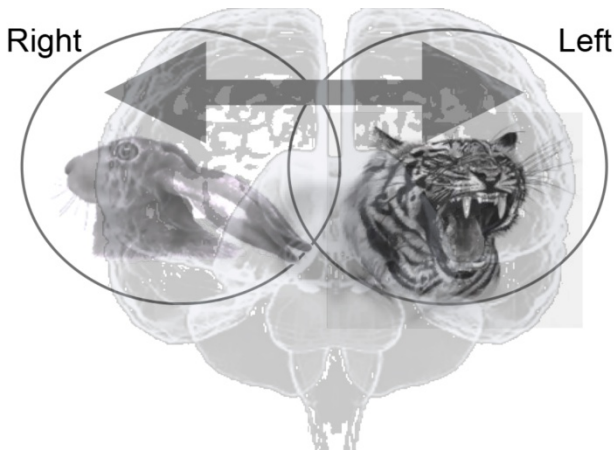
People who command a kid to stop crying tend to do so out of their own irritation, not real compassion, not what’s really loving. It’s easy for anyone in authority to do the same, albeit with polite cover. My urge to do this was intense. Mia’s crying was sometimes very loud. I was embarrassed on some level and worried about upsetting others in nearby offices. That seemed like a perfect excuse to politely impose some order. But I (barely) knew better and pushed on. Mia was extending her circle of pain to include me. She had allowed me in. I needed to open my heart bigger.

The new discoveries related to the autonomic nervous system are critical for sufferers and helpers alike. An uninformed, unaware ‘helper’ (therapist, significant other or friend) may inadvertently enforce the parasympathetic line. *Take it easy, calm down, you’re a nice person, he’s not worth it, let it go.* But the exalting of relaxation prolongs suffering and suffering’s sacred potential.

With well-meaning parasympathetic soothing, the deep pain of emotional trauma may be shushed away for a while. But this is temporary and not transformative. To begin to grasp how patterns of emotional dysregulation, happiness, anger and sulking persist, we need to delve into nature’s split decision. Nature enthusiastically said *yes* to two very divergent ways of experiencing our world. She stuck them both in the single human skull with a huge split down the middle.



Right-to-Right



The human brain is more two than one. The fact of its highly separated hemispheres, in combination with attachment, is key to understanding and healing emotional trauma. By design, we begin life as limp, hapless creatures. Floppy bodies with a spongy brain to match. The brain and body come online through the mother, or whoever dominates the mother role.

The true breadth of this mom-baby nexus is astounding and goes to the heart of anything important one can name at any point in life: love, meaning, fear, anxiety, relationship, potential, hopes. Over the last thirty years, Allan Schore has charted these connections.^{viii} His work has led the way to a “new paradigm” (which he also refers to as modern attachment theory and regulation theory) in mental health centered around attachment, brain science and trauma.^{ix} This body of work reveals that during attachment, the mother’s right hemisphere is in a sort of dance with the baby’s right hemisphere.

THE BRUISED HEART

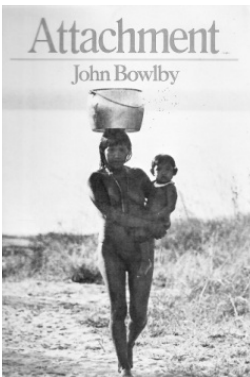
*Art, poetry, movement, metaphor, deep stirring moods.
Devotion, inspiration, passion. Music, the songs of the heart.
These are the mystical worlds invisible to the left hemisphere.*

All that happens or does not happen in the first weeks, months and years of life slips into the mists. Increasingly as a toddler forward, we internally experience life as a unified, single person. It is critical, however, to underscore that the prevailing experience of an integrated, unified sense of self/other (me/you) is actually *secondary* and *tertiary*. This fact is the critical ‘take-away’ of the right hemisphere attachment story. The mom-baby world came first and this inner architecture remains preeminent psychologically.

Trauma heals into wholeness.

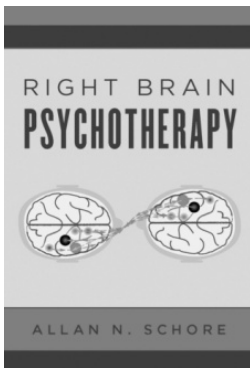
Because of the elusive, illusive power of the singular self, clarity regarding these depths comes through emotional upheaval. This is trauma’s secret code and the core idea behind this book. Without ‘the cracks that let the light in,’ the powerful, partial truth of singularity obscures the deeper, truer, broader, freer reaches of consciousness. But all that encapsulates and safeguards the desperate, fragile ego is resisted. Swimming in a pool is one thing; in the open ocean, quite another.

*A dense, neurotic, defensive posture dissolves in an open,
relaxed body.*



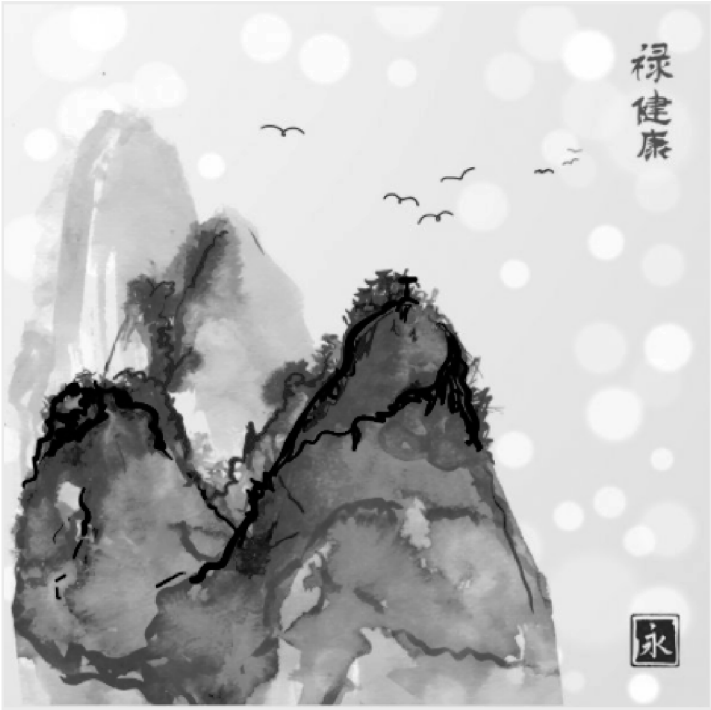
Let’s quickly tie a bow around the research into maternal attachment. In the 1960s, attachment exploded on the scene.^x So critical was mother’s love that babies might die from a ‘failure to thrive’ without it. By the 1980s, attachment’s influence across the lifespan became clear. The actual toddlers in early studies, to name one strand of the research, were followed across their lifespans. Their original attachment style shaped their approach to

intimacy in adulthood. Other lines of research concurred: close relationship styles in adults were extensions of early life attachment.



The attachment roller coaster of mom-baby years becomes the romance roller coaster later in adulthood. There is no end of emotional longing, fixating, dwelling, rejection, correction, excitement, dejection, confusion—rinse and repeat.

Since the 1990s, Schore's work has filled out the picture.^{xi} He discovered that the right hemisphere, so dominant in maternal attachment, shapes emotional intimacy in its totality: 1) in the mom-baby domain; 2) in romantic, intimate adult relationships; and 3) therapist-client relationships.^{xii} In effect, the empathic therapist's right hemisphere listens and calibrates itself to the sad, upset, hurt or otherwise dysregulated right hemisphere of the client.



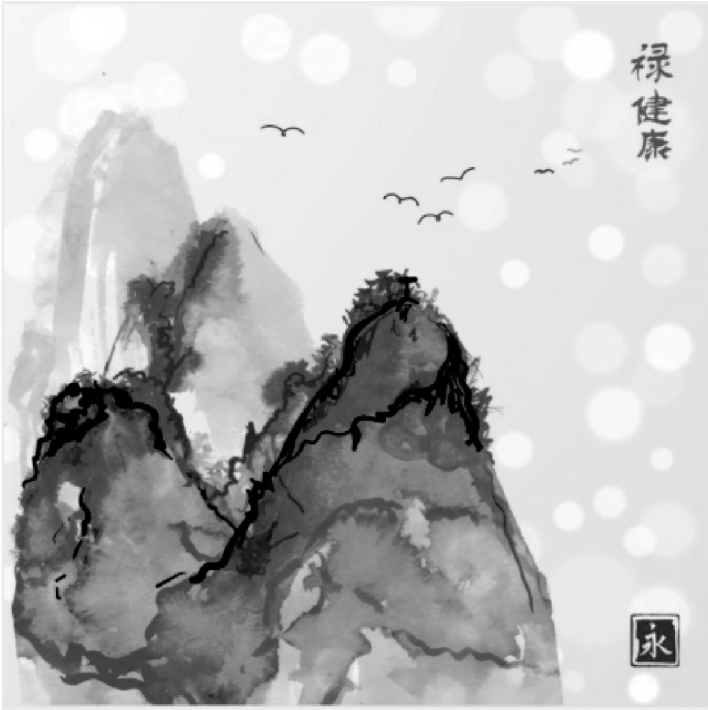
Proto Self

The beauty and power of the early life origins of attachment cannot be understated. Across the hundreds of long days and nights of mom-baby attachment, a proto-self emerges. This right brain to right brain process begins in the third trimester in utero and continues into the second year of life outside the womb. Only after this intensive right-to-right hemisphere process does the left hemisphere kick in and speech start to blossom.

First all is sea. Slowly a little barren island breaks the surface, recedes and re-emerges. An island formed fleetingly, seeing itself in the mirror of its mother's eyes.

For better or worse, the emergent blob of 'me' is first and predominantly somatic and affective.^{xiii} Language comes a zillion years later, from the point of evolution.^{xiv} The left hemisphere's gifts were very slow to emerge in evolution, and the reverse, the ancient, pre-eminent predominance of the preverbal, somatic, affective self, cannot be understated. The path to ultimate healing and liberation merely begins with the verbal echo chamber, the mental world of thinking and logic.

The mother (by which I mean mother-figure, main attachment figure, main caregiver) looks at her child's face and eyes for untold hours across the first hours and weeks. Sporadically and increasingly, the child looks back with more reliability. What does she see?



There's sanity in insanity. We're trying to survive a storm, cross a sea, complete something that still rages in our body.

When All Goes Well

When all goes well-enough, a caring, emotionally stable and available mother consistently mirrors her child. Her face and eyes reflect the baby's moods and feelings. Her physical affection backs this up. She spends thousands of hours carrying her baby, stroking, holding, rocking. This too is mirroring, in the best of cases. The mother does not tickle a baby who is becoming upset by this. But she does tickle and up-regulate where fitting (e.g., when the baby is disorganized, perhaps some mixture of sleepy, hungry, bored or confused). The attuned, caring mother perceives this on an intuitive level and uses her charms to bring about connection through affection and perhaps upbeat play or a more mellow, gentle dance. Moms do not have to be angelic. They can miss the bullseye by a quite a lot.

The new generation is ever-adapting to what's available. The mother's gazing, cooing, squeezing, stroking, touching and carrying are the outward behaviors that meet with the infant's *orienting reflexes*. We use our senses to *actively receive* the world.

Like a queen arriving at a palace, the emerging self has no concern about the many preparations completed in advance—so long as they were done well.

Through mother-child attachment, the pathways of the mind-body connection are refined. All the soothing of tears, all the bouncing and play, all this preparation is a conduit for the unfolding autonomic nervous system. This subset of the mind-body interface, mainly known as 'fight-flight' is constructed via the right hemisphere's hypothalamic-pituitary adrenal axis. So long as small freak-outs result in attachment corrections, a bandwidth of normal is established.

THE BRUISED HEART

Language is also right hemisphere biased at the outset. Beautifully, language begins as music, through *motherese*. Motherese is the singsong, high-pitched way mothers speak. It is also the way we speak to beloved pets and sweethearts is actually more melody, song and tone than language.^{xv} Historically, non-native speaking women routinely co-mothered infants. They performed beautifully despite knowing few words, because they spoke (sang) motherese and had the same caring gaze as an accompaniment. The ‘nonverbal’ or musical dimensions of language are processed by the right hemisphere: intonation, inflection and prosody (patterns of stress and intonation)—everything besides pure rhythm, which is handled by the linear acumen of the left hemisphere.

Deep, direct attachment connections shape the *implicit self*—all under the guidance of the right hemisphere. Implicit means unmediated. There are no disruptions or fracture lines. Another word for this is *embodied*. A friend is a whole, not an accumulation of elements. One’s love for him is the same. The whole can deepen and widen, such as in friendship as trust and intimacy expand.

When I surf, there is a sort of moving oneness. A streaming, flowing sequence embodied in the catching of the wave and carving the wall. The left brain’s linear sequence, critical to focused learning and mastery, is enveloped or sheathed not in a static but in a sort of organic, living unit. Filled out by the right hemisphere, the whole (the ride) *is* greater than the sum of the parts. Attachment can be articulated as cumulative from learning to mastery. But it is and, is experienced as, a living whole.

The soul is wounded when the attachment dance is not adequately intensive, immersive and in-depth, when it's shallow, inconsistent and rocky.

Left-Right Glitching

The brain glitches and trauma results, however, when this process falters. When attachment's natural, mom-baby loops are interrupted. When there are failures in mirroring, singing, cooing and affection, in picking up, holding, and communicating is lacking or out of sync. And later, in post-toddler, early childhood and teenage years, when moments of closeness, understanding and trust are hit or miss.

Perhaps mom-baby syncing up is too hot. The mother's moods shift, her temper flares and there are fractures in the flow. This connection may lack enough heat, passion, adoration, affection, connection. And it is too cold, with extended periods of disconnect and lack of her engagement.

All of this tends to sound very judgmental. But obviously even a supermom who is overworked (outside the home) and never home, or too ill, etc., is "emotionally unavailable." For the baby, too hot or cold quickly tips from safety toward danger. Too much affection is hard to imagine, but inadequate attachment trips the same trigger wire as any other perception of bodily danger. It's hard to breathe too much air but the opposite quickly raises alarms.

We are a hearty species. The right hemisphere develops as best it can. The danger becomes infused, like pollution in the air. The emergent self will not be so disjointed as to fail to develop a crude sense, for example, such that the arm and hand are dangling to one's side are mine. But where attachment is marred by the too hot or cold attachment, the baby's implicit experience of itself (*its self*) is polluted by fear and dread.

THE BRUISED HEART

The brain glitches. It registers the daily danger as, at once, predictable and therefore safe. An intermittent caring person mitigates this, but the main act is an emergent mini-me, a subset of mom. This pre-logical, affective matrix does its best to incorporate, e.g., embody the inconsistencies and disharmonies. A higher, positive, therapeutic force, however, can destabilize this baseline of shame and pain. A higher love, e.g., greater safety and healthier attachment dynamic, reaches back in time and corrects wrongs etched deep in the internal connections of the brain.

There is no map greater than compassion.

Clients like Mia who ‘fall apart’ in a caring context time-travel, permeating the deeply affect-based unconscious. Devotion to their precarious journey is key. Schore’s work shows that therapy, like attachment, is a right hemisphere to right hemisphere process.^{xvi} Everything depends on the same factor, the consistency, depth and intensity of the care offered. You don’t rescue a kidnap victim over and over. Little by little, collaboratively you form a path back and forth. We need the reality of even the harshest childhood to stay in reality.

Clients such as Mia are unwittingly pressuring the left hemisphere to loosen its lock on the here and now, to ease up on its arrogance and insistence that it defines reality. The left would prefer full ownership, to define the problem, declare it unsolvable, remain in a perpetual state of distress but remain the boss.

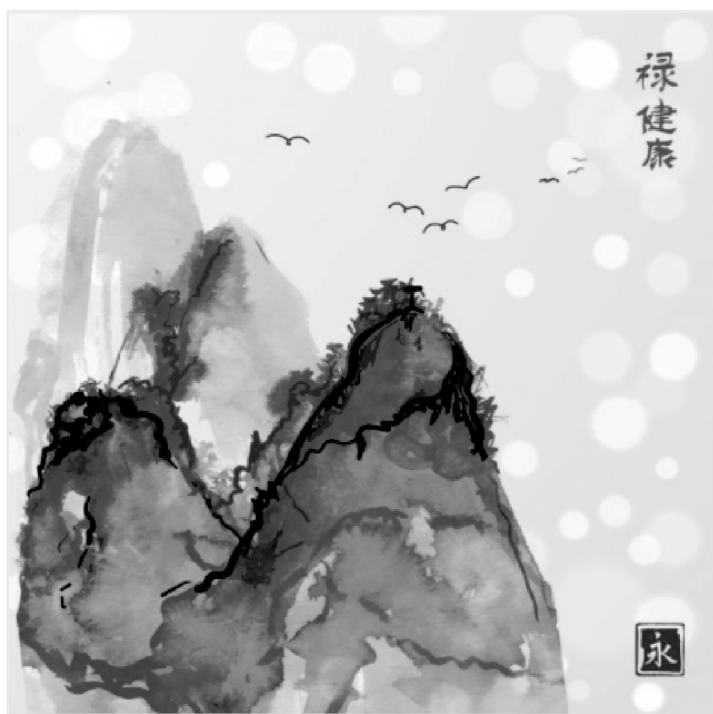
Initially clients defensively cling to the left’s certitude. Variants of, ‘It’s too late to do anything about it now’ and ‘I’ve tried everything, nothing has worked’ are common refrains. Many are hellbent on going down with the ship. It’s all they know. They arrive in therapy to prove that nothing can help. But having made the decision to freely come to therapy ‘irrational’ tears may flow. Or they may lean back satisfied having proven you cannot help.

Never mind common sense. Never mind that loving mothers allow their children to cry many times a day. Kids cry about things that just happened but also time travel. Their memories may take them back to experiences that still pack a punch, or ones seemingly irrelevant but somehow stirring. My little son recently was sobbing. Somehow the concept of his big brother moving out for college in a year had just landed.

Never mind that when the client needed help, no loving listener was present. Obviously, the client needs to time travel and the logic that ‘it’s too late’ is anything but. What once hurt remains so—yet can be overcome.

*The greater the atmosphere, womb, hearth of
lovingkindness, the more the nascent connections
between trauma’s broken bits are revealed.*

Enveloped by a loving presence, the spirit seeks to ‘re-member,’ to reconnect the pieces. This is the right hemisphere’s specialty. Conversely, separating life into pieces is the left’s preference and forte. The parsing of deep emotional pain is easy to spot. The hunger to vent and the conviction that nothing will help are grumpy neighbors. Recent research has expanded an understanding of these two ways of being, processing and experiencing.^{xvii}



Dr. Iain McGilchrist



Dr. McGilchrist's journey in 'lateralization' (the study of humans' split brain) took 40 years.^{xviii} It evolved from early intuitions—such as the implicit sense that the 'whole is greater than the sum of the parts,' his love and exploration of art, music and literature, his work in neuroscience and schizophrenia. Dr. McGilchrist highlights several key points regarding the evolution of our split brain. Across evolution, the two hemispheres became larger and larger. The right became larger than the left. Each hemisphere became more internally integrated and specialized. The bridge between the two hemispheres became proportionally smaller. The cells in this bridge, the corpus callosum, became more dedicated to inhibiting signals from the opposite side. In fact, the proportion and variety of inhibitory neurons increased across our species' evolution. A special level of inhibition developed via the massive expansion of the frontal lobes.

Our split brain, as McGilchrist articulated in "The Master and His Emissary," evokes two ways of processing and connecting. We pay "two kinds of attention at once." A powerful, simpler form of this is seen in birds where one eye moves independent of the other. Their left (right hemisphere) eye is designed to look out for predators. The other homes in on prey. Experiments show how such birds will attempt to see danger with their left (right hemisphere) even when the opposite eye has the better view. Animals do the reverse when tasks involve predation and grasping. The correlate for this is the human's use of the right to grasp, punch or throw a spear.



THE BRUISED HEART

*The right brain is all about our existential,
fleeting, vulnerable status in this great cosmos.
The left is a narrow, utilitarian toolbox
for manipulating our tiny sliver of it.*

Imagine waking up in an unfamiliar place, having heard a strange sound. Everything's dark. We naturally twist our body and extend our *left* arm and hand (controlled by the right hemisphere) as we try and orient, find walls, doors, furniture. We pick up an object, get ready to swing or throw it with our right arm and hand (controlled by the left hemisphere). Due to the hemispheres they inherit, a mother primarily carries her infant with her left arm and performs tasks, attacks and defends with her right. (And yes, our closest primate relatives are predominantly right-handed.)^{xix}

There are many mysteries at hand. The closest halves of the mother's two retinas, the left hemifields, are wired to her right hemisphere. When walking or running, with her body twisting, this enables her to more readily visually check on her baby and right hemifield engagement on predators, prey, berries, the path she's walking and so on. The baby's proximity to her beating heart provides a continuation of the womb's comforting percussion.

McGilcris's paradigm is more radical and far-reaching than the both oversimplified and *incorrect* view of left/right distinctions popularized in the 1970s. This held up the left side as all language and thinking and the right as neither of these, and housing visual and emotional capacities. Thinking, language, emotion and imagination are, as McGilcris makes loud and clear, *whole brain* activities. The grand chasm between ways of thinking, feeling and imagining that form the yin and yang of life fomented not simply from the left hemisphere, which all mammals share but from one additional massive development.

Frontal Lobes & Inhibition

Along with humans' expanding, diverging hemispheres, the frontal lobes increased in size and power. With this came a massive leap in our ability to step back from nature, to have a rich inner life. Nature no longer just happened to us. As with the corpus callosum (the "bridge" between the hemispheres), the frontal lobes are loaded with *inhibitory* neurons in addition to 'excitatory' ones. Billions more highways and traffic, sure. But importantly, also, billions more speed limits and traffic lights.

*Neural inhibition chips away at the marble, saying no,
making space. Getting rid of what does not belong.
Leaving what is wild and free and most meaningful.*

With these developments, bird brain basics (already described) broke orbit. Recall how birds' left eye/right brain scans for anomalies, opportunity or danger? And how the right eye/left brain hyper-focuses on the stick it needs for its nest or the brown seed in the brown sand? And mammals, primates and humans inherited this same split system?

This stretching-interplay led to our species great achievements. This cascading, space-making, moment-making capacity is captured in the beautiful quote attributed to Michelangelo. When asked how he made his sculptures, he said (paraphrasing) that he simply cut, chiseled, chipped and removed the marble that did not belong.

Taking some poetic license, this meditative journey was itself the destination. There was no perfect vision to try and live up to. Michelangelo was releasing not making. He freed 'unnatural' beauty from its rock (nature) prison. His heart-stopping forms were unnatural because they were supernatural and archetypal. (Ahead, I will suggest an updated model for archetypes I call *inmaps*). So guided, he used his cultivated knowledge and supreme fine motor skills with sublime precision. The right hemisphere channels, and the left articulates—because the frontal lobe gives pause.

THE BRUISED HEART

The brain grew us, and we grew the brain—in the Darwinian sense. Chicken and egg. The hemispheres grew larger and proportionally more separate. Tools, weapons, speech, socialization, family, tribal formation—to name just a few—trace back to this tale of two hemispheres and the ever-larger present moment facilitated by the frontal lobes. “Delayed gratification” is really, delayed everything. Delayed fight-flight automaticity, delayed space between stimulus and response. All this evoked increasingly complex emotionality, reasoning and behavioral repertoires. The gist of this positive feedback system is a larger moment, a bigger now—more awareness, more being. Consciousness, piggybacking on the frontal-aided delay, expanded. But more is not the only take-away, more *and* more different is more fitting. The left became more left-ish and the right, more right-ish. Each through the dynamic tension with the ‘opposite’.

Years ago Evidence of Behavioral Modernity

300,000	Cooking food in caves
130,000	Intentional burial (possibly much longer)
100,000	Beads, adornment, trade
42,000	Fishhooks
35,000	Elaborate cave art: horses, cattle, mammoths, even rhinoceroses, also cave lions, panthers, bears, cave hyenas

Tool-making tracks this clearly. A million years would pass before early humans did much more than purposefully crack a side of a stone off to use the sharp edge. Simplistic Oldowan chipped stones date back 2.6 million years. These reflect a far less thoughtful, less delay-capable, less deliberate mind than that which produced the Acheulean stone axe a million years later.

The hemispheric tension allowed for a higher, more idealized image, notion, goal or idea to exist in tension with a cruder level. The right’s

artistic vision persisted as the left churned away, making mistakes but persevering. With this came discoveries. How rocks break and chip and how to get them to break and chip. These developments involved emotion: aggravation, confusion, surprise, delight. A discovery might lead to the tribe's adulation or jumps in status for weapons that bolster hunting, gathering and the making of clothing and shelter.

Perhaps more discoveries will shed light on what appears to be the million-year delay and vast different between the Oldawan and Acheulean levels of awareness. An *ultimate trauma* view, even if retrospective, seems to fit. The oceanic stretch to



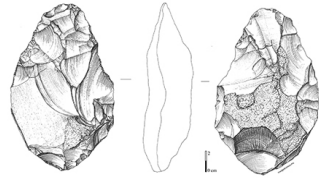
human consciousness automatically forces an encounter with all that evolution had never revealed before, e.g., vulnerability, death. Implicitly, awareness is stunningly terrifying and traumatic. Any possible path to a pure, open, ultimate awareness must first plunge headlong into this morass. With ultimate trauma, I suggest that this possibility of growth through pain is our essence (or essential essence or potential). That this nexus is less of a developmental endpoint and more of a living potential, the very character of consciousness.

It is conjecture, but the delay between our remnant Oldawan mind and more current levels of awareness may reflect the depths we have to travel through trauma to more fully access the oneness of life. To our inheritance of sentience, you could call it. Or perhaps, our spiritual lineage. Not to go back, but to bring the past into the present. This is the distance a life bent toward awakening travels, or a moment of pain offers. The chance to realize, to awaken to our essence as one with all sentient beings, as Buddhists describe. One with our Earth mother and cosmic sheathe, as indigenous sages refer. Other names are the ground of being and pure awareness.

THE BRUISED HEART

Boosted by the combination of the hemispheres and frontal lobes, nature gave birth to human nature.

Eventually the leaps in mental and motor skills (from Oldawan on) enabled fishhook, jewelry-making and cave painting.^{xx} Control and refinement of hand and finger movements were enabled by advances in the left motor cortex.^{xxi} These leaps in the neurology corresponding to right-sided (arm, hand, finger) dexterity spread (in an evolutionary sense) neurologically to (what became the adjacent) laryngeal motor cortex.



Much as someone creating a spearpoint has an image of their goal, early humans shaped sounds. Ever more precise sound-making evolved into every more elaborate speech, and into richer emotional, interpersonal connections, and more cohesive tribal cultures.



With these developments, humans could step back psychologically from the direct pressures of survival and to live in a wider, more conscious space informed by curiosity, love, fear and longing alongside reasoning and abstraction. All of these accomplishments demonstrate the power and importance of attachment as much as they do leaps in analysis and planning. By now, I hope you will recognize the inner to-and-fro pattern of the hemispheres and the role of neural inhibition in these advances.

Cooking later, back in the cave, exploited the left hemisphere's capacities for planning and fine motor coordination, and right's capacities for social-emotional values. Feelings are intrinsic to all aspects of tribal life, including the hunting, gathering and sharing of food. Noncontributing, infirmed elders (in some cases, the archeological record shows) were fed and cared for. Positive emotions such as care

and trust would be needed to mitigate against selfishness, envy or aggression to maintain cohesion. But every emotion had an important place. Hostility and shaming likely played a role in pressuring lazy or conniving tribes' members to limit their burden on the tribe.

These factors are recapitulated in various contexts. Modern toddlers and kids need guidance to mitigate their own pushes and pulls. The social-emotional toolbox routinely includes praise, rewards, consequences, parent's affection and withdrawal of the same—in addition to heaps of 'natural' social consequences such as snubbing and shaming. With healthy guidance little ones learn to modulate jealousy and aggression, to delay gratification and cultivate confidence in their world.

For anyone with early life attachment trauma, however, the unmet need for such mature love goes underground, not away. The longing may surface later in adult relationships and manifest in the projection of a desired protector and provider on to others who fall short of the mark. Young adults are especially prone to falling hard and projecting blissful levels of perfection onto another. They are also vulnerable to recoiling and lashing out when their rescuer fails them.

These dynamics demonstrate how emotional trauma is vulnerable to hemispheric glitching. The left's intense locked-on, obsessed, singular, predator focus is exploited in infatuation. An indefatigable hunter may find his delicious prey being carried off by another. Intolerable separation distress may prompt anger at their beloved angel.

As we will discuss in more depth, separation distress drives us to “face our fear” and employ attachment in the service of right hemisphere hurt. A whole-brain bliss, with getting who we want, echoes back to mother's breastfeeding and caress. Hope springs eternal because it was reinforced to some degree. There was some sort of bosom of safety. Such an oceanic bliss, a she/he-completes-me pinnacle, is the lust-romance opiate scientists have found involves (taking this analysis to a neurochemical scale) oxytocin.

THE BRUISED HEART

The archeological record fits this dual-hemisphere picture where attachment had an increasingly powerful role in social functioning. Some intentional burials were apparently plain. Others had lavish ornamentation. This mixture may reflect (left-brained) order and hierarchy, as well as (right-brained) emotion and attachment-based relationships. Esteemed tribe members garnered more adoration. Skeleton fragments have been found of older, crippled people. These suggest they were cared for and protected for years despite being a burden. This too suggests the left/right mix of hierarchy/esteem and attachment/compassion.

The key point is that this yin/yang deepened with the brain's blend of excitatory and inhibitory neural connections, very much boosted by our frontal lobes. Healing from emotional trauma comes through the restoration of this widening, stretching cognitive-emotional field. Within this, we can bodily experience and sustain life's range of agony and ecstasy. With wisdom—the accumulation of experience and insight from living within this widening field—we increasingly, willingly let go and dive into life, into cosmos or the mystery of existence, not knowing where it leads. We “fall” in love with the process of letting go and getting back more than we possibly could have imagined.

This is the path of the warrior, the path of the heart, the path of an integral form of courage. Emotional trauma imprisons. There is a real danger of living out a small, wounded life—unexamined, unimagined, uncreative, neurotic, fear bound and narrow.

Power corrupts the few, while weakness corrupts the many. Hatred, malice, rudeness, intolerance, and suspicion are the faults of weakness. ^{xxii}

For early ancestors and indigenous peoples across time, life was riddled with hardship, suffering and injury. Mothers died in childbirth, as did newborns. Imagine burying a friend with nothing remotely resembling a shovel. Grief was perfused in life. The leaps in awareness from the

hemispheres' expansion went hand-in-glove with existential angst and questing. Bad things absolutely happened to good people, and vice versa. Whether one suffered tragedy or an unexpected boon, they likely pondered, 'Why me?'

For indigenous peoples, questions of ultimate meaning break free of narcissistic, neurotic holding patterns through the lived experience of *belonging to*. They *belong to* Mother Earth, not the other way around. This is not a left hemisphere *belief* but a right hemisphere, implicit *knowing*. We are born of a mother who was born of a mother, going back. All creatures too are born of a mother, all embedded in the same cycles of procreation and aging. The air, animals, plants, wind, rivers and mountains are somehow her, our mother.

Emotional turmoil is born of the left hemisphere's intense self-assurance. On average, neurotic self-absorption drives attention to rips in the tribal social fabric. These 'hard-wired', pre-configured, pre-existing conditions are, clearly, fierce. We are suckers for their wisdom whether we like it or not.

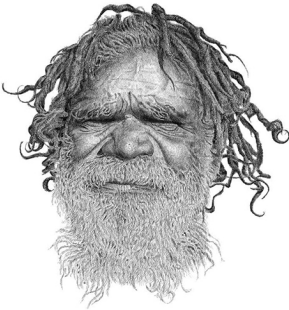
Recall once more the left's fierce focus, for example, enabling birds to discern seeds from background pebbles. By design, the right hemisphere's threat detection is pushed out of awareness and only rushes back in when its survival is threatened. This was the set-up before the massive expansion in excitatory/inhibitory capacities. With this, a system designed to switch drastically on a moment's notice entered into ever more shades of gray. This opened the door to depths of feeling, to rich social matrices—and to the corruption of this beautiful, ancient, tender inheritance.

The child's need for attachment is her natural pull to *belong to* her mother. This is a stream of the same innate, indigenous river or drive, as suggested, aligned with human nature, Mother Earth and Mother Nature. This pristine Eden gets butchered in neurotic breakdowns, but beckons at the same time.

THE BRUISED HEART

Indigenous peoples are not being conceptual or philosophical when they refer to belonging to the land and not the other way around.

When this need, as if for air itself, is stymied, alarms go off. And when these do not lead to action and a restoration of safety, of mother love, fear, anger, hurt and terror churn. As these build, the left brain's innate drive to force some, indeed any sense of stability and confidence pushes back. And when all this roiling persists, everything is in play. A best friend becomes a worst enemy. Anything in the name of even a moment of linearity and order.



So-and-so hurt me, will not say sorry, will not text, went too far. There's judge, jury and justice. The wounded mind defines the problem so narrowly, erecting an illusion of solution predestined to disappoint. There is not enough breadth or flow. Supposed solutions are concrete, unimaginative and cut off (through neural inhibition). But deeper connections within the field of the right hemisphere are both possible and transformative.

What anthropologists refer to as animistic^{xxiii} is revealing. As they encountered the remaining hunter-gatherers and 'primitive' cultures, they described this universal mindset. These naïve peoples actually *believed* that all things, rivers, plants and weather were animated or alive, and were part of a grand, integrated living system or being. We can discern now how the term *belief* reflected anthropologists' own left-hemisphere speech/language bias. Better descriptors are *experience*, *implicit knowledge* or *wisdom* that all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, humans—are part of a living web.

Famously Carl Jung used the verb, *know* rather than belief. He'd been asked if he believed in the existence of a god. He said, no. He did not

believe. He knew. This was his way to express his view that archetypes, including ‘the Godhead’ were inherited, internal realities, truths. We can see this far back but not further. Not before the Big Bang.

Modern peoples are cut off from this earthly essence, this psychological and spiritual home, foundation or mother. This cutoff is intrinsic in emotional trauma and its reversal is intrinsic in healing.

“A baby has for a long time been part of its mother and has floated in the ocean of the womb. So, it has the sense from the beginning of what is really to an enlightened person totally obvious—that the universe is one single organism.”^{xxiv}

Anthropology and psychology have underscored the limitations or primitiveness of animism. Specific examples such as voodoo, ritual sacrifice and ancestor worship also reflect the narrowed truth claims typical of the left hemisphere. The left appropriates what it can map and model, and no more. And in its typical self-congratulatory way, it makes sweeping authoritarian claims about this subset of reality.

Indigenous worldviews, no different than modern ones, reflect the left’s signature. As with birds’ right eyes and humans’ right hands, the machinery of the left enables the body to isolate and manipulates what it can *grasp* and no more.^{xxv} Understanding, thinking and comprehending reflect the root meaning of *comprehend*, from the Latin *comprehendere, to catch or seize.*^{xxvi} Once we have some sort of map, we protrude into the world, to carve, throw, carry, attack and use our speech to yell or manipulate. In the case of emotional trauma, there may be some awareness of the right’s emotional distress. But this tends to be pinched off by the left’s narrowed aperture. All sorts of distortions occur. Old pain is painted onto current life circumstances. Our current day self screams in the face of unfairness or asymmetries. The venting lets some of the pressure off but partial truths ensure no marked, longed for, lasting change is achieved.

THE BRUISED HEART

We ‘kick the dog’ after a rough day at work and get ‘insanely jealous’ of a peer, significant other or friend whom we elevate. We feel pathetic and self-loathing when someone is dismissing. The drama can be as unbearable as it is cut off from its source. An inner child dreams of a parent whose big pupils are pools of concern and love. Their eyes and face mirror us. They see us. They play with us. But somehow this dreamy figure lives in an unholy gridlock with one who was cold and perpetually unavailable. Meanwhile others perhaps better put together walk right by.

We go about feeling and believing (reflecting right-based emotion and left-based cognition respectively) and doing our life in creative and befuddling ways. Life’s consistently unbearable and just as consistently we are sure all would be fixed if a certain someone would just turn their lovelight our way.

In emotional trauma, this already unhappy, neurotic stalemate, designed to enhance survival, gives way. It is as if two people are paddling a canoe. One on the left and one on the right. The canoe rocks side to side, as the left and right paddlers, taking turns, plunge their oars in the water. The back-and-forth rocking they cause is secondary to the stability born of forward motion their cooperative pattern facilitates.

As Mia “blacked out,” something fast and intense occurred leaving her paddlers in the water and canoe adrift. Did one paddler independently not do their part, or shove the other into the water? Trauma can be framed as accidental or purposeful. Both frames of reference are valid. An “intrusive” memory is at once reckless, intruding, upsetting the order and, just as validly, is also seeking to be re-membered and thereby facilitate emotional healing.

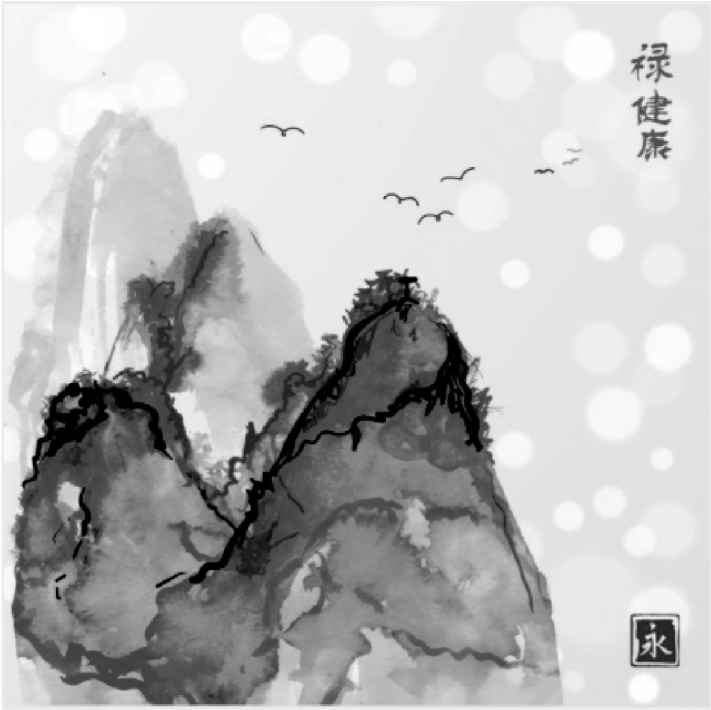
From a hemispheric perspective, the trauma-holding right paddler suddenly, intensely rocked the boat. The left could no longer track the who, when, where of the present, one of its primacy functions. The

unfolding events of the wedding vanished as the left attempted to compensate, restore order within chaos. It too lurched about, coalescing around a new and terrible set of information coming from the right.

Mia's regression, as we will discuss in a future section, parallels what scientists call 'defensive aggression.' This is the familiar attacking-back, teeth-bared, cornered animal mode—a mix of terror and rage. (Terror, incidentally is more based in the right hemisphere, and rage in the left). Seldom does this raw instinctual capacity take over so full-throttled. Normally, in everyday states of distress, the boat gets rocky but does not capsize.

