

Dissociation and restoration in trauma survivors and their children

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Abstract

Analyses of the intergenerational transmission of trauma from survivors to their children have, since the first psychoanalytic explorations of Holocaust survivors, given insights into the experience of the second generation. The transmission of trauma from mother to child has received attention due to the range of psychological symptoms which present in clinical settings by the survivor generation as well as the second generation. Traumatically generated psychological disruption in survivors manifests in their families. The children of trauma survivors are situated in the position of witnessing, partaking in and attempting to repair the parent's experience. This paper presents a relational perspective on the restoration of the traumatically ruptured self-object and the relationally manifest dissociative process that influences trauma transmission. Ulman and Brothers' (1988) interpretation of Kohut's description of the ways in which children attempt to restore their representations of self and self-object through disavowal is considered here as a primary intrapsychic and intersubjective process reflecting the intergenerational transmission of traumatic themes.