

FRAGMENTATION - - INTERMITTENT INSANITY

When you are "off" it does no good to pretend to yourself or others that you are perfectly fine. It's not a time to make important decisions or wage an argument . . . and to try to fix it. At best sex can only be a temporary band-aid. Most people know the difference between "on" when they just flow along, and "off" days when emotions are exaggerated, distorted, and negative, and so are responses. Thoughts are black or white, negative, and hopeless . . . always . . . you never . . . what's the use. I'm too fat, too dumb, too ugly . . ." Your eyes blur, you lose the qualities of color. Your mind dulls. You can't find your keys, wallet or your sense of self. You don't want to have sex or you can't live without it. You stumble and trip over words and thoughts and down the stairs. You feel smothered, abandoned or both.

We call this state of being "off", fragmentation. Themes from your primary scenarios, character style, agency, or transpersonal issues are the source of your fragmentations. If these core themes of yours are not triggered an upset in the present will be just an upset. It will not cause the deeper more debilitating symptoms of fragmentation. Fragmentation is the cause of the "crazy", rigid or incompetent unrealistic behavior that leads to most relationship conflict and disappointments.

Because intimate relationships create a parallel to your first family they create beliefs such as, "this time it will be different", or beliefs such as "if you don't do it the way my father did, you're wrong". Either way the struggles that ensue often trigger a fragmentation of the bond of the relationship. They can cause a state of frantic hyper-energy or boredom with life in general and relationships in particular. These are real barriers that communication alone can neither uncover nor resolve. Without a way out, the hope for the relationship may dissolve and sexuality becomes a painful struggle. The path for finding your way out of fragmentation is through the four arenas.

In an intimate relationship both people must first recognize and be willing to admit that there are times when they are fragmented, their perspective skewed, and emotions exaggerated (even though their upset feels perfectly justifiable.) Surely you have noticed that there are times when others, maybe your friend, lover or spouse, has seemed a little crazy. You may find it embarrassing but probably not difficult to admit that you are also occasionally emotionally and rationally "off"

Yet, you know the times when you are "off" because you feel it in your body - - even if you won't admit it. Fragmentation affects your body, your senses and perceptions, calls for

1994
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1994
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your worst fears and negativity, causing you to feel helpless, clumsy, forgetful, angry, and confused. Chaos follows throughout the day.

Although it can feel like insanity, fragmentations are a normal and familiar part of life. They tenaciously recur throughout life for all people. An episode can last for five minutes, five months, or for years. We see the most common type of depression as a series of lingering fragmentations that have not been worked with and cleaned up. Most mood swings, anger, and irritability are caused by fragmentation.

Many people have the misconception that the things people say or do while in the state of this "intermittent insanity" are the real truth. But they are wrong. What they are experiencing are the symptoms of fragmentation. And, the symptoms are more telling of childhood injuries than of a current situation. These underlying source of each fragmentation, not the symptoms, must be acknowledged in order to resolve any current issue.

During this shift in consciousness, some people simply fall apart, while others become tight and rigid from trying to hold it all together. Still others grab onto someone or something. They try to feel whole by turning to addictive work, food, love, alcohol, drugs, and of course . . . sex. If your partner turns toward you for a sexual "fix" on an ongoing basis, your sexual excitement will surely vanish.

Sometimes you are not aware that you are fragmented, you just find yourself feeling irritable, angry, depressed, "horny" or "spacey." Sometimes these feelings don't seem associated with anything else. You believe you just wake up one morning and you are "off".

If you think this shift in your body is random or without reason you can't influence your emotional health and the disruptions that are sure to come. If you realize that there is a cause to your upset but deal only with the obvious external or superficial symptoms rather than the underlying core themes you will find that "the blues" still hang on. There is no need to live this way, but mental health, like physical health, doesn't happen magically. Both require personal awareness and informed, sound, consistent practices.

A basic mental health principle of IBP is that you can't consistently maintain a sense of well-being within yourself or a relationship all the time. We all fall into self and relationship fragmentation. The trick is to not get stuck worrying about falling apart, but to focus on being able to get back together again more quickly each time so that you do not have to live in this state.

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THE WINDSURFING STORY

A few years ago we were watching seven beach boys windsurfing in Hawaii. It was wonderful to see the way they would attack the huge waves, jumping or crashing through them for a thrilling ride.

They seemed to fly, hitting the waves without ever falling down. This amazed us as most of the windsurfers we had seen before, spent most of their time trying to get up on their boards, and once up and riding the surf, they struggled to stay up.

Never falling down seemed impossible, so we studied these litesome bodies more closely. What we saw at first seemed like magic as their movements were so swift and smooth. Testify to their lack of concern for falling down was their freedom of movement and the risks taken by the young men. Their fall, we saw, was as graceful a part of the ride as any other. As they hit the water they swung their big sails toward the sky and on to the next big wave without missing a beat. Knowing how to get up was their secret.

So it seems that the secret in windsurfing is to learn, not how to stay up but how to get up. We realized what a great metaphor for mental health windsurfing is for, like good mental health, no one can stay up all the time. We all have times when we get knocked into the water. But the secret, as in windsurfing, is in knowing how to get up rapidly. Many people expend most of their energy trying to stay up and that is an impossibility. Relationships are the same way. Constantly working on a relationship is exhausting--learning how to get back up is much more exciting. We can learn to "surf" mental health and our relationships.