But in emotional trauma, the hemispheric paddlers are forever over or under-reacting and over or under-compensating. Lots of flailing, freezing and bullet dodging with little forward motion. Such is the brain's effort to answer the age-old question, 'is it better to dig it up or bury it'? Sometimes capsizing is best. Sometimes years are spent preventing total calamity, and the lost time is the bigger real tragedy.

Mia and her boyfriend's history was both typical and distressing. Neutral or positive phases would not last. Her wounding would simmer and intermix with his. One or the other would erupt, perpetuating what had been a three-year pattern of fights and fallouts. What has been called 'modern attachment theory' sheds light on these common dynamics. In fighting with her boyfriend, Mia was attempting to complete an amazing, natural healing process.



Humans have an intuitive, metaphorical mind, and a rational mind. The first a sacred gift and the latter a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant but has forgotten the gift.

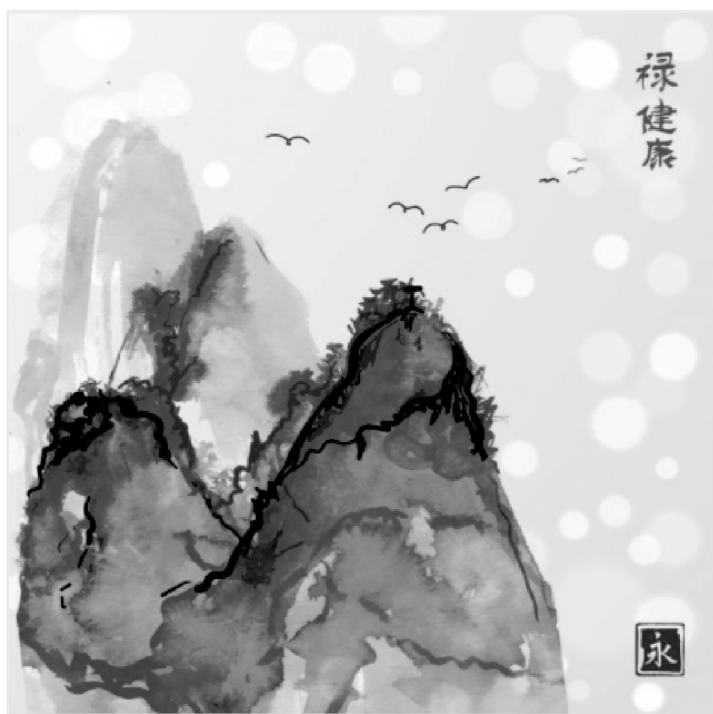
Facetime

Mammals' and humans' nervous system is designed to sequence offspring who perceive any sort of threat across fight/flight to *face*—toward their mother, group, herd, pack or tribe. This ancient, protective system became more elaborate in humans. The proverbial gift that never stops giving. The wellspring of friendship, love, tribal identification and loyalty, for society, religion—intrinsic also to you-name-it malevolence, misogyny, domestic violence, gang fights, genocide, climate change.

The human mother's face is integral in maternal attachment. Those better at 'facetime' in childhood survived dangers, increasing their chances of mating later. Additionally, attachment and facetime became central to 'pair bonding' in adults. The more efficient a person's fight-flight-face system, the better one's chances in the Pleistocene boudoir.

This facetime is deeply embedded in the right hemisphere. According to Schore, the well-attached mother co-experiences the child's emotional life via right hemisphere to right hemisphere communication. Her right hemisphere co-regulates her baby's.

When the pair is *up-regulated* (in play, agitation and fear states) or *down-regulated* (during sadness, boredom, listlessness), the mother implicitly knows to mitigate and bring about regulation. For this reason, the attachment component, "face," can be added to fight-flight-faint-fold. As counselors, we *face* our clients and verbally and nonverbally express our understanding and concern.



*But what to do when one sees flailing, tears, heartbreak
and anger, and hears stories of suffering?*

I understand

The emerging neurobiological model (more just ahead) offers some fresh answers to how to help and how to heal. Many well-meaning loved ones and therapists inadvertently stop suffering souls from healing and breaking free in the first place. A ‘calm down’, deescalating emphasis merely nudges fight-flight to the background. Stalemate is achieved as the parasympathetic soothes and the sympathetic flees and avoids. This sucks the life force, the qi (“chi”), needed for transformation.

Especially dangerous is the white lie, “I understand.” Confronted with pain, friends and professionals are themselves cornered. Recall how suffering is conveyed right brain to right brain. Friends and helpers may inadvertently be trying to manage their own escalating distress and unknowingly listen and speak from a subtly defensive posture. “I feel your pain and do not know how to help,” is better than “I understand.” But often we are thrust into defending our own locked up soma.

*Too emotional in some contexts. Freaking out, losing it,
sulking! And not enough in others. Cold, numb, bored,
annoyed, ruminating, checked out or locked up.*

Watching suffering evokes suffering, or our own constrained, contained fight-flight mess. We ‘emotion workers’ unconsciously brace ourselves against the pain we see before us. We close off or flee—unconsciously to be sure—through measured, heady forms of empathy and connection. Sufferers hitting their limit hate to hear that they are “too sensitive,” “just” need to “get over it,” be tough or do something as if any of this is somehow a novel concept. But we cannot stop ourselves. Our own revved up fight-flight biology is engaged. We need to say something. Sooner or later, friends become more distant, sufferers do

THE BRUISED HEART

not return to counseling, and subtle or worse forms of victim blaming ensue. “They just are not ready.”

No surprise that for most, emotional pain endures. The severely emotionally wounded get one clear message. Not only is my pain awful, but I better not let it out in public. Patterns of holding in and breaking down endure. Unhinged relationships, substance use, mood swings, eating issues vacillate but endure. Some master repression and spend years too careful, perhaps in too careful, looks-great-on-paper forms of romance and love.

Commonly there are blends. Periods of being lost in the fog and also of unraveling, freaking out, recovering and supposedly moving on. As we will discuss, Mia’s early years were mostly the former, lost in the fog. And her recent years were the latter, volatile, sadly with some violence.

Psychological trauma is the emotional correlate of modernity's physical illnesses – such as addiction, obesity and diabetes. Trauma increases as we humans lose touch with our more ancient embedding in nature and decreases with the reverse!

Garden of Eden & Trauma

We've been extricated from the natural order of our nomadic, foraging ancestry. Creation myths, such as Adam and Eve, mark this disconnection as a 'loss of innocence' and 'fall from grace.' We become sinners. Sin refers to psychospiritual trauma in the negative, i.e., our separation from divinity.

Through reconciling with our sinful (traumatized) nature (the bible teaches) we are made whole. We reach paradise, restore our inherent innocence—or, in the language of this book, we spiritually awaken. Through trauma into liberation. This 'ultimate' view is decidedly *both/and*—we are all traumatized and we all can awaken.

Emotional trauma is terrible, of course, but paradoxically closer to 'paradise', or psychologically speaking, to being attuned to oneself, others, the world around, our beautiful earthly home. This is the ultimate side of trauma—consciousness of the fragility of life, the wonder, how can I possibly be alive and experiencing all this? As depicted in the diagrams (in the appendix), this lived experience characterizes the highest levels, where the negative and positive symptom sides crisscross and transform.

But sweeping statements aside, the details are critical. Trauma for Mia and so many is not on an abstract spiritual plane. Their animal-level fear response is in overdrive. Clinical trauma is immediate, in-your-face. It leaves no room for philosophical reflection. There's nothing more pressing or demanding. Two interpretations swim side by side. The more overwhelming and inescapable one's turmoil, the greater the access to transformation.

THE BRUISED HEART

The Garden of Eden story symbolizes the human psyche in the crosshairs of evolution and modernity. At some point in our misty, animal past, we were innocent; that is, without the psychological capacity to glimpse our small self in the mirror of the cosmos. Self awareness sounds great. But with it comes the fall and alienation. Implicitly, humans find themselves shocked and fearful. All around is difficulty and pain. Christians are not taught to deny any of these realities, only to open their hearts to the Savior and the Good News.

Buddha's personal creation myth and eventual teaching has parallels. He was an overprotected son of a King, living in a family compound, wanting for nothing. Then he encountered old age, disease and death. He would come to teach a path to liberation based in opening one's heart to these deep realities.

Mia was always told that she was hotheaded. She was, they said, an angry baby. The story of her throwing her spoon was so funny. All her cute tantrums.

Story Flares

The story of story, and the power of story, are key to healing from trauma. The brain-body web expanded across evolution. The left's enriched controls fostered not just better spear throwing but a fierce capacity to use sound, e.g., speech/language, to perceive and manipulate the world. With an expanding repertoire of meaningful speech, enhancements in strategic hunting are not hard to imagine. A hunting party could plan ahead, adjust in the moment and form the most lethal killing machine the earth had ever seen. But some vision of clever grunting barely begins to capture the left's speech/language brilliance.

Long before, our forager ancestors put 'one foot in front of the other' and followed jungle trails. Linear pathways through time and space and social life were intrinsic to tribal life. The morning turns into the heat of the day. Babies are born. Death is everywhere. A fight de-escalates, and a truce is achieved. Seasons pass. A valley once replete with berries and game must be abandoned. The right hemisphere, implicit, earthy awareness, permeated by these realities, predated and provided a container for the left's skyrocketing specializations.

The orderly and linear left co-evolved with the cyclic, web-based right, enabling the tribal mind to extend into and through time. A spear flies, not just because the brain signals the arm's action but because of the mental *movie* (a perfect word) overseeing this manipulation of limbs and tools.^{xxvii} Linearity, cause and effect, goals missed or achieved are experientially embedded in a flow or story. The conscious self—who has duties, habits, forms and reinforced alliances, and is forever seeking, forms from a dense layering of these flows. The day, the tribe's activity, moving, making bowls, baskets, jewelry, talking—all of these are organic, flowing and moving.^{xxviii}

THE BRUISED HEART

“The one who tells the story rules the world”

- Native American saying

A deep story mind operates outside of awareness. We do not wait for opportunity. We lean into life. This leaning in is predatory in character and coordinated by the left hemisphere’s aggression and confidence. The right stands by, as nervous prey, looking for problems, ready to sound the bell. The story vessel integrates and activates. Deep, partial narratives seem to light up like flares in response to incoming data. The sun goes behind storm clouds. Small animals are suddenly on the move. A sound, a flare launches, and an instant, made-to-order image of a predator or perhaps prey supports our leaning into this moment. Only the genes of ancestors with just-right, not too narrow, not too tight scenarios were passed along. This time it’s our friend and we stop ourselves from launching the spear.

This flow is inner and outer. A tribal Mia imagines and plans relationally. She may share her idea, prompting the group to recall a previous hunt that nearly ended badly. All might agree on some different approach or decide to gather berries. Recalling, explaining, adjusting one’s narrative was critical. Tribes were attacked by other tribes. The most flexible, cohesive tribes, in the overall course of evolution, survived. ^{xxix} Narrative capacities were intrinsic to socialization and in turn to genetic dominance.

Contributory vs. Protective Factor in Trauma

Contributory factors:

- the earlier in development that trauma occurs
- the more frequent the traumatic experiences
- the more intense and intrusive
- the longer the experiences last

Protective factors:

- healthy attachment
- belonging, affection, caring, love
- explanations, therapy



*The self is a bridge, a continuum,
embedded in a beginning-middle-end flow.
A seeking, failing, modifying, succeeding narrative.*

In trauma, fear impregnates the core narratives of one's identity. Story gives coherence to the rejection or loss. A client, Haromi, tolerated her boyfriend's anger and drug abuse because of her particular narrative. Her 'once upon a time' was that a day would come when he would realize that she was 'the one' who stood by him through the dark times. This would reset all the pain she was experiencing. Rather than, they fell in love, but it turned out her soulmate did not have the maturity to grow along with her. Instead of riding off into the sunset, he would be degrading. He drank to excess when he was happy or sad, lacked the ability to delay gratification, would cheat on Friday and go to church on Sunday—to name a few issues.

Haromi's intense faith in her boyfriend and their love, as personal myths often are, was beautiful but ultimately both delusional and protective. Her father was a self-absorbed alcoholic who had walked out early. At age 20, she began a three-year, dysfunctional relationship with an intermittently loving, intermittently rejecting alcoholic. This time would be different. Haromi would fall apart when her boyfriend checked out and cheated. Their break-ups were the typical rubber-band type. True to the 'daddy issues' trope, her boyfriend became a project. Ultimately, she was far more invested in his stabilizing and maturing than he was.

Trauma undermines personal narrative. Haromi, like all of us, was the central character in her own story. In it, the father took on enormous meaning when in truth her mother and siblings had enormous problems independent of his. But the possibility of his return in some form, the possibility of a new order through a masculine hero itself, was an ordering principle.

THE BRUISED HEART

*Our own origin story, our own 'once upon a time,'
is a living dimension of identity etched not in stone
but in story.*

We all live within tall tales formed of powerful, defining themes. Personal narratives are nested within family and cultural spheres. Trauma distorts and lives within these. Defeatist stories, common in trauma, compel people to tolerate abuse or fling themselves into dangerous situations. Failure fulfils the story arc. Where rejection is embedded, people can go through years forgoing risks that could reset the story entirely.

Wounding lives in personal narrative. Here are three 'once upon a times': I was the product of a one-night stand. My dad quit caring after he remarried. I had to raise my little brother because my mom was always drinking.

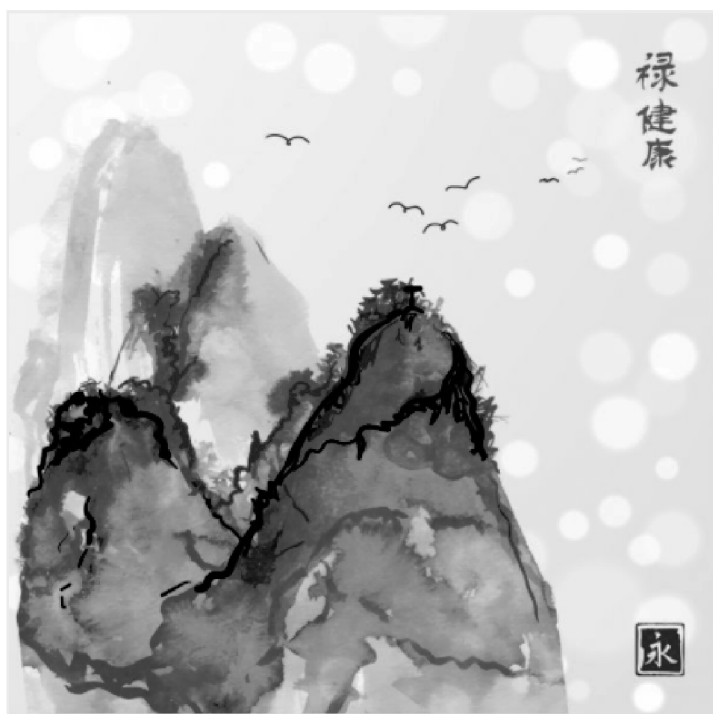
Emotionally informed approximations are part *responsive* to changing conditions and part *predictive*. Haromi chose a partner whom she already knew in a sense. His dark moods and addiction were predictable. As a child, she was protected by an unconscious belief that her dad would return. As a woman, she just knew her boyfriend and she would one day make it. Her narrative protected her when she learned, again and again, that her boyfriend had lied, was drinking, was with someone else, was not coming home. The responsive, predictive dimensions of human intelligence are robust and intrinsic to everyday consciousness. These dynamics distort incoming data and thinking about future options.

Simply put, trauma gets inscribed and becomes a powerful narrative, when fear escalates past normal thresholds. The more often, the earlier in life, the more intense, and the longer any emotional dysregulation lasts, the more the wounding. Relatively more inscribed, more trauma-laden self-narratives have more influence on natural, ongoing perceptual processes.

In trauma, emotionally laden, partially formed vignettes help people manage their life. They operate like a ship's navigational equipment in a storm. But these trauma dials only highlight certain phenomena. Becoming accustomed to huge waves and howling winds assists the sailor in navigating the storm. But the same sailor sees storms the next day when the winds have calmed. She mistakes dangerous harbors as safe, and safe harbors as dangerous. Often clients who have gone from one stormy relationship to another are able to describe boring, caring people that like them. Somehow, however, the feelings are not mutual. No potentially corrective, healthier relationship even has a chance to get started.

Traumatized people filter social situations for evidence of rejection and its other side, emotional rescue. What passes such filters then feels like proof, one's worst suspicions confirmed, or a dream come true. In one case, we quiver in the corner or tolerate injustices; in the other we throw ourselves into imbalanced, dysfunctional relationships.

We humans are paradoxical to the core—extremely conscious and extremely unconscious. The deep self, based in machinery, 10,000 generations old, controls much of the conscious show from behind the scenes. When interpersonal data is experienced as troubling or endangering, our soma's physiological first responders move into action. To optimize our capacities to adapt to ever changing conditions, much remains offline. This set-up is helpful in normal contexts but the opposite in trauma. Consciously, we lock on to surface whos, whats, whens, wheres and whys. Unconsciously, we are fighting and/or running for our lives.



Trauma-to-Transformation

This book is about the surprising possibilities for psychological healing and spiritual transformation when our sense of ‘me’ is permeated by emotional pain. Fight-Flight is a living, fluid portal. Terror and panic are guards ensuring only the spiritual warrior is allowed to pass.

What Buddhists call *awakening* is accessible through exactly where we least suspect or want to look, smack in the middle of our most impossible, intolerable experiences and emotions. In this sense, intense suffering may open doors to unimaginable healing and renewal.

Both indigenous and modern peoples recognize the sacred potential of intense somatic activation. Maori warriors chant and dance the haka. Quakers and Shakers were named for their ecstatic dance.

To be sure, this is just one more of the thousands of books in the ‘self-help’ arena. But please know, I would never have written a word if I knew of a similar book, or if my personal and professional experience did not convince me of the strangely beautiful and accessible upside of trauma. Please decide for yourself whether your experience of emotional pain is adequately described here. And if so, please assess whether the ideas for the very opposite, for the full release of your pain, have meaning and truth for you.

But any claim of trauma-linking-to-transformation needs a ton of clarification and explanation! I am staking mine, the heart of this book, on the overlap and interweaving of multiple, divergent sources. I hope you will bear with me in laying these out.

First off, the term *trauma* needs expansion. Psychological trauma, as a concept, must expand beyond the medical model, e.g., PTSD in soldiers. Trauma exceeds the ‘single-incident’ fallen-hero view. Traumas occur at any age, often repetitively, and may or may not ‘hurt’

THE BRUISED HEART

or involve any threat of life and limb. Trauma may or may not be comprehended at the time or even later as traumatic, bad or malevolent. Often kids who suffer molestation have very distorted recall, blame themselves and view themselves as co-conspirators. A current client knows her mother is emotionally abusive and claims to love her nonetheless. Day two of a recent visit was pushing the limit. And by day three, this client was using a paper clip on her legs to draw blood.

We may look like adults on the outside. But childhood neglect drags behind our bruised inner kid along. This is more amazing and positive than it sounds. The same kid is ready to break free.

Mama Trauma

Most emotional trauma is transgenerational. Abusive parents carry wounding across the transgenerational bridge. They, their parents, and their parents' parents suffered their rough childhoods long before Oprah and the self-help movement. Many had little clue as to their own suffering and even less opportunity to seek healing.

Almost all women-mothers suffered worse misogyny and abuse than their daughters would. Many women-turning-mothers endured abuse, drinking, cheating husbands and financial hardship. Many emigrated from other countries, and all did so in a sense of bridging from a culture and time ill-equipped for modernity. Marriages were strained.

While men are commonly much more than complicit in transgenerational trauma, it is worth mentioning nature made sure they were not in the mother role. Men consistently have more of anything one might name that would impact mothering: autism, schizophrenia, violence, substance abuse. The same disparity holds for health generally and mortality.

So, there are two sets of facts. One is based in the mother's life – how hard she had it – and another is based in their delivery of the goods needed for a child's mental health. It is critical for their adult children to objectively take both perspectives into account. To what extent was my mother, because of her life, some mix of overwhelmed, checked out, distancing, anxious, depressed, explosive, simmering, cold or defensive? How might her wounds have wounded me?

THE BRUISED HEART

Mothers are at the fulcrum of the attachment process. Wounding caused by men, patriarchy, misogyny, childhood trauma, sexual assault, poverty, workload, discrimination—to name some common factors—naturally impacts their baby’s attachment experience. Social safety nets pale next to the complexities that perpetuate transgenerational trauma. *Transgenerational trauma*, however, is not a serious concept in mental health diagnosis and treatment.

In billiards, one ball knocks into another and that one into another. There is enough data at this time for a diagnostic system that recognizes and identifies transgenerational and attachment factors as a central part of the clinical picture. The delay reflects the very factors that perpetuate the problem, e.g., minimization of contributory factors such as misogyny, poverty, patriarchy, parental maturity, dysfunction, lacking of stability, compassion, and the presence or absence of mirroring, play and consistency.

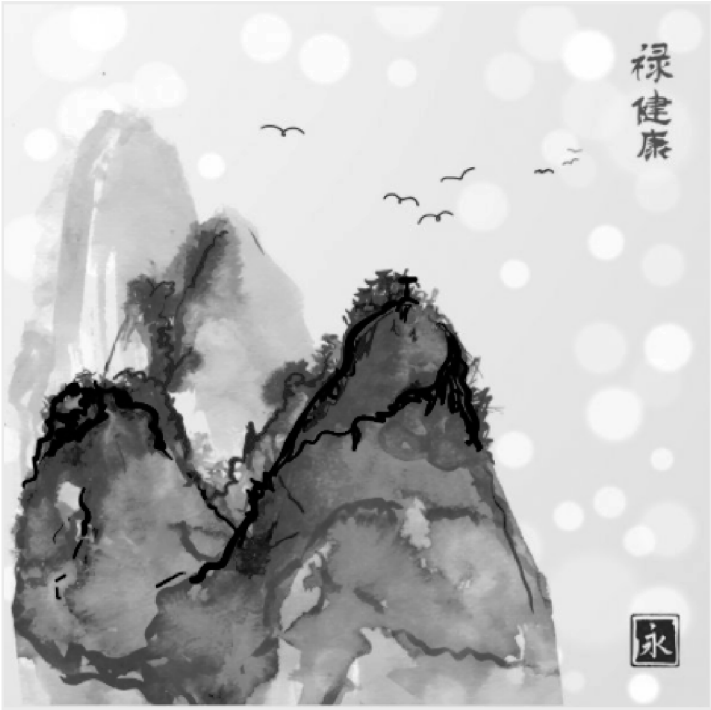
Where transgenerational factors underlie anxiety or depression, a diagnosis such as Emotional Trauma Disorder should be considered (see Appendix, “Emotional Trauma Disorder”). The clinician could code ‘mama trauma’ factors, which can trace at least one generation back and directly bear on a person’s emotional functioning. Some sort of starter diagnosis might speed up inclusion of transgenerational factors in clinical training, diagnostic systems, insurance benefits, etc.

Her mother, despite all her own wounding, would do anything for Nilia. Take a third job. Nilia was her life.

Nilia was very damaged by her mother’s intense anxiety and intermittent yelling, grabbing and spanking, and it took months before she was able to see both sides. She would answer objective questions regarding the abuse. At one point, the full weight of the fear Nilia lived with hit her. She cried from a deep, quiet place, softly expressing how she was going to heal for herself and her mom. She would break the chain for both of them. This would mean the world to her mother.

Nilia's deep-seated pain and hope comes from a depth of spirit we can map, crudely at least, as 'above' normal (see Appendix, "Positive and Negative Symptoms & Global Functioning"). The term 'above' in this sense is the same as 'deeper than,' e.g., outside of, greater than, transcending.

This book aims to bolster the development of an expansive model in which transcendence is clinically clear. Such a map incorporates transgenerational, causal factors (what are traditionally referred to as 'positive and negative symptoms,' the role of attachment and protective factors, and hints at the transpersonal side of trauma. It points to the potential for radical healing and transformation, and a breaking of transgenerational cycles. This leaps past symptom-reduction and knocks on the elusive door of "potential" – a concept ready to leave behind its hippie holds and crystal caverns!



Cult-y



Cult-like parenting is not uncommon. In my practice over the past couple of years, I can recall at least four clients whose childhood was dominated by, if not brainwashing, something very similar. For each, there was an ‘early and often’ form of malignant messaging and oceans of anger. All were castigated for not caring, thinking, planning or working hard. Their mothers claimed to know and love their child as no one else would. And they explained, yelled and otherwise used contortions of logic to prove the child was selfish, unappreciative, ridiculous, etc.

All four client mothers were emotionally volatile in their interactions with their kids across the span of their childhoods. All were prone to raging and blending explosive anger with an uncanny, dissembling, dismantling form of argument. The word ‘manipulation’ falls short. The focus was on striking down their children’s natural efforts to form an independent, coherent worldview.

All four mothers appeared stable outside the mom-child bubble. Three of the four, in fact, were charismatic and impressive around others, teachers and other parents, for example. Miraculously, no doctor, teacher, aunt, state agency or neighbor ever intervened. But upon closer inspection, family and friends who tried were cut off.

Even after months of therapy, my polite, highly accomplished client Daphne could revert to cowering and apologizing, for example, if a friend’s tone of voice suggested disappointment or she was a few minutes late to our session. Daphne and I learned to make room for these waves of body memory. Shame and automatic thoughts spilled over. She’d been so disrespectful, selfish, stupid. She’d clearly screwed

THE BRUISED HEART

up again. The need to apologize and restore safety was palpable. The bruised heart breaks for the other, unable to achieve more humanity.

All four clients, incidentally, reported their mothers virtually never said sorry. The body longs to hear this word. So much so, the child-victim just says it because it must be said. Sorry, a cry validating all the sorrow.

Daphne's father lacked money to fight for custody. He'd witnessed the brainwashing-like nightmare she'd endured. There'd been nights until 2am at the kitchen table where the mother was demanding, repeatedly, for hours that the child simply do as she'd asked on some homework assignment. But somehow, each effort Daphne made only further proved she did not care or appreciate her mother's help.

Daphne's dad was hellbent on getting her out of this situation. But her mother was persuasive and charming. In court, she had made unseemly, baseless accusations about her father. Her father hung in, got extra work, incurred debt and eventually managed to get shared custody.

The year before the court battles was even darker, according to Daphne. At age ten, she was fully absorbed in her mother's righteous, victim mindset, where the father was all bad and the mother a tormented, unsung hero. (As I will discuss in a future section, archetypes such as the unsung hero are extremely powerful.) Daphne recalled later how she had vehemently believed (e.g., fully embodied) the mother's mindset. In therapy, as she re-entered her ten-year-old, Stockholm-syndrome self, she shuddered with a heavy, deep-seated sense of horror. We did several touch-and-go landings before exploring this territory further.

Slowly Daphne discovered the saying, 'ignorance is bliss', to have real power. To barely have a self, to barely have agency or vitality, had an allure. The agonizing feelings are pushed away. But in the end, we cannot return to Eden. We cannot step in the same river twice (according to Heraclitus). The river's not a fixed entity and neither are we.

Daphne had been a little girl who loved her father *and* could not see him. From morning to night, her mother talked, explained and picked apart any residual feeling Daphne might have had, for example, that her father was good. Daphne learned how everything she felt was invalid and untrue. Any interest in living with her father became synonymous with choosing her mother's abandonment.

Such torment was ever-present yet unpredictable. Daphne recalled her mother waking her in the night and hitting her. She asked, "Mom, why did you hit me?" and her mother responded, "I don't know what you're talking about." Terror comes in many forms. As we will delve into, fight-flight anguish gives way to a 'new-F', referred to as *fold* or *faint*, which can translate psychologically to dissociation and hollowness.

In cult-ish trauma, recovery calls for re-inhabiting a blown-out soma. As a young child, there were rare visits with other kids' families—generally Daphne recalled not knowing how to process mundane interactions between other kids and their parents. Once, her friend spoke up about using a different backpack. The kid's mother commented that she had not thought of that. Daphne's body was bracing for an explosion, but it never came.

Therapy helped a lot but it's important to view this in context. Daphne had been making gains since age 11. Over years of weekend visits, her father demonstrated his devotion to her through consistency, kindness and structure. In fact, his positive experience had inspired Daphne initially to make the call.

Another client, Trina, experienced similar cult-ish mothering. Her mother was part of a fundamentalist Christian church in South America. The smallest transgressions such as not wearing the right dress or displaying the wrong demeanor around an elder landed Trina in hot water. Her mother had more money than most and ties to the United States. This translated into disproportionate power within the church. 'Church moms' were only too happy to pile on when Trina's mom was upset with her.

THE BRUISED HEART

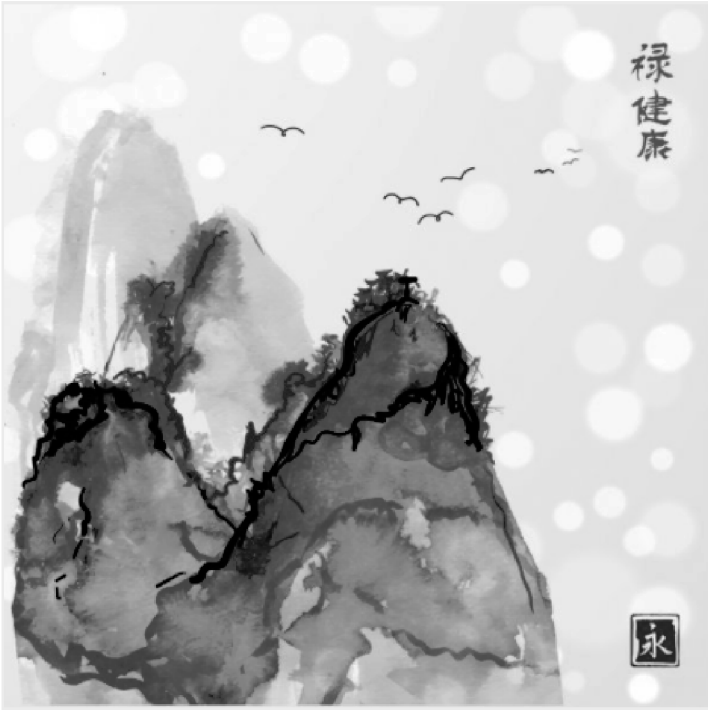
Her mother would spread the word of Trina's supposed misdeeds, usually invoking 'respect' alongside God and the devil. Soon a couple 'church moms' would descend. They would call or visit and rehash the supposedly horrible behavior. Taking their cue from her mother (and somehow earning points for doing so), they would take apart any sort of rebuttal Trina might have. Every piece of reasoning was proof Trina's thinking was out of alignment and that she was ungrateful, selfish and seeming to be asking to be abandoned! Her attitude was causing great harm to her dear mom. You simply do not talk or behave that way because "she's your mom."

Not long after moving to another city, Trina finally had a nervous breakdown. At that point in time, her mother with the backing of a couple church moms was in the habit of raging and demanding Trina drop everything she was up to and return home. Remarkably Trina did so multiple times without a second thought. She would travel four hours by bus. Trina would then wait at a sketchy bus station often for hours. Her mother would decide whom to send and when. One time she left her Trina there all night.

The day finally came when Trina did not obey. Actually, she did not refuse; rather her body did. By this point she, intellectually gifted, Trina was already at risk of failing graduate school. For the two weeks prior, Trina barely ate, slept or bathed. Her professor suggested she come to the counseling center.

Renalda's mother was different in the details while similar in the bigger picture. The raging and chronic, invasive questioning, critiquing and dissembling were the same. Differences included eccentricities around eating and body image. Her mother would demand Renalda eat in front of her, all the while silently staring at her daughter's mouth as she chewed. A repetitive message was that she looked fat, would never get a husband, and that her mother was the only one that would stick by her.

These clients shared the sense that no one would really believe the extent or depth or detail. They both knew what happened and did not believe it. Actually, this very sentiment itself ran deep. They had seen their mother turn off the vitriol in a split second, answer the phone or roll down the car window to talk to someone, and be completely polite. They had themselves lived in two worlds. School was a surreal, temporary reprieve where they kept their secret because they knew no one would believe them. Another shared sentiment was the need for their mom to finally see, finally admit, finally *get it*. These clients knew this was irrational even if some sort of fantasy court was convened and all evidence and proof presented. Still, did they have to go through life without their mothers' love?



Potential

Who can say what sort of depths of being, what expansions of feeling and insight a person may achieve? Should anything so impossible to define or measure fall within the scope of ‘best practices’. Perhaps symptom reduction is, in fact, the proper role of mental health professionals as the medical model presumes.

On the other hand, to ignore the complexity of psychospiritual potential because of its complexity is hardly a satisfying stopping point. Some people achieve far more than symptom reduction or a return to a previous baseline. This certainly means something real to them.

Depression is not simply lifted. Anxiety is not just quelled. Rather than simply becoming more manageable, feelings expand in range and intensity. This expansion of affect connects people in new, deeper ways to cut-off parts of themselves, to others, to earth and to questions of meaning.

Symptom reduction is, of course, compelling. It answers the existential question, ‘Why am I here?’ for both the client and therapist--stuck staring at each other in a quiet cubicle of space. Symptom reduction gives each a clear role. But the wider, shared humanity, the possibility of an enveloping, open-ended healing is being bigger than either—these too are facets of the potential at hand.

In truth, gifted clinicians become so over time, not magically but through intensive, hard work and mistakes. They enter into the pain and confusion of their own being, and thereby the healing and awakening processes *themselves*. I often feel an incredible depth of humility and gratitude for the chance to spend time with my ‘clients.’ Who benefits most is not always clear.

THE BRUISED HEART

Rather than a dense, immovable hopeless, out-of-control rage. Rather than a five-alarm, chest-crushing panic, the victim/survivor eventually learns to permeate these storms. They become more fully themselves and human at the same time—no longer just victim or survivor.

There's healing and there's *healing*. There's a return to baseline, and there's healing that lives up to its original meaning: wholeness. This begins with a safe, gentle sense of our smallness embraced by a cosmic bigness. There is recovery (or discovery) of a childlike awe, and a jaw-dropping "ah" in our core. The truth of being hits us, like the first time we glimpse the Grand Canyon or see the Pacific Ocean.

Emotional storms still hurt but never quite the same. A 'toxic' family remains behaviorally unchanged. But lessons learned leaves one less intoxicated (to use the same term) by the chaos and power plays. The healing process is one of *becoming* ever freer more than getting over or rid of something. Our smallness is at home in the bigness of life.

The extent that one's spirit has been brutalized and separated from this sense of belonging and freedom is key. The term *ultimate trauma* refers to this level of soul wounding. Deep within, we sense the prospect of recovery and transformation. Emotional trauma is a road to a love that lies in the eye and experience of its beholder. A nascent, freer self. It's not childish, or wishful thinking. We get it at a soul-level and it resonates in classic motifs. A heroic journey with great risks, a hidden treasure. The only guarantee is that playing it safe brings more of the same suffering, the quiet tragedy of the unexamined life.

Life is unfair in the extreme in both directions. To be born human in this empty, cold, uncaring universe of gas and dust and nothingness, is unfairly rare and profound. Not to melt all barriers to the fullness of this blessing is a travesty. Life is also replete with suffering. At the same time, this is all 'just so.' Bugs splattered on windshields.

Whom is this book for? You, if your journey is replete with emotional suffering, and any possibility of a passage to awakening, freedom, peace, wonder has been no more than a mirage. You, if overwhelm and mental torment has been immune to caring friends' advice, self-help books, therapy. You, if you have chased supposed solutions but there has been no distinct transformation from a helicopter view of your life. Successes have been but small variations in a landscape dominated by struggle and distress. And in truth, dysfunction has stretched across relationships and living situations and years. And you still smile, perform well at work – things look good 'on paper.' You impress others and laugh sometimes—but in your heart you know you're stuck.

On the one hand, those of us in this boat (understandably!) avoid (deny, rationalize, dismiss, etc.) emotional hells. We stall out and waste time in shallow, partial ways. On the other, we may think we are ready to let go. But we are not actually ready to live without our pain and meet life naked, free and happy. We need to taste it, but our joy muscles are severely atrophied. Go anywhere and look at people. Distracted, checking their phones, busy trying to get and be elsewhere physically and mentally. Developing robust positive emotions requires a sort of embodied faith. *Happiness requires practice.* Every chance possible, noticing delight, being thankful for anything, is serious business in this regard.

Set your iPhone to randomly beep. Notice in that instant the whirl of thoughts dominating as your mind comes to a stop. What expression is on your face? Check your posture. What's holding you, and in what way? Interrupt this with anything fresh - any new, unfiltered sensation or awareness.

Awakening is not mystical, random or word magic. If we do not work at this, living in this stunning, stimulating world is numbing. Our life becomes exceedingly complex and intricate, requiring multi-tasking. But who built the massive contraption that demands constant

THE BRUISED HEART

adjustments? Modern lives are defenses against the sheer nakedness of each new moment—in part. And in part, powerful vessels of experience worth improving.

Disrupting a stubborn mind frees the living present. An ever more elastic, receptive mind then is key, especially when ruminating and gloom permeate and amazement or peace thins to a dangerous degree. The three-dimensional beauty of a cat's fur coat, a smile from a stranger, a leaf in a pendulum-float on a perfect day, a metal tube flying through clouds. Too often we meet life from the past tense. The past tense is fine but should not overly predestine or preconfigure our lived present.

Paradoxically, a wider, freer present empowers forays into the soul's tender, sorrow-filled chambers. Journeys into grief, both losses and suns not kissed. Such is the range of this life. Tremendous power and courage are required to hold such tenderness.

Our own and others' night seas are one. But without a devotion to the sweet immediacy of the moment, the leaf falling, the fragility and earnestness and fear everywhere, life's dark tones and textures are muted. The sorrow that connects us with the deepest reality, that all we experience passes by, is not sustained enough to taste its sweetness. I hope some of the following ideas help you, as they have me, to do a little better at tolerating and sometimes collapsing into the power *and* mystery *and* tenderness *and* sweetness *and* joy of life.

Mia had told her boyfriend he was worthless a hundred times and to go. She was cruel because she knew he'd be back. Her anger was unchecked.

For Mia, the surface storms were intense yet disconnected from rock-bottom realities. She and her boyfriend would rubber-band between getting along to bickering, with regular plunges into an abyss of wrath. But they shared certain lofty, lovely proclamations. They told one another that they were special, not shallow like others. Loyal, devoted,

eternal. A day would come, this shared myth foretold... for marriage, children, growing old together. Eventually, their myth could no longer contain the emotional violence.

Perhaps we see a counselor, take medications. Between emotional seizures, we may do OK. All such patterns, of storms and clear weather, deserve respect, curiosity and precise mapping. Hanging out in the world before this one reminds us of, as Buddhists describe this, our decision to be born again.

Just about everyone on this sort of roller coaster has an implicit second sight. They sense the false floor and glimpse the raw pain below. Most harbor forms of self-disgust in the basement. Dead-end conclusions are common: we are damaged, broken, horrible. But meanwhile, before we can handle the downward descent, we're locked in for the ride.

*"If you don't laugh, you're gonna cry."
- Colonel William F. Gilmore*

These days, the usual suspects – stress, anxiety, depression – are being branded as affective or emotional dysregulation (also hyperarousal and deregulation). Renaming provides a more up-to-date and accurate picture of the psyche. This book aims to show how the scientific leap propelling these clarifications lines up with ancient views on spiritual liberation, enlightenment and bliss. Together, the scientific and spiritual perspectives light the way to transformative healing.

