

The Treatment of Trauma-Related Structural Dissociation of the Personality: An Advanced Course

Ellert Nijenhuis, PhD
Bergen, Norway September 2010 – May 2011



This new course is specifically designed for colleagues who have followed the basic 8 day course on the treatment of trauma-related structural dissociation of the personality, and who wish to further develop their skills in treating patients who have been chronically traumatized. The course focuses on discussing and practising clinical skills and challenging interventions that flow from the theory as well as from a Janetian psychology of action described in *The Haunted Self: Structural Dissociation and the Treatment of Chronic Traumatization* by Onno van der Hart, Ellert Nijenhuis, and Kathy Steele (Norton, New York, 2006). This book will be used extensively in the course. Participants are invited to present difficult clinical cases. These cases will be used to practise making historical, functional and holistic analyses, to design detailed treatment plans and specific interventions, and to prepare the execution of the interventions in a skilful way. All participants take part in role-plays and home-work groups to ensure that they leave the course with a solid experiential understanding of how dissociative patients feel, think, and act, and with an advanced command of the clinical tools required for conducting therapy with complex cases.

Although the case discussions are bound to address a wide spectrum of theoretical and clinical issues, the four weekends of the course will have their own emphases. The first weekend is geared toward improving the participants' skills to make a variety of in-depth analyses of the patient's functioning. These analyses include assessing the patient according to a Janetian analysis of the patient's "mental economy." This analysis examines what the patient's mental income and costs have been, are and will be (if nothing is changed) the patient's mental income and costs, and how a more profitable balance can be reached. The first weekend will also address how clinicians can assist patients to overcome a severe phobia of the diagnosis and a deep phobia of collaboration and attachment in the first phase of treatment.

The second weekend involves the in-depth analysis and treatment of substitute actions—lower level actions such as suicidality, substance (ab)use, and disruption of personal relationships, including the relationship with the therapist and the therapeutic team. These actions substitute for more difficult, but more adaptive higher level actions. Reflexive mental actions will also be examined in the framework of substitute actions, and ways to foster adaptive reflective and experimental actions are discussed and practised.

In the third weekend, participants rehearse a variety of ways in which patients can be assisted to integrate their traumatic memories. The integration of traumatic memories is a most difficult mental action that only succeeds when the patient manages to deepen and maintain the collaborative and attachment relationship with the therapist and the therapeutic team. This principle will be strongly emphasized. Participants will be acquainted with the mental actions that survivors of relational

traumatization engage in to annihilate attachment relationships and they will learn to quickly detect the signs of such impending attachment disruptions. They will subsequently practise how patients can be assisted in repairing the collaborative and attachment relationship with the therapist and the therapeutic team.

The fourth and last weekend focuses on transference and countertransference actions. Participants will be invited to analyse their own responses to their different patients in terms of a psychology of action. In this context, they will recognize how countertransference reactions can be understood as substitute actions, as actions that stand in for more adaptive, but more demanding clinical conduct. Generally speaking, countertransference actions emerge when the patient's actions elicit the therapist's action system of defense so strongly that the therapist loses the capacity to be integrative and therapeutically effective. Ways to detect, manage, and overcome such most understandable but ineffective actions will be explored and rehearsed.

Location and time:

The course will be held in Bergen, Norway. More precise location is not decided yet. There are 32 direct flight routes from different airports in Europe to Bergen (many of them cheap), and you can also go to Oslo, and there are departing flights from Oslo to Bergen more than every hour.

Here is a list of direct flights to Bergen:

<http://www.avinor.no/lufthavn/bergen/direkteruter>

1. part: 3rd and 4th September 2010

2. part: 3rd and 4th Desember 2010

3. part: 11th and 12th March 2011

4. part: 27th and 28th May 2011

Time Schedule:

1.day: 1000 – 1800 (10am to 6 pm), and 2. day 0900 (9am – 5 pm) each of the four times.

Language:

The course will be in English.

Accommodation

You will get several suggested hotels when you register, both cheap ones and more expensive ones.

Subscription:

The fee is 13600 NOK (about 1675 Euro) which covers the whole course, including lunches, tea, coffee, fruit, cookies, and handouts. The bill will be divided in two, one before the first part, and one before the 3rd part.

You will get 10% off if you are a member of ESTD (European Society for Trauma and Dissociation). To get this, you have to be a member at the latest on the 1.st of May 2010, or if you register later, you have to be a member when you register. It is your responsibility to report if you are a member when you register.

You can subscribe by sending an email to ar-blind@online.no with name, work address, telephone number, email address and occupation. For more information, please send email to the same address. You can also find a norwegian description of the training at www.krisepsyk.no and on the country and training section on www.estd.org

Latest subscription is on 1.st of September 2010. One has to pay for the whole course, in case of withdrawals after this date. **Beware that it will be limited to 60 participants at the most.**