

Abstract

When the caregiver, usually the mother, is emotionally unavailable or does not meet needs that will regulate them, the child will learn to suppress their needs or switch them off altogether, developing a weaker sense of self and becoming unable to manage their feelings when under pressure. Children who experience repeated relational failures can suffer from the effects of developmental trauma.

This dissertation explores through key texts and research, how healing developmental trauma occurs within a developmentally reparative therapeutic relationship. The case study provides an example of how providing a developmentally reparative relationship can alter the way our brain functions, reshaping and creating new experiences.

This dissertation concurs with the key theorists in psychotherapy in that relationship is the first condition of being human. One of the most consistent of all the activities of the developing human is our striving for contact with others and is the primary motivating experience in human behaviour. Our emotional responses are impacted by the patterns of emotional experience with others from the moment we are born and become our blueprint for relationship throughout our lives.

What has happened to a person can never be undone, but we can deal with the imprints of the trauma on mind, body and soul (Van Der Kolk, 2014).