*"The trouble is, you think you have time."
- Lord Buddha*

My goal, as the author, is to take this deep dive together with you, much as I am fortunate to do with clients. To explore the rich, intertwined, emerging body of evidence for such big-time assertions that link trauma to ecstatic wonder, as personally, intimately and powerfully as possible. Naturally, such claims can come off as shallow, 'New-Agey,' grandiose or vague. In many cases, they are. Books,

THE BRUISED HEART

teachers and movements may ultimately be money driven, based in ego, reductionisms, hollow and hurtful. In fact, there's emerging clarity about one dimension of this shadow (where meditation and Buddhism are grossly over-simplified and distorted). Perhaps you've purchased such books or been involved in such programs. I welcome your caution.

The 'darkness before dawn' trope, for me, achieves a leap forward in its scientific gravitas, even 'proof.' More on this now and ahead. This new view, based in multiple lines of evidence, potentiates a shift in focus away from mere symptom relief to an open-ended upside.

Because I don't know you personally, some of this book will not fit or feel aligned with your experience. But to the extent we are co-travelers on this trauma-liberation journey, the 'real magic' of a very personal message arises as these ideas co-mingle with your direct experience. We are wounded souls bent on healing, intent on awakening each human throughout. In this, we can affirm the shared intention of bridging the divide and making it to the other side. There giving and receiving flow as one.

The essential assertion is this: trauma and enlightenment (a better word is awakening) appear to be opposites but are actually one. Not in some vague, New Age sense but in an intricate, traceable, lucid, scientific and full-blooded sense! In a way that will satisfy both one's hunger for evidence and scientific proof, and one's personal, emotional longing. The intricacy and depth of this linkage tends to be intuited at a distance and even then only rarely. Mostly the linkage is hidden in plain sight, obscured by shifting surfaces.

*“What’s wrong with you?
You’ve got some demon anger streak.
You even had it as a baby.”*

Mia, Continued

Why today? Why was this young woman seeking help now? Through shaking, tears and rambling, it soon became clear. Mia was somatically losing it, literally and figuratively begging for help. And she was terrified that she was going to learn that she was insane. She wanted but just as strongly did not want to reveal what she’d done. She was a torrent of burning hope and searing fear.

Mia was disjointed and very hard to follow. She’d managed to describe how she’d blacked out and attacked her boyfriend. From the inside out, her experience was one of some terrible part of her (unknown to her) suddenly exposed both to others and herself simultaneously. All she knew was that after coming to, after awakening like an innocent baby, as we all do ever so briefly, there was chaos. This innocence is a precious base, too soon obscured. Mia was thrust into raw humiliation. She came to, seeing the reaction of others and her boyfriend whom apparently, she was scratching and hitting. She’d evidently exploded on him in front of a lot of polite, nicely dressed extended family.

Her eyes revealed a soul far from home, safety and the familiar. And more, there was no going back.

While very confusing for me as her counselor, Mia countenanced something recognizable, even if one has never seen it before. She had the deep-set, distant look of a person who has witnessed something with no place in the normal order of things. The look of those exhausted by a long effort to flee abuse, rape, genocide. The deadened eyes of a child long after the panic fades.

THE BRUISED HEART

They were the eyes of a beggar who could no longer look back, who did not bother to catch the eye of whoever was leaving food or money or ignoring him.

Where there is torment, there is longing. And longing leaves a trail of therapeutic breadcrumbs. Longing for relief, for peace, for the pain to stop is the (ultimate) call to fullness and oneness. But when the heartbreak is too big, too old, too unmapped, we are crushed by our own desire. We cannot fight our way out of the proverbial wet paper bag. We are a great falcon who believes it is flightless.

The path through trauma calls for every possible smudged, torn, partial map, every possible form of help. In trauma, we are disembodied, dismembered, cannot re-member.

They say if it was not documented, it did not happen. Analogously, in attachment, if you are not mirrored, you do not exist. You cannot breathe and are in danger.

Mia's amnesic experience is revealing. Movies depict the veteran fresh from war suffering flashbacks with intrusive memories, perhaps confusing former and current realities and punching someone they love. Mia was not slung backwards into some earlier horror, that she could recall, e.g., on the mind level. But her behavior and emotions were told their own story of being cornered, terrorized and lashing out against a (perceived) threat or attack.

The inside/outside of the flashback dynamic is typically less dramatic but no less potent. This is at work 24/7, keeping overheated inner material in and preventing potentially triggering material from hitting home. As a result, a traumatized, anxious person may experience the same event, person or issue very differently from others.

There is the outward suppressing, numbing force—where truly sad or scary phenomena are muted. Everything is “fine” and “no big deal”. It does not matter that something nearly went very badly, for example,

because everyone's OK. On the other side of the same coin, neurotic people are easily upset and over emotional.

In Mia's case, a high degree of instability was baseline. Since there was much of the same in her family-of-origin, this seemed normal. On the other hand, she was aware of the larger world where yelling and fighting was an aberration. Somehow these worlds collided.

Perhaps the symbolism of the wedding played a role. Marriage celebrates attachment, commitment and devotion. This transcendent ritual marks the declaration of not just two people, but their respective tribes, committing to provide and care for those marrying. A wedding is a declaration and celebration of emotional safety. Somehow the fancy affair both triggered and impaired Mia's ability to express strong emotions. Some sort of perfect storm put her usual defenses in check and resulted in a rapid regression. This corresponds to a downward spike on the classical continuum of functioning—from normal to neurotic to borderline—and a tragic episode of 'defensive aggression'.

Anger is a separating, breaking force that often uses rapid encroachment. We punch, kick or rush toward and into, to enhance the prospect of survival through disabling a perceived threat. In Mia's case, the threat was two-fold. Her mother intermittently raged. But even when not emotionally jacked up, she was not affectionate. Love withheld is another, quintessential form of danger. As discussed in the *Facetime* section above, this translates as nowhere to turn, as a safe pathway blocked.

THE BRUISED HEART

Trauma is a natural threat response when the earliest chapters of childhood include towering adults raging. When the very figures to whom we are neurobiologically attached, whom we depend on for safety, rage.

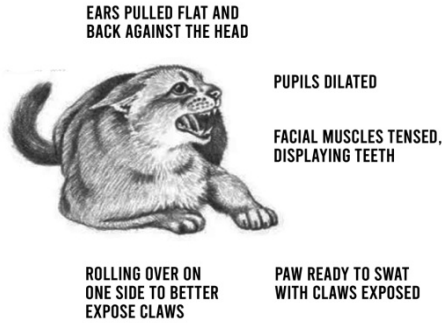
Mia's experience of being threatened or attacked had been repetitive. Cumulatively, the experience was like a sort of colored dye that Mia had been immersed in over and over. This began before she had language or any steady sense of a self. In classical PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), there is a before and after. There is an event or series of threatening events, and then the fall out. In many forms of child emotional trauma, there is no beforehand.

When a larger, louder animal or person is in fight mode, and directing their aggression at us, we feel the heat. Returning the fire, an eye for an eye, is untenable. The more powerful animal soon wins this game. So kids internalize the heat. They turn the anger inward. Self-hate, self-doubt, self-sabotage. The colored dye is the inner, unexpressed, unprocessed fear and anger.

"Men only want one thing. Better at least find one with money. Even better", her mom would add, "I have one that stays around when I tell him to go to hell."

Parents who engage in outright anger and those who tend to be calm but withhold love look very different to outsiders. But for the child, the result can be quite similar. Love withheld sets off similar alarm signals. *I'm not safe, I'm in danger, something is very wrong, something is wrong with me.* The combination of emotional neglect and parental raging is a common set up for trauma. A toddler's or child's attempt at signaling distress through moods and behaviors is easily dismissed or suppressed by their wounded, hardened caregivers. Recall how Mia was teased for having an angry streak.

Complicating this, her mother was ‘normal’ much of the time, refraining from overtly abusive care. She worked hard to pay the bills, made food, did laundry. This is a common, transgenerational backdrop. Her mother’s own experience had been laden with far more poverty, maternal anger and detachment.



Just as a skittish dog that learns to be appropriate with limited people in limited settings, Mia was timid and entirely appropriate in most contexts. The aggregate was a sort of stalemate. Intelligent, shy, hard-working but inwardly coiled like a snake. This evolutionary,

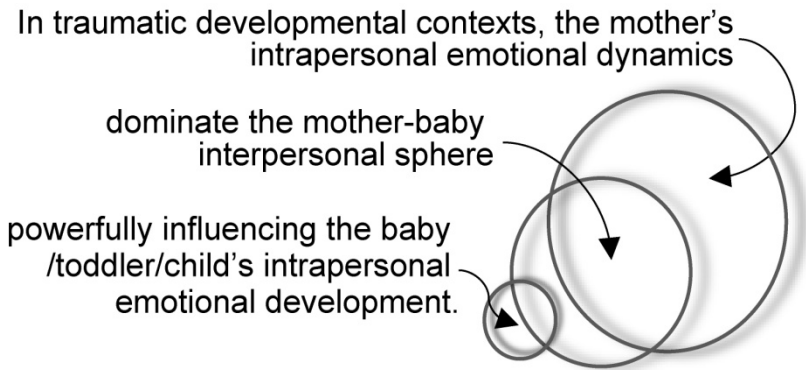
physiological state is referred to as *defensive aggression*. Such an animal (human) is highly activated, agitated, volatile, and wavering between fight-flight poles.

The cat in the picture here, ears pinned back, teeth bared, preparing to fight or escape, provides a visual of this common threat response mode. It is worth noting that the aggression, anger and rage associated with ‘fight’ teeter side by side with the terror and fear of ‘flight.’ Both modes are anything but peaceful and fun for the animal. Such an animal is very unpredictable. It might run off at 100mph or bite.

Like glass in the skin or a wire around a tree, Mia’s psyche grew around this. But disintegration and integration of the foreign object were never accomplished. Glass or wire are partial metaphors. Metaphorically, the secret, foreign, inner land grew in strength and size even as it was buried by the overall, ongoing growth of her larger self. So Mia continued. She developed a broad range of ‘normal’ emotional intelligence alongside continued, underground, terrible emotional wounding.

THE BRUISED HEART

The inner cycle, the reinforcement of the inner wound, is analogous to a physical wound. One is cut, begins to heal, and is re-cut in the same location. Emotional abuse often centers around a person in power ‘picking the scab’ of a person with less power. Mia’s abuse was not physical in the classical sense. Her mother cut her with anger and words. But the new understanding of trauma, which incorporates abuse, threat detection and response, makes one thing clear: classical distinctions among physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse are crumbling. All forms of abuse potentially follow the same yellow brick road, often to trauma. And, as with what does not happen, emotional neglect is just as critical as what *does*.



Trauma forms under psychological neglect/abuse conditions because the parent/environment fails to facilitate a healthy emotional response. Fluid, healthy, internal affects as seen in similar contexts in animals are stymied. The behavioral repertoires these launch then glitch. Otherwise powerful, critical emotions lose their protective, organizing power.

“Fight/flight” helps articulate this point. This observable, powerful dynamic captures how the animal mind uses oversimplification to survive crises. It instantly approximates one of the two as the best fit and launches into all the pre-programming of one or the other.

When one is traumatized, the beautiful utility of the human emotional rainbow is not allowed to form coherently in the first place. Normally, when confronting loss, we feel sad. Sadness develops as an organizing force, metaphorically, because someone was not screaming ‘Run for your life!’ or laughing at us when we experienced some sort of loss (perhaps we could not locate a teddy bear).

A coherent emotional experience supports evolutionary adaptation, competition and success. We need ‘negative’ emotions just as we need pain sensors in our hands. We will not love, be attached to others, work as a tribal unit or protect our offspring without the sharp sting of fear or anger to fend off anyone who might harm them, or sadness, and without feeling longing and loss when they and we are separated. We need these, just as we need pain signals when our hand is too close to fire.

Because of attachment pressures, whether a mother is emotionally unavailable or intrusive and abusive, the result is similar. The baby suffers. Its emotions do not unfold and blossom. A baby needs a certain form of closeness that honors and reinforces emotions. Those from amazing mothers have a wide emotional range. Their mother played with them and the play involved attention to their learning and discovery thresholds. She encouraged words and skills that were just a tad out of reach. She then cuddled, smiled and praised them as they made gains in speech, knowledge and skills. Naturally, these babies became interactive, inquisitive toddlers with an expansive range of feeling.



THE BRUISED HEART

Emotional neglect is the new 'abuse.'

Toddlers from abuse/neglect backgrounds simply do not shine in the same way as others. Their raw emotional intelligence, verve and acumen are muted. Across development, the feeling basis of their personality is not refined in ways needed for deftly navigating this complex world.

For Mia and for so many with intense emotional suffering, the very person that fed and protected them intermittently raged. Corrective experiences, for example, where a parent demonstrates intense concern for the impact of their anger, were too few and weak. The damage to Mia's basic ability to trust and form attachment-based (love) relationships was profound.

Mothers with this parenting style issue non-apology-apologies. They rationalize hostility as inconsequential or born of love and concern and therefore justified. Lacking mitigating insight, their harsh patterns persist. Those with less power live in dread. With no true ability to alter the grave situation, they simultaneously give up and shut down.

Like many such kids-turned-adults, Mia and her boyfriend would unconsciously feel more connected, real and alive when emotions flared. You only hurt or feel hurt by the one you love, goes the logic. While the two vaguely knew the constant fighting was dysfunctional, it also felt normal.

Victim/survivors of abuse (which *includes* neglect) are simply globally worse off than others. Their emotions do not provide reliable internal or external guidance. Their feelings, rather, are blocky. Too much of one feeling and not enough of another. Too few in-betweens. They are slow to recover and change settings. They may very well have fun, laugh and have friends, but life is less elaborate, rich and refined.

For many, boredom is more problematic. Boredom is a nonword word, referring to a listless, dysphoric, drifty mood space. An absence of a

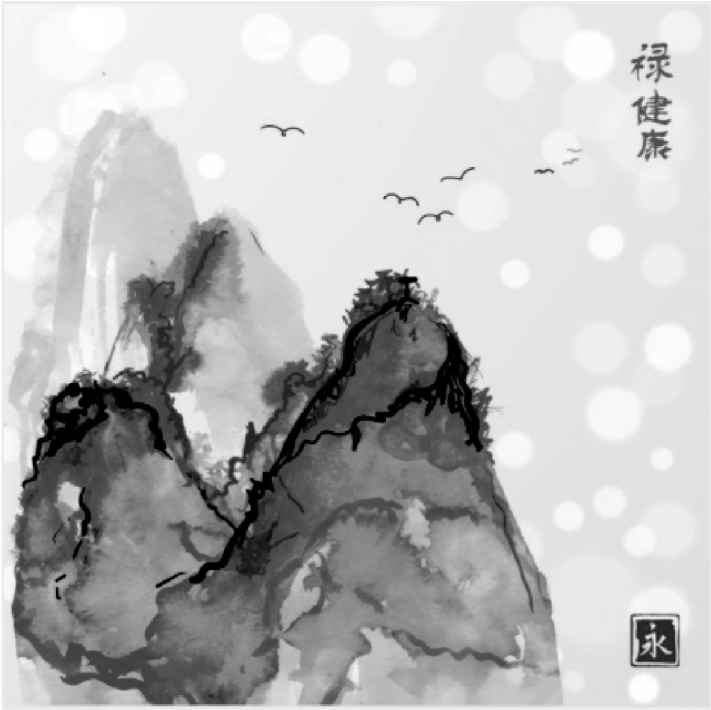
higher resolution needed to orient and take action. Adult from these sorts of childhoods often gravitate toward externally defined sources of purpose. They may be anxious grade grovelers and prone to too much music and gaming.

Similar to dyslexia, the ability to read inner states or others' intentions is impaired. Rather than sense someone's not in the mood to communicate, they may be too needy to properly hesitate or too action- or outward-oriented to cultivate richer relationships. When they do sense they have overstepped, presumptions gravitate toward dejection.

Many like Mia overly invest in people who, like themselves, are emotionally under-developed. They misread their partner or friend just as the reverse is happening. Battles that neither side clearly started are common fare. When miscommunication turns stormy, everyone feels and, in fact, is deeply misunderstood. Both sides are brokenhearted at the core and doomed to seek another's broken heart to mend theirs. Hard-earned breakthroughs and insights are soon buried by another avalanche of the same. The bar gets set higher and so the power of the core wound inches closer.

Emotionally wounded partners read volumes into small gestures, tones of voice, faces, texts and messages. A lot of pain rushes in when a message is not opened, opened and not responded to, and responded to after too long a delay. The less we have to go on, the more we project. Messages, texts and stories read but not responded to scream rejection. Something *I* send, not viewed, or liked is *me* not seen, seen and not liked, seen but apparently invisible. These emotional interpretations overflow with projections of disdain. They are perceived as proof that we do not exist in the other's heart.

One client saw all males' texts as predatory despite a wide variety of forms and contexts. All males objectified all women. And therefore, none of them had any business trying to communicate with her. There was no possibility that most were terrible but not all.



*“Trauma” may not be your word, your name for “it.”
You may not have a consistent name despite repeatedly
crashing into whatever it is. Terrible, harsh, relentless
territory. Leaves you soaked in shame—maybe that
word fits?*

Articulating an Ultimate

The more that emotional pain stretches, across mind and body, the more its goal of release is realized. In this stretch from longing to belonging is oneness and freedom. Everything becomes aligned and loosened. Clichés achieve their true depths. We do not have to think, work and worry so much. When we run across the room and hug a long-lost friend—within, joy is stubbornly unstoppable. It’s paradoxical, but the larger the expanse or continuum, the more the trauma or pain melts into an open field of consciousness.

I’m only partway there, to be sure. So far, I have learned that emotional pain needs to be both cerebral (named, framed) and embodied (felt, sensed) for a chance of real release. I hope this book helps you at least with the former. I’ve learned that much of the ache we feel is a sort of bluff. It is not simply bad though this foregone conclusion tempts, screams and insists. However, to stop at this point of judgment guarantees suffering. And this can persist for hours to decades! Usually, in trauma, there are interior shells within shells of unresolved pain. The turn for the better comes when healing is both bottom-up but top-down. Done because the pain is so severe and “in the name of love” as Bono sings. For adults coming to this realization, a developmental map helps navigate these dark passages.

*With trauma, the backdrop of our mind
appears as a mass of broken shards and rock, foreboding,
impenetrable, and covering over deeper dimensions.*

THE BRUISED HEART

The baby-body begins to taste separateness. (Again, this is also the Garden of Eden story.) Trauma (sin, separation, fear) is the first stretch, the stretch that tears. Sticking just with homeostatic ‘sin,’ something in the body wells up: hunger, boredom, fear. If we are cold, warmth resolves the tension, satiation solves hunger or thirst, stimulation to boredom, etc. Hopefully, with the stretch and hurt comes the salve and return to baseline.

*The body gives voice to bottomlessness and void.
Abandonment or freedom? We must wonder and let
wonder lead the way.*

But when the body aches for contact, closeness and love, we are in the raw and tender space of ultimate trauma. The heart’s deepest longing connects to a primordial *attachment* impulse—something at once relatable and mysterious. Attachment is the biological bridge to mother love. She oversees the transition from unconsciousness to this point, and so she—as the feminine principle—holds the possibility of a return to oneness.

This is a somatic bridge to spirit. How big is it in you? To articulate this requires knowledge and feeling for both the lows, the agony, and the highs, the release and rest. Our soul aches for joy, love and oneness so, so much. Can you feel this ache? The longing in belonging. It exceeds any one person. Can you hope, somehow, the same for them? Can you feel the beauty in the terror, that your deepest craving is beautiful and natural? Can you drop all judgment, all shame and be affirming? Can you freely want love, companionship, closeness, safety and mutual joy, and recognize there is nothing wrong in desiring? How strongly do you feel this in your heart? Can you want this for anyone or any age anywhere on this planet who is scared, sad, alone and in need of love? Can you know this open giving is the heart’s home?

Ultimate trauma is a term for the emotional pain that makes the deepest essence of this universal ache clear. It reveals that we have an

inner imprint of divinity where desire dissolves into oneness. Trauma exposes the raw wound, the shearing separation, and cry to be one. Not in some mystical, abstract way. But to love, be loved, have a soulmate, be at peace, taste and revel in this world's exotic flavors.

People matter so much to us. We heal *through* others. But this is partial. We heal for others. As we heal, we channel an ecstatic gratitude, a higher and interconnected form of love. We feel others' pain and longing for love, give of ourselves, which turns out to be not really of but more *through* our being. Joy bursts in places where it seems an opposite, borderline ridiculous or too good to be true. Fear, hurt and longing call us into a fearlessness, into choosing a safe coldness, or a giving and caring with no immediate clarity or guarantee.

Intensity is key for this top-down, bottom-up stretch into 'ultimate trauma'. Torment, ache, dysregulation and trauma – all words for the lower part of the map—are the start of awakening. Linking the lower intensity to the higher, sublime, divine field or energy or vision or dream is essential. This expanding dynamic, over and over, is the stuff of therapy, healing, personal growth.

These floors of mind are laid down, as we have been discussing, in the early attachment phase. When things go poorly, the infant doubles down. It demands one particular human being, not some random stranger, show up. This same 'low' persists and seeks resolution in adulthood. During heartbreak and loss, we can barely think or breathe without 'the one'. This narrow intensity holds the seed but barely waters it. A breakthrough is possible but only when our constricted demand expands.

The love it demands is the love just at hand.

We long for the supreme safety, the belonging and excitement we had with that one person. Unshackling this pain opens the door. The pain is not just ours individually, but ours as a human. The heart is not damaged but longing for bliss. We have to know something of these

THE BRUISED HEART

deeper truths to move forward. This is the imprint I just referred to, of divinity. We have the seed of some sort of vastness in the midst of torment. Something in the very middle of our pain cries out.

All this is something like atomic power. A cosmic force is hidden in the tiny—relative to history and the human population—pangs and hurt we feel. We may be but one little human life, with one, small bruised heart, but every baby rocking, murmuring, missing their mother, every teen rejected by a peer, reeling for their lover, the heartache in anyone of us at any age is primordial and delicate. Its threads connect to ultimates, to being cast aside, exiled from the tribe and kicked out of utopia. And to the safety, joy and comfort in belonging.

Folk tales, legends and great teachings often refer to the sacred depths within us. From the psychological perspective, many ancient stories are metaphors for human psychodynamic truths. In ‘The Princess and the Pea,’ the true princess, representing an inner sacred component, is married, or integrated, with the king. The king is a metaphor for our potential, a supreme ordering or alignment of our being from bottom to top. The king is seeking. He is then made whole by the marriage.

In this story, the true princess is the one with such sublime sensitivity that she cannot sleep, or remain unconscious, because of a tiny pea. The pea is placed under 20 mattresses and 20 feather blankets. All this depicts how intense sensitivity precedes transformation. In the morning she explains that she’s black and blue and was unable to sleep. The princess’ bruised body and insomnia stems from an advanced somatic awareness.

Oversensitive

Traumatized people grow up being called ‘oversensitive’ or ‘too sensitive.’ This is served up as a blanket critique of a person’s character and specifically their emotional life. For anyone with emotional wounding from childhood, the accusation is interpreted as a deep-seated flaw. Somewhere in the neighborhood of damaged, pathetic, crazy or weird. Rather than helping the person to differentiate and integrate their emotional energies, this genre of commentary drives a wedge. Only certain affective colors – serious, calm, happy and upbeat, for example – are OK.

The accusation often always has some truth to it as well. Super intense emotions are difficult to manage. Some people are like rocky boats capsizing over and over as loved ones get tossed out, as does the ‘oversensitive’ person himself.

There is no clear solution. Suppressing intensity due to internal shame hardly resolves the world of feelings being experienced. Even if the other person has a point, they have a power and control agenda. Manipulating emotional intensity through self-medicating is another common, terrible non-solution. And rolling with the intensity often leads to impulsive and self-destructive behaviors. People who throw themselves into relationships may go from so in love to so brokenhearted in a short period. No wonder many just lock their doors and suffer alone.

Hardly anyone is accused of being ‘undersensitive.’ Not surprising then that this is not a word in most dictionaries. Oversensitivity gets all the attention. Society at large seeks order and obedience. The same goes for many families, friends, bosses, co-workers and significant others.

Undersensitivity needs clarification, especially related to trauma. First off, it is not the opposite of oversensitive but the ‘other side of the same coin.’ Mixtures of shutting down and oversensitivity are seen in common blends of anxiety and depression.

THE BRUISED HEART

Ultimately the solution is less in the direction of balance than authenticity and recovery of real, natural and, yes, intense feelings, intense ways we are sensitive and overwhelmed but able to make space for buried, lost inner realms. After years of working with amazing clients, I've come to believe that intensity/sensitivity needs a PR agent and extreme make-over. The great figures across history just had to have been very intense, high-energy, blinding lights. Many were ridiculed in their time but later redeemed as gifted and passionate.

A huge part of therapy is creating, sinking and rollicking in the many flavors of life's inherent joy.

But 'undersensitivity' also needs to be called out as a massive problem. Trauma work begins with an expansion of one's ability to manage intense emotion. But compromise and tolerance are tools, not the goal. Authenticity is. And one way or another, this takes one into an ever richer, more direct, raw experience of the lows and highs of life. And into the mysterious linking of these, of suffering and bliss, compassion and joy.

The intensity of the tumultuous inner life carries the energy for transformation so long as peace can break out once in a while. Transformation occurs as this higher-order territory becomes ever more accessible.

The Classical Continuum

There is an important caveat pertaining to sensitivity and intensity. To explain this, consider the *classical continuum of mental functioning*. I will use this metric or model extensively in future sections. This continuum ranges from psychotic to borderline to neurotic to normal.

Borderline personality was once called the “as if” type.

Emotion, whether mellow or intense, is not so much the issue as is a stable enough personality to tolerate, manage and benefit from emotion. The lower psychotic to borderline range lacks adequate self or ego formation. Problems related to over- and under-emotional sensitivity become extremely disabling below the neurotic level. The distinction is both of kind and degree.

Borderline personality was once called the “as if” personality. Functioning is marked by decreasing capacities of owning or embodying one’s sensitivity, intensity and emotions. There is no ‘there there’ in borderline functioning. Whether a person is calm, raging, repentant, grieving, goofy, pleasant or any flavor of emotion, over time, turns out to be unreliable. Their emotional experience and behaviors lack coherence and meaning. Emotions are not reflective of a consistent personality structure. They may feel and behave ‘as if’ angry, excited and empathic (fill-in-the-blank), but whatever footing they seem to have, whatever coherent relationship one feels has been formed, turns out in time, especially under stressful conditions, to fall away.

Just ahead, we will delve into a richer map of oversensitivity and under-sensitivity by employing the classical continuum. This map arises from

THE BRUISED HEART

an overlay of so-called positive and negative symptoms—not to be confused with positive and negative emotions!

I press clients to feel into and revel in any possible real happiness. To expand precious moments of hilarity, rich connection with family or friends. To let warmth and safety wrap all around them—to deepen into the authenticity of these heart openings.

As with the princess and the pea, her healing involves connection to a higher order. Therapeutically, this inner heaven is achieved when a person's emotional wreckage is lovingly welcomed. When more of this is invited with empathy and curiosity. What are its deepest, oldest reaches? What dreams does it harbor?

“Looking for love in all the wrong places” has all attendant emphases: the wrongness and wreckage and the seeking. The latter is the golden path, the hope, the potential of a higher love and greater bliss. The more stably we can map, and stretch the map from wreckage to bliss, the more we are on a path of transformation. Turmoil is bliss inside out. Always less cataclysmic and more relevant than it appears.

*What might it be like to actually solve the puzzle?
For the loss, heartbreak and terror to achieve some sort
of naked and complete epiphany?*

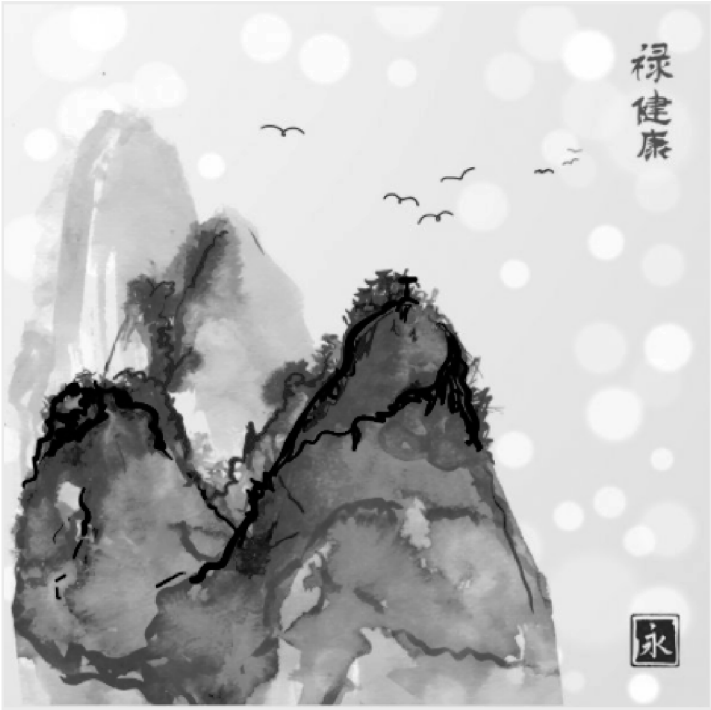
When we stand back to look at life's most intense chapters, we may not readily see or admit to a certain pattern or cycle. We may feel like we are going to die after an argument. Pine and grieve and swear we are sorry, or demand the other person say sorry. We may feel like someone will never notice us. Many of these ‘come to Jesus’ moments are, to our astonishment, survived and more. We get the chance we thought we never would. Then unlike the end of the rom com, after we unite or reunite and enjoy or re-enjoy the honeymoon, the high fades. The best self is not sustained.

*How would it look, smell and feel to never again fade
from what all that raw pain so longed for?*

For the deepest longing, fear and agonizing need for reconnection to remain blinding and brilliant? Never to allow dullness to seep back in. Never to take one's pain or another's wonder for granted. Each time we survive another hell zone and move on, we deny the power of this jagged core of being to re-make us.

*In trauma, the ugliness you feel to be you that hides
your essence is rejected. Change comes with tolerance in
the face of challenge, with softening and curiosity.*

With Mia and others willing and able, I strive to provide the safest container for (what client's experience as) their most dangerous emotions. For some, therapy feels like the barely but safe enough detonation of massive bombs! For others, it's more like a multitude of small and mid-sized explosions over a long period. One way to optimize healing is to keep an eye on the science of the inner life. Otherwise, a person's panic or grief seems impossibly theirs alone to survive.



Why do we take so long, go through such suffering, and seem never to learn? A partial answer lies in the two competing maps of trauma. These cause confusion and obscure the larger truth of trauma as the gateway to transformation.

Normative & Ipsative

Psychological suffering tends to be outwardly defined and inwardly experienced in two ways: normative and ipsative—and both distort the deeper truth of trauma. The ‘normative’ take on suffering offers a powerful lens. It is based in comparisons to the general population.

The normative scale is embedded in the so-called medical model or disease model. In math, normal is the mean or average. Though easy to criticize, it is extremely important in psychological healing. Analogously, we may legitimately feel sick and objectively not have a fever. The other way suffering is defined and perceived is in relation to the person herself or himself, to their own average or normal. This is called ‘ipsative.’

Everyone around me is doing so much better. No one knows how crazy I am. Why can't I ever catch a break?

When we use the word *normal* and all manner of synonyms and antonyms, we tend to refer to a mash-up of the normative and ipsative scales. Consider the many ways we refer to emotional functioning. We monitor ourselves or comment on others (as *ok, fine, getting by, busy, not bad, stressed, weird* or *freaking out* interchangeably with *anxious* and *depressed*). There is no consistent reference to the two ways of measuring normal/abnormal.

The normative scale is the backdrop of standardized psychiatric diagnostic systems, most notably iterations of the DSM and ICD systems. ^{xxx} These are the massive catalogs of every form of psychopathology imaginable. In this sense, normal is therefore *not* any of the vast list of disorders.

THE BRUISED HEART

Historically, mental-normal was even more undefined. Slowly, severe forms of psychosis were emancipated from ancient religious explanations. Demon possession morphed into madness and insanity. With Freud and the birth of psychiatry, neurosis became a serious field of study and treatment. Severe suffering worse than neurosis but not as extreme as psychosis became referred to as borderline, e.g., on the borderline between neurosis and psychosis. Slowly, more specificity regarding borderline forms of functioning increased. Severe borderline personality falls at this level.

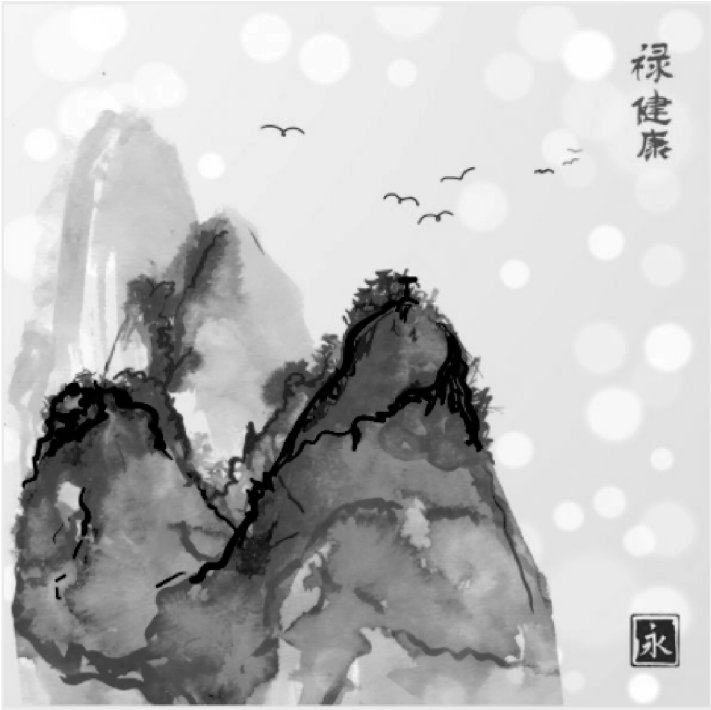
Actually, the borderline realm includes the severe extremes of many conditions. These include bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, delirium and dissociative disorders. All of these may *include* profound mood disturbances, intrusive thoughts and hallucinations or similar overpowering psychotic experiences. For example, flashbacks in PTSD or severe dissociation involve what psychiatrists call impaired reality contact. Ultimate trauma certainly may dip into borderline levels of confusion, anger, vitriol, dissociation and instability.

Trauma is a sister of paranoia. The degree of self-monitoring is extreme and unbearable. We are in a perpetual, losing battle to shake off toxic shame.

The ipsative view of ‘dis-order’ references the degree of change from a person’s baseline. Obviously, clinicians and loved ones become concerned when a person’s functioning marks a radical departure from their norm. The distance that one’s wounding has pulled them downward toward ‘insanity’ is very telling. The key normative and ipsative questions (respectively) are: 1) How impaired is their functioning? and 2) How impaired do they feel?

In multiple ways, this approach helps loosen up the grip of shame and self-hate. Shame has its way in the dark. Just opening up and discussing emotions helps differentiate their many colors. The discovery that’s

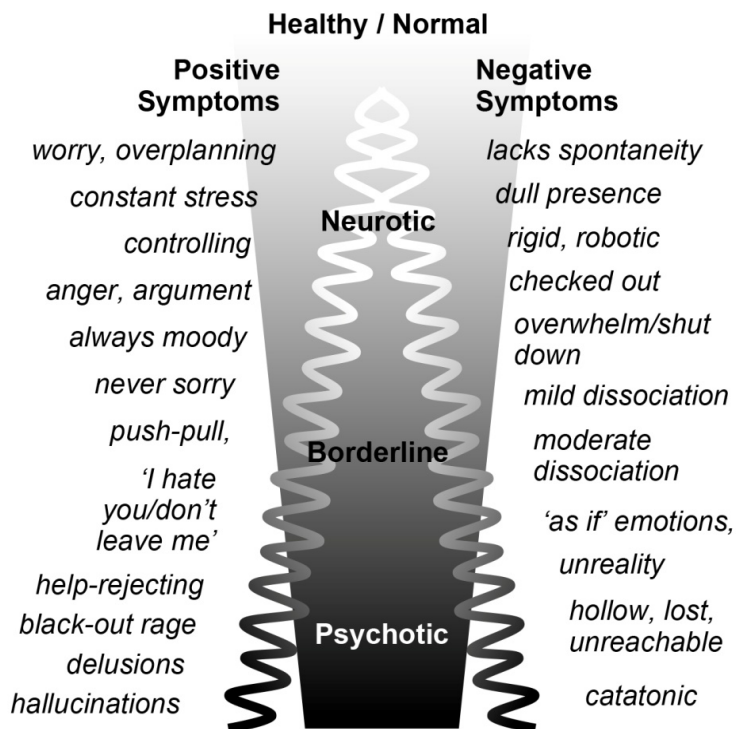
one's private hell has a location on a map can be relieving. The classical continuum helps people compare their inner sense of crazy or damaged (ipsative scale) with the general population (normative scale). Many feel relieved to learn they are not imagining or exaggerating the intensity of their anguish. No longer can a person feel utterly misunderstood if their experience is locatable within a massive system involving doctors, diagnoses, research and models.



Hitting Top

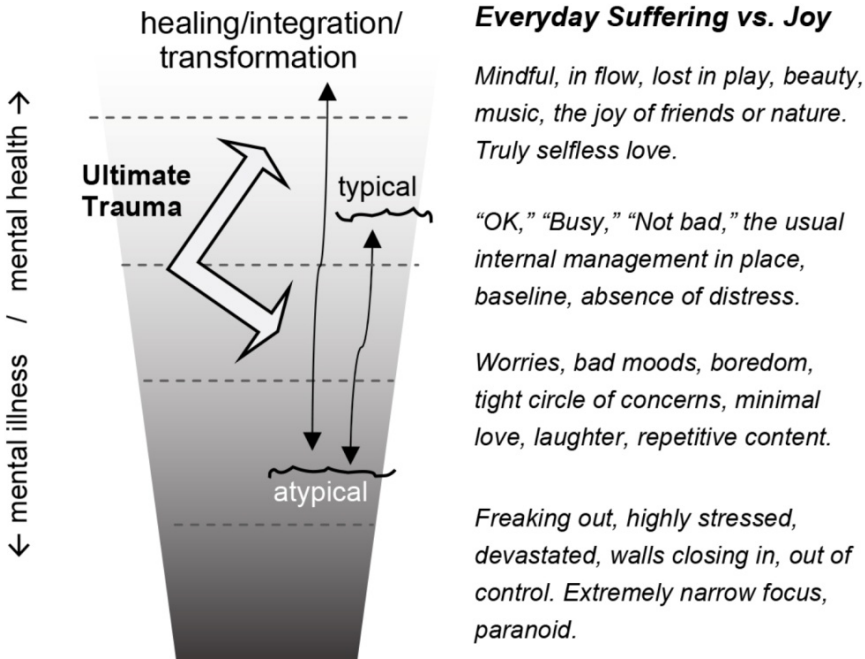
‘Hitting top’ is not a thing, not a phrase. Qualities such as bliss, kindness and fulfillment have no palpable upper limit. Alternatively, depression, psychopathology and ‘hitting bottom’ are recognizable enough to be part of everyday language. But something like hitting top need not be handed over to religion or philosophy. An informed psychology is achievable.

