

A Summary of How I See the Work of Psychotherapy

Neurotic symptoms or emotional conflicts generally stem from parenting in which certain important *psychic nutrients* are absent. As a result an inner division develops: dissatisfactions with the self, and forward movements in life, which for some people are simply normal challenges, become terribly difficult hurdles.

Very painfully, the self comes to be disliked. There is great anger towards the self (and others). A paradox—almost mysterious—is that good feelings towards one's own self are hard to accept. As a result, pain and frustration become common daily experiences.

This neurosis is like a *persona*—it fights for its life with diabolical cleverness and tenacity. This self-destructive behavior is one of the greatest human mysteries, but its existence is too well established to be doubted.

What to do?

1. We try to identify the ways in which normal emotional development got stuck.
2. We try to get the emotions unstuck so the individual develops normal psychological muscle (ego strength) and feels capable of meeting life's challenges. As this happens, self-regard starts to replace self-dislike.
3. We try to always remember that the *neurotic persona* will fight with great tenacity.
4. We try to identify what "benefits" are unconsciously attached to the various symptoms.
5. There is a common, almost universal, tendency to recite all the ways in which "I hurt". Much of this is unavoidable, but our energies must be refocused to the tough questions:
 - a. In which ways do I need to grow?
 - b. What are my ways of avoiding growth?
 - c. Why is growing so scary?
6. Our ordinary rational minds are mixed blessings in these efforts because they are not comfortable with the unconscious mind. Here lies much of the work!

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