The ultimate trauma model is a combination of the normative/ipsative mapping of functioning and the upper, albeit tough-to-define but also tough-to-refute realms. The higher one travels, the clearer so-called oneness or potential or enlightenment becomes. Seeming low points are not simply undesirable and low. As one heals, these transmute into depths of being, channels of understanding and empathy.



THE BRUISED HEART

The Lord Buddha referred to the inseparability of the beautiful lotus flower and the mud that nourishes and contains it. He taught that both what we avoid and chase lead to suffering. In meditation, we witness suffering and all forms of experience. All things, all experiences are impermanent. To realize this can embolden a person not to avoid the mud or fixate on the flower, to know their oneness within what Buddhists refer to as empty space. Indeed, no single piece or corner or essence of anything has substance. Emptiness is the nature of any mental form. For Buddhists, this pathway of discovery leads to ever-deepening clarity and warmth. One no longer judges others who, by definition, remain less aware. Suffering therefore is a portal to transformation. From another perspective, suffering is unrealized potential.



Applying an ultimate trauma view, emotional wounding is not negated but transcended. Trauma's devastating, destructive powers are viewed alongside its transformative ones. This is depicted graphically as the distance between the lower and the higher points. Traditional, clinical, diagnostic suffering refers to the density of, or 'stuckness' at, lower levels. The combination translates as the degree to which the true self is bruised and wounded or, alternatively, released and freed from trauma. The better, higher the foothold, the greater the potential for release.

'*Normal*' is a powerful, ubiquitous archetype. Evolution has us saving energy wherever possible. Normal is the huge middle of the bell curve. Whether a smell, sound, another's behavior or the weather, normal helps us know when to let it pass or when to take note. As long as anything that flits across the screen is not extreme, normal presumes we are safe to keep rolling along.

Normal is analogous to an electronic security system. A small amount of energy is used for background monitoring. The right hemisphere is primed to leap into threat response mode at any second. The general sense embedded in culture of what's alright, good, OK, works the same way. The focus is on normal, status quo—or something problematic.

In both medical and mental health arenas, normal refers to an absence of symptoms. Below or outside of this, presumably, is abnormal – sickness and pathology. Standard symptom-reduction goals therefore merely give a nod to the higher reaches. By removing obstacles, e.g., anxiety or depression—in theory—the patient may grow open-endedly, achieving superior health. But this begs many questions. Some people get 'better' but do not become particularly wise or compassionate. Some severely damaged souls achieve higher levels of bliss, kindness and fulfillment than others who were never as wounded in the first place.

THE BRUISED HEART

Heartbreak or apathy implies some awareness of what is missing. In ache and longing, perhaps an ultimate way of being is close at hand.

Realization, awakening or whatever term one prefers is not reducible to a neutral, symptom-free state. Even if ultimately indescribable and bound to interpretation and truth claims, higher reaches appear to have some general characteristics. The mountain top does not suddenly appear but increasingly comes into view. The healing process opens to the great heights of release and freedom not independently, but interdependently, alongside depths of empathy and compassion and connection with our immediate surroundings.

It's not bipolar but unified. With healing, suffering becomes more porous and diffuse and even beautiful—impossible to contain with mental judgment. The heart's knowledge and natural way, so-called lovingkindness expand. Careful attention to this 'ultimate' field is therefore most compelling. It's logical, poignant and pressing.

Positive & Negative Symptoms



Positive Symptoms

- Overt, obvious, visible
- What is extreme and clearly wrong
- Hearing voices, delusions, paranoia
- Overwhelmed, multiple complaints



Negative Symptoms

- Hidden, lacking
- What is strangely missing
- Dullness, dissociation, apathy, 'checked out'
- Lack of speech, cognition, motivation

Many beautiful souls are tortured by demons and delusions. This is common fare at the 'psychotic' end of the time-honored spectrum of mental functioning: psychotic-borderline-neurotic-normal. At this extreme, one does not *think* they are being chased or haunted or that they hear voices. They *know*. It's you, family, friend or therapist, who needs to believe and help—now! For sufferers, skepticism, reflection or insight have little purchase. Some voices outright command that people suffering from schizophrenia kill themselves, and many do.

People with bipolar disorder, in the throes of a manic episode, may be slaves to a 'flight of ideas.' A mental mutiny ensues as a torrent beyond containment, concepts, knowledge and paranoia, demands passage. This may manifest in 'pressured speech.' Reality slips as internal efforts to manage these the Niagara waters.

THE BRUISED HEART

These sorts of symptoms are referred to as “positive,” as in extant and overt. They show up with force and would be visible on video. *What is* as opposed to *what is missing*. These two forms of issues or symptoms are represented by the squiggly lines in the figure (see below and the Appendix). In psychosis, much of mental life is externalized, ‘outside’ the self, out of control and forced upon a person. This is the territory of persecutory delusions and hallucinations.

The latter – what is missing – is equally destructive. Such so-called negative symptoms are common in ‘street people.’ These factors are just as ‘outside’ though a little harder to define. There can be a subhuman level of ‘oomph,’ a deadness, a lack of connection to the human realm - apathy, dullness, sluggishness.

There may be positive, not negative, vice versa or blends. People with emotional trauma tend to have a blend but not necessarily in the same moment. Just as a person with panic nonetheless manages to sleep at some point, she may also have depressed mood when not feeling terrified. The following figure gives a brief sketch; see the appendix for more detail.

There’s some truth to the stereotype of the crazy person laughing, sneering and mumbling to themselves. Speech and emotional expressivity tend to be ineffective, idiosyncratic and odd. A weird inner world is leaking out. Great demons threaten, but nothing is being done about it all. Paranoid visions and narratives are displaced by hapless pacing, murmuring and rumination. There is no measurable progress. Just looping.

Irrational convictions undermine meaningful contact. Emotions cannot achieve adequate coherence and cannot assist in organizing the mind. There may be terror, but there’s also dissociation. No partial anchor or answer for “so what?” The ‘negative symptoms’ undermine reality contact and result in an impasse and lack of a touchpoint.

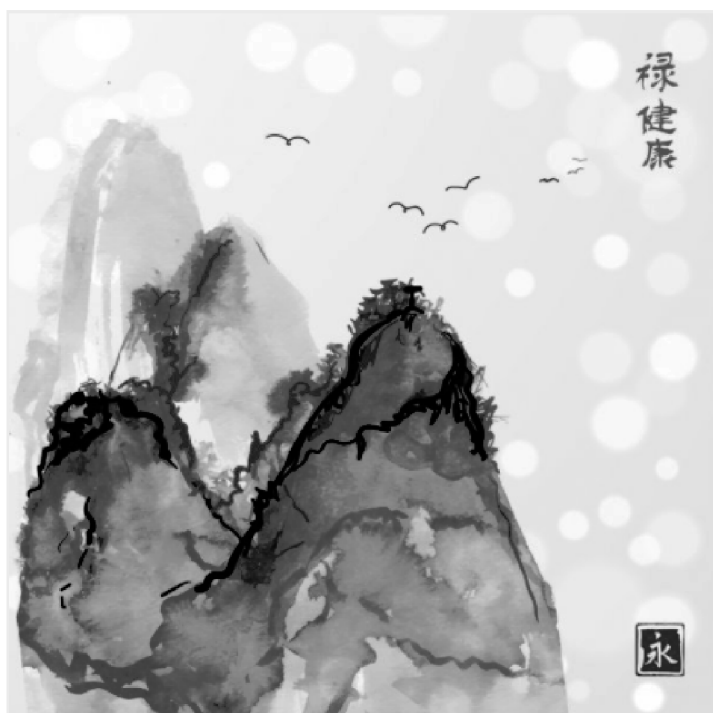
POSITIVE & NEGATIVE SYMPTOMS

The point of all this? We are they. We, despite being at higher levels of functioning, have the same tender, vulnerable brain and are prone to the same hierarchy of functioning. The whole rainbow of life, from psychosis to powerful and clear—reflects humans' evolutionary best. The lower levels are a sort of catcher's mitt. Giving way proportionally to the forces slamming into it. Even bones are made to be broken at some point, are designed to be protective in this sense, fully capable of healing.

Our hold on reality may be better than those suffering at the lower extremes. But even if we are fortunate not to have such a devastating disorder as schizophrenia, deep attachment wounds from dysfunctional childhoods may be more serious than the herenow self believes. A combination of positive symptoms and negative symptoms tends to distort, deform and block the sunlight. In combination, the two sides block the direct experience of living, swimming and dancing in this bedazzling world.

The underappreciation of negative symptoms, especially at higher levels, is understandable. They are hidden on the one hand and seemingly frivolous on the other. And they are stubborn. A more detailed analysis is required to comprehend 'ultimate trauma'. Minimization of negative symptoms at higher levels has a cost. To my thinking, this causes reduced precise at naming what is wrong. In turn, treatment goals are less exacting and clinical interventions are less effective.

Differences in negative symptoms across levels of functioning are of degree and not just type. Instead of haunting auditory hallucinations, powerful, hateful self-talk may fill the inner airwaves. Even if not delusional, one may be deluded, weighed down by powerful negativity, for example, or presumptions of shame and worthlessness. For many, familiar versions of self-hate, criticism and disgust persist despite efforts to change and heal. Shame-based self-assessment clouds experience and drives laden, persistent presumptions: *I'm weird, crazy, stupid, pathetic.*



*I'm a big, bright red apple with a wretched, rotten core.
Have a look, enjoy a bite. The more you take, the more
you'll choke. The more I show you, the more you will
know the ugly truth of me.*

Emotional Neglect & Shame

Deep, persistent emotional pain is born of what happens and what does not happen. Often damage occurs despite there being, as they say, plenty of food on the table. There was food on the table, yes, but no love in the air. Emotional neglect, all that was needed but missing, is mysteriously recorded in our deepest, oldest emotional layers. Most of this is background, not foreground. The frame not the painting.

The unmovable, dense world of “shame” is the tell. Shame and disgust are critical, primitive adhesives where body meets affect. As the two sides begin to rip apart, under emotional neglect conditions, barely conscious, impossibly sad ‘shame’ enters. How early? I would not guess pre-verbally, but it certainly is present in a toddler’s mind-body. Dogs are famous for exhibiting something in this emotional range, for example, after a caring owner catches them doing something they know they should not.

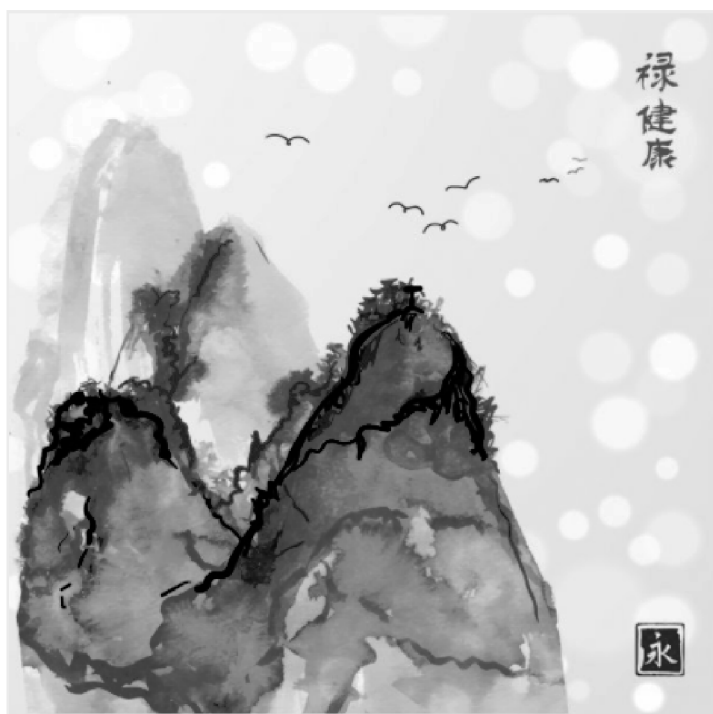
← Emotional Neglect ←

ANXIETY ← Giving up ← Dread ← Terror/Panic ← Fear ← Worry

ANS ← Parasympathetic-Fold ← Sympathetic-Fight/Flight

ATTACHMENT ← Avoidant Attachment ← Anxious Attachment

SHAME ← Shame, Self-disgust ← Self-hate ← Negativity ← Anger



Blends & Reversals

In real life and in all we experience from the inside out, negative symptoms are intertwined with positive symptoms. Stable or well-regulated blending marks healthy levels of psychological development. I've been amazed by clients' ability to experience incredible pain, within the sphere of trust we work to develop, on their journey to health. With higher blends, a person is aware of and not destabilized by their fears. They may be tempted to avoid a situation but know it is best to confront it. Before this, clients commonly express that they have tried everything and feel completely powerless.

As shown in the figure, a beautiful thing happens at the higher, integrative stages. On the way up, toxic 'positive' and 'negative' symptoms begin to blend, not simply co-exist. These blends create stability. And at the highest tier, a *reversal* of the two symptom sides energizes the psychospiritual experiential field. Sadness has a softness. Excitement is less hyper in nature and more euphoric. Wonder is born.

Alternatively, lower functional levels are associated with unstable blends. The word, upset, captures the essence of affective dysregulation. The mental set is upturned by a hodgepodge of positive and negative symptoms. In addition to anger and anxiety, a person may avoid, ruminate and sulk. Self-medicating with alcohol or marijuana often goes hand in hand. This exploits the two symptom sets. It has the twin power to numb the intensity and allow more free expression of emotion—but it's mostly a bypass.

At neurotic and lower levels of overall mental health, the agony of self-hate is common. The distress often voiced as "*I'm pathetic*" or something similar includes positive symptoms, such as anger and agony alongside the excuse-making and avoidance. They may have a stuck, checked-out demeanor. They may find excuses for not sticking with a self-improvement plan.

THE BRUISED HEART

Intense, destructive affects are kept in check by powerful, unconscious avoidance and dissociation. As I will discuss in a future section, people routinely explain that a “*part of*” them wants help and another “*part*” sabotages. “Part” talk and the subjective experience under it has many parallels. There is the extreme of dissociative identity disorder, which falls in the lower borderline range when serious.

Power is a fundamental and important concept in healing. At lower functional levels, there is less power. There is less ability to channel emotional resources. Seminal research on dominance and submissiveness (such as Milgram’s authority study and the Stanford Prison experiment) demonstrates how normally high-functioning humans are very prone to ‘giving away’ their power. Not so different from other animals, we quickly presume an alpha or beta slot in certain interpersonal dynamics.

The beta or powerless position is highly adaptive, or we would not have inherited such an intense predisposition. However, in emotional trauma this same inheritance blocks creativity and flexibility. Because we perceive ourselves as less than and not enough, we are prone to hopelessness and a sense of futility. There is an inner scream, proclaiming (positive symptom types of) danger and fear. “I’m scared, hurting, send help!” But via negative symptoms, help is inwardly rejected. We’re parched but will not drink the cool water right in front of us. Weakness takes over. There’s an internal aggression, stomping down on hope. An attitude, as Eric Clapton sings, of “kill it before it grows.”

The old, ‘boy who cried “wolf”’ tale is telling. It both cautions against exaggeration and negates emotion. It echoes patriarchy’s war on feelings, e.g., boys should not cry. Such implied messages are often perpetuated by well-meaning parents, who received the same in their childhood. Acknowledging a child’s motive for attention-seeking can occur very efficiently. Without this, once fleeting, easily remedied specific emotional distress is aggregated into a heap of undifferentiated emotional pain. Hurt mixed with dull acceptance.

The positive/negative dance partners are most recognizable at the lower extremes of mental functioning. People who hear voices mocking them, who feel they are being watched and want to end the (positive symptom) torment, are also, to a profound degree (due to negative symptoms), not there in the first place. In psychosis, 'humanity' is markedly diminished. It robs people at the psychotic and lower borderline realms of a stable sense of being here, on earth, in human form, alive, with thoughts and feelings.

An empty *and* profoundly disturbed quality combine. This can evoke the sufferer's internal sense of being possession. Only the outsider refers to sufferers' bizarre convictions and secret knowledge as delusional.

But there is no hard line in the sand. Upon closer inspection, the odd positive/negative pairing shows up in everyday anxiety, depression and relationship problems. A comprehensive, sensitive understanding of emotional distress must take into account both sides: the obvious, loud and clear side of misery, and the less obvious ways a person is offline, shutdown, robbed of life's basic juices. This truth spans the grand scale of psychological functioning.

Both dimensions increase with acuity (general severity). Up from the loud and eye-catching symptoms, such as flashbacks, mood swings, panic, compulsive worry, anger, self-hate, suicidal thoughts, are milder versions of each of these. Up from profound levels of emotionlessness, disconnection from reality and so-called 'poverty of speech' are still intense forms of emotional dulling, dissociation and hollowness.

Positive symptoms dominate the limelight. Negative symptoms are like Harry Potter's cloak of invisibility, making the in-your-face, positive symptoms seem even more devastating. Thunder and lightning verses dull and overcast. The former gets family, friends and clinicians' attention.

But, metaphorically whether overcast or a monsoon, we do not see the sun. We are not guided by the light of our blazing, life-giving star. Our

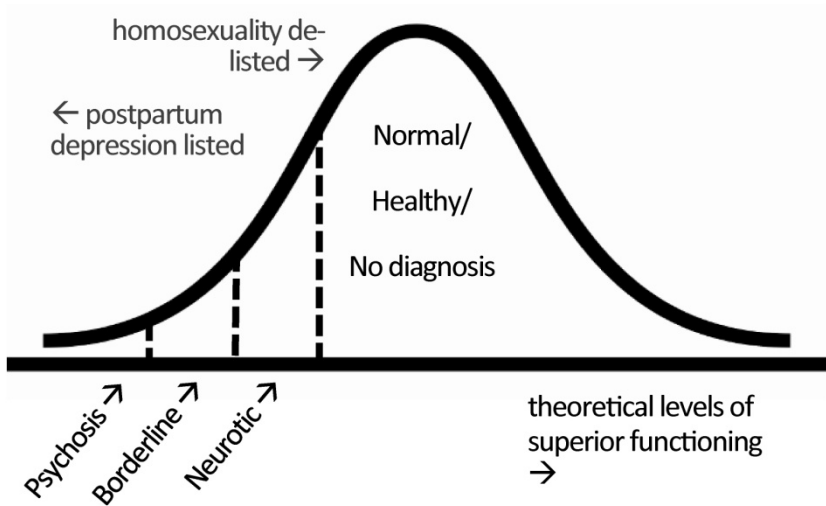
THE BRUISED HEART

spirit is muted. Motivation and enthusiasm are grayed out. And more subtly, so is the dark beauty and mystery of the night's deep purples and blacks. Our mellower, reflective aspects. Sorrow or sentiment and quiet forms of gratitude, awe, harmony and wonder. We miss out on the brilliance and the tenderness.

Fortunately, the bruised and shut down 'inner child' can reawaken. This brings fresh energy to the slumbering adult and is the key to confronting stalwart emotional pain. It is through the child's pain that the open, trusting, enthusiastic child emerges, and through this happy inner child that the slumbering adult awakens. "The only way out is through," wrote Robert Frost. Healing of deep-seated trauma, recovery of lost capacities, is always *through*. Though oversimplified, the following graphic can help illuminate the roots of suffering and dispel some of the confusion surrounding psychological problems and solutions.

The positive/negative symptom viewpoint provides a novel angle on the philosopher's question, "If a tree falls, and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?" If we translate the question from a sensory to an emotional experience, the answer opens up. In profound suffering there is emotionally deafness or numbness. But with healing, experience and feeling are restored.

Diagnostic Systems & Higher Stages



Modern taxonomies such as the DSM continue to expand, encompassing ever more precision while still conforming to this time-tested, psychotic-to-normal continuum. What has not changed much is this richer view of trauma treatment, recovery and healing. A couple examples demonstrate how diagnostic systems are indeed growing with the times, but nonetheless have far to go.

For decades homosexuality was considered deviant and abnormal. On the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, the American Psychoanalytic Association issued an apology. Alternatively, postpartum depression was historically not a recognized disorder. Instead, this was stigmatized and passed off as some sort of hysteria or weakness, not a legitimate disorder worthy of diagnoses and treatment.

As historical injustices are remedied a more precise range of normal comes into view. At this stage, a new leap in this process is in view. So far, abnormal has only referred to lower, dysfunctional phenomena.

THE BRUISED HEART

Higher, 'post-normal' functioning has remained undifferentiated. The time for defining normal only as the absence of lower problems has passed. The evidence shows that higher levels of psychospiritual functioning are at least as real as 'normal' ever was. Higher levels, in fact, can be achieved through the integration of life's hardships. The ultimate trauma model aspires to add some specific concepts and parameters to this expansion.

Many great thinkers, sages, theoreticians and philosophers have proposed maps of super-normal realms. Ken Wilber compiled dozens of these maps in his book, *Integral Psychology*. Another popular model is Spiral Dynamics. To my knowledge, however, none of these incorporates the proposed (ultimate trauma) perspective.

The emphasis of many models is on states of tremendous clarity, understanding and wisdom. Critically, higher states encompass the lower ones. Wilber suggests the Russian nesting doll as analogous. Each successive outer shell is painted and appears to be a whole. But in truth, each additional, thin level or layer is a sort of skin or outer husk. Its developmental significance presumes the incorporation of preceding, deeper levels.

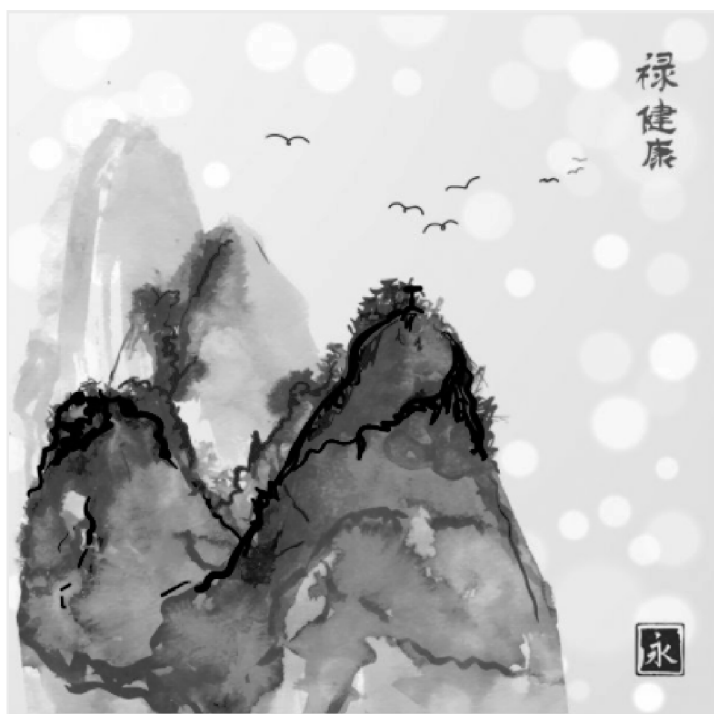
Ultimate trauma adds some precision to this framework—specifically showing how emotional trauma is a channel of healing and awakening. This expands on the 1970s 'state-trait' model which defines *states* as more fluid and therefore desirable to *traits*. So-called traits therefore generically refers to lower, more rigid and externalized phenomena (in the psychotic direction, as depicted below). The popular post-traumatic growth model is also aligned with an ultimate trauma paradigm. It also asserts that trauma can be transformative but does not identify factors such as positive and negative symptoms or hemispheric functioning.

The most pain-ridden lower reaches are valid, not yet integrated phenomena. Generically speaking, the more intense and debilitating, the more potential for radical shifts. The so-called pathological

dimensions of suffering are in relationship to the higher realms. Fleeting psychospiritual highs hint at a path to radical clarity possible through integration. The absence of the same does as well.

Critically, this hopeful view clashes with reality more times than not. Statistics are not favorable for many diagnoses. There is little evidence for breakthrough psychospiritual healing for most people with major mood, psychotic and substance disorders. There is no end of spiritual claims for this patently sad fact. Some books on near-death experiences, for example, suggest such lives are chosen rebirths. Such spirits beautifully, bravely choose such incarnations to further heal or awaken.

In my experience, many with emotional trauma achieve ‘normal’ as classically defined, as an absence of extreme problems. But only a very small percentage of these qualify as achieving breakthrough psychospiritual integrations. This set of facts is easily criticized. The list includes my own limitations, the lack of any standardized assessment of any such achievement, and the lack of corroborative data. On the other hand, the anecdotal, clinical support is strong as is the cumulative neurobiological evidence for an expansion of the ‘new paradigm’ in the higher, spiritual direction. Another strand of evidence corresponds to how the higher realms appear to embody something other than symptom disappearance—something mappable and wonderful.

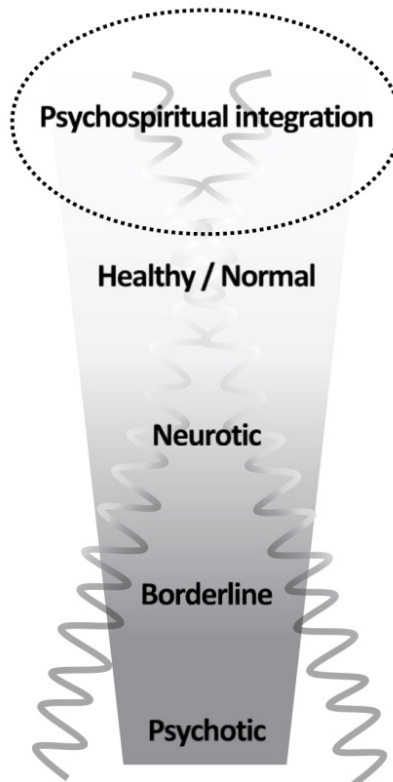


“E-motion”=feelings + soma. Psyche’s innate fluid, experiential character.

Crisscross & Paradox

At the highest levels, positive and negative symptoms cross. The inherent qualities of *movement and flow* in “e-motion” loosen. A sunset may evoke tears. For the Buddha, love awakened in the face of disease and suffering was illuminating. Jesus’ compassion drove him to spend time with the lepers, criminals and prostitutes.

These spaces open in the transition above and beyond (what passes for) normal. From the normal perspective, in fact, psychospiritual integration looks abnormal and irrational. Why, for example, check out of life, not marry, not have kids, wear a robe and chant and pray to the air?



THE BRUISED HEART

The little quiet kid may be the most damaged but the teacher's busy keeping the rowdy ones in their seats.

Let's trace all this carefully. Recall, positive symptoms are unhinged mental and emotional phenomena, from insane rants to rage to paranoia. They command attention and toss us to and fro. Their less visible accompaniment, always co-occurring, negative symptoms seem less important. Negative symptoms are the life-robbing, dulling, muting overlays. Clinical terms include anhedonia, alexithymia, dissociation, depressed affect and avolition.

*If life passes and no one is there to feel it,
is it a life after all?*

On the way up to the 'normal,' positive *and* negative symptoms lose their subverting powers. At the lower extremes, the psychotic realm emerges from the primordial night. No longer is our back pinned against the wall, our energy consumed coping with demons.

The stalemate breaks and shifts at the borderline level. No longer handed over to demons, delusions, intense affects begin to have more power. Many people operating at the borderline spectrum report extreme attachment disruptions, abuse and/or neglect dating back to around ages two to five. The re-entering of affect, this re-remembering of the psyche, seldom occurs under ideal conditions. The psyche (and the word *self* works just as well) attempts to heal old wounds in the midst of current havoc, leading nowhere. Chronic, repeated blowouts rather than a progression of growth are the norm. Another reason for this is the lack of psychological cohesion. The psyche is fragmented. There's no particular consensus of intention or willpower. The re-integration of affect is merely one force among others.

Analogously, a crack addict “hates” the choices they make. They “know” they want to stop. And they also experience great highs and releases with their own authority.

For most, the zigzaggy borderline realm is never transcended. The core instability mellows slightly over decades. Jesus’ eye of the needle speech is one of many ancient references to the rarity and complexity of true healing. Another is Buddhism’s premise of past/future lives. Thousands of millions of rebirths not only as insects or other life forms, but in other realms, all outside of the rarified chance of being born human.

Psychic pain, on the positive symptom side, is no longer discharged through hallucinations and delusions, as in the level below. But the degree of affective volatility and projection can be more extreme as, metaphorically, the space capsule encounters earth’s atmosphere. Many families are devastated, for decades or generations, by people with borderline personality disorder.

Gwen’s formative years were dominated by her ever vitriolic, intermittently suicidal sister. Gwen suffered the typical collateral trauma of family members of borderlines. She attempted to skip adolescence, be the adult and save her sister. She entered her 20s a wreck.

Just up from the borderline level, at the lower neurotic strata, hurricanes get downgraded to tropical storms. Repetitive upset and turmoil are the daily fare. With improvement, the basic character persists. Big storms are just less frequent and the daily drizzle is more bearable. Affect is increasingly intimate *and* intense—not just the latter. Still, the neurotic is cut off from her essence, which aches for peace. Peace does not yet have its due authority and is mistaken for passing episodes of relief, mere breaks in baseline chaos.

Farther still, into normal, the forces, flow and energy of life no longer knock us upside the head, at least not quite so hard. But still, we do not appreciate strong emotions’ protective, corrective authority. Then, higher in the rare transition to the lived spiritual life, the combined

THE BRUISED HEART

intensity and intimacy of affect dominate and liberate. One is more internally energized, more one with the rainbows of feelings, yet friendly with the stillness in it all.

Emergent emotional integrations *move* us in ways less physical and physiological and more psychic, sentient and expansive. Lower positive symptom forms transmute, becoming the *moving* moods and feeling tones of life. Here, anger, fear, worry and anxiety arise in flux. Intense emotions mirror their negative symptom counterparts – helping breathe life into a disembodied existence. Dull, shutdown sides of life, melt and shimmer with intensity. This is the natural, implicit home of being on the move toward healing and integration. Psyche arises bodily. The sheathe of existence is more pliant and somatic.

At these strata, anger's heat may energize the speaking of truth to power. Not as an aggressive sort of righteous indignation. The call for justice is passionate and demands activism. Yet there's a freedom from compulsion. More like a mother lovingly soothing a child's tantrum.

The beauty of each day awakens the spiritual warrior. She clears her psychic field of impure, egoic intention. She enters the cosmic flow of lovingkindness. This is no concept or intention but rather a force as natural and real as gravity. What moves her to speak and act is an extension of a freeing process, based in love, beneficial to all.

*A snow melts. White powder turned ashen.
Mud and rock. An ending. Then color. Wildflowers!*

The weight of sadness lightens through expansion—tears of joy arising in stillness. Tragedy and endings are no longer sluggish and clunky. Stirring reminders of life's fleeting, arising nature. The many-hued, flowing essence of affect awakens in and through the body. Apathy, dissociation and numbness wiggle and shake off their slumber. They are relieved of their rigid, protective posts. Intense feelings, thoughts, insights and silence are all highly elastic dimensions. All part of a larger spongy matrix, a medley of being.

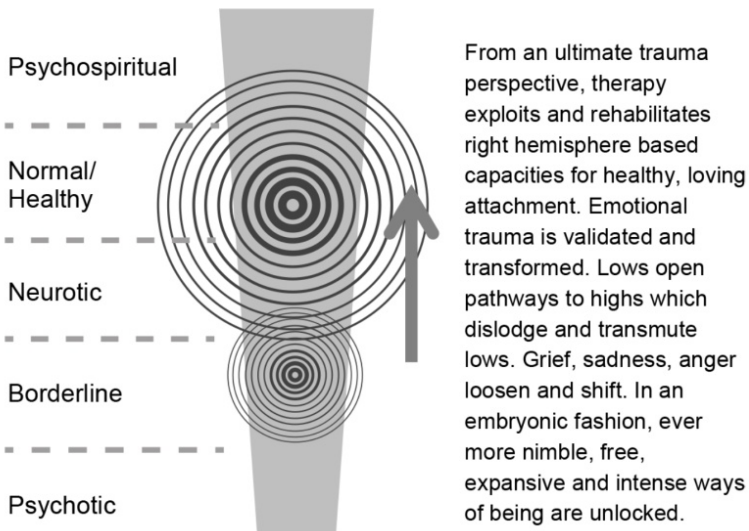
Words

These thousands of words are imperfect descriptions of the experiential integrations that open up at the psychospiritual level. These are poor alternatives for Robert Frost's path through the woods. A path through and into an ever richer, deeper somatic attunement.

*Two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the one less
traveled by, and that has made all the difference.
-The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost*

One connotation of *spirit* is breath or air. Claims of open, easy highs are suspect. Breathy, new age declarations that "it's all good" and "meant to be" are very common. But frothy advice, for example, to "just let it go" may be experienced by recipients as hollow and unhelpful. With extensive psychospiritual integration, words and messages convey more depth. They are vibrations of an embodied lovingkindness. They bear the power of this embodiment. When we have healed our psyche and spirit, what is said and not said becomes a towering truth.

Functional Levels and Confidence Bands



THE BRUISED HEART

Hence the wisdom in, 'the more I learn the less I know'.

Advice in the form of *just do x* is especially suspect. Real advice recognizes the vulnerability, difficulty and an organic openness or the healing process more than any outcome. With actual leaps in intuition, insight and clarity, our spiritual wingspan increases, as do our rootedness and presence on this earth. Now, in *this* moment, mind, thinking and words are less central. Socrates wrote nothing down. His mysterious teacher—the mystic, Diotima—was even more elusive.^{xxxix}

There's nothing wrong with idealism and aspiration but the shadows these cast cannot be overlooked. Wisdom is 'mud and lotus,' both the earthy, messy, dark side, and the glorious blossom. It's the unexpected lesson from relationships we just knew were perfect and then felt trapped in. Idiomatic moves that lead to insight. In hindsight, of course, our view was too narrow. An old view had to die for a new one to be born.

Often, we only engage our confusing, messy life because of failure. We think we know better and resist to the bitter end. But our insistence and aggression should not too soon be jettisoned. Before we were both more impaired (higher acuity) and less aware, less alive (lower vitality). Both what hurts *and* dulls at the neurotic and normal level is more embodied at a higher level.

Change requires increased intensity, vitality and chi. Otherwise, fear (detachment and dissociation) holds sway. But with gumption, we can look the zombie-self in the eye. We can *touch into* higher energetic levels of being. A most elegant, delicious form of this is called 'pure awareness.'

Pure awareness... is the simplest and also the most advanced teaching--the essence--of the Tibetan tantric tradition. Pure Awareness, also called the awakened state or the Buddha mind, is our most fundamental nature, a part of ourselves that is neither born nor dies and underlies all of the experiences of our human life.^{xxxix}

There are a hundred ways to ask or express the same thing. What's life? What is this being human thing all about? Check it out. Diligently. Sit, notice. There's an emotional quality, to be sure, and this is always in flux. There are thoughts reeling about, but some sort of silent bed under them. The breath is especially remarkable. With persistence at letting go, it proves to have its own existence. The body breathes itself. And, in turn, this body... vessel... home... has 'body-ness,' a vibrant essence. With no boundary.

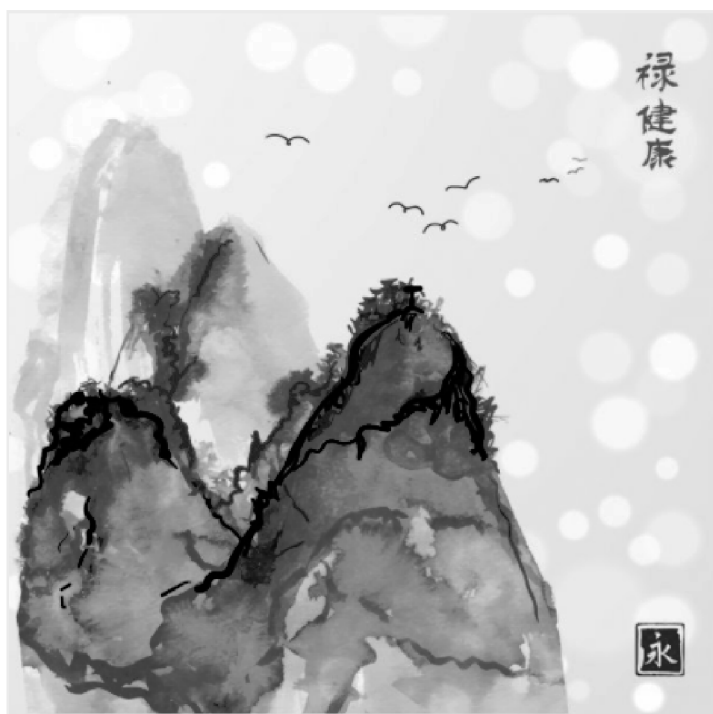
With these expansions comes relief, a freeing from smaller holds we never really needed. But this can be disconcerting. We were so invested. There's a very tricky business at work of mind defining things, and ever more subtly asserting its domain. The New Age, supposedly Buddhist claim that 'letting go' has something to do with 'end of suffering' thing is actually not that mysterious or abstract.

This path has two experiential sides: the receiving, noticing, benefiting, and another, an actual, natural force—a goodness, a love with no strings that receives the person, mind, being letting go. The mind might like to take credit. But this inner mirror of 'me' knows: *"I'm not inventing this wonder."*

And try as you might to sense it, there's no edge. Everything blends into larger fields. None of these is foreign or lifeless. There seems to be something warm, empty, 'just so', a 'cosmos' which is being's own vessel.

The more one "practices" and hangs out in this medley, the wider the experiential field opens.

The Buddhist teacher, Reggie Ray, identified this, what I've tried to articulate, as *pure awareness*. No edge, always more space. More quiet and stillness between any forms or elements. But no falling into deadness or complete darkness. It's spacious but not just space. Rather, it is all teeming in some virginal, pure way.



Bungee Cord

Ready for the not-so-secret secret to this whole book? The whole psychotic-borderline-neurotic-normal, and on to psychospiritual enchilada map is both ‘state and trait.’ This maps the ugly fact of stubborn personality traits on the one hand – lives stuck for decades – and living, fluid states on the other.

Remember Mia? She plunged into a fury so complete that it temporarily took over her conscious mind. This plunge dipped into the psychotic strata. Between therapy sessions, she weathered borderline blowouts with burst of violence and cut-offs. Healing came in, unlocking the moment, the lived experience *somatically*. For her and most of us, empathic therapy can provide the container through which we experience otherwise container-breaking fear and anger.

These moments are actually not simply higher on the continuum, but fuller. One’s range of experience, their circle in this depiction, widens. In effect, we rise above the two-dimensional surface and inhabit a third dimension. One incorporates the totality—the lotus blossom of spirit and the mud, grit, difficulty, complexity and churning of the so-called lower realms.

Jesus and Buddha and great sages personify this nondual expansion. They are enlightened through the spectrum of human experience, the greed, the smallness, the desire to murder, all of it. They bungee from psychospiritual downward. Both left this earthly plane to battle evil powers, e.g., the devil in Jesus’ case and Mara in Buddha’s.

They abided in the universe of human suffering, including psychotic torment and temptation. Words fail to express the legacy of such spiritual masters. Nonetheless, I spilled a lot of ink on this in (my previous book) *Buddha’s Mom*. Metaphorically, this human, psychotic-to-psychospiritual spectrum leaves the flatlands. A freer perspective rises

THE BRUISED HEART

up above in a third dimension, and so on. The whole spectrum becomes a speck. A grain of sand among others, other perspectives, all sentient nodes, all sentient beings. Everything since the Big Bang has a mother, including the Big Bang. So everything has a witness. It follows that enlightenment is some of oneness with this witness.

College Kid

Let's consider how this holds true when a child in need of love meets, over and over, with their parent's wrath or coldness. Their hungry, open spirit contracts. The psyche defines the repetitive context as proof that life is unsafe. Narratives lock in, perhaps in the forms of 'I'm unlovable' or 'I need to prove myself and earn love,' to name two of millions.

Like an animal pacing in a cage. Doomed to forget but wired to remember the wilderness. We go about talking to somebody when nobody is there.

The same kid later, as "a college kid," has a falling out with his or her 'soulmate.' If the inner child has not healed, the original pattern fills in like ink in water. Their sweetheart finds themselves in plots they did not author. There are baseless claims of rejection, which maddeningly lead to circular efforts at correction. Breakthroughs are followed by resurgences of the original claim, just in slightly new forms. A twisted plant seeks light, still twisted.

On the 'positive symptom' side are spikes of hurt and hopelessness; on the other symptom side, a closing in of walls, trepidation, ruminating, bracing and tightening. The mind reels during break-ups, confessing, begging, encouraging and yelling at ghosts.

*Just talk to me. We can get through this.
You got it all wrong, and from the beginning.
But it's OK. It makes perfect sense. I was wrong too!*

The kid-adult is possessed, so to speak, by the wicked combination of the left and right hemispheres. As the right hypothalamic circuits ramp up, the cornered animal fight-flight mode kicks in. Right hemisphere alarm bells cause the left to attempt linear thinking and formulate a coherent explanation and action plan. But the thought-centered, human left hemisphere responds too vigorously, a victim of its own brilliance at narrative recall. It slops about in a soupy recall of

THE BRUISED HEART

interactions, conversations. Each is potentially useful but the totality, the cacophony and lack of amelioration from the angles, ideas, claims and stories, is a sledgehammer when a scalpel is called for. The overflow of, for example, imaginary responses and explanations to the person perceived as hurtful and unloving does not dispel or quell the agony. This pervasive, thought-centered inner life keeps circling back to the (right hemisphere) rejection and loss. It is gasoline to fire, spurring more thinking and more distress – an endless loop.

A dog chasing its tail. Feelings drive thinking in loops.

Where there is unresolved trauma, the mind swirls in this way as the two hemispheres attempt to resolve emotion and cognition. One side ruminates and speculates as the other dwells in echoes of ancient abandonments. All is re-review and re-re-review of imagined futures, hoped for and feared scenarios. We go over and over what a friend, boyfriend, parent or boss said and did. We see their face, hear their tone, feel their energy—over and over. We rehearse our explanations and have our imagined day in court. Intoxicating, neurotic worry churns, boiling over in righteous campaigns to forge fairness and justice. We wake to speeches from our misunderstood, neglected heart. Maybe we acknowledge and feel terrible about something. But we did not intend to do what we did, and this seems fantastically unappreciated. Hellish hours, as we walk through life, do not interact with the world around us with any real sensitivity, and we lose time.

*Neurosis is a long prison sentence
with a possibility of early release.*

Therapy

Only with healing do we ever break the back of these dead zones. Therapy is key. It is going backward, excavating, digging up these layers of anger and hurt so the dread and ‘stuckness’ loosen. It’s OK to be sad and mad just as long as there is movement, motion, emotion. Often in therapy the old wounding meets the raw, fresh, present moment. What are we doing in this little room together? It’s implicit. Afraid but finally courageous, seen, safe and loved enough? When we are, we shift, we move, we emote and realign.

Clients initially express that ‘there is so much going on’ even as they feel stuck and sure nothing will help. There’s too much to discuss, which they proceed to unpack, while emphasizing there’s no reason to do so. This living sense of binding, hopeless ineffectiveness distorts the experience of time, of the present. It robs them of precious, often, years. This tends to hold true for both victim and perpetrator. The same recoiling and locked-on self-protection are a response to an unjust, cruel attack even when, upon analysis, they have done the rejecting. The walls fall and the boxes dissolve as the inner child is discovered. Her hurt and efforts at defending herself need not be parsed but spaciouly embraced.

Smallminded constraints limit interconnectedness and active participation in our shared human condition. Suffering is isolating. One is less open to others’ help and less concerned and empathic toward those around them. Ultimate trauma is potential energy to disband self-protective anger, which pushes back and maims others, and self-protective fear, which flees and isolates. As the Figure shows, movement toward our body’s ‘positive’ factors with eyes and heart open shift fight-flight upward. Anxiety tags along but so does hope for a day

THE BRUISED HEART

when we're OK, safe and happy. The day may be never, very far away, or soon. Much depends on the capacity to exercise this awareness muscle, carry the healing further.

Feelings overpower or remain unchecked through avoidance. Clients routinely point out with tremendous certitude that their terrible situation (child abuse, a breakup, loss, some financial crisis) cannot be changed. It simply has happened and cannot be reversed. In this, the deer-in-headlights 'freeze' is clear. Often this 'checkmate' is communicated to the therapist as dry fact, with minimum emotion.

This form of avoidance uses a sleight of hand. It flips the *outer* and *inner*. The outer, the event or situation, gets all the authority. The inner is simply its powerless victim. All the evidence of psychological healing and growth is dismissed. The left hemisphere's smarts are hellbent on proving the unprovable.

Everyone knows that no one remains blissfully content in any relationship, just as they know if you throw a rock in the air, it will eventually come down. They know some part of the lost bliss was really an amped up fear of change. They know some people do forgive, forget, let go and move on.

Therapy unfolds in this space, where the outer confronts the inner. In the outer, clients feel desperately alone and uniquely doomed. Nothing can change the past. There's a defeated, stagnant satisfaction in this 'case closed' trope. Never mind all the evidence, that the relationship was stuck, that loss, grief and healing are part of life. That people grow at different speeds, commonly grow apart, that many fall in love with others, that some are just done. True transformation is possible only by engaging the inner reality of these 'negatives'. Within this cauldron, other dimensions of the inner world unfold. In the smallest ways, the light breaks through, proving that one can be a bit more engaged in the present. A bit more alive.

Meanwhile, the outer world has supposedly moved on. She or he is not looking back, does not respond. Time freezes as our fight-flight somatic storm both stalls out and rages in the ‘deer-in-headlights’ *freeze* stage. Fear suffocates, mutes all color. Anger may also whip about, cleaving the world into black and white. Victims brim with righteous indignation. Dejected kings and queens high once a throne now tipping, they cast blame. Smashing against the ground, they eat dirt. ‘Humiliation’ is derived from *humus*, e.g., *earth*. Archetypes in line with loser, orphan and outcast, perhaps monster, ugly, dejected move in, ready to provide a semblance of stability.

Righteous anger and shivering fear paint the world in black and white. Worn down, depression sees only gray.

But difficult experiences, faceplants in uncertainty and fear, connect us to our species’ lineage –to animals, early life, the Big Bang. Our story could not be more exotic. We are the tip of some unimaginative chain. So what, we are compelled to ask, am I to do with my small window in the universe? Through trauma, we are compelled to live these ever richer questions.

Emotionally wounded people wrestle with what really matters in life *more* than others fortunate to primarily live at the ‘normal’ zone. Many therefore achieve higher (above normal) heights and insights. The big questions press down harder. Life’s ugliness is more in their face—paradoxically—because they can handle the pain. Outsiders may see them as courageous.

Sabrina offers such an example. A couple years after being abused, she reported the details to the police. When she shared this, I commented that she had been “brave.” She responded that others have said the exact same thing and that this surprised her. The body that reports abuse is also the body that carries it. For her, reporting the abuse was logical. Like reporting being hit by a drunk driver. By telling the police, perhaps others would not suffer what she continued to live with, as she would an injury from an accident.

THE BRUISED HEART

Many clients are courageous, inspiring, full of life and also powder kegs of anxiety. Therapy is needed, often, to facilitate a safe path into what turns out to be a capacity to feel life intensely, and a courage to ask and live much out of a sense of what really matters. For some, therapy is a safe way to walk down the stairs, into the emotions often referred to as “hitting bottom.” They have “lost everything” and discovered or been forced to take note of something more essential. In hindsight, smaller boxes presumed to be home, belonging, safety or love stopped functioning as such. And other paths, better, freer, deeper paths of the heart proved to always have been there, ready all along.

Loneliness

Psychospiritual FOMO is a thing. We see others bathing in friendships and exciting experiences. They appear to have what we want for ourselves. The question becomes what is blocking us. As a university-based psychologist, I have had days when one amazing, lovely human after another articulates how lonely they feel, how much they ache for friendship. How can they sit next to one another in the lobby and not become BFFs? Why is there no lonely hearts' club on campus to connect them all together?

Indifference, not hate, is the opposite of love.

But of course, each of them has much work to do to *be* a friend. Each wants someone to love them, to listen to them, to feel their pain. But each has a way to go to be *that* person for someone else. Meanwhile, loneliness pushes us down (as shown in the graphic in the previous section) to lower levels of functioning.

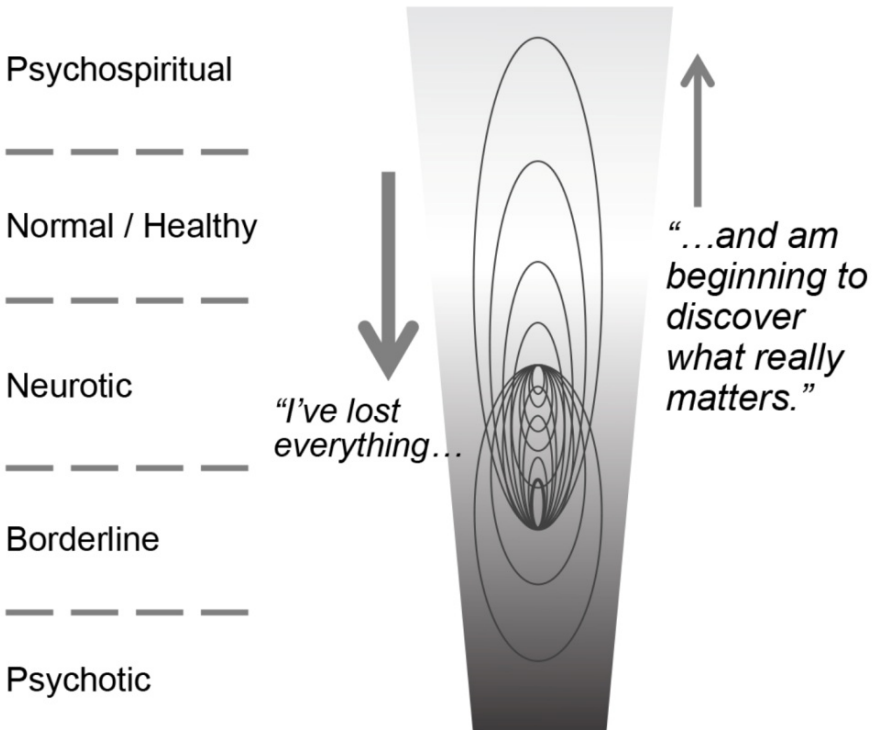
Emotions help manage loneliness. Anger pushes where sadness and longing pull. Together they keep us contained but also possess seeds for breaking loose. Emotions that force separation are paradoxically entrapping. Anger and criticism of people as shallow or unstable helps us to feel less rejected. After all, we want nothing to do with them. We have to remain mad for this to work. Hating is hard work. As one sees in the politics of hate, people nonetheless settle in for years. Even as we criticize others for being shallow, we are being internally cruel. We are mocking our own desire for some sort of similar rock to rest upon.

Jealousy is another way we remain lonely. Seldom is the other person quite as contented as we believe them to be. We imagine people mocking us and having no clue or care how much we are hurting. Emotions locked on another need to be dislodged. We should point to a future point, a mythical future lover, or engage in therapy and visualize our goal to actually stand on our own feet. Every tiny laugh

THE BRUISED HEART

and sense of awe, every thanks we feel for being alive, are bigger than one realizes. With some loosening, we can acknowledge the sadness and fear that came long before the breakup. We can long instead for a clearer center of identity, meaning and confidence. It's OK to desire some ease and confidence in life. We can rejoice in telling others our goal, in stumbling upon moments of can-do, of "I got this," and in receiving support and affirmation. To heal loneliness, we have to feel the pain and risk loving openly.

Functional Levels and Confidence Bands



High Functioning

Although the juxtaposition of emotional damage and high functioning is fairly common, these dynamics deserve more curiosity. The stormy contrast (low/high functioning) is confusing for the sufferer, spouse, friend and clinician alike. Enormous energy is expended around what precisely is wrong, what would help and what the person needs to do. Half-truths fly—Emily needs to break up, learn to delay gratification, stop drinking, go to counseling, get a job, realize what a great person she is. Peers routinely offer (what for the low/high functioning person) are unhelpful, shallow and obvious suggestions. These partial truths muddle the prospect of real change. Friends mean well. Sufferers appreciate the effort yet feel misunderstood.

High functioning but highly impaired people are unable to really engage in what seems clear to others. But this has deep roots. And is not because the concepts are unobvious to them.

Without a more lucid identification of the low/high confidence bands (see the previous section and the appendix), sufferers are often lost in the morass. As the overlap of expanding concentric circles depicts, a larger map can help differentiate where an emotional experience or insight falls. Intermittent insights (higher up the chain) are indeed slivers of wisdom that too often fail to be named as legitimate and beautiful, albeit partial. Returns to the lower reaches do not nullify these.

In a clearer view this ability/inability elucidates how confined, narcissistic and unimaginative the pattern-prison has been. The richer the map the greater the prospect of healing. Healing evolves through continued acknowledgement of all everything with an authentic bearing: trauma, neglect, poverty, parents, ex's, on the lower end, and breakthroughs, positive aspects of relationships, and former epiphanies on the upside—all welcomed in a spirit of love and faith in the prospect of transformation.

THE BRUISED HEART

The complexity needs to be acknowledged. For example, we launch into new romantic misadventures, sure this time this person understands, really loves us, is amazing and that we have learned from our mistakes. Ditto for the new church, a city or self-help angle. More hidden is an emphasis on avoiding pain. For many clients, the high of drama and infatuation is their analgesic. Forward and fast, no looking back. All these new romances and self-improvement campaigns deserve close analysis not derision. Critical ‘half-truths’ lie like buried treasures.

Rays of universal truths shine even in self-destructive ventures. The high functioning element within ultimate trauma is not a carve-out, for example, where one does well at a career but horrible in a love relationship. Rather, the highs contain identifiable strands of positive *and* negative symptoms. There is poetry when a person is at once a disaster *and* a sublime witness of their impossible pain. Their pain is both unique and universal. In my experience as a psychologist, this connection—from the personal to the universal—is transformative.

As the depths of these concepts take root, patients’ hearts open. The truth of devastating patterns are exposed not as proof of wrongness or stupidity but within the vast scope of our humanity. With this, patients feel more fully seen. They feel more deeply welcomed and at home within these ideas, within this model—again so long as this is articulated within a caring, therapeutic relationship.

I’m no genius. In fact, I find myself hoping for average among my colleagues. I have seen many clients make dramatic gains where others have not. No doubt there are better ways to communicate these ideas. My goal in writing, however, is to offer at least one version that I have seen have a true and lasting impact.

Implicit Knowledge

One client that I showed these graphics sat reading them in silence, crying, nodding. Adelina had been shut down, e.g., pressured to *repress*, pressured to employ negative symptoms to mute what the positive symptoms therapy had allowed her to *express*. For many, the news is sobering. Like discovering they are in kindergarten and not college.

For Adelina, to date, the effort to fit into this world had been stupefying and life-robbing.

Almost everyone expresses a sense they knew it all along. These ‘ah ha’ moments tend to have the two sides, surprise and the opposite. She “knew” being so cut-off and numb was wrong. She knew her mother’s role in this. But the implicit knowledge was not integrated, and so not available in any practical or expansive way. Adelina felt guilty to identify her mother’s influence, knowing how the discrimination and suffering her mother faced. But only through this very loving, empathic connection, with her mother historically with the life flowing by her now, does such heavy slumber begin to stir. As people sense they now get it, they want to take action.

Implicit knowledge or intuition lives within psychological wounding, like honey in a beehive.

With this stirring, we can unclench. Do less bracing, reacting to ghosts and get out of the way. What I’m suggesting as a suffering-to-transformation pathway is psychospiritual yoga, a potential energy held in the body. The suffocating, hypnotic power of negative symptoms needs the movement of love between people, the divine e-motion that seeks only to release the truth Adelina saw in the graphic I showed her and felt in the discussion we had.

The turn is one from dullness and inaction toward a discovery of *actively* missing out on life. Negative symptoms include campaigns to mitigate and hide from life’s intensities. There is finally an awareness of

THE BRUISED HEART

how one is putting energy into dissociating, numbing and dismissing depths of care and love through negativity, a forced shallowness and hollow rationalizations.

The philosopher asks, “if a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?” The point is experience, *awareness*. Was a human soul there as witness? If so, yes, of course. It makes a sound. There is no *not* hearing, seeing, feeling something real.

Experience cannot be undone. Ultimate trauma sufferers are not able to delete the underlying pain. But these lower realms of emotional experience are never the whole story. Only a healthy (or at least relatively healthier) body experiences dis-ease. Suffering is implicit in the contrast. As the diagram above shows, emotional trauma may span the three levels (neurosis, borderline, psychotic). But from an ‘ultimate’ perspective, the upper reaches are critical to transformation. They heard the tree fall and continue to everyday. And this unfolds in a teeming, healthy forest.

Positive and negative issues have a sort of mathematical relationship to healing. As they merge, they re-form. For example, less repression, more anger. Perhaps a person finally confronts and breaks free of their emotional prison. Perhaps they get arrested. There’s no simple, linear path from an outside perspective. But when the internal wounding is taken into account, even setbacks can be productive, a la ‘hitting bottom’. Ignorance and inaction are not bliss but the source of suffering.

Such was the Buddha’s basic message: life is suffering until one awakens to this fact. We bump into this essential truth both as we fail to achieve what we want and suffer and as we achieve what we want and are still wanting. The universal call to ‘let go’ is ‘just so’, self-evident but easier said than done. When we manage to (whether we describe having “something” or “nothing” left) some sort of field of experience expands without any manipulation or prayers. The Buddhist term awakening has the same root meaning as the word awareness. The root word in Buddha and Buddhism means to awaken.

Help-Rejecting

The oil-and-water mix of positive and negative symptoms helps explain why so many people with very serious problems do not are ‘help-rejecting.’ Even when some sort of help is available, they self-sabotage or are ‘noncompliant’. An ultimate trauma perspective sheds light on this common frustration. As anyone close to someone with major mental problems knows, not only does their friend or family member suffer but the collateral damage is enormous. Help-rejecting behavior is rampant even in first-world countries where resources are more plentiful. Family and significant others routinely spend enormous energy and money trying to get the loved one into treatment. Just as commonly, the would-be patient bails. They stop taking their meds, return to alcohol and drugs, stealing and fighting. They go back into the same or a similar toxic relationship. They return to good days, bad days, and at times to teetering on the edge of suicide.

The borderline realm is defined by instability. People do not follow through on appointments, delay gratification or take medications properly. In my view, people actually need more protection from themselves—not only when they are suicidal. Their will is fragmented. One ‘part’ of them aches for sanity. Another may be profoundly depressed, another belligerent, another hellbent on getting high.

The oversimplification that ‘they haven’t hit bottom yet’ is, I hope, clearer in an ultimate trauma model. ‘Part’ of them has it bottom (the lower rings on the confidence bands) and other parts have not. A sustained pattern of profound instability is evidence that such a person needs some form of protection from themselves. Presently in America, extreme behaviors are met with lightweight outpatient options, prone to ‘noncompliance’, very short-term involuntary hospitalizations or arrest. The money spent on repeated Emergency Room visits could pay for more creative, reward-focused programs overseen by a mental health court.

THE BRUISED HEART

Meanwhile these patients absorb the professional shaming. They are constantly told what they already know, e.g., they should have complied or followed through with services. Variants of this 'hitting bottom' routine include claims that the person prefers the highs of mania (in bipolar disorder) or drugs to sobriety or so self-absorbed and grandiose as to think they know more than the professionals. In this model, we see how the power of messages, e.g., that you are not ready, are not serious, are too crazy, that nobody can help someone who does not want to help themselves, to reinforce wounding. In truth, help-rejecting is two-way street.

Terribly wounded people practically smell when someone does not like them. Or out of paranoia, they project and re-experience wounding when one out of a hundred otherwise caring comments from a counselor-type misses the mark.

Re-wounded and assured no one cares, clients may get mad or 'vote with their feet' and not return. A therapist's indelicate comment, on one hand, undermines their brittle (higher-level, but not yet stable) specialness. On the other, pushing back against efforts to help ('I already tried that, it won't work') reinforces the (lower-level) negativity. There simply is not enough gas in the tank to stabilize a middle against these constant mood swings. Positive symptom storms zap the little fuel (insight, wisdom, logic) available and the status quo is reinstated.

A mental health care system more aligned with science would better take on this core problem of corrupted willpower. Bold, caring programs could work more closely with law enforcement. Presently the bar for brief curtailing of free will and civil rights is set at imminent self-harm. In the hospital where I worked, the 'Baker Act' (a temporary involuntary hold) was used only to curtail extremes of self-destructive behavior. I had to impose this hundreds of times. Patients soon returned to their slightly less extreme lives. Many cycled through the Emergency Department repeatedly. Perhaps others overdosed or killed themselves before someone was able to intervene.

Why not use a science-based combination of carrot and stick to more effectively interrupt these patterns? Just to exaggerate the point, we could pay people to complete levels of care in non-medical settings. At lower levels, just voluntary attendance in meetings might earn credit for whatever is actually meaningful for the patient—a food voucher, medication co-pays, a pass to a nicer shelter, babysitting or movie tickets.

Mental health courts, law officers and emergency services personnel who intervene in crises could be provided succinct data on participation and completion of various components of treatment. Completion of higher level, more robust components could translate into housing, education, job training and more intensive psychotherapy. Money otherwise spent on hospitalizations for overdose could go extremely far. Consider the savings, for example, on even a small decrease in patients' life-flighted in by helicopter following overdose, who then spend days intubated in critical care. If such a new paradigm in psychology were truly taken into account, higher-level capacities would be fostered, with an aim toward their stabilization, through play, music, movement and the like.

More clarification of emotional trauma as a centerpiece for common, costly problems is needed. In the next section, I suggest a diagnostic category of *traumatic depression* with this in mind. This proposed diagnosis better captures the blend of lower-tier negative symptoms in combination with positive symptoms in help-rejecting behavior.

Our country's infatuation with (and declaration of) so-called independence is suspect when millions do not *independently* follow through with services and suffer horribly. Ultimately the hyper-focus on individual rights gives us, to name one strand, tens of thousands of homeless veterans *legally* hallucinating, haunted and inebriated, dirty, uncomfortable, sick, laying on sidewalks and in back alleys.

An ultimate trauma model distinguishes higher degrees of liberty and freedom to make bad decisions from the lower forms where the word

THE BRUISED HEART

'decision' and logic this presumes does not apply. Woody Allen offers a comedic, exaggerated window into the higher, neurotic realm. He's constantly in therapy, incessantly complaining and just as consistently getting nowhere. It would make sense for mandatory limits, such as court-ordered treatment plans, to stay clear of people operating at this higher level. It also makes sense for therapists to confront mental masturbation, the precious time wasted as Allen does through his comedy.

Anatomically, it almost seems that separation has emerged from more basic pain systems during brain evolution... neural circuits mediating separation distress are under the control of brain opioids... " xxxiii

Separation Distress

Consider the chilling cry of a baby in distress—and the relevance of this for that baby’s survival. This hardwired SOS signal system is central to the proposed trauma-to-transformation bridge.^{xxxiv} As Jaak Panksepp discovered, the associated brain circuitry coordinates both the cry for help and the rescue.^{xxxv} Beyond the obvious importance for a baby’s physical survival, the same circuitry spikes strong emotional connection especially in the face of danger.

Early humans needed social bonds to survive things. Acquiring food, eluding predators, and nursing offspring are all easier done in partnership with others. Maybe over time this social alert system piggybacked onto the physical pain system so people could recognize social distress and quickly correct it.

The cry signal and urge to rescue are two sides of the same coin. A baby’s cries spike concern if not terror, just as it is an expression of the same. As Panksepp has shown, this distress system is based in a specific, ancient, subcortical brain region. This is activated when the (bird, mammal, primate and human) offspring is separated from their mother.

Further, the emotional *pain* evoked by this circuitry is likely due to the phylogenetic origins of its neural circuitry. The ‘felt sense’ of extreme emotions permeates both their experience and descriptions, e.g., hurt, heartbreak, ‘it killed me’, ‘a slap in the face’.

Separation distress circuitry evolved very close to where one can generate physical pain responses.^{xxxvi}

Separation distress is fundamental to the trauma-transformation bridge. How we respond to a screaming baby, especially if she is ours, offers a biological peek into this vast emotional reservoir. We are compelled to

THE BRUISED HEART

find, grab, rescue, touch and nurture, to look for the source of and mitigate the distress. Love, attachment and distress reunions and rescues are evolution's response to emotional pain. They are intrinsically connected. Attachment has power. It soothes and relieves.

The upside, transformation, liberation (or whatever term one might prefer) simply continues in this same positive, suffering-reducing, happiness-invoking vein. In my book, *Buddha's Mom*, I explored this attachment-liberation connection in depth.^{xxxvii} Buddhism proposes that joy and understanding, often called lovingkindness and wisdom, await anyone who investigates life deeply. This is a core Buddhist idea, and the reason for purifying one's mind and letting go of what proves to be temporary and illusory, for example, the valuing of material possessions or pursuit of transient goals.

*Broken hearts, as they say, can be broken anew.
Broken open and set free. Buddhists describe such
a freedom as emptiness. As a shimmering, unfolding
'metta'—lovingkindness, cosmic love.*

Natural Intensity

What is cosmic love or all this positivity? How, where is any direct, reliable flow of the vivid, outrageous, expansive thunder and sunshine that, I'm suggesting, is our emotional essence. As I try hard to show in *Buddha's Mom*, religious and philosophical abstraction can be balanced by science, through a deep dive into our very biological legacy. And, particularly, in Buddha's (Siddhartha's) stepmother, Prajapati, and all that she channeled, eventually expressed through him.

A fierce, free homo sapiens of the prehistoric savannah (within) is lost to emotional trauma and even more so, to traumatic depression. Paradoxically, this anxiety has nowhere to land. So safe are we from predators. We are imprisoned by our disconnection and success as a species. We naturally look for this home in work, various enthusiasms and in others. But these fires burn out, and the search picks up. There's a dull ache and absence.

Ancient intuitions and voices are calls to seek, to wonder, even to have faith in our versions of a longing/belonging nexus. This is where our being makes its home. The web of our tribe, nested in its earthly matrix—we are to live our gifts from here. This is the vibrant ground, the active emotive realm below thought. Here we are not confined by workspaces, stores, cars, kitchens and bedrooms rather than one with the horizon in every direction, with the elements, storms and darkness. Nor by being married, or so-and-so's significant other. Unless they are truly along with us on our journey and we their's.

The door to our natural intensity can be opened *through* whatever we have to work with emotionally and somatically. But paradoxically, it is

THE BRUISED HEART

commonly instead obscured *by* the same—by blends of anger, overwhelm, sorrow and fear. The word, “crazy” is constantly used to describe inner states. Mostly this is just the wordy left hemisphere cutting off any real dive into feeling. Avoiding deep, genuine, powerful, confluences of intense feeling is avoiding life.

But too often, “Nothing to see here!” our pain assures us. Or “Been there, done that”—marking the twin shields of protection and repression. Doubt is bent on crushing hope yet some sort of knowing that there is much more to life persists. With some mix of perseverance, insight, luck, help, patience and courage, this may open to trust, confidence and anticipation of further healing.

This book aims to help you achieve a shift from more closed, negative states to more positive, open ones. This possibility is everywhere. Even drugs and alcohol, for all their destruction, can be framed in this light. These physiologically disrupt the stand-off. “Liquid courage”, for example, decreases positive symptoms, e.g., anxiety. At the same time, alcohol decreases the power of negative symptoms. Temporarily at least, people may shirk their preference to hug the wall, be a ‘wallflower’, shake off shyness and feel more energized. Albeit, perhaps ‘inappropriately’ they may be brash, loud or dance freely. Little wonder that the message to ‘just say no’ to drugs and alcohol is so often ignored. The point here is while very problematic, many forms of coping, from drugs to dysfunctional relationships, can be revealing. Less judgment and more curiosity go a long ways.

A common rule of thumb for therapy is ‘it gets worse before it gets better.’ Faith in this, or just tolerance of the bumps and setbacks, is another harsh reality of traumatic depression. The capacity to give the process a chance is lost to the emotional storms at the neurotic level. At the borderline level, the term ‘help-rejecting’ is in fact used to describe this common feature. It is not uncommon for patients report a long list of therapists, as well as family and friends, who mistreated or did not

love and support and accept and understand them. A closer look reveals how not only the positive symptoms (e.g., rage, blame affects) but dissociation, being checked out, is causal. People with borderline personality lack a stable sense of self. An inconsistent, bumpy hold on reality soon throws them out of any process that requires the consistent showing up—both physically and emotionally.

Severe mania can convince a person not to dull the high with medication and that there's no need for therapy. Severe depression can convince a person that nothing will help, so don't bother. Moderate anxiety has a better chance of resulting in follow-through. But when this is protracted, people's give-a-crap is worn out. The anxiety convinces them that therapy did not work or will not work. This sits on top of a lack of passion, a lack of courage and wonder. It would be very healthy and wise to wonder, and research, how it is that some people with very similar issues do manage to achieve breakthroughs. But the negative symptom, dull pessimism, wins the day.

The point is to witness these expanding flavors with one's eyes and heart open, with kindness and sensitivity; where there is a cut-off hell, a heaven-on-earth waits. An earthy heaven feels and respects hell. It knows this runs hell's bodily reality, that this runs through all of us. That "I am an animal looking in the mirror." An animal uniquely aware of its awareness, feeling its feelings. This earthy heaven sees with second sight, sees the hell in others, knows their pain in the most personal way. Heart-powered, it reaches out without hesitation, with oceans of care.

There's a saying: 'many paths, one destination.' Where 'many paths' corresponds to these many-named, old/new storm systems, 'one destination' also has many names: 'nowhere,' 'here-now,' 'liberation,' 'awakening,' etc. I am hoping, intending, praying that what I've come to learn about the one destination has value for you. The essential case I hope to make is that this one destination (call it beyond-names, already-everywhere, freedom, joy, etc.) arrives, beckons and is

THE BRUISED HEART

accessed—through emotional pain. This is a most bedazzling, confusing, exciting truth (to give it that problematic, weighty handle). We will delve into this bridge, this trauma-liberation nexus, in various ways. I hope to show how this notion flows from a new integration of multiple lines of “evidence.” Sources include evolution, affective neuroscience, brain hemisphere research, polyvagal theory, attachment theory and clinical data. For the latter, the reader will meet several amazing-but-typical clients coping with profound emotional wounding.

Another patient, Hannah, was thrust into nerve-racking levels of responsibility early and often. She was the oldest of four. After the parent's turmoil ended in divorce, she would find herself mitigating another sort of storm.

The collateral damage perpetrated by this exotic amalgam (child, teen, adult in her thirties, when we met) was not nearly as cumulative and massive as that she absorbed. This is most likely a ‘karmic truth.’ Buddhists and other authorities on spiritual matters speak to the soul choosing to endure, and benefiting from enduring, the pain they are born into.

Hannah would face the typical vise grip. She could share her vulnerabilities, fears and joys with a mother lacking the capacity to receive, hold or be parental. Or she could withhold, and self-parent. A three-year-old, for example, forming rationalizations about what was cool and an accomplishment. But choice, except for between bad and worse, was an illusion. She was bound to begin life as a shiny, bruised shell.

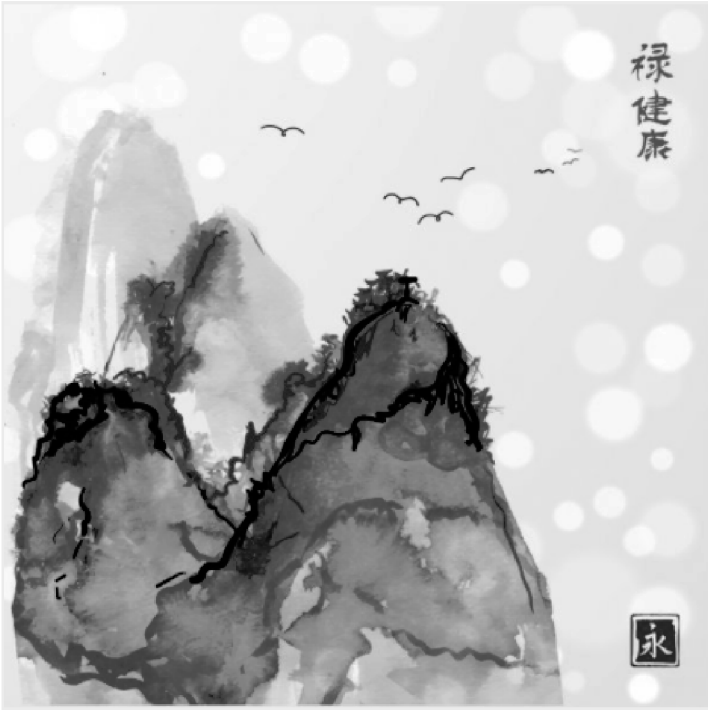
Hannah's outsides hid the inner torment. But, as always, the inside demands its own airing. This outside-inside tension shaped her life, as is always the case in traumatic depression. There tends not to be a single clear reconciling. Hollywood does not shape us. We actually will find a clearer mirror image in the sages and heroes of history, even if only in their early stages. What if Jesus had not survived his 40 days and nights?

During visits to her dad's—in another state—she would try and keep the boat from sinking. Her dad's eccentricities headed toward the cliff.

Avoidance became its own intensity during Hannah's childhood. The 'negative space' in art. Many clients describe their concerns in a removed, objective, even-keeled manner. There are often emotions close by. Tears flow when this is pointed out. But the fact remains that they have shunted much of their natural *qi* (or "life force") and brute affective power backwards, against itself. It's not uncommon to date back to childhood, and to be the defining characteristic of their personality.

Later, in Hannah's teens, there would be arrests, diagnoses and medications. The course of the disease, in doctor-speak, was variable, worsening over time, and ultimately dire. She saw it through.

Hannah morphed into the designated driver while others went bonkers. Her siblings were her kids. Who else would feed them? She was adultified, the decider—like deciding to call the police when her father packed the van full of everything from the "house" (a garage where he had his kids living with him in another country) and drove off. This mandatory mode filled the space left by a nonfunctioning mother and father.



*The bubble wall enclosing us is invisible from within.
It's a backdrop, presumed infinity. Hannah was
immersed in the infinity of parenting her parents and
siblings and locking out her own emotional screams.*

Traumatic Depression

'Traumatic depression' might be a better diagnostic category for many people (also see Appendix). So many people are given adjustment, anxiety and depression diagnoses thinly pegged to their current emotional, behavioral presentation. Symptom naming makes sense when a clinician has no history to go by but, for many, the jury is back and a richer scientific identifier should apply.

Sufferers of traumatic depression, in my experience, are amazingly courageous people who for years have lived, bounded up by powerful, traumatic forces of their early life. They describe a recognizable journey, tasked with creating a semblance of functionality. Many parented themselves while also learning what they could in terms of managing their dysfunctional parents and sometimes their less able-bodied siblings. Often the oldest or older kids incur the most trauma. Sometimes the parents mellow over time and adult children form decent relationships. But the core attachment damage remains.

*There is no other life or perspective.
A kid's eternity holds the original suffering in place.
That's how home and family are.
To penetrate the bubble and look back is a beginning.*

The outwardly functional, inwardly terrified Hannah often described how imprisoned she was in her daily life. An academic mentor might express concern when she told them a little about her life. Friends along the way would also extend their warmth. She might then share a little more of her story. Sometimes this innocent effort to connect on a deeper level went OK. Other times Hannah would fall backwards

THE BRUISED HEART

into a confused state. She might be convinced that she manipulated nice people to parent her. So many everyday, otherwise normal experiences could trigger these implosions and reinforce her shame mantra: “I am pathetic.”

*What was the nature of your first chapter on the planet?
Did anyone see you – actually notice you changing in
small yet remarkable leaps? Did anyone share in your
discoveries, celebrate as you blossomed?*

Another client, Sharon, preferred not to elaborate on early abuse referenced on her intake form. No one should ever be forced to confront anything painful. Love and safety are essential to optimize the possibility of sacred sorrows being assimilated. When a caring patience fills the space, shame-bound secrets seem to rush to enter. Sharon felt compelled to confess that she is constantly working herself into a panic. Her routine was to jump on the internet and find medical proof of her imminent demise based in almost no symptoms and dubious logic. If you look hard enough, you might be able to link acne, insomnia and a rare cancer.

Sharon’s preference to steer clear of certain topics noted on her intake form, and her insistence that she was damaged beyond repair, were directly related. She needed to be allowed to proceed incrementally. Her internet habits corresponded to a sort of midpoint on the shame elevator descent. The ritual had two sides typical of traumatic depression. She would cozy up to her wound by entering into fear and self-hate. The ritual would proceed through to a sort of endpoint. Many people use food, binging or purging, or extreme behaviors involving pseudo-intimacy. Free diving into the dark depths validates the pain until some sort of endpoint occurs: the ice cream is consumed or the night turns to day. Sharon would become overwhelmed by cathartic crying as she pushed extremes of fear and absurd self-diagnosis.

Were parents around, people around, floating about but at imprecise distances? Were you loved Hallmark-style, in a general sense? Were you seen only when there was upheaval, when you were in trouble? How predictable, consistent were your parents? Who read to you? Who listened, actually listened, to you?

Confession-style sharing increases as the therapeutic space becomes a sort of belonging, nonjudgmental, safe refuge. Clients may jump to share proof of their deep-seated convictions, e.g., that they are pathetic, crazy, hopeless, weird. Worth noting, telling someone you secretly hate or sabotage yourself remains a somewhat safe admission. Loving oneself is a far more tender prospect that often requires more testing of the therapeutic container, e.g., the therapist's own depths of love, understanding and compassion.

Kids from abusive or chaotic homes grow unwieldy, protective antennae many times their small stature. Paradoxically, they don't feel worthy of a relatively healthy other – suitor, therapist, friend, later in life. Sadly, they make easy prey for other wounded souls. A big ego burning with a hidden anger is a common perpetrator architecture.

Even kids with nice AWOL parents are left to plummet to earth without an adequate parachute. Kids need parents who remember being little, with perspective, able to look out for the up and coming. Otherwise, we grow heavy antenna and feel the unnatural misshapen burden. We go through life feeling weird, ugly, wrong and pathetic too much. But grotesque or not, our survival demands our radars over-react. We wake up and fall asleep scanning, overthinking, fixing. Our grasping is desperate, wobbly, tenuous and barely conscious – and remarkable.

THE BRUISED HEART

*For Mia, the intensity of her experience had
(metaphorically) arrived, long travelled.
Arrived over and over, having traveled from ancient
times, far-away lands – only to be turned back.*

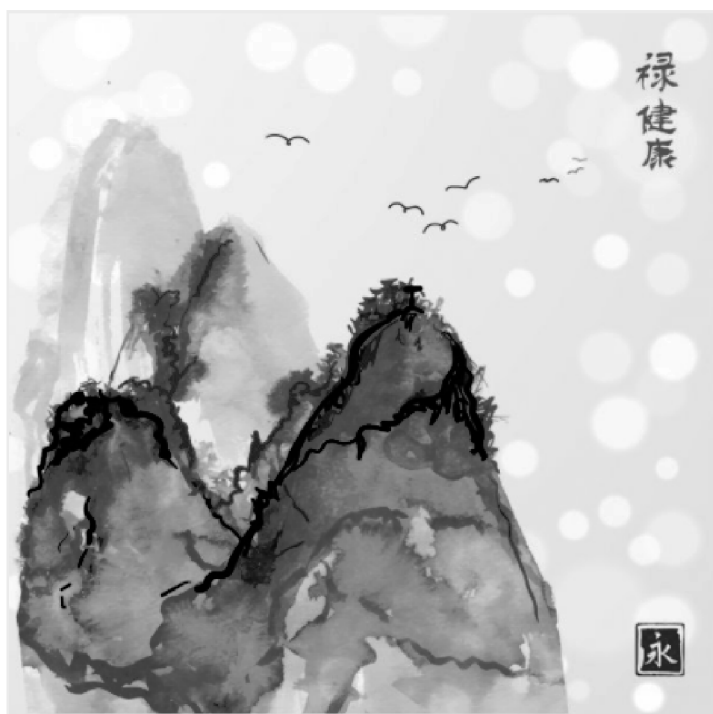
Writing about the deep psyche that we all share is inherently complicated—for many inter-related reasons. We have highly individualized personalities resting atop a shared humanity. We access the open, common ground of being through our uniqueness. Because of this, models, ideas and concepts that seek to plumb the universal depths may speak to some but not others. For a true believer of one religion, another religion is invalid.

Models addressing ultimate matters are limited by the small overlapping aperture of individualistic experience and the ability to articulate our experience. We can have a very special experience that others do not relate to and softly or harshly invalidate. Maybe they could relate but our words fall short. References to grand depths that reach a broader audience either dumbed down to minimize criticism. Truth claims ring hollow or obvious or vague or irrational. Little wonder, we push aside the inner call to seek answers to life's great mysteries. We may feel we already know or there is no merit for us personally. We may catch a glimmer and chase the shininess for years, only to discover we are like a dog on a chain.

For all these many interwoven reasons, making headway toward the upper realms is formidable. Few make it far and fewer still manage to shine the light back in ways that touch us.

I believe that the unique passion for life we each carry is key. Our distance from God, to put it in old-fashioned terms (or bliss, or truth, or our calling) may be measured in units of suffering. Analogously, freedom calls out to the cornered animal as fear.

A take-away is to be more concerned about comfort and complacency than anxiety. The daily tug to calm down and act normal may itself be delusional; that is to say, based in an irrational belief that normal is ideal. This pull may obscure the truth and purpose of our existence. All the worry about what people think, the freak-outs when expectations hit a wall, niggly upsets when we're late – all these may be more sedating and time-wasting than we have ever realized.



“Mother” is emotional oxygen. She’s the woman (typically) whom our little, fast-forming brains lock onto. Mama in all its forms comes long before there’s a me. She’s a meh-meh, the sound of suckling lips seeking the breast. Many languages use repetition to just express more. She is the me cast across infinity. Me before me.

Emotional Neglect & the Mother Matrix

Beating, yelling and molestation no longer control the market on child maltreatment. Equally horrible are storms of a quieter sort. This form of trauma may be near invisible to the passerby, neighbor or other kids’ parents. It often goes unacknowledged or misunderstood by teachers, neighbors, pastors, counselors and people with some potential to intervene. There is no real way to appreciate its power however, outside the mother matrix—as I will try to explain.

The little, feeble (I) me in fact forms very slowly. Every bit of me (your me too) requires massive, interconnected, invisible scaffolding.

We touched on the topic of emotional neglect in the initial discussion of Mia. The majority of the time, this silent storm co-exists in the background, more 24/7, where the attention-grabbing thunder and lightning are more intermittent. It’s unfortunate that the bar for child maltreatment, for so long, boiled down to: 1) was there an adult witness, and 2) did it leave a mark?

One very shutdown client in her 40s quietly shared that not once did her mother say she was pretty.

For Mia and Hannah, the question of abuse and neglect is revealing. There certainly was food in the fridge. There was no (traditionally defined) physical or sexual abuse. Both dismissed spankings as

THE BRUISED HEART

upsetting but just a normal cultural reality. Other Hispanic parents did the same, so no big deal.

An updated, ultimate trauma lens puts attachment-wounding at the center. This puts yelling and hitting in a richer emotional context. Attachment-wounded toddlers and kids crave emotional closeness. Their parent's anger, being fight not flight, comprises a reversal of an otherwise distancing dynamic. Suddenly the child is centerstage. They are being looked at, engaged with and spoken to. But this dream come true is simultaneously upsetting, replete with threats of emotional cut-off and perhaps hitting. Both Mia's and Hannah's mothers remained prone to episodes of anger and yelling across their entire development. As adults, both these clients were embroiled in close relationships involving similar episodes.

Finally, the jury's in. Neglect and abuse, it turns out, are more alike than different. Two sides of the same coin. Intervention directed at only the sparks and explosions (arguing, power struggles, excessive criticism, physical turbulence, etc.) is understandable but tends to be relatively superficial from the perspective of core patterns.

Police or psychiatric involvement may be necessary. A concerned relative may take in a battered spouse and her toddlers. A report might get filed with child protective services. There might be a conference with the teacher, some counseling, some medications prescribed. But, as almost anyone can attest, the deeper pattern soon returns. Its code is below mind, registered and running its operating system through the soma.

Hannah's mother was suspicious and mocking of her daughter's high intelligence. Proof, she said, that Hannah was odd and would always be.

At long last, the line between neglect and abuse is blurring. Where previously only abuse that left a mark or only injury or risk of death connoted trauma, the critical reality of the psyche is, in a sense, 'the

new body'. With ultimate trauma, the soma is the new psyche. Soma is the mental vessel of deep-seated affect and any wounding at this level. Soma incorporates the physiology that gives rise to awareness, is damaged by neglect and yet key to healing. What did not happen, e.g., neglect, did happen on a somatic level.

Fights with significant others are commonly driven by the soma's dream to achieve emotional unification and safety. But to appreciate this miraculous upside potential of the soma requires an elevator ride down, past thoughts, past feelings, into its blended sensate and affective field. There, one meets the mother matrix.

It pays to try and look through the eyes of the child. With this, much falls into place. For the child, mother is all. She holds, carries, bathes, feeds us. Mother is to the baby as water to fish. She is the vast matrix of the baby's horizon to horizon.

We are more defined within this dynamic than we can possibly know. Psychologically, a sort of proto-self, a *mini-mom-me*, coheres in response to her energy, her voice, skin, warmth and vastness. She is vast relative to our embryonic origins. For better or worse, our nascent self begins to take shape as vessel and mirror of this primordial dance.

*Mama, mom, mother, ma is the mass under our feet,
upon whom we lie, who provides us life.
The ma of ma-tter and ma-terial.*

Mother's actual identity, blood relationship, gender and age vary endlessly. Colorful evidence of this, of mixed species—a tiger mothering piglets, etc.—is an internet mainstay. These videos tug the selfsame emotional heartstrings. An instinctual vocal response to these images and all such adorable phenomena is “Aww”. Note how this is synonymous with “awe”! And how this is also the second of two phonemes, essential sounds in *mom*, *ma*, and *mama*. The other, the m-sound, is evoked when the simple, out-breath, exhalation ‘ah’ is

THE BRUISED HEART

combined with the lip-smacking motion of a baby suckling. And so the baby's name for, call for, expression of its core need, its basic survival orientation is universal. The same forms the root sound and meaning of matter and material.

As I discuss in *Buddha's Mom*, Siddhartha (later in life, as adult Lord Buddha) would return to this. He would teach his disciples to follow the breath into the sentient field below thought, that gives rise to thought. The mother of mind.

A word for mother is Sanskrit combines these same two sounds is *amma*. He instructed his followers to follow their breath, to sink below mind, into the body, into the soma, the vessel of awareness. A common, related instruction is also to make the sound, 'ohm'.

From the Satipatthana Sutta:

"As you breathe in, breathe in through the whole body; as you breathe out, breathe out through the whole body"

Psychologically, mother is the concrete, living, human answer for "who cares?" In emotional neglect, there's typically a person in the role of mother. But her emotions and actions do not answer the call. She does not notice what deserves notice, forgets what counts, notices and becomes exercised about unimportant things. She is there in person, not in spirit. She is who purports to care but does not, deeply scrambling the child's basic emotional orientation and stability.

Mothers who were themselves love-deprived lose their way. They feed the baby's stomach but not its soul. Changing diapers, entertaining, consoling may get a passing grade. But with neglect, (what is called) mirroring is weak. In mirroring, mothers see, feel, react to their baby's behaviors, voice, facial expressions, sounds and words a coherent manner. Knowing more, their emotional response to nascent, passing states is accurate and serves as a powerful compass, a north star in the night, for the infant. Mirroring provides the basis for robust development and

resilience. But in neglect, much of the depth and intensity of the baby's emotional nuances go unmirrored or are mis-mirrored.

Sure, 'she did the best she could' often fits. At the same time, these are hollow words when they ignore how her best also comprised the transgenerational transmission of deep-seated emotional wounding. While a reasonable, sad conclusion, this story tends to underestimate the complexities at hand: the mother's era, her own trauma, the power of stifling, emotional overwhelm, the lack of 'a village,' for example, robust health, respite and educational supports, partner conflicts, misogyny and financial, housing-related stressors.

All this as her baby pulls for more, for an infinite, psychic, intuitive, perfect love, 24/7! An infant is hurling through more change that it can possibly assimilate and sucks up all the affection, attention, emotional exchange and cognitive guidance possibly available, and then maybe sleeps a little! Babies take mothers to the limits of their ability to sacrifice, work and truly love another creature. Many mothers, of course, have other kids, a job, a headache or illness, depression and/or a hapless partner.

*Their baby is ridiculously alive—quixotic actually—
but how fully is she seen?*

This is the juncture of the mother matrix. The baby is born with this force, this need and lens (or *inmap*, as will be discussed ahead). And of course, full-grown babies turned mothers still have the same. The mother matrix operates as an evolutionary field through which offspring are programmed to become oriented and develop across their earliest phases, and through which the mother facilitates this.

This feminine principle potentially channels love and healing not just early life, but lifelong attachment, not just maternal (mom-baby) attachment but also in adult intimacy (romantic partners and also close relationships more generally). We carry our wounding from the former to the latter.

THE BRUISED HEART

Each developmental juncture has the power to heal and renew. Pregnancy, birth, the first hours and weeks are singularly packed with potential. This outrageous, tender part of life is both biological and magical. Vulnerability, possibility, the bridge between generations enjoys the possibility of a reset. Young mothers find themselves on this precipice.

Miraculously, real breakthroughs are common. Parents swear to do better than theirs did and they do. Nature puts almost everything on the line with each new generation. Baby's voracious need for presence opens wide. Will an imperfect someone step up to the plate?

*Toddlers boldly set out across the room or in life,
finding their bodies between bump and glide.
Did anyone mirror the confusion and courage, absorb
the primordial pain of a bump or cut?*

A baby will turn and look at the mother and organize its energy accordingly. Her 'ooos' and 'ahhs' and *motherese* intonation are extensions. If she is attuned and her face and voice indicate all is well, pain or confusion or fear and any aversive experience is, on average, over time, metabolized within this dynamic Residual snarls are smoothed over.

If she is not there or is angry or smiling (or discordant) as the baby screams and looks for her, the pain goes underground. Across such experiences the two-way mother matrix forms the first layers of the soma, for better or worse. Babies need substance *and* subtlety. It's impossible to push against vapor *or* crude, dense, blocks.

*The mother matrix sets up the robust illusion of
a separate self. She oversees the sequence, from invisible
to nascent to glimpses in her vast mirror, reflections that
stabilize, become ever more reliable.*

To better appreciate the 'mother matrix,' consider a female ancestor from 50,000 generations ago. Let's imagine that as a baby girl, her mother was injured and unable to carry her. Her mother was around

EMOTIONAL NEGLECT & THE MOTHER MATRIX

for a while, but then no more. Did this ancestor experience emotional neglect or trauma? Given that something like this must have been common, we can appreciate the power of the mother matrix to ensure genetic viability of the offspring. This girl was not so impaired as to undermine her general ability to function as a member of the tribe.

Mother writ large, evolutionary mother, is the once upon a time, beckoning us. She is the circle and cycle of life, the totality that surrounds.

To make it into the gene pool, the mother matrix ensured her emotional viability. A cold, uncaring kid grows into an unhelpful member of the tribe. She misunderstands social cues and does not participate and help out. Imagine a whole tribe of such social misfits. They would easily be overrun by an more cohesive tribe who attacks with a high degree of planning and coordination. For a host of reasons, on average over time, our imaginary ancestors' genes would not make the cut. Instead, supported by the mother matrix she adapted. Perhaps older siblings or other tribe members, themselves with emotional attunement and attachment stepped up.

*The happiness is just a consequence of how respectful we are with the nature. Marcel Merthelorong,
Resident of "happiest nation" Vanuatu*

Most hunter-gatherers clearly endured more hardships than most modern peoples do. The point I am stressing is simply that our bodies and psyches were born of such a life. That such a life, psychologically, was our mother and matrix, and we meet this when we drop below thought into the soma. And that in emotional trauma, there tends to be a rift between the modern self, the cerebral worlds we inhabit and the lost but living seat of emotional pain. And that healing calls for this reconnection. And that many modern problems (child abuse/neglect and attachment wounding, emotional trauma, obesity and suicide) are variants of this core disconnection.

THE BRUISED HEART

*We will always be in the mother archetype,
as we individuate. Always, as old ghosts slide
in silently, ominously, continuously.*

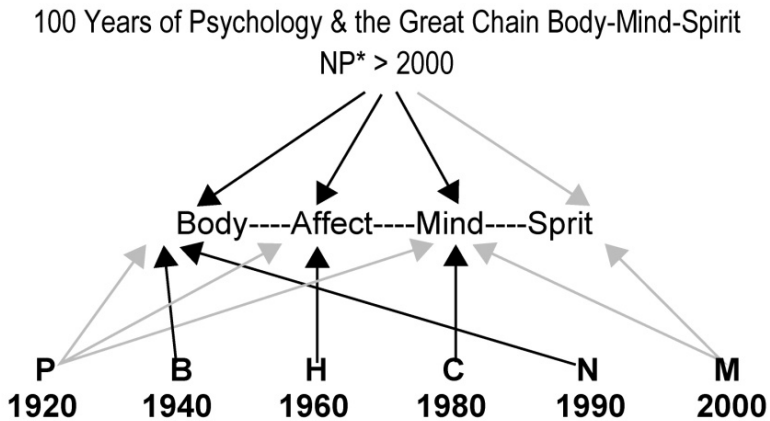
Our emotional heritage is ill-fitted for modernity. But the fact of its stability over hundreds of thousands of generations is evidence of its potential to reacquaint us with the depths of our humanity. Such is the potential *in* emotional trauma. Trauma invites us to take this journey, to move into the subtle, wounded realms of our deep affect, our soma.

As suggested by the imaginary ancestral daughter of the injured mother is one way to conceptualize the healing power of the mother matrix to compensate for tragic circumstances. Accordingly, when the biographical mother is unavailable physically or emotionally, the mother matrix ramps up. So, if our biological mother is emotionally unavailable, or hostile, unstable, etc., efforts to project a viable attachment figure intensify. A father, grandmother, peer, sibling, aunt, pets, nature or stuffed animal can provide some compensation, buffering the trauma. I personally spent a lot of time in the forest with my dog, and later in the ocean.

For Mia, Hannah and many, the alternatives were sparse. When adult options are few, our own emotions and self-identity have to compensate and absorb the blow. We have already discussed how shame, self-loathing, anxiety and panic set into motion in emotional neglect.

The grand outcome is unpredictable but fits the general model. A person may like themselves on the surface and harbor self-hate just below. They may idealize their mother, or they may blame her for all their problems. They may conclude that she did her best and resist reflection. And, of course, many just do not make a clear connection of any kind and have disorganized, dysregulated lives.

First 100 Years



From the left: Freudian **Psychoanalysis** BF Skinner - **Behaviorism**,
 Carl Rogers - **Humanistic** / Existential, the **Cognitive** Revolution /
 CBT, **Neuroscience**, Kabat-Zin **Mindfulness**
 *NP / New Paradigm.

Diagram by Vincent Schroder
www.vincent Schroder.com

A cross-referencing of psychology's history with the age-old continuum, 'body-mind-spirit' offers further support for this 'ultimate' view of emotional trauma. Historically, sages and philosophers have proposed variants of body-mind-spirit (sometimes called 'the great chain of being') as shorthand for consciousness. This helps explain psychology's zigzag path across its 100 year history. Each of these major approaches enjoyed its fifteen minutes of fame (actually about 20 years) before the next took over.

The darker lines in the graphic connote the primary focus of each of these theoretical orientations. The 'new paradigm' (depicted at the top) is remarkable for achieving strong integration of body-mind. This provides a foundation for our ultimate trauma thesis, the connection of mind-body psychological foundations with spirit.

THE BRUISED HEART

Historically, 'mind' in body-mind-spirit referred to what we all implicitly experience, the blend of thoughts and feelings that make up everyday awareness. Beginning a century ago, certain white European and American, albeit white, privileged males, began to do something radical. They sought to understand and help people with whose minds, e.g., both emotions and reasoning capacities, were not working well. Rather than leave them to suffer, seek medieval treatments, force families to keep secrets, or pretend the church had answers, these first pioneers endeavored to study and help broken minds empirically and scientifically.

A field of psychology began to take shape. Initially, Sigmund Freud's ideas and methods broke new ground, essentially creating talk therapy. Freud was holistic but lacked what today passes for a scientifically valid elucidation of body-affect-mind (as depicted above). Subconscious fantasies were thought to be propelled by bodily instincts and drives. The ego was proposed a personal mental construct, and the superego as an impersonal mental construct. Ego was doubly tasked. It had to manage sexual and aggressive drives and affects, on one side. And ego had to cope with culture, religion and society, e.g., the superego, on the other.

In psychoanalysis, the mind-level is the lesser of evils and not the great fount of logic and reason other orientations would propose. Emotional suffering was theoretically linked to early development. But while emotions were taken seriously in one sense, they were dismissed in another. The analyst was emotionally detached. Patients were to lay on a couch looking up and not *face* the analyst. As discussed in the section above (*Facetime*), 'face' is key to the NP.

In keeping, emotion is referred to indirectly. Decades would pass before more straightforward diagnostic terms, such as anxiety, panic, grief and depression would replace the more formal concepts of hysteria and neurosis. Across the 100-years, matters of the heart never stabilize as the field's *raison d'être*, it's focus and purpose. Only with the late-breaking, new paradigm (NP) is this accomplished. This critical inflection point

occurs not through refinement or hyper-focusing on any particular element in the great chain but through intensive integration of mind and body.

The essence of the 'great chain' is not the separate units but unity in diversity, and diversity in unity. The psyche, the seat of human experience, is the totality, both the plurality and the unity. We have a body, mind and spirit, and these are one. This need not be abstract. Each of us is somewhat of a 'different person' in different contexts. Each of us is a confluence of the past and present. We are like rivers, with subcurrents from childhood, culture, our work and relationships, and we have one self or psyche.

The new paradigm itself is a rich, interactive web of body and mind subdisciplines. Major strands (that we will cover in more detail) stem from: evolutionary theory, regulation theory, affective neuroscience, polyvagal theory, attachment theory, psychodynamic theory and brain hemisphere research. Some of these may sound abstract but in truth, they are all very accessible and relatable as is their totality.

Before moving more fully into this new, powerful, integrative model, let's continue to review the lead up to this NP. Behaviorism's superstars, John Watson and B.F. Skinner came next. They rebuked Freud's bizarre claims. For them, the psyche was an unknowable, irrelevant 'black box', beyond the scope of science but also unimportant. All human phenomena, they claimed, boiled down to learning, and learning to behavioral reinforcement.

Famously, Watson claimed that he could use behavioral techniques to shape a random baby into 'any type of specialist... doctor, lawyer, artist... even beggar-man and thief'. Supposedly we learn everything through reinforcement. Anything undesirable, say a fear of flying, could be extinguished through exposure and desensitization. But all this falls short of the new understanding of the critical role of maternal love/attachment in psychological development.

THE BRUISED HEART

Eventually, behaviorism's mechanistic claims and tactics lost their luster and yet another new kid on the block moved in. The 'third force', the humanistic movement, brought *feeling* to the fore. Carl Rogers forever put, "how do you feel?" at the heart of therapy.

Humanistic psychology's focus on feeling was radical. Empathy, reflective listening, non-judgment and positive regard reflect a deeply egalitarian ethic. No longer is the doctor the one with all the knowledge and techniques. We heal from within, and there's no limit or upside. Also called the 'human potential' movement, this chapter was pushed back against patriarchy and hierarchy.

Eventually this too sputtered out. People still got depressed, became addicted to substances and struggled with schizophrenia. They did not all have the answers within. Humanism was criticized as being imprecise and anti-scientific. Like its precursors, this paradigm also failed to place emotional suffering or trauma with a comprehensive scientific context, for example, based in evolutionary theory, attachment, and the autonomic nervous system.

Mind is what the brain does, and information processing is what the mind does.

In the 1980s, the computer metaphor for mind was on a steep ascent. Popular approaches to emotional problems focused on the disputing and correcting their logical code. This overemphasis on logic (one level of the great chain) marginalized affect. A more parsimonious view simply views emotion (anxiety and depression, for example) as disordered—period, e.g., as too much fear and sadness respectively. Sensible efforts to correct such issues could include more parsimonious ones. For example, clients could be guided to facilitate a richer mix of feelings, improving overall affective balance. Often excess sadness or fear is really a sort of developmental arrest. A person may need to more fully grieve or become attuned to more subtle variations of the same general emotion. Mind-based approaches may inadvertently convey the

message that emotion is inherently problematic rather than a source of intuition, perception and meaning.

“CBT”, cognitive behavioral therapy, became a dominant clinical perspective and approach during this cognitive chapter in psychology’s story. CBT frames feeling as secondary, as a derivative of thinking. Note how no synonym of emotion, affect or feeling make the marquee. The “C” territory of cognition, thinking and mentation is coupled with “B”, body, behavior. The latter was a nod to behaviorism’s reductionistic agenda. Presumably, all psychological phenomena was built up from simplistic stimulus-response bits. “C” was the new “B”, the new way in which the mind was constructed from simpler, in this case, pieces of thought. The big, open notion of human potential was a balloon to CBT’s pin prick.

But old video of the Albert Ellis (the great thinker and author of concepts that would mature as CBT are hardly devoid of emotion! He resembles a fired-up trial lawyer probing with great passion. He repeatedly, intensely cross-examines his patients and makes an (emotionally powerful) case that irrational thinking alone made Mary afraid of x or John sad about y.

“Irrational” assumptions are certainly in play. Self-talk in trauma includes, “I’m pathetic/ crazy/ dirty/ damaged.” But therapies overly focused on conscious, verbal processes preference the *mind* (in body-mind-spirit), while purporting to help resolve emotions which live at a lower, somatic level.

The NP takes a more balanced and integrated approach. Often suffering associated with current phenomena has older roots, often dating back to childhood. The roots of deep-seated emotion is not easily accessible. It seems to exist a lower level, in the direction of ‘body’ on this continuum. A major book aligned with the NP, published in 2014, is entitled *The Body Keeps the Score*. Such works view body not just as a sort of trauma housing, but as a potential source of healing.

THE BRUISED HEART

The prospect of radical, broad-spectrum healing from complex, old, layered wounding via narrow mental strands of experience is dubious. Underlying, somatic-level wound may go untouched.

*Finally, the NP offers a powerful response to
“the problem of emotion,
ignored for most of the last century.”*

Allan Schore

The NP (still mostly on the periphery but moving in) has something to say about psychology’s story. Across the 100 years, psychotherapy’s secret sauce has always been the therapist’s concern and devotion to the client—to a very significant extent. Whether the patient was meeting with protégé of Dr. Freud, Dr. Skinner or Dr. Ellis, they may have treated humanely and kindly.

Consider how the typical doctor-client dynamic offers a vehicle for adult attachment, for a warm, caring concern for a person’s suffering. There tends to be some sort of one-on-one, some form of caregiver-sufferer dynamic and dialog. There tends to be multiple elements recognizable, potentially, as involving the providers’ good intentions, respect, and concern for the client’s well-being.

Getting back to the psychology’s story, advances in brain scan technology across the 1990s propelled what is now a household name: ‘neuroscience’. The working premise is that the closer one gets to brain or neural (neuron-level) activity associated with psychological functioning the better.

Like others before, this chapter also fell short of providing a radical model of or remedy for emotional suffering. Not only run-of-the-mill depression but everyday phenomena neuroscientists themselves consider relevant, love of their spouse or child, for example, were impossible to pin down. Their neurochemistry or electronic patterns were not distinguishable in scans, bloodwork or genetic analysis. No

brain-based approaches to healing broken hearts have been refined. For all the remarkable discoveries regarding the brain, neuroscience has not radically changed outcomes for the average person coping with emotional trauma.

Continuing, as depicted on the graphic, the realm of spirit (in body-mind-spirit) in mental health has historically been weak. Classically, this dimension was always deemed outside the scope of scientific inquiry and relegated to the realms of philosophy and religion. However, over the last 20 years, there have been some notable developments.

Under the banner of the ‘new age’, the blend of mental health and religious/spiritual areas exploded. One can find admixtures of psychological approaches with everything imaginable. Examples range from intersections of psychology/mental health with meditation practices, hallucinogens, shamanism, cults, crystals, aromas, past life regression and yoga!

One of the few, well-researched, evidence-based intersections was pioneered by Buddhist, Jon Kabat-Zin. His MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction) method is now widespread. He and his colleagues demonstrated the power of structured meditation for reducing stress. MBSR has important overlaps with emotional trauma. MBSR, however, does not provide a comprehensive approach to emotional trauma diagnosis or treatment.

The main take-away from this one-hundred-year history is not one of blindness, bias or poor judgment. To the contrary, each of these major chapters was courageous and disruptive in its own right, built on the backs of thousands of sincere, dedicated professionals. Each movement endeavored to understand and treat emotional suffering. Any take-away message then is one of appreciation of the complexity and challenge of understanding and helping those in distress. It is one of humility and grace, for this intense march toward a fuller view.

THE BRUISED HEART

In total, these chapters paved the way to all that now falls under 'mental health', and to the NP's improved depth and clarity. My goal for this book is to demonstrate how this expanded understanding appears to provide a richer path to spirit. 'More' spirit, paradoxically, lies in the opposite direction, back into affect, to the dark territory of the heart. And deeper still into the soma. The ground of being. Spirit's light seeks out this darkness. The body is a living evolutionary field with access to this truth.

Fold

Survival of the fittest refers both to individuals and their herd, gaggle or group. In elaborate species such as ours, evolutionary fitness means much more than not being eaten by a predator. A neurotic tribe member may over-react, hesitate, be less productive at daily tasks – for example, at gathering up skins, making weapons and organizing kids, as a tribe prepares to move to a better area for food or safety. The greater the psychological instability (for example, due to emotional trauma), the greater the risk transferred to the tribe as it competes for survival.

We can infer that our ancestral tribes' affective stability was highly adaptive. Like the porridge in Goldilocks, our emotional inheritance was neither too cold (or chill) nor too hot (hair-on-fire, freaked out). There can be little doubt that emotional trauma is mainly a modern disease. Recall the 'adverse childhood experiences' (ACEs) that I described at the very beginning of this book? The tragic triangle of 1) physical, verbal, sexual abuse, 2) physical, emotional neglect, and 3) parental mental illness, substance use, divorce (death, abandonment), incarceration, and/or domestic violence, tracks closely with modernity. A parent's abuse would otherwise not go unchallenged by other adults in tribes of 30 to 100 that spend their entire days and nights physically close. Similarly, a neglected child would tend to get reasonable care.

Our tribal brain developed in contexts which, in general, produced neither too hot or cold affect and reactivity. ACEs were minimal and compensatory, protective attachment factors (which Dr. Perry reports to be alarmingly powerful) were prevalent. Our emotional inheritance, reason and evidence suggest, is simply a thing of beauty. We are naturally highly sensitive, skilled at rapid responding, and at returning to baseline. We are facile, adaptable, and not inherently stuck in fear or overwhelm. Such states, therefore, tend to signal trauma and potential for realizing its beautiful upside.

THE BRUISED HEART

From this vantage, we can come now deeply appreciate the ‘new-F’, variously referred to as *freeze*, *fold* or *faint*. When there’s intense or sustained fear (as in fight-flight), the body moves into fold mode. The physiological and psychological characteristics of fold is a centerpiece of polyvagal theory, itself a centerpiece of a ‘new paradigm’ in mental health.^{xxxviii} Rather than mobilizing the system to fight or flee, the ‘new-F’ *downregulates*. This full-bodied response is managed by the body’s ultimate neural superhighway, the vagus nerve.

The two branches of body’s longest nerve, the vagus, exit the skull and descend deep into the torso. Running from the the brain to the colon, the vagus connects with major organs and three major zones of activity.

The fold/faint system is referred to as the dorsal vagus. It can cause one to faint not just in fear but when, for example, a fan finally sees a popstar. It is employed when animals ‘play possum’ or (so-called) feign death. Note, of course, that in these cases the dorsal response has nothing to do conscious decision-making. This is engaged when a bodybuilder goes to give blood and passes out, and other variants of the blood/syringe type of fear and fainting.

On hearing this shocking news (of his followers’ murders) King Wenceslaus was seized with an apoplectic fit, and died a few days afterwards.

Generally, the fight/flight, mobilizing, up-regulating side and opposing, down-regulating, ‘fold’ side are in tension with one another. In everyday affairs, there is no need to slam on the breaks. We may feel put off and sympathetically upregulate to make a point when someone’s not hearing us. And we may save our energy, strengthen alliances as we share a laugh with a friend. We startle and double-check when we detect some change in the environment. Then we relax if we determine there is no threat.

The affectively dysregulated or emotionally traumatized individual tends to have too much of each pull. She lives in the throes of *fight-flight*'s intense anger and fear. But under *freeze*'s immobilization and *fold*'s dissociative fog, she cannot break free from entrenched patterns. Her psychological machinery is old, loud, slow tractor not purring, speeding Porsche.

*The vagus' three zones are the gut (the dorsal vagus),
the heart (the sympathetic system)
and the face (the ventral vagus).*

My professor used to hammer us with, “stress makes you stupid.” The internal perception of threat from a jacked-up fight-flight system impairs logic, insight and communication. The perceptual field narrows. We see danger, threat in almost everything. Fold/faint's hollowing, deadening powers reduce whatever clarity remains even further. Naturally, the less nimble an animal's affective and behavioral repertoire, the greater the risk.

For highly social animals, the major metric is group cohesion—which by now, hopefully, we can recognize as an extension of mother-love, and as a macro-attachment. In F-language, this is the new-new-F, *Face*. I wrote about this in the earlier “Facetime” section. ACEs are traumatic because the entire system, from fight/flight to fold to face is glitching, unable to restore order. The body's raging and/or collapsing, and our ‘caregiver’ is not helping. In fact, they may be at once our abuser.

The f-f-f-f system attempts self-correction, attempts to self-regulate and achieve physiological homeostasis. But at the extremes escalates. Such is the plight of the animal staring death in the eye, the cornered victim, the toddler under attack or with no options to the brutality of 24-7 mental abuse. In severe emotional trauma with old, family-of-origin roots, the damage is baked in. It is layered over any semblance of a full-blooded, vitality. Often the person gets by in life, and sometimes quite impressively. Who will intervene on behalf of their lost soul and lost potential?

THE BRUISED HEART

The degree of damage tends to be difficult to assess. Only their potential – if glimpsed or achieved, their nascent wholeness, reveals the breadth of the shutdown in hindsight. Slivers of their inner beauty are priceless hints. These have the potential to reveal the contrast in play. These reveal the degree to which greatness is drowning. This is especially the case in traumatic depression.

For those sufferers, powerful forces bent on forming a coherent self are stymied. The self, the cobweb of predicates for all possible sentences beginning with “I,” “I am...,” “I like...,” “I always...,” “I never...” is harsh. They lives in a cruel loop, perpetually encountering existential threat. The profound emotional disturbance itself is one final, protective effort to apply the brakes, and stop the slide to even worse, even more fractured states.

The myth of 'love thyself' crashes on the rocks of emotional neglect. There's no self to love, only storms to survive. On the ragged path to healing, we may catch a glimpse of the warm sun, always there. A daisy, a seagull, the beauty of something breaks through our pain. Just for a moment.

Tortoise & Hare

The story of psychology parallels that of the tortoise and the hare. The hare (rabbit) bursts forth a little too gleeful and self-enamored and easily distracted. It does not have time for elders and their so-called wisdom traditions. The recent dominance of neuroscience is the latest iteration of this problem. Neurons and what can be seen and measured are privileged over more complex phenomena such as affect, archetypes or states of consciousness. Because neuroscientists are themselves conscious, one would hope there would be more tortoise in the mix.

*The proverbial beauty of the sunset soon passes.
A whole lifetime can pass before the depth of special
experiences connect, like pearls on a string.*



The Mind and Life project is a notable effort to integrate the tortoise and hare. Advanced meditators were subjected to brain scans, and information pertaining to, for example, increased frontal lobe activity has been discovered. Other sides of this effort would involve the inner peace and higher states of consciousness as the starting point. Monks might then train neuroscientists, inner city teachers, prison guards and child therapists to bring more wisdom and compassion to their work. Changes in the scans of these regular folks and those they help might refine which methods have the most efficacy. Neurofeedback protocols might be developed based on the power of a monk's compassion for a stressed-out hospital employee.

THE BRUISED HEART

The two poles of classical Buddhist meditation are focused (Shamata) and open (Vipassana). An over focus on the brain may lead to ‘neuromania,’ where neurons are somehow of higher status than consciousness.

With the NP, there is far more precision across such scales as body-affect-mind junctions, actually involving a partial return to the murky world of Freud, but this time with scientific rigor. Freud famously proposed we all start out our psychological life in a sort of taboo, incestuous preconscious stupor. Baby boys lust for their mothers, and harbor deadly rage toward their fathers—and vice versa for baby girls. Bizarrely this does not seem as far-fetched as behaviorism’s depraved view. Most have heard the story of Little Albert. Humans were viewed as Lego assemblages, constructions of whatever happened to be reinforced across time. To prove one component of this, fear conditioning, they placed a nine-month-old baby, very likely without his mother in the room, on a mattress on a table. As they had him react and interact with real and stuffed animals, they used a hammer to strike a suspended steel bar.

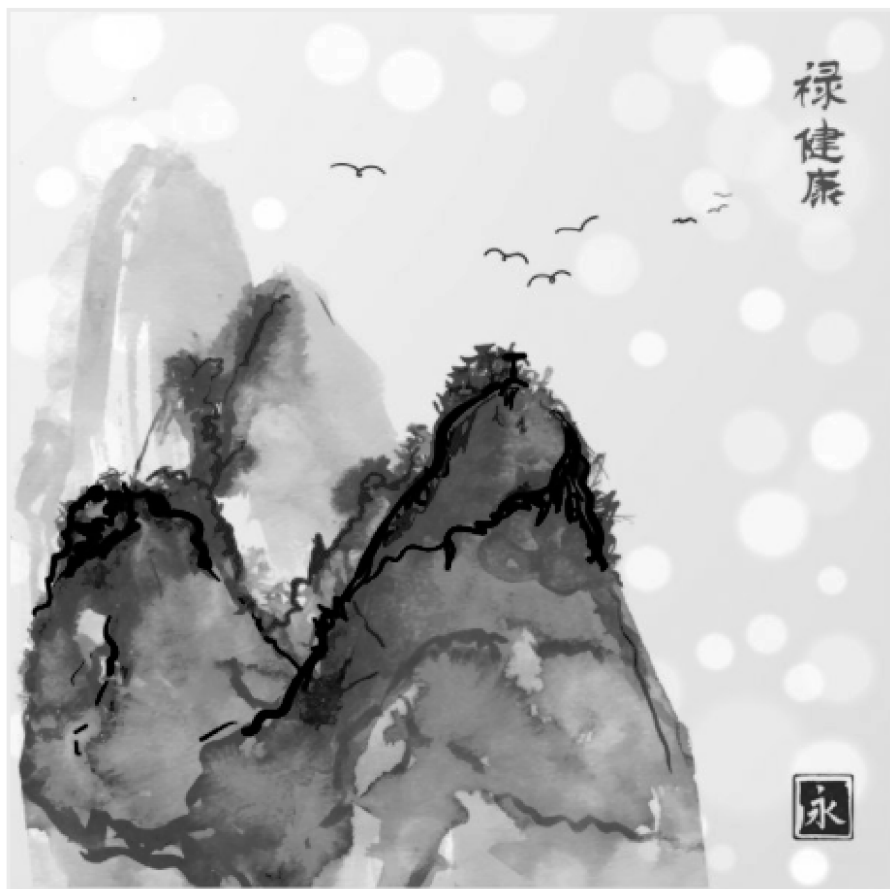
Tree Rings



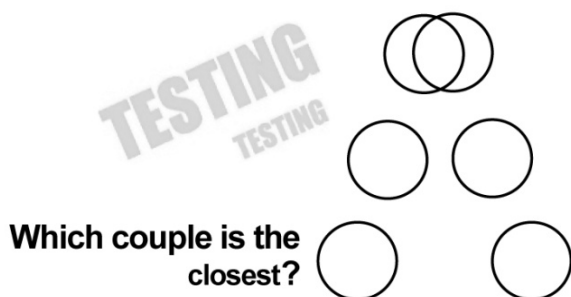
Any effort to address current issues may get off on the wrong foot without an uncovering of underlying factors. Metaphor, analogy and imagery fall in the right hemisphere's wheelhouse.

*A tree's rings reflect all the seasons of its life.
The rings show the good and the not-so-good seasons.
They track how storms, droughts, lightning strikes and
tough times leave scars.*

Because how the past bears on the present is impossible to pin down with precision. Metaphors such as tree rings can help. Blends of developmental factors, abuse and neglect, are analogous to the changes in seasons and storms of life affecting a tree's growth. An earlier event influences later growth and this impact is recorded by the tree rings. On the other hand, a tree may thrive and grow despite adversity, and this too may be recorded. Life shapes us all. Both easy and hard seasons contribute to our uniqueness.



Codependence, Counterdependence



Codependence refers to an unhealthy form of relationship in which a person has a confused understanding of closeness and intimacy. The top circles above are codependent. Deliciously close and untenably suffocating! Families, couples and friendships of all manners involve codependent and lopsided relationships. This seeming super closeness is inherently unstable and rocky.

Codependence is marked by sudden shifts to the bottom set of circles—to *counterdependence*. In this mode, one feels deeply misunderstood by the very person they thought knew them – as the saying goes, the very person who supposedly ‘completes them.’

This is extremely threatening. All sorts of defensives rush into to assist. Often a volcanic shift from the top circles to the bottom pair is achieved through argument and “break-up” of the merged self/other formulation. Instead of completing one another’s sentences, hot and cold wars break out. Common mixes involve anger, violence, manipulation, distancing and sulking.

In codependence, we seek meaning, safety, survival through another. But our supposed soulmate is doing the same. Our love of them and their love of us is actually selfish, immature and born of deep-seated anxieties. We need to stand on our own better, to be a better friend and support to ourselves and others (the middle set of circles).

THE BRUISED HEART

In codependence/counterdependence, we seek healing for deep, old wounding through the other. It does not take much for one person or the other to discover the thin ice that the relationship rests upon. Small tears in the fabric are daily fare. Behind the scenes, a sad, angry pain can grow. One feels misunderstood and unheard, despite efforts to explain, over and over. Soon the fabric is ripping apart.

Generally, this push-pull is an echo of deep attachment wounding. Recall that we are wired to quickly switch from cooing with satisfaction, say, as we are breastfed, held and touched affectionately, to freaking out. “Separation distress,” as this is called, is under the control of the same subcortical centers as panic. Human and all manner of mammalian offspring who do not panic and wail risk something more existential than their heartbreak. This all works exquisitely. Offspring and their protective mothers are reunited and the genes swim along to future generations.

Healthy change begins as one forges personal capacities, based in the defining of one’s source of meaning in life, peace, happiness, joyous, challenging activities, alternative friendships and so on. Ways of relating are not quite so dependent on one other person. This capacity-building results in the ending or recalibration of relationships characterized by ups/downs, manipulation and other forms of conflict, aggression or emotional abuse. Resilience grows as one deepens their insight into their own emotional vicissitudes and shifts away from an attribution of their emotions onto another.

We need to ‘own’ our emotions. Therapists advise arguing, wounded, topsy-turvy couples to practice “I- statements”. These follow the form: “When you _____ (insert only objective behavior, such as speak loudly), I feel _____ (insert only an emotion).”

Arguing and fighting in codependence are tricky. Couples often make progress and come to new understandings and learn to fight more fairly. But arguing is unconsciously rewarding and ego reinforcing. We can be

like highchair tyrants angrily flinging food off our tray no matter what is offered to us. We feel better after we rant and finally calm down. But how aware are we really of the impact on others?

In codependence, power and love are jumbled up. Power should serve love. A couple should move to a new city if the move is truly best for the relationship. Iconic examples of corrupted power/love dynamics are seen in interpersonal violence. Perpetrators and victims often repeat these patterns after finally breaking up in subsequent relationships, so psychologically, there's actually little growth.

The notion of a healthy argument refers to a non-blaming expression of sadness, anger and fear. One person manages to own that they felt abandoned or wounded. Their partner listens, allowing them to express all such feelings. A person is able to express their desperation or arrogance, discover and admit in the same motion that they presumed the other should read their minds. The roots of presumptions and pain can be loosened, freeing one to be more comfortable with their vulnerabilities, with their hunger to be loved. Healthy communication, of course, is often rocky, scary and intense, but leads to real shifts, real progress at letting go of expecting too much from another person. It moves from expecting to asking, inviting and evaluating the potential for a deeper, realistic bond.

Native Americans and indigenous peoples have much to teach us regarding ego and codependence. They do not presume the earth belongs to them and owes them its food or beauty. They have a much more delicate sensitivity and awareness regarding our ultimate place in the cosmos.

This capacity is often labeled *intuition* and is critical in overcoming codependence. Intuition is defined as the ability to understand something immediately without going through the effort to reason or think it through consciously. Intuition is built upon curiosity,

THE BRUISED HEART

imagination, risk-taking and creativity. These are distinctly absent when ego takes a hard position, defends its honor and seeks to right injustices. It's good not to get walked on, to speak up and tell someone it hurts, and to stop—but the merit of arguing does not extend far beyond this.

Tahlequah & Trauma



After Tahlequah's newborn calf died, she carried it day and night for two weeks.^{xxxix} Hundreds of hours and through hundreds of miles in her dark sea home. The intense caring and grief on display here account for two of seven mammalian (primate and human) "affects" (foundational emotions). This discovery lies at the heart the amazing new field of affective neuroscience.

*It's not fight-flight anymore. It's fight-flight/freeze-fold-face.
With face, the underlying energy, beautiful life-protecting
fear, thrusts us towards love, toward an attachment figure.*

As this heartbreaking event makes clear, Tahlequah's attachment to her son is no standalone emotion. By design, moms and babies freak out and experience intense fear when separated. The proverbial mamma bear clearly has emotions other than bear-love at her disposal when her cub is threatened.

These primary paints—attachment, grief, fear and anger—form ever more colors in our species. Disney movies, romcoms, myths, fairy tales, songs, the world of literature—all these depictions of the human experience rely on higher-level but still familiar blends. Love, love lost, love re-established at the last second, against all odds, are staples.

The rich emotional life of Tahlequah offers some lessons. According to Panksepp, grief is an innate affect in mammals with two dimensions,^{xl} the other being panic. The grief/panic adaptation serves the goal of mothers and offspring experiencing attachment-related alarm, in the offspring when too distant, or in the mother in response to the offspring's signals.

THE BRUISED HEART

Trauma is a word for a glitch in this repertoire. The offspring is analogous to the separated loved one. His or her panic arises when efforts to re-establish closeness fail. The very person who represents safety somehow now also represents danger. Tahlequah, the evidence suggests, was operating with the normal scope of the killer whale's emotional span and was not traumatized. Devastating loss and grief may border on being traumatizing but the distinction is important. In psychological trauma, the loved one tends to remain alive, but not as loving or attached as hoped.

Gatherer-hunters (calorically-speaking) with whom we share an elaborated version of Tahlequah's emotional palette, presumably, were served by this inheritance. We share the compulsion to bond and grieve when someone to whom we were attached is killed. There is ample evidence of prehistorical burials.

Tahlequah's heartbreak would appear to be part in parcel of her genetic inheritance. A temporary state, a dimension of her depths of emotion, and not any sort of adaptive weakness or shortcoming. Similarly it is likely that our foraging ancestors were not highly prone to the sort emotional trauma or traumatic depression I have been trying to articulate. But given how pervasive this is for us moderns, the conclusion is clear. The problem is both individual and collective. It stems from gatherer-hunters clash with modernity, and it is devastating for anyone so burdened.

Chelsea – A Counselor’s Perspective

Neurobiology provides a rich frame for counseling. Often, as with Chelsea, present-day turmoil is superimposed over early life wounding. She began counseling focused on her fear and avoidance of someone at work. Chelsea had previously dated Alex but had to break it off after a year. Seeing him, especially when she was alone, was terrifying.

With Chelsea, the metaphor of tree rings helped. Metaphor, imagery and imagination are characteristics of the right hemisphere (RH) and gateway to the affective substrate of left-hemisphere (LH) thought. Chelsea and I talked about how the tree rings in a cross-section of a log show where a storm from long ago impacted growth for several seasons. Connecting on a visual, emotive, creative RH level is as important as ascertaining a person’s LH story, history and goals. In fact, prioritizing trust and empathy facilitates clients’ identification of deeper and potentially transformative dimensions of their inner life.

When encouraged, Chelsea shared how many past experiences were similarly painful. Family dysfunction, abuse and neglect, once etched into the autonomic nervous system (ANS), translate into a baseline arousal level. Following emotional trauma, bodily reactivity tends to get stuck. Demystifying anxiety and depression through discussion of evolution and neurobiology can start to dislodge a person’s runaway fear and backdrop of self-loathing and shame.

Asking clients about working at a deeper somatic level is empowering. “Listen to your body’s signals as you think back.” Even if focused initially on the latest agony, shifting into a somatic awareness deepens the therapeutic journey. As Chelsea sank into bodily feelings around a recent event, she recalled a couple of stories about her father’s explosive temper. The memories also connected to her mother’s drinking. The more the night wore on, the less her mother was emotionally available. Counselors are trained to observe and reinforce clients’ success in making these sorts of internal connections.

THE BRUISED HEART

Animals in dangerous contexts adjust. They increase their vigilance and become primed to fight or flight. A shaky, dysregulated ANS is prone to locking in and defending against (perceived) immediate threats. Recent research suggests such states may stubbornly persist.

Generally, the making of internal connections is constructive but not as helpful as one might hope. Clients tend to feel both surprised by recollections and insights, and that they knew whatever they just recalled all along. Essentially, they are making contact with a repressed, implicit memory. Allan Schore, a leading researcher in the neurobiology and treatment of trauma, cautions counselors to pay more attention to facilitating clients to emotional regulation than insight or so-called “a-ha” moments.

Chelsea’s recounted how her boyfriend Alex was enthusiastic about their budding relationship. He was handsome and “looked good on paper.” But in time he became controlling and prone to both belittling her and sulking. Chelsea, to my mind, fit what I’ve proposed earlier as traumatic depression. With this, the negative symptoms, the dulling and giving up are extra intense. She stayed with Alex knowing, she said, how terrible it was because this was how it always was, how all men must be. And she referred to herself as a “jerk magnet”. This is typical of a higher (verbal, mind) level trying to make sense of lower, somatic states.

Founder of affective neuroscience, Jaak Panksepp identified *play* as one of mammals’, primates’ and humans’ seven base affective systems.^{xli} These potent, innate capacities have ancient origins and are located in the sub-cortex.

There can be room for blends of play-related humor, lightheartedness and *caring* (also one of the seven affective inheritances). After Chelsea tearfully described some of his dark side and mistreatment, Quietly, and (I believe) smiling wryly, warmly, said, “And you let him get away?” Clients appreciate counselor’s effort to tread the awkwardness and cultivate emotional safety. They sense when a counselor takes risks to

express warmth, and alternatively when she takes protective cover. Given the power differential and the premise of helper/helpee, clients might not comment when the counselor pulls back, gets clinical and professional—and the more emotionally-connected moment passes.

Misalignments and words that do not reflect deeper intentions are inevitable. The money is on the repair work. When a comment misses the mark, slowing down and checking for disconnection is key. More than, “you know?”, the check-in can take a very customized form. “Just now, it looked like maybe you were really close to something heavy.” If authentic, counselors might share how they wondered after the previous session. They may ask about a piece of dialog, or choose to share some measured, appropriate personal information that serves to deepen and humanize the therapeutic alliance. In various ways, these efforts can serve to harmonize the shared emotional space, based on the client’s cues.

A neurobiologically-informed counselor has curiosity for how the ANS shapes the conscious life of their clients. On the one hand, Chelsea’s ex initially seemed to have qualities aligned with stability and predictability, and also play—all signs of a secure attachment space.

Soon enough, according to Chelsea, she’d ignored the ‘orange flags’. Alex was good at giving an initial impression of caring about her. But he would cut her off, and be much more passionate to share his ingenious solutions, all of which she’d thought of long before. Such orange flags are *actively* ignored and shoved aside.

Trauma is a sort of heat-seeking missile. Fired from the land of ancient pain, seeking a current-day mirror.

As the relationship with Alex deteriorated, Chelsea felt more “at home” in a world that ranged from placid to chaotic. Subconsciously, her nervous system was synchronizing. She harbored an old, stuck, startle response from childhood. Some days were placid, and some disrupted by her father raging.

THE BRUISED HEART

In Chelsea's words, "I guess part of me felt I deserved it."

Though she knew better (a typical LH claim), she kept trying to fix things. Against friends' advice, against her quiet intuitive voice, she persisted. For his part, Alex's insecurities drove him to exploit Chelsea's mix of lostness and openness. Alex was closed, egotistical, often smug. He was 'always right' and apologies were rare. Apologies, upon close inspection, accompanied moves to deepen his control. He would sometimes regress, cry and express how terrible he felt—but somehow at the same time his hook would end up getting set even deeper.

This sort of codependence and counter-dependence travel together. Chelsea's codependence, per usual, was more flight-fear and Alex's counter-dependence more fight-anger. During escalations, the Alex-sort perceives an intimate other as an opponent to be toppled. And the Chelsea-type experiences arguments as abandonment. She was at once terrified, fleeing from the heat and anger while pleading for de-escalation. In codependence, there's crushing anxiety and excessive supplication.

Volatile relationships, of course, do not stick to any particular script. They involve reversals, where the generally weaker, pleading, more apologetic partner goes into attack mode. Or goes cold, uncaring and appears ready to fully disconnect. And where the more controlling, harsh, detached partner temporarily is emotionally vulnerable and surprisingly authentic.

To outsiders, such couples seem addicted to their drama. Nothing seems to put a dent in the pattern of hourly, daily emotional squabbles. One or the other sends mean texts or ghosts the other leaving them emotionally off-kilter and neurotically checking their phone.

This sort of baseline is a subset within larger, nastier storms. Supposed break-ups lasting days or weeks are common. These may be accompanied by hitting, pushing, self-injurious regressions, by 'biting' accusations, and perhaps cheating for the purpose of drawing blood.

Such dynamics reflect desperate half-baked, jumbled efforts to stop the pain, to achieve freedom, to inflict pain, to be rescued. These are interpersonal, emotion-driven correlates of a cornered animal’s attempts to survive.

A counselor may want to point out the obvious, that fights never lead to real change, that getting back together is not wise. The counselor may want to help a person stop the insanity. But giving the client a nonjudging, caring, safe space is more important. There’s a very real risk of the healing, otherwise, being undercut.

As previously discussed, fold/faint also has important implications for diagnostics and therapy with emotionally wounded clients such as Chelsea. Part of these emotional storms involves the dorsal vagus’ downregulating power. This facet of our nervous system (elucidated by Stephen Porges’ work on the polyvagal system) is incredibly strong, and works as a brake against the sympathetic fight/flight response.

The fold/faint response decreases respiration, heart rate and blood pressure and is the leading cause of fainting in humans. Under its influence, our life force, our vitality, our sense of ‘being here’, of engagement in life falters. We disconnect and dissociate. Clients ‘don’t feel like themselves’ anymore.

In therapy, Chelsea expressed relief as we discussed the science and power of faint/fold. With empathy and gentle questions, I helped her back off a little from the momentary fray. She wept with insight. This potent, somatic process typical in clinical depression secondary to emotional trauma helped her to recognize, ‘I’m not crazy’. It can be very hard to separate and appreciate the intensity at hand. One’s logic and intuition are undercut. The gentle, detailed re-establishing of internal, emotional connections leads to deep openings of the heart, to clarity, but generally against the confusion that presses on, demands answers now. So it’s a process.

THE BRUISED HEART

Mild to moderate levels of dissociation are more common than most realize and can contribute to inaction, and to people forgoing therapy for years despite intense suffering. I try to tell clients not to give up on the possibility of healing, even if I'm not the best fit for them.

Chelsea and Alex's troubles are also recognizable in the final "F", e.g., *face*. Face completes the fight-flight-freeze-fold/faint-face sequence. Face could be called the attachment-F. As first discussed in the "Facetime" section, an up-regulated nervous system causes a child to fluidly move across fight-flight upset to face.

This is the case for fear or joy, and all sorts of feelings in between. The up-regulated baby/toddler looks and/or moves toward their caregiver. The motive and action is one aiming for contact, perhaps physical or 'eye contact'. With development, the world of the attachment-F expands endlessly into the interpersonal ocean, mother-love, the tribe, and in adulthood, close friendships and intimate relationships.

According to Allan Schore (the leading researcher of the 'new paradigm'), attachment begins and continues to be based in a *right hemisphere to right hemisphere* connection. The mother's emotional world opens to, and pulls forth her baby's. Adult couples, close friends, and all close, caring relationships naturally live out of the deep reservoir of our more ancient, body-based, unconscious and more emotional hemisphere.

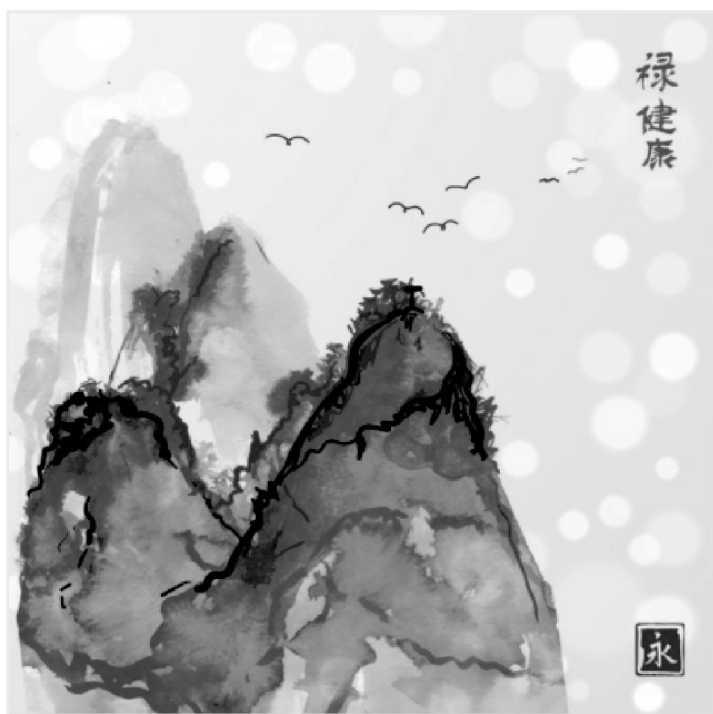
The therapist's empathic connection becomes an optional off-ramp for clients. Traditionally of course, therapy sessions are face-to-face. They take place in the cocoon of a quiet office. Modern variants still emphasize face, if not Facetime or Skype, the focus remains warmth, care and devotion to the client's emotional stabilization and healing. Within such a context, the therapist can both employ and cultivate various potentials (for example, curiosity, imagination, risk-taking and creativity).

With encouragement, Chelsea brought in photos, did drawings and persisted at 'inner work'. Therapy for her became a place to confront

CHelsea – A COUNSELOR’S PERSPECTIVE

tremendous pain at her own speed, and to develop freer, playful capacities. Some things got worse before they got better. This is common as a person lifts the veils of repression and meets the pain. And also as their significant others, friends and family respond.

Over time, Chelsea walked me through what it was like to be her as a child, teenager, and fluidly in the present, in the chair facing me. We traced her powerful shaping influences through the new paradigm concepts and practiced letting the nervous system and old traumas sync up, discharge often with intensity and tears, and settle back. Before we stopped working together, Chelsea began to feel freer to go off-script, let go of narratives and zigzag.



Perfect Storm

Trauma is a perfect storm best viewed through multiple lenses, including the base affects, hemisphericity (the study of the bifurcated human brain) and subconscious filters.

The takeaway message, however, is clear. In trauma, everything lines up, resulting in system overload. The conscious mind is left in the familiar, tormented, hyper-focused state. Some critical relationships have become unbearably intense. Every word and move are laden with implication.

A rich multilayering of filters is always in play, generally supporting our well-being. But in trauma, there is a massive superheating of emotions. A sort of emotional seizure and fracturing of normal operations. Foundational, innate assessments of *safety vs. danger* and *order vs. chaos* become scrambled.^{xliii} We will look at these unconscious processes in detail in the next section.

When love goes bad, these background algorithms have the power to escalate the sense of raw, existential threat one experiences. In such cases, rejection and betrayal reach mythic, painful proportions. We may retreat in horror or aggressively demand correction.

We tend to go from thinking we did or said something wrong to *knowing* we did. The old saying “A little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing” captures this perfectly—especially when trauma is in play. Conviction runs supreme. A loved one’s behavior *is* awful, a parent *did* cross the line, a colleague *meant* to be hurtful and a friend *does* know better, and I *did* totally, irrevocably screw up.

Emotional pain is registered in the body as threat, injury and extreme, immediate danger. The desperation to correct the disorder in one’s universe is intense. All this is the handiwork of the right hemisphere, the inherited world of a terrified, cornered, defenseless bunny (our prey animal lineage). An instinctual, animal-level terror rages, in the perfect

THE BRUISED HEART

storm of trauma, as the left hemisphere, the center of consciousness, escalates. This is the seat of the forward self, the intensely narrow, focused mind. Here we see the repetitive narratives of betrayal and various related, runaway themes, for example, of corrective and rescue fantasies: “Finally, she’ll realize what I was saying all along.”

*As our split personalities teeter on the brink,
we bounce between fight and flight.
Are we passionate about our career or spouse,
or passionately insisting upon this to ward off any doubts?*

As trauma sets in, small delays and imperfections in another’s behavior seem only to stoke the fire. An unforgivable sin has been committed, yet he is not begging for forgiveness. She is not making sure I’m OK. They are not reaching out. Text messages carry this weight of this world sliding toward oblivion. While “ghosting” is what does not happen, the absence of a reply feels like an active assault to the soul. Again and again, each time one checks and rechecks the phone, one feels the sting. Each message not read, or not responded to, is a “slap to the face.” This phrase, in fact, captures the reversal of the core hope of ‘face’ to bring about intimacy, warmth and connection.

In trauma, one’s place and status are cut down leaving hate, grief and longing. This launches the forward, thinking, speaking self into ruminative efforts to restore order. The concrete minutiae, the exact dialog and behaviors—the perfect text or response—fills the mind’s echo chamber. We seek the safety of reunion and order. This may be channeled through some fantasized, perfect apology or understanding.

This forward-self arises, as discussed, in the first-person, the I/me. Like Chicken Little crying about the sky falling, this center of mental activity is clueless regarding deeper ones. It knows little of the dense, interwoven, physiological origins of its fervently felt complaints. It is helplessly naïve relative to the subconscious factors that shape its focus. There is no conscious connection (to name a few) to the subcortical

regions evoking separation distress or panic, nor to the archetypal hero turned villain.

There is simply no way to understate the power and degree of unconsciousness that Jung called archetypes have on the conscious mind—except to look around at all the suffering, all the heartbreak, all the abuse, all the longing. Intelligent people suffering everywhere. Suicidal or depressed ‘first-world’ people are caught betwixt and between. Belonging, love and emotional safety are slippery. Everyone they meet is also in need and on a desperate search. Swipe right and you’ll soon meet your match.



The tiger in this picture has locked in on a target. She is fueled by the whole of her innate, lethal capacities for aggression and attack. She has no direct awareness of the tools enabling her to differentiate her own in-group from prey. She embodies ferocity and ‘knows’ in this moment a desire to kill. We share in her incredible power to focus and go after. When perfect love is the placeholder for the basic survival needs co-opting this ferocious capacity, untold misery can unfold. We keep looking outward, keep chasing, when we need to do more looking inward and learning to be still.

Humans come with this inherent tiger capacity—and the less understood, counter-intuitive other side. We are tiger-and-prey. The depth of these two forcefields helps set the stage and underscore the subtle power of the alpha/beta dynamic in interpersonal dynamics.

Early foraging groups became ever more successful as these two divergent modalities co-evolved—tiger/rabbit, left/right brain, alpha/beta. One capacity exploded in one direction, one in the opposite, both in the same skull. Our success as a species was interpersonal and tribal. The easy to overlook point here being *leaders need followers to be leaders*. Small bands

THE BRUISED HEART

of people required sharing, cooperation and teamwork. The feminine side is not 'opposite' of the male. Cooperation is not opposite of hierarchy or order. It is a blend, born of emotional maturation.

In trauma, this maturation is hobbled by impaired attachment. Our brain glitches. It attacks itself and flees itself. The traumatized person is emotionally jumbled. An inner tiger is seeking not meat but meaning, connection, someone to see us and "get" us. The person we targeted has perhaps fallen short and so is now prey, or this is transferred to all women or all men. Subconscious hurt, anger, fear is intense. We are so locked in on someone real or imagined outside of our inner life that we are locked out of our inner life and do not see the forest for the trees.

We may be in fierce attack mode or cowering with overwhelm and fear. We may dwell in beta; after all, no one will ever love us. We will never achieve what our hearts seek. We develop an emotional auto-immune disease, using our tenderness to drive cynicism.

Anytime we drift so far from our true nature, we can look back to animals and children for cues. It'd be hard to imagine a cynical tiger, rabbit or human toddler. But not so hard to note how they share not only fight-flight-fold capacities, but also the mercurial pull toward joy, to an interactive, fun, active mode. Play, it seems, tricks us from the start not to take it seriously.

The famous phrase, the map is not the territory, speaks to the left and right hemispheres, respectively.

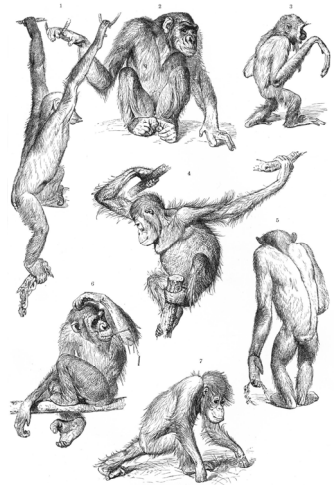
Play



Play is one the foundational affects at the heart of *affective neuroscience* thought to exist in all mammals. The others directly reflect Darwin's twin poles of survival and procreation, for example, aggression and protecting the young. But play is

more enigmatic and intriguing. It is intrinsic in attachment and development generally. Mothers have to enjoy, or experience joy in, their babies to tolerate the burden. In us humans, the same joy is a large part of the magnetism of romance.

Play is the gift that keeps giving, fun for the sake of fun. Reveling in joy expands joy as a capacity. The more this potential is tapped, the earlier, the more intensely, the higher the high-level, *transformative*, positive symptom potential. Dalai Lama and enlightened persons are routinely described as not only wise but joyful, humorous and playful. These 'you had to be there' qualities are difficult to capture in words, subtle and contextual. Naturally, these were under-reported by disciples of realized masters such as Jesus and Buddha.



THE BRUISED HEART

Siloing of any of the affective systems that Panksepp discovered leads to confusion. Play may be just play, but it only comes down to us a major reservoir of beingness because of the power it achieved through various integrations. By direct inference, it is key to emotional resilience and interpersonal savvy. Less obvious, however, the same can be said even of grief, another of Panksepp's discoveries.

Consider separation distress, which according to Panksepp has clear subcortical associations with grief. This form of freak out ramps up when an offspring is separated from its caregiver. When no reunion is forthcoming, grief sets in.

Obviously such circumstances are inherently dangerous, and evolution (through random mutations) created powerful emotional response systems to mitigate this risk. This includes this mix of fear and grief as well as the joyful, playful side that goes with reunion. Such is the push-pull of attachment. Capacities for terror, heartbreak, and for relief, exuberance and celebration with reconnection.

"Perhaps the best therapy for depression, at least in its milder forms, is to coax people to play again. And also to have lots of physical activity which can invigorate many brain systems."
- Jaak Panksepp

Psychology's historical focus on abuse over neglect has kept *play* out of the limelight. In my experience, passionate, engaged parenting, even when interspersed with regrettable anger and hitting trumps self-absorbed, disconnection, even if this looks more stable from a distance. Intensely emotional mothers are often actually OK at play, just not great at holding back anger. But emotionally wounded, distant mothers do not play. The worst of both – intermittent anger and poor mirroring – is clearly very damaging.

In therapy with Mia, Haromi, Alexandra and all the others mentioned, there were moments of edgy hilarity. Often a certain tender, higher form of play moves into the interpersonal atmosphere alongside courageous sadness.

The capacity for pee-in-pants hilarity is, for me as a psychologist, serious stuff. Eye-watering bursts of you-had-to-be-there commentary are spirit stretching. Soaking in a suffering client's explosive joy disconfirms rigid worldviews. There are even emerging reports that micro-dosing of hallucinogens facilitates this same sort of transformative shift.

Reveling with clients in what was initially on the edge of shaming, life's painful absurdities and maximum cringe moments is healing. Joy may rewrite old, painful attachment experiences. Where we once experienced imploding shame, expansive playful emotions provide a larger experiential space. In these, the former bruised self is reconfigured.

*In **The Lion King**, the Hero's Journey (homeladventure/home-reconfigured) is called the Circle of Life. Simba is the young upstart, hero-to-be. His father, Mufasa, King (protector of/guarantor of safety) of the Circle of Life has died. Mufasa was killed by his brother Scar, a clear shadow element that, predator to prey, looms and lies in wait. Simba's initiation is in his being orphaned, being pushed out alone into the world, unwilling and unprepared. At this level of an initiate, he is both potential warrior-hero (King's son) and vulnerable. Call to adventure and the feminine element: Nala tells Simba he must help, the Kingdom is in in bad shape (chaos) due to Scar letting in coyotes (more of the predator element). The mentor, Rafiki, appears as to aides, helper figures, Timon and Pumba. Simba's guilt and fear is met with a divine encounter, the Ghost of Mufasa, and he is emboldened. Facing shadow, confronting evil, standing up to predator and danger: Simba encounters and fights Scar. Constructive rage, where darkness empowers the hero: Scar's admission of killing Mufasa enrages Simba. Apotheosis/climax: Simba beats Scar, becomes King of the Circle of Life. The hero's return: Simba returns to the Kingdom as King, celebration, he and Nala, the feminine, have a son.*

Inmaps

Language acquisition capacities – pronoun forms: first person, second person, third person; subject/verb/object, statement/question

Story / narrative structure – ‘once upon a time,’ creation myths, meaning-infused personal story arcs

Classical Jungian forms and their extensions - warrior, witch, orphan, hero’s journey and developmental forms, the Godhead, the Shadow, Medusa

Super-ordinate/dynamical forms - yin/yang, safety/danger, order/chaos, predator/prey, feminine/masculine, introvert-extrovert, victim-perpetrator, codependent/counterdependent. Big-5 personality factors, 5-stages of grief. Animal-human-spirit, body-mind-spirit. Repression, compensation. Subpersonalities: Rowen’s natural continuum of self-parts

Instinctual/Biological forms: dominance/submission, attachment, fight-flight-freeze-fold-face, polyvagal theory, defensive/offensive aggression, Panksepp’s seven base affects

Healing from trauma calls for the most elaborate mapping possible. One has to build a powerful, loving, reality-based forcefield through engagement in the present, perfect-enough for the beautiful, wise, scared, wounded inner child to make its new home.

In conjunction with the concepts already discussed, what I call ‘*inmaps*’ (or *inmap* in the singular form) may offer something helpful in this quest. In my book *Buddha’s Mom*, I suggested that inmaps (“innate neurological meaning-appraisal-perceptual systems”) provide a theoretical, technical extension of the classical “archetype” construct.^{xliii}

THE BRUISED HEART

Carl Jung identified timeless characters such as the villain/bogeyman, crone/witch, angel, fairy, monster, joker/fool/trickster, as well as phenomena such as evil spells and the ‘night sea journey.’ He referred to these as *archetypal*, which roughly means supremely typical. They are intrinsic across the gamut from culture, folklore, legend, literature, myth and religion to individual dreams.^{xliv}

*Romantic comedies, summer blockbusters,
Disney staples, the Godfather and Star
Wars—all electrify inmap-based themes
and feelings deep in the heart of homo sapiens.*

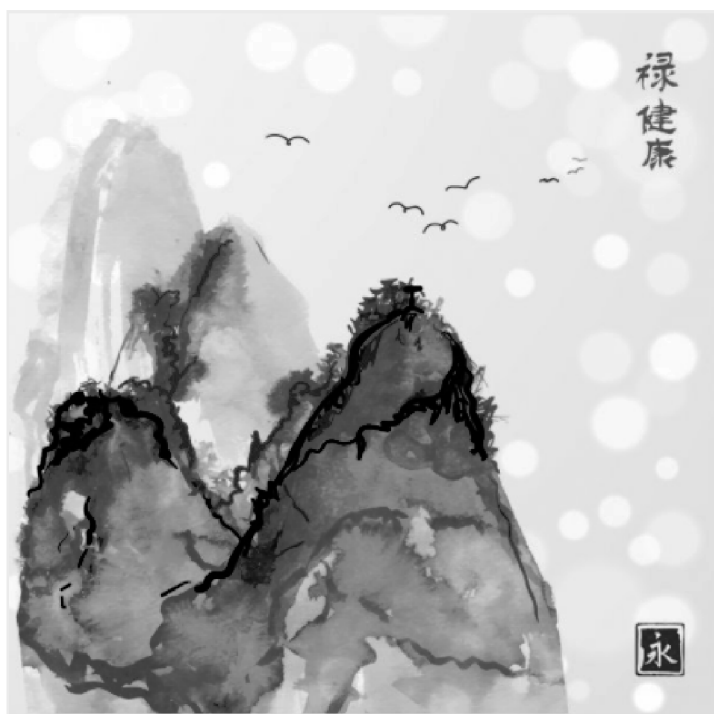
Jung referred to *archetypes* as evolutionary ‘images’, as a sort of deep code with broad implications. The term, however, has become associated with a relatively narrow genre, e.g., king/queen, messiah. Jung’s work encompassed most of what I am proposing with *inmaps*.

Jung’s discoveries predated many of the breakthroughs in neuroscience that can now be integrated. These include Panksepp’s base affects, polyvagal expansions of the threat response, and relatively new insights into the implications of the brain’s distinctive hemispheres. Archetypes also tend to be viewed as distinct from other innate phenomena which impact psychological functioning. These include language acquisition structures, narrative structure and dynamical forms such as the big-5 personality factors.

*Definition of archetype: 1: the original pattern or
model of which all things of the same type are
representations or copies: PROTOTYPE.*

*2: IDEA SENSE 4C 3: psychology: an inherited
idea or mode of thought in the psychology of C. G.
Jung that is derived from the experience of the race
and is present in the unconscious of the individual*

The concept of *inmaps* covers the range of deep psyche, meaning-shaping systems. Essentially, inmaps are inherited, neural software systems that shape high-level emotion and salience. They are not all good or all bad. For example, a 'hopeless romantic' may bring a sweet, needed energy to an otherwise dry relationship. Alternatively, this inmap may be compensation for a fear of commitment. Without digging deeper and achieving insight, such a person may sabotage a relationship as it matures beyond infatuation.



Subpersonalities

John Rowen has advanced a model of “subpersonalities” as intrinsic in normal personality functioning.^{xlv} The dominant personality exists fluidly alongside distinctive subpersonalities. Each of these shares the same quality of autonomy, albeit to a lesser degree. Subpersonalities are naturally then also part of anxiety, depression and personality disorders.

Subpersonalities are nodes of sentience, centers of perspective and emotional experience. They operate like mini-egos. Each has its own viewpoint and sense of meaning. In part they are separate and independent and seek to remain so. And in part, in normal functioning, they are symbiotic and function so as to support the overall personality in the sense that they enable an alternative functionality and perspective.

There is a normal/abnormal continuum ranging from a healthy, federated personality composition, where parts are highly inter-communicative and fluid, to a complex of highly separate, disharmonious component personalities. Extreme, non-cohesive organization is evident in psychosis and dissociative identity disorder. In these, the healthy, natural, integrative function is faulty and self-parts function with a pathological degree of autonomy.

Subpersonalities, rather, are typical of a normally functioning personality. This is reflected when one references how “part of me wants to...but another part...” Per John Rowan’s model, they are imbued with the same evolutionary, implicit will to compete and survive (just be), as runs through the normal and/or dominant personality. They just have less power, intensity or dominance. Put another way, they are less masculinized.

This concept helps explain stubborn dysfunctional patterns. Clients often exhibit excessive, irrational self-sabotage alongside insight and healthy interpersonal capacities. They behave, quite precisely, as if *some*

THE BRUISED HEART

part of them wants the very opposite of what the dominant self wants. Subpersonality theory also parallels the 'hostile brothers' archetype (e.g., Cain and Abel, Batman and Joker, and Egyptian deities Set and Osiris), as well as common pairings such as perpetrator-victim and codependent/counterdependent dynamic.

Developmental Inmaps

Developmental inmaps include narrative/story forms. Falling under this are: narrative arcs, storylines, journey, and common elements such as goals/obstacles, characters, setting, tension and drama. Sequential and circular context is another form: the cycle of life, Jung's night sea journey, and the hero's journey [departure, initiation, apotheosis (dramatic climax), return].

In a common arc, loaded with meaning, one leaves home, never to return. Buddha said one can never step in the same river twice. Combining inmaps helps unlock the power of stories such as *The Lion King*.

As with PowerPoint or Photoshop, the base software sets parameters and determine how raw inputs are refined. An insecure kid might inhabit the role of class clown, a role to which she and others already ascribe a certain meaning and feeling. Within their family, they might be the outcast 'black sheep,' also a role pre-imbued with certain parameters of meaning and emotion.

*Sure, you tell me I'm going to be fine.
That you love me, that I'm awesome.
But when I'm not with you, all I see is broken and ugly.
And I can't ask you to keep carrying me.*

Inmaps work in the background. Their field of influence arcs from the deep unconscious forward. To the degree any given inmap, say black sheep, wanderer or orphan, is highly defining and influential, this background software is co-opted by the left hemisphere's converging, narrowing tendencies.

The left, as discussed, is excellent at generating maps. Recall the bird pecking gravel where its left hemisphere has to go all in on whether a given speck is food or not food. This all-or-nothing, binary mapping expertise is, by design, unfazed by the right hemisphere's 'anomaly detector' function.

THE BRUISED HEART

Recall the right hemisphere's expertise is vigilance. It is an active receiver, on the listen and lookout for danger, as well as opportunity.

We are set up such that our forward, conscious self—under the left's guidance—is free to *manipulate* the world, peck for seeds, carry sticks to build a nest, use our arms/hands to pick berries, throw a spear, or use our voice to *gather or disseminate* information.

Through neural inhibition, signals from the right are held in check. Unless there's a clear and imminent threat, the left leans toward confidence. Generally, it works. We manipulate the world fluidly. We gather berries without hesitating and flinching at every sound or losing track because we feel sad. Without the left's self-assuredness, nervous energy would consume more calories than the fruit we manage to gather.

The psyche sits atop an amazing, subtle, somatic hierarchy of threat detection. Low-level responses manage factors which would otherwise impair cognition and place animals, and us at risk. Consider how a horse chomps on grass. It may need upwards of twenty pounds per day. It would be in jeopardy if it had to lift its head or flinch at every stimulus. Instead flies are discharged with waves of skin contractions. Its heavy head remains hung, while passively listening, assessing potentially more significant concerns.

Evolution's gas and brake pedals are on a continuum. Threat response glides up and down fluidly. In trauma, however, this tried and true system is stuck and glitching out. The right, metaphorically, is hollering like the boy who cried wolf one to many times. The left is convinced that *its* universe of knowns and unknowns is *the* universe.

The left persists on defining the reality, priorities, what is fair and need to be prioritized. Perfectly impossible non-solutions repeat themselves thematically. The couple has its hundredth ugly fight. A person aches to reunite with *the* other person who no longer wants to be in a relationship or *an* other who soon is also emotionally unavailable.

Indeed they may drive them away out of their bottomless demands. Or they beg not to experience some tragedy that's already taken place.

The first of Kubler-Ross' five stages of grief is denial.^{xvi} These reveal how the brain shudders and can temporarily get stuck when suddenly adjusting to a major change. The second is bargaining. Someone terrified of flying needs to fly to see their dying father but wants a guarantee that there will be no turbulence. Someone would love to swim in the ocean but not if there are sharks. In trauma, these inefficiencies persist. There is no movement in the so-called grief process. On the surface are good days and bad ones, but deeper, rigid patterns hold.

The dilemmas people present often belie an undercurrent of fear. The relationship ended because the person once again chose someone unreachable. Perhaps it has not ended but should because they are being mistreated yet somehow feel there are no options. A fear of flying turns out to be one of many neurotic, life-restricting fears—storms, bees, mass shootings.

Neurotic surface maps, with their circular problems and non-solutions, require deeper, better territory-approximating ones. Inmaps potentially provide much more explicit and evocative representations and explanations of a person's inner life. A person may be overidentified with a victim mindset or similarly, in the forcefield of what some call a 'martyr complex.'

In Jungian or 'depth psychology,' patients delve deeply, sometimes over a period of years, into the particular archetypes most impacting their lives. Jungian analysts refer to patients as being "in the grip of" such energy fields until they work through these. From the hemispheric perspective, we appreciate how this concept refers to the left's tendency to grip, grasp and manipulate the world. But in the case of trauma, the left-right balance is failing. Often, various archetypes have a person in their grip. This deeper, meaning-shaping patterning is likely more aligned with the right hemisphere.

THE BRUISED HEART

Inmaps are powerful intrapsychic lenses cultivated across evolution to provide meaning over incoherence or chaos. They may help prevent dysregulation (e.g., paranoia) by articulating a narrative structure. Rather than simply saying bad things happen to good people and therefore giving up, inmaps provide some contextual meaning for loss or misfortune.

For Jungians, the solution is not escaping the grip of the archetype. Rather, they assist us in our own manifestation, our differentiation. They are partial paths, useful until we attain our own lay of the land and dare to wander off on our own. To worship one way or one person, to cling too tightly to safety is not to know the value of the other pull, to take risks and make discoveries. A single or narrow inmap can help for a while, but then restricts. But others await, ready to lend a hand. Through insight and healing, one comes into a better alignment with the creative and suffocating power of inmaps.

Jung described archetypes as a river's landform—the dry riverbed that is filled with water. The river is our living, moving, conscious life shaped by deeper forces. The Zen tradition also refers to a river as a metaphor for consciousness. Life flows, potentially blocked over and over by boulders in the way. It tries to flow toward an ocean of totality, *emptying into fullness*.

To achieve this, one must see rocks clearly, let them be, and flow by unimpeded and free. One must be the river in its totality, going nowhere, just flowing peacefully around massive rocks even as they shape its course. Just being, and letting rocks be. Inmaps with a grip on us are like rocks before this freeing insight. They shape but do not determine the flow. Through psychological healing, we appreciate their significance, and in doing so, the grip loosens.



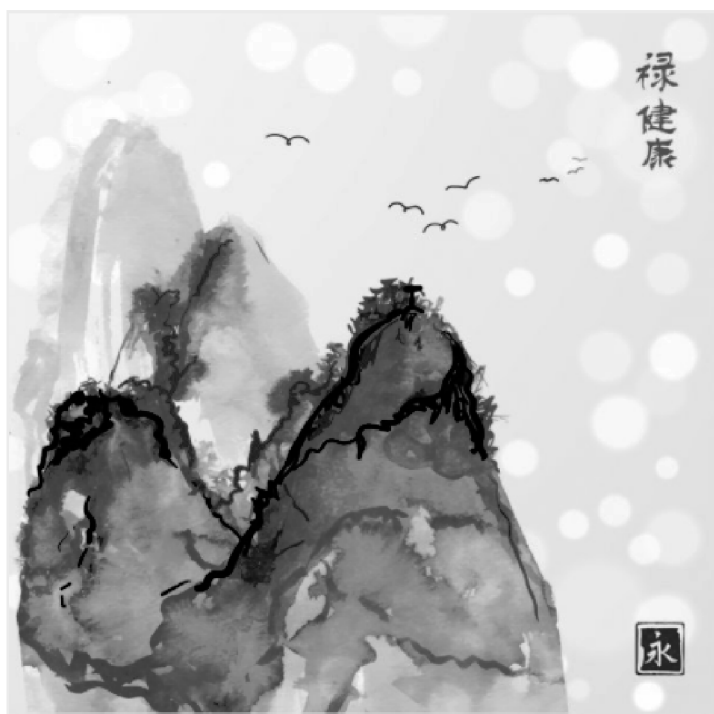
Carl Jung also referred to the classic myth of poisonous-snakes-for-hair-Medusa. No mortal dared look at her face lest they be turned to stone. By some accounts, she was terrifying; by others, ravishingly beautiful. This myth represents the power of extremes, or what some call a messiah complex or a martyr complex, to stymie growth and healing.

People throw around endless terms – daddy issues, fear of success, victim, perpetrator, slut, asshole, golden child, middle age crisis, and so on. They refer to a musician as having written the song track of their life, to their ‘heart of hearts,’ and to some experience as utterly life changing. Inmaps can help make such psychological sense of all of these and liberate people of constrictions that hold them back in life. One develops a larger, freer, more conscious ability to be energized by, and less in the grip of, any particular inmap.

Trauma comes wrapped in story.

When people “tell their story” and frame what’s troubling them, they do so in narrative terms. When they refer to something sacred or deeply personal to the values they live by, they tend to do so in a narrative, *once upon a time*, context. Naturally, emotional wounding comes wrapped in the same, in a story form. Because inmaps shape the most profound dimensions of our inner and interpersonal life, they are critical in shaping personal narratives.

To heal from trauma, one has to come into an ever clearer lived experience of the inmaps at work in their own subconscious. Naturally, this exceeds the scope of any book and likely requires in-depth psychotherapy. I hope this book helps connect anyone on this journey to the fertile ground of ‘the new paradigm’ in psychology and from there to richer expanses of growth and creativity.



*Fight-flight, attachment and affect are gifts of the body,
the soma and our inheritance.
As lotus roots to blossom, these potentially open to a
totality and oneness beyond words.*

Inmaps in Action

Recall Haromi? She and her boyfriend, Ryan, cycled through multiple episodes of his lying, cheating and threatening suicide. Associated inmaps are not hard to notice. Their arguments were replete with *fight-flight*, aggression/fear and so-called autonomic hyperarousal. Confrontation sometimes spilled over into grabbing and shoving: *fight*. Threats of, and intermittent break-ups: *flight*.

Viewed through the *maternal/biological attachment* lens, their attachment to one another swung between two poles: “love” and reunion, and bickering and arguing. The first reflects motherlove, protection and *safety*. Multiple inmaps overlap. Psychodynamically, Haromi projected childhood attachment pain, loss and longing onto Ryan. We are amazingly unaware of the deep origins of hope, fear and desperation. These intense rivers of feeling can spill into an ocean of insight and compassion at any moment. For most of us, there are flashes and retreats. Once small again, we snap back to our storied agony. We again confuse authentic love for our tinier version, somehow overly drenched in fear and hurt.

Safety and order (which I call superordinate inmaps) correlate with powerful *affective* fulcrums such as the ancient, subcortical systems, which Jaak Panksepp named (and capitalized as) and evokes CARE—one of affective neuroscience’s big seven base affects. In romantic relationships, the positive intensity is coupled with LUST.^{xlvii} CARE pulls us into the unconscious, our warm, safe ‘mother’ home—the ancient womb, life-giving breastmilk, the hole, den and cave of sleep. The second, arguing and fall-outs with the very lover we thought

THE BRUISED HEART

understood. This evokes the chaos of *fight*, of attack, the bodily, physiological distress babies experience when cold or hungry. This dysregulation evokes Panksepp's RAGE and FEAR affect.

Other fundamental, powerful inmaps are the linguistic and story/narrative forms. Animals show awareness of before/after, a skeletal structure in story. An experimenter may dump three pieces of fruit into a pail. Orangutans gaze longer when the experimenter inverts the pail and only two fall out. The 'after' does not make sense. This barely scratches the surface of the evidence of empathy and understanding required to operate in complex social networks. Our nonverbal, meaning-filled capacities rocketed to outrageous heights with language acquisition. Story/narrative connected the former, nonverbal capacity for meaning, with speech/language.

Tribes have their collective creation myths. Being *the one* who stuck by her boyfriend was Haromi's personal myth. This narrative held together by a burning desire. As a child she ached for a stable, devoted attachment. This fire still burned in the present. A large extent of what came to contain and define her, for this long chapter of her adult life, was this compelling story arc. She would be *the one* who was always there, and Ryan would finally see this.

For Haromi, *the one* narrative was deeply anchored in the experience of her father's abandonment atop the lifelong, rocky relationship with her mother. Mother was partially there, so the hope survived that father would walk back through the door. Her heart craved the kindness, joy, connection, protection her nascent inner child embodied. A child's longing is archetypal. Adam and Eve leave behind the innocence and paradise, which then has to be re-achieved through God. Complete, safe, loving reunion is projected on to an idealized father/protector/provider (a classical Jungian archetype).

Work on brain hemispheres adds clarity. Old emotional scars live on, *vividly*, breaking into the here-now through the left. And *achingly*, somatically, timelessly through the right. Emotional distress registered in the right brain is not time-stamped. Sadness is not in a linear, before/after, cause/effect, sort of positioning. Rather our wounding is a living, present backdrop repeatedly projected onto the present. The two unite and things improve all the time. Remarkably, the family of someone unaccounted for years ago experience closure when the body is found or perpetrator is arrested.

In a PTSD flashback, the past breaks into the present. Intrusive thoughts are a milder form of the same dynamic. Haromi felt reverberations of the past heartbreak in every twist and turn in her current relationship. Romantic reunions echoed some inner child's version of things working out. Perhaps Dad would walk through the door with presents and give Mom a hug. Repeated discoveries of Ryan's infidelities were extreme triggers. More mellow prompts, evoking sadness and dread, were things comedians make fun of, how Ryan would not think or remember things that were meaningful to Haromi but instead, generally, put himself first. Experiences of Ryan's immaturity and self-absorption opened inner channels of rejection and fear.

In Haromi's *once upon a time*, 'there was a mom, dad and a daughter'. dramatic turn was her father's abandonment. This parallels Mufasa's death (see above description of the Lion King) and note how this early loss guides the story, and shows up as a ghost at a later point. Haromi's boyfriend echoed this light/dark role. In the beginning and with each reunion, he would express his devotion. He abandoned her emotionally, many times, providing many opportunities for reunion. Reunion had the possibility of resetting the creation myth. Addressing its core wound.

Haromi was called to sacrifice, show forbearance and humility through the darker, shadow side, e.g., *humiliation*. She was thrust into this 'adventure' and, I can attest, it was harrowing. Haromi hated, struggled,

THE BRUISED HEART

but somehow tolerated her boyfriend's wild ways—for *the day would come when he returned from the wilderness having realized that she was the one*. Her story (and story generally) gives meaning to chaos.

The martyr archetype gives a particular twist on the theme, *hard work and sacrifice earns future returns*. For the martyr, the degree of toil and pain is equated with the greatness of the reward. The more blood spilt, the bigger the prize. In sessions, Haromi combed through details of arguments and texts, viscerally reliving the agony. The minutiae was proof her boyfriend was not who she thought. Like an addict trying to justify stopping, she would seek validation for how wrong, unfair, selfish and unloving his actions proved him to be. With each cycle, however, Ryan would say a few magic words and soon they would talk. Then spend a day or so getting along, including time in bed.

The self toggles between hope and disappointment. Where there is early trauma, ancient storms thunder in the background. Being surrounded by an enemy is ultimate danger; surrounded by a lover, ultimate safety. The larger these storms, the lower one falls on the normal-neurotic-borderline-psychotic scale.

This 'classical continuum' inmap and many more are what I call *dynamical*. Another, which we have discussed in depth, is that of positive/negative symptomology. The combination of these two offers another perspective of how trauma, over long ago calendar-wise, wields tremendous power. As we have already examined, positive and negative symptoms are integrated at the higher stages of healing. All the wounded inner child longs for—kindness, mutual effort, consistency, play—becomes a present capacity. Further up, one moves into the potential to be a unique, potent force of lovingkindness and wisdom.

A key *language acquisition inmap* incorporates the *first/second/third person* pronoun forms. Like marrow to bone, there is an original, underlying, creative source. In Buddhist terms, these are “just so.” They

“co-arise” as an essential character of consciousness. All that one experiences as (first person) ‘me,’ as myself, absolutely appears to be separate and distinct.

I see a tree. Surely I am not the tree! You hurt my feelings. I did not hurt my own feelings.

Of course, the separate self is valid and real. At the same time, its separation is not quite what it seems. Haromi’s *projection* of deep-seated unconscious material sheds light on the origins of this separation, where the self (‘my me’) develops distinct of a you, him or her. This partitioning was not in place in the womb and only barely in infancy. Across toddler years and childhood, however, the distinctions increase. Between age two and twelve especially, the merged, undifferentiated status evokes the first/second/third person, despite the emotional dynamics.

Finally, mother/father will come through.

Haromi did not cry about her father for years. She had repressed the pain of rejection, as well as the deep-seated hope of reunion and healing. The brain’s hemispheres and frontal lobes provide the set-up for this. Strong connection and inhibition coexist. Ancient pain both distorts present reality while remaining offline.

Psychodynamically, the past presses on the present and *projection* and other dynamical inmaps spring into action. Healing from emotional trauma comes with appreciating the creative, positive, protective side of these ‘defense mechanisms.’ All the turmoil in Haromi’s relationship stemmed from unconscious efforts to remedy, not just defend against, early attachment wounds.

Labeling, for example, dysfunctional relationship and interpersonal violence were applicable. But from another vantage point, she was striving for a beautiful, open-ended ‘we’ with Ryan. But to know her and all the clients mentioned in this book, is to know the ‘we’ they seek

THE BRUISED HEART

is open-ended. Haromi wanted to be a doctor, to travel, and heal other broken relationships with her immediate family. This push in each of us is boundless and deserves curiosity and reverence.

The heart breaks—open.

The master affect, according to affective neuroscience, is ‘SEEKING’—the impetus to see what’s around the next corner. In tai chi and acupuncture, they speak of *qi*, life force. Note how this is communal, not arising in a vacuum. From my point of view, this drive to share, be heard and connect, ever more fully, is the key to healing and transformation. It compels people to make their first therapy appointment and attend their hundredth.

The Freudian psychoanalyst’s old joke starts off with, “Tell me about your mother.” Through the therapeutic relationship, old relationship wounding is released, freeing people to be more authentic and loving in their current lives. A ‘new ending on an old beginning’ opens. The therapeutic container, the ‘we space,’ correlates with the ‘first person plural.’ The correct way to understand Haromi and similar clients is not that she was seeking love in all the wrong places, but rather, she had not experienced the depths and intensity of her true self, her inner beauty, in her past or current relationships. Her love was too big for the narrow doors available to her.

Returning to Mia briefly. Her progress was bumpy and surprising. She like to tease me when I made vague references to nature, love, healing and spirit. Meanwhile, she seemed to plant seeds everywhere. Just by being herself and going with the flow, all sorts of unpredictable friendships blossomed. Her joy in small things was like a candle flame in the darkness. Her mother remained quick to anger, but also softened. Most subjects remained verboten, but her mother would cry when their visits came to an end. Mostly, Mia seemed to live more on a sort of trampoline. The bounce back ups were more consistent, and she would regularly go higher and higher in her sense of not knowing but being

OK – in abiding in *wonder*. Mostly with and through others that seemed to be pulled into Mia’s orbit, drawn to her smile and laughter and spirit.

“We,” the first person plural, ’ is the gateway to the heart.

There’s a ‘we’ in looking up at the night sky. In my book, Buddha’s Mom, I talk about the *we-space* and this amazing, mysterious, ‘first person plural’ in depth. The night sky, a sunset, and immersive, transporting experiences share three dimensions. Feeling one’s smallness in the vast mirror of the universe are two pulls in play. This twoness has a oneness. There’s the largesse and smallness that are felt simultaneously in such communions. The same *two-and-one* occurs in joyful expansions of friendship, in co-experiencing a child discovering something, and in romance. There’s the *you* and *me*, and the *we*.

There’s a back and forth somehow floating on top of infinity. Infinite emptiness, infinite vastness according to Buddhists. The same goes for joyful expansions of friendship. For witnessing the twinkle in kids’ eyes, the contagion of laughter, the beauty of music, our nature home, the passing moment, tiny yet a totality.

With all the amazing people I’ve described, we toggled back and forth. We processed the surface stories and let the larger storms reveal their dark wisdom. When life opens to deeper layers of psychological pain, note how it also energizes. The inner journey always gives more back. A fiercer connection with life is an unbidden gift. Think about that. As these lovely people more fully encountered their truth, the results were never linear. Therapy was the space for confusion, tears, and trying-on-for-size these many maps. Imperfect approximations. Maps not the territory. Through the back and forth, healing surprises. Guaranteed.

A fundamental step in healing is appreciating the otherness of emotional wounding, much like the night sky. But we insist on mapping the so-and-so did such-and-such. We log and recount the

THE BRUISED HEART

unfairness and difficulty, naturally—but often we are a little too sure of our story. Maps are critical. And at the same time, the map always turns out to be too rigid and simplistic. Letting the dark, the irrational and deeper self guide the way always surprises. The results are never linear. Therapy is a space for confusion, tears, and trying-on-for-size these and many other maps. Therapy is also the space for explosive delight and lasting shifts. Maps, not the territory. Through the back and forth, the small self and the terrifying, beautiful, strange, vast innerscape, healing surprises. Guaranteed.



APPENDIX

THE BRUISED HEART

Major Elements of the New Paradigm in Psychological Science & Treatment

Key, interwoven concepts related to relaxation and resilience stem from what has been referred to as a 'new paradigm' in psychology. This emerging view is built from a very rich synthesis across the great realms of body-affect-mind.

regulation theory – Based on the work of Allan Schore across many areas, including neuroscience/ neurobiology.

interpersonal neurobiology – Emphasis on the human brain as, essentially, a combined personal and interpersonal organism, as dependent upon and supportive of close, high-functioning relationships.

affective neuroscience – seven subcortically-based primary emotional/affective systems in mammals: SEEKING, RAGE, FEAR, LUST, CARE, PLAY, GRIEF/PANIC.

polyvagal theory - A highly expanded view of fight-flight system, emphasis on somatic awareness.

attachment theory - The role of secure vs. insecure attachment in ongoing interpersonal emotional dynamics.

psychodynamic theory – The influence of family-of-origin and developmental trauma.

hemisphericity – New appreciation of left/right brain, how many of the stereotypes regarding left brain/right brain differences from the 1970s are wrong, key distinctions, an embedded evolutionary understanding.

depth psychology –How subconscious factors involving culture and archetypes, including shadow, are involved in the shaping of perceived meaning, life narratives and powerful emotions.

somatic meditation practices & somatic psychotherapy approaches – The field of psychology has always been an admixture of research and practice, each side informing and propelling the other to deeper, richer levels. At this time, a variety of somatic approaches is on the rise. These include ancient Buddhist Vajrayana practices, blends of meditative 'skillful means' and psychotherapy and more purely somatic psychotherapies. An example of the latter is Peter Levine's somatic experiencing.

positive psychology/resource cultivation – With roots in humanistic, Gestalt, hypnotherapy, EMDR, emotional and interpersonal capacity-building

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SYMPTOMS & GLOBAL FUNCTIONING*

Positive symptoms (fight-fight)

Strong feelings are increasingly nuanced and accessible with less destabilization. Difficult emotions are tolerated. Rainbow of feelings expands: from sorrow to distress to inner peace to joy to enthusiasm to wonder and openness. Expansion becomes source of meaning, basis of interpersonal connection, empathy, intimacy.

Anxiety dominates. Panic attacks at more severe end of spectrum. Depression, issue-exhaustion is common. A range of overwhelm from severe to less so. Good grip on reality, but endless emotional turmoil. Intrusive thoughts range in acuity, as do parts/subpersonalities.

Massive instability, collateral damage (friends, family) and failed efforts to stabilize. Psychotic symptoms with severe personality, bipolar, post-trauma disorders. Extreme mood volatility. No stable self, "parts" wield power. Mix of specialness / grandiosity / narcissism & inferiority /victim mindset. "Acting out".

Enormous suffering, symptoms beyond reach. Perceptual disturbance. Voices, knowledge may be perceived as real (hallucinations/delusions), both real and not real, or not real but inescapable.

Positive symptoms

Negative symptoms (fold*)

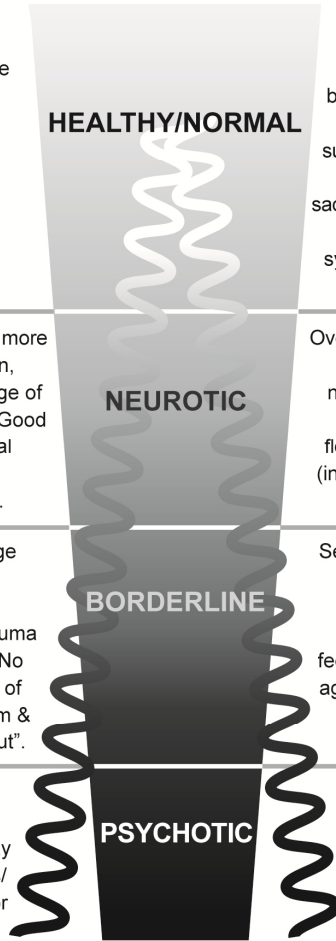
Intense fear states do not overwhelm or cause shut down. Grief and sorrow are distressing but tolerated. Empathic capacities, to engage with others who are suffering, develop in line with these abilities (to tolerate fear and sadness). Ability to bridge and abide in these positive and negative symptom sides is basis for further psychospiritual development.

Overwhelm, despair, drift, isolation, powerlessness, helplessness, numbness and mild dissociation. Positive emotions are forced, fleeting, shallow. Deeper feelings (intense sadness and fear) only in bursts, generally suppressed.

Severe depressive moods, bouts of low energy, giving up. Dissociation, sense of being outside of one's self, life. One feels powerless, reactive, lacking agency, scattered, disconnected. Parallels with avoidant attachment.

Flat affect, anhedonia. Blunted affect, profound confusion, poverty of speech, and thought, avolition (absence of will/purpose).

Negative symptoms



THE BRUISED HEART

*Legend for Positive/Negative Symptom Graphic

- The **squiggly lines** in Figure X depict the relationship of positive & negative symptoms to functioning across the spectrum of functioning.
- The **light-to-dark cone** depicts basic awareness, basic grounding in reality, which decreases with neurosis, and further still in borderline and psychotic functioning.
- **Acuity** is a general term for affective regulation, mood stability, stress tolerance and behavioral stability.
- Lower realms are synonymous with **high acuity**. At these levels, symptoms are beyond reach. Positive symptoms are tormenting. Negative symptoms restrict their affect, capacity for connection and engagement, and willpower.
- In **mid-acuity** and borderline ranges, memories may be intrusive to the point of 'flashbacks'; at the same time, a person may feel dissociated and numb. At less severe levels, anxiety may co-exist with hopelessness.
- **Positive symptoms** stem from the sympathetic nervous system, activated in "fight-flight."
- **Negative symptoms** stem from ancient 'fold' (also referred to as faint) response. This threat-response system physiology immobilizes (partly or completely) animals/humans and hits the brakes on fight-flight activation.

Emotional Trauma

- The secret to healing from overwhelming, rocky emotional problems is hidden in plain sight.
- Some examples of real people like you on the amazing journey of their life along with some simple models light the way.
- Emotional and psychological stabilization, strengthening, expansion and even "spiritual realization" is not that complicated or mysterious.
- Among the most incredible models is attachment theory.
- Attachment theory explains how many well-meaning mothers create long-lasting emotional trauma.
- Research into the brain's two radically diverse hemispheres also provides breakthrough vision of how emotional problems seem to resist healthy change.
- Everyone's heard of 'fight-flight.' The new view fills out our evolutionary inheritance. In addition to the fear and anger aspects, the breakout new model adds 'faint /fold' (depressive, dissociative features) and 'face' (attachment, love dimensions) to this powerful mirror on each of us.
- Emotional distress is so loaded with the potential for radical healing that shallow models need to be avoided. An emphasis on symptom reduction (by whatever name, e.g., reducing anxiety, affective regulation) is misguided. Getting over or getting rid of tough experiences in life has too high a cost.
- Healing and transformation call for a thorough incorporation what psychiatrists traditionally refer to as "positive symptoms" and "negative symptoms." Traditional approaches to anxiety and depression reflect a positive symptom bias. Overlooked negative symptoms are also key to transformation.

THE BRUISED HEART

- Another overlooked gift is intensity, even the intensity of fear and sadness. Intensity is the raw energy of radical, transformative healing. If you feel things intensely, you're well on the way.
- Early life trauma commonly leads to self-medicating and refusing help. Finally, there is a clear explanation for this.
- A proposed diagnosis of Emotional Trauma Disorder captures how early life emotional wounding manifests in adults. Another new diagnosis, Traumatic Depression, describes one of the most severe forms of lasting, deep-seated wounding--while pointing to ways to transform and heal.
- There are important distinctions between severe emotional trauma at borderline levels, and moderate to mild trauma, corresponding to the neurotic realm.
- How diagnoses and approaches to trauma that downplay transformation distort realities and lead to unimpressive outcomes.
- How mindfulness and somatic meditation practice are critical 'higher-level' capacities for the trauma-transformation pathway.

Emotional Trauma Disorder (ETD) / Traumatic Depression (TD)*

*proposed diagnoses

- 1) **Symptom Array** – 1- code overall acuity: mild, moderate, severe; 2- select one or more of the following five:
 - a. baseline anxiety
 - b. panic
 - c. depression/dissociation (sadness, hopelessness, overwhelm, anhedonia, listlessness, low energy, dissociation, shame)
 - d. anger, rage

- 2) **Treatment History** – Code 1- “undertreated” – e.g., if patient has less than one year of sustained psychotherapeutic treatment for early life trauma (weekly to biweekly sessions), 2- select either “*some* or *extensive* treatment” and diagnose Traumatic Depression not Emotional Trauma Disorder.

- 3) **Contributory Early Life Attachment/Caregiver Factors:** Specify any of the following that contributed to ETD and the patient’s approximate age span:
 1. caregiver impairment –
 - a. suspected transgenerational factors
 - b. anxiety/depression
 - c. anger/rage
 - d. other mood instability / bipolar
 - e. personality/narcissism
 - f. alcohol/substance use
 - g. trauma history (caregiver suffers from psychological trauma)
 2. other family/relative impairment - psychological and/or substance abuse factors in other family members impacting ETD
 3. impaired attachment/emotional neglect – code for deficits in affection, quality time, mirroring, play, validating child’s emotions and interests, consistency, structure in parenting
 4. repetitive/intrusive messaging and/or response prohibition - specify who and what form and impact (instilled obedience, fear, low self-esteem, shame, perfectionism, dependency)
 5. physical abuse (specify if present, who and what form)
 6. sexual abuse (specify if present, who and what form)

THE BRUISED HEART

- 4) **Contributory Early Life Extrinsic/Systemic Factors** – poverty, discrimination, relocations, immigration, legal issues.
- 5) **Protective Early Life Attachment/Caregiver Factors:**
 - i. alternative attachment via a grandparent, educator, frequency, duration, and patient’s approximate age span
 - ii. additional interpersonal supports (family, peers, friends)
 - iii. extrinsic/systemic factors: academics, hobbies, sports, church
- 6) **Current Contributory Factors**
 - i. interpersonal (family, peers, friends, significant other/spouse)
 - ii. academic/work/other resources
- 7) **Current Protective Factors**
 - i. interpersonal (family, peers, friends, significant other/spouse)
 - ii. academic/work/other resources

Inmaps

innate-neurological-meaning-approximating-perceptual-systems

Language acquisition capacities - first person, second person, third person; subject/verb/object, statement/question, Chomsky's deep structures.

Story / narrative structure – 'once upon a time,' creation myths, meaning-infused personal story arcs.

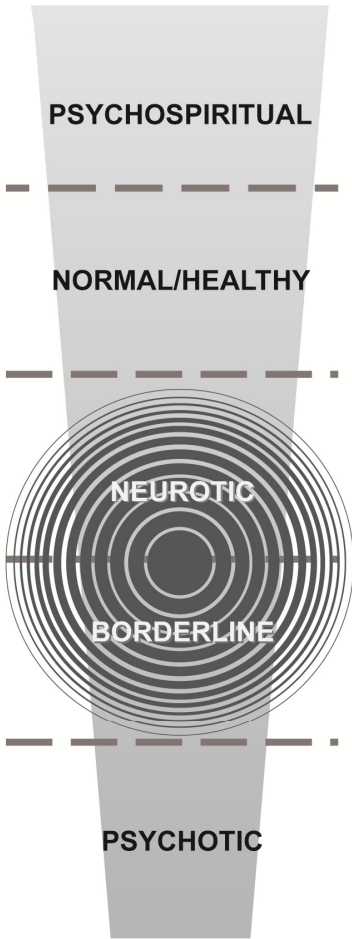
Classical Jungian forms and their extensions - warrior, witch, orphan, hero's journey, the Godhead, the Shadow, Medusa.

Super-ordinate/dynamical forms - yin/yang, safety/danger, order/chaos, feminine/masculine, introvert-extrovert, victim-perpetrator, left-brain/right-brain, codependent/counterdependent. The classical continuum of mental functioning (psychotic-borderline-neurotic-normal), Big-5 personality factors, Myers-Briggs, Spiral Dynamics, Kübler-Ross' 5-stages of grief. Animal-human-spirit, body-mind-spirit. Conscious/unconscious. Repression, compensation. Subpersonalities: Rowen's continuum of self-parts.

Instinctual/Biological forms: dominance/submission, attachment, fight-flight-freeze-fold-face, polyvagal theory, defensive/offensive aggression, predator/prey, Panksepp's seven base affects (capitalized per Dr. Panksepp: SEEKING, LUST, FEAR, CARE, RAGE, GRIEF/PANIC, PLAY).

Traumatic Depression cont.
(proposed diagnosis)

TRAUMATIC DEPRESSION (a proposed diagnosis)



Dominant Criteria (all of these fit):

1. Symptoms more severe than Emotional Trauma Disorder.
2. Both positive and negative symptoms sets predominantly fall at borderline to neurotic span (see "Positive & Negative Symptoms" infographic).
3. Emotional dysregulation has been persistent, even if intermittent, over >2 years and has included both anxious and depressive symptoms.

Also, at least 4 of the following 6 fit:

1. Dysfunctional relationships with one/more parental figures over extended period of time.
2. Dysfunctional family of origin includes emotional neglect where mirroring (parental awareness and positive validation of child's moods and feelings) was very minimal.
3. Parental figure's response to child's dysregulated mood states was lopsided. Acknowledgment and response to child's emotions occurred much more in response to hostility, e.g., arguing and fighting, than to sadness, fear, or positive (happy, enthusiastic) states.
4. Yelling, fighting, chaos, instability in the family origin structure/daily routines was common.
5. Person as a child displayed avoidant attachment characteristics, in addition to anxious-ambivalent attachment characteristics.
6. Signs of help rejecting. Outpatient psychotherapy/ counseling has been minimal or repetitive and unsuccessful.

• Acuity code: "Severe" when generally consistent with a classical cluster B personality disorder diagnosis; code "IHF" when patient is intermittently high functioning.

Bibliography

- ⁱ Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship Of Childhood Abuse And Household Dysfunction To Many Of The Leading Causes Of Death In Adults. *American Journal Of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245–258. Doi: 10.1016/S0749-3797(98)00017-8
- ⁱⁱ Magruder, K. M., Kassam-Adams, N., Thoresen, S., & Olf, M. (2016). Prevention And Public Health Approaches To Trauma And Traumatic Stress: A Rationale And A Call To Action. *European Journal Of Psychotraumatology*, 7(1), 29715. Doi: 10.3402/Ejpt.V7.29715
- ⁱⁱⁱ Hambrick, E. P., Brawner, T. W., & Perry, B. D. (2019). Timing Of Early-Life Stress And The Development Of Brain-Related Capacities. *Frontiers In Behavioral Neuroscience*, 13. Doi: 10.3389/Fnbeh.2019.00183
- ^{iv} Perry, B. (2020, April 11). Trauma Survivors Listen To Science – An Interview By Lisa Romano. Retrieved From <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yt63y5ythi0>
- ^v Szalavitz, M., & Perry, B. D. (2011). *Born For Love: Why Empathy Is Essential - And Endangered*. New York: Harperpaperbacks.
- ^{vi} Hạnh Nhất, Thích. (1999). *The Heart Of The Buddhas Teaching: Transforming Suffering Into Peace, Joy And Liberation*. London: Rider.
- ^{vii} Schroder, V. (2017). *Buddha’s Mom: The Neurobiology Of Spiritual Awakening*. Gainesville, Fl. Createspace.
- ^{viii} Schore, J. R., & Schore, A. N. (2007). Modern Attachment Theory: The Central Role of Affect Regulation in Development and Treatment. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 36(1), 9–20. doi: 10.1007/s10615-007-0111-7
- ^{ix} Schore, A. N. (2003b). *Affect regulation and the repair of the self*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- ^x Bowlby, J. (1998). *Attachment and loss*. London: Pimlico.
- ^{xi} Schore, A. N. (2003b). *Affect regulation and the repair of the self*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- ^{xii} Schore, A. N. (2019). *Right brain psychotherapy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

- ^{xiii} Van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Books, 2015.
- ^{xiv} Vonk, Jennifer; Shackelford, Todd K. (13 February 2012). *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Evolutionary Psychology*. Oxford University Press, USA. pp. 429–. ISBN 978-0-19-973818-2.
- ^{xv} Schore, A. N. (2003b). *Affect regulation and the repair of the self*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- ^{xvi} Schore, A. N. (2019). *Right brain psychotherapy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- ^{xvii} McGilcrist, I. (2009). "About Iain – Iain McGilcrist". iainmcgilcrist.com. Retrieved 23 April 2018. From the author's web site 'About' page.
- ^{xviii} McGilcrist, I. (2019). *Master and his emissary: the divided brain and the making of the western world*. Place of publication not identified: Yale University Press.
- ^{xix} Macneilage, P. F. (2004). Faculty of 1000 evaluation for Chimpanzees (Pan troglodytes) are predominantly right-handed: replication in three populations of apes. *F1000 - Post-Publication Peer Review of the Biomedical Literature*. doi: 10.3410/f.1020160.230468
- ^{xx} Dawn of Humanity. (n.d.). *Adventures in the Bone Trade*, 138–151. doi: 10.1007/0-387-21618-9_11
- ^{xxi} Chatterjee, Rhitu (15 March 2018). *Scientists are amazed by stone age tools they dug up in Kenya*. NPR. Retrieved 15 March 2018.
- ^{xxiii} Thomsett, M. C., & Thomsett, J. F. (1997). *War and conflict quotations: a worldwide dictionary of pronouncements from military leaders, politicians, philosophers, writers and others*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- ^{xxiv} Watts, A. (1999). *The philosophies of Asia: the edited transcripts*. Boston: Charles E. Tuttle Co.
- ^{xxv} Lombard, M., & Haidle, M. N. (2012). *Thinking a bow-and-arrow set: cognitive implications of middle stone age bow and stone-tipped arrow technology*. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 22(2), 237–264. doi: 10.1017/s095977431200025x
- ^{xxvi} Thomsett, M. C., & Thomsett, J. F. (1997). *War and conflict quotations: a worldwide dictionary of pronouncements from military leaders, politicians, philosophers, writers and others*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- ^{xxvii} Chatterjee, Rhitu (15 March 2018). *Scientists are amazed by stone age tools they dug up in Kenya*. NPR. Retrieved 15 March 2018.

-
- xxviii Holt, B. M. (2015). Anatomically Modern Homo sapiens. *Basics in Human Evolution*, 177–192. doi: 10.1016/b978-0-12-802652-6.00013-x
- xxix Cohen, Yehudi A (2017-07-12). *Human Adaptation: The Biosocial Background*. ISBN 9781351514712.
- xxx Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5. American Psychiatric Association, 2017.
- xxxi Schroder, V. (2017). *Buddha's mom: the neurobiology of spiritual awakening*. Gainesville, FL. CreateSpace.
- xxxii Ray, R.A. (2018). *The practice of pure awareness: somatic meditation for awakening of the sacred*. Boulder: Shambhala.
- xxxiii Panksepp, J. (2014). *Affective neuroscience: the foundations of human and animal emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- xxxiv Cromwell, H. C., & Panksepp, J. (2011). *Pioneering research in affective neuroscience: celebrating the work of Dr. Jaak Panksepp*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- xxxv Cromwell, H. C., & Panksepp, J. (2011). *Pioneering research in affective neuroscience: celebrating the work of Dr. Jaak Panksepp*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- xxxvi Panksepp, J. (2014). *Affective neuroscience: the foundations of human and animal emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- xxxvii Schroder, V. (2017). *Buddha's mom: the neurobiology of spiritual awakening*. Gainesville, FL. CreateSpace.
- xxxviii Schore, A. N. (2012). *The Science of the art of psychotherapy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- xxxix Mapes, Lynda V. (August 8, 2018). "'I am sobbing': Mother orca still carrying her dead calf — 16 days later". *The Seattle Times*. Retrieved August 8, 2018.
- xl Panksepp, J., Siegel, D. J., & Biven, L. (2012). *The archaeology of mind: neuroevolutionary origins of human emotions*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- xli Panksepp, J. (2014). *Affective neuroscience: the foundations of human and animal emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- xlii Peterson, J. B. (1999). *Maps of meaning: the architecture of belief*. New York: Routledge.
- xliii Jung, C. G. (2014). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*. London: Routledge.

^{xliv} Campbell, J. (2017). *The hero with a thousand faces*.

Mumbai, India: Yogi Impressions.

^{xlv} Rowan, J. (1990). *Subpersonalities: the people inside us*. London: Routledge.

^{xlvi} Kübler-Ross Elisabeth. (2002). *On death and dying: Questions and answers on death and dying; On life after death*. New York: Quality Paperback Book Club.

^{xlvii} Panksepp, J., Siegel, D. J., & Biven, L. (2012). *The archaeology of mind: neuroevolutionary origins of human emotions*.

New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

ANXIOUS

DO YOU THINK YOU'RE TOO EMOTIONAL?

LONELY

HEARTBROKEN

EVER BEEN TOLD, 'YOU SHOULD TALK TO SOMEONE'?
DO YOU DEAL WITH LOTS OF INTENSE FEELINGS?

SAD

OVERWHELMED

TERRIFIED

INSECURE

ANGRY

PANIC

DO YOUR ISSUES DATE BACK TO CHILDHOOD?
DESPERATE FOR REAL, LASTING CHANGE?

Do you have a bruised heart? Too many days and too much time stressed and overwhelmed? Too much fear, panic or anger?

Emotional storms hold us back. But healthy emotions are exquisite! Deep, open and free emotional capacities give life meaning and joy. These seeds within can become the source and essence of closeness, trust and love.

Traditional frames of reference may hurt more than help. Classical **anxiety and depression diagnoses** fall short. They distort the truth of what is damaged as well as the potential for radical healing.

A better map for the bruised heart is "**emotional trauma**". Through the stories of multiple clients, Dr. Schroder builds a case for the potential in emotional brokenness to bring about genuine transformation. His clients' journeys breathe life into the powerful '**new paradigm**' in neuroscience, psychology and psychiatry.

Graphics and diagrams make this new science of the heart vivid and accessible. Emotional trauma, seen clearly and courageously, is **ultimate trauma**. This lucid map lights the path to psychological healing and, further, to spiritual transformation.