FORMS OF FRAGMENTATION

The simplest type of fragmentation is when any element of a current event is similar to an injury or theme in the primary scenario of your childhood. It's as if you are catapulted back to an archaic time when the emotions of an event or theme were overwhelming. Now you not only have the current injury to sort out and deal with, but the additional emotional weight and overwhelming intensity of the childhood injury with which to contend.

Character Style and Agency, developed in childhood can cause further fragmentation. When your character style works against your best interests you are likely to find yourself "off". If your agency unilateral contract (to give in order to get seen, loved or just not abandoned), doesn't work or causes you to abandon yourself, you can, and will, fall apart.

If you lose the "witness" aspect of yourself, your internal perspective, the place you stand outside of time to observe the impermanence of everything, including your own life . . . you will most surely fragment.

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When fragmentation hits a bull's eye on the scar of a childhood injury, even the smallest event looms large, and causes a deep emotional betrayal. This betrayal can undermine the very promise of the relationship and linger as anger or disappointment for its duration. Without promise, the relationship may drag on, but the hope dies, sex becomes perfunctory or no at all.

If you are in an intimate relationship and don't clear up your own fragmentation, your negativity and distortions can cause your partner and relationship to fragment and fall apart. If you remain in this state for prolonged periods of time, especially if you are unaware that you are experiencing yourself, your life, relationship and partner through a tainted lens, you can stretch the bond of the relationship needlessly until it breaks.

arguing about fragmentation In therapy, couples often insist on arguing about what happened after a fragmentation occurred, rather than uncovering the source and get out of this draining, disabling state. They want to complain about the irrational, cutting words thrown back and forth. The things people say and do while "unsane" are just symptoms of this state. A reiteration of "He said . . . She said . . ." can only push both people deeper into the insanity. When unattended, this irrational and upsetting state of fragmentation is as punishing to the relationship as it is to the individual. Most fighting is caused by unacknowledged fragmentation.

Fighting, no matter how fair, doesn't work. The things people say or do while in the state of fragmentation are just the symptoms of fragmentation. It is the cause of fragmentation, not the symptoms, that must be resolved. An argument that is not easily resolved means that something deeper is going on in the relationship that is not being recognized or dealt with. More fighting won't solve the problem because it doesn't deal with the real issues and only inflicts more wounds.

STEPS OUT OF FRAGMENTATION

You can avert the destructive cycle of emotional abuse by following a simple series of steps that will enable you to address your underlying trigger. Surprisingly, these steps can quickly shift you back to a state of balance and well-being. These steps are best done in a journal. If you want to understand and resolve your problems, take your fragmentation and rage to your journal . . . then you can be understood by others. Clear up your distortions then you'll be able to clear up issues with others.

When couples are taught the steps out of each type of fragmentation they are often upset to find how effective these simplified steps are . . . because of all the time and energy they have wasted in fragmentation throughout the years. They often say, "If we had only known."

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STEPS OUT OF SCENARIO FRAGMENTATION

Step 1. Acknowledge that you are fragmented. Identify the physical, emotional and thought pattern signs of your fragmentation: especially loss of sensory awareness; negativity and hopelessness. Where do you feel these signs in your body?

Step 2. Write acknowledgment, "I have been fragmented before, I will be fragmented again. I have gotten out of it before, and I will get out again. "Notice if you feel differently in your body.

Step 3. Get present by doing a sensory awareness exercise. You have fallen into the past, out of your body. Instead of here and now, you are then and there. To bring you back to your senses, use your eyes. Aloud, quickly list the colors and objects you see, i.e. blue shirt, green pants.

Step 4. Go back to the last time you felt good. Then go back two more days to see if you have found the original fragmentation trigger point. Now, go forward and find the initial trigger to your fragmentation. All later events are clouded because your perceptions and emotions were "off". Write any later upsets, working first on the initial fragmenting event.

Step 5. Acknowledge the childhood injury that is parallel to the current event upset.

Step 6. Discover which Good Parent message would have made a difference had it not been missing in your remembered childhood event or situation. Then discover which Good Parent message was missing in the present fragmenting situation. Are they the same? Do you give this message (or messages) to yourself and take it in from others when it is given? Do you disqualify the person bearing the positive message? Is this a current theme in your life?

If you can't find the trigger, write the Good Parent Messages from memory. The ones you don't remember are the ones that caused your fragmentation. Give the messages to yourself, explore the meaning they now have in your life and the lesson to learn.

Scenario: Good Parent Messages - (Memorize)

1. I love you.
2. I want you.
3. You are special to me.
4. I see you and I hear you.
5. It is not what you do but who you are that I love.
6. I love you, and I give you permission to be different from me.
7. I'll take care of you. — *good*
8. My love will make you well.
9. I'll be there for you; I will be there even when you die.
10. You can trust me.
11. You can trust your inner voice.
12. Sometimes I will tell you "no" and that's because I love you.
13. You don't have to be alone anymore.
14. You don't have to be afraid any more.
15. I feel your love and take it in.

can't take care of myself

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STEPS OUT OF AGENCY FRAGMENTATION

Step 1. Acknowledge your Agency trigger: You have done something wrong; Your target didn't get fixed or stay fixed; You've set your body in a ready mode for agency; You tried to get your sense of well-being from the outside, or; Someone didn't live up to your unilateral contract.

Step 2. Discover your physical, emotional and thought pattern symptoms of agency.

Step 3. Repeat the agency mantras to yourself. If you can't feel their truth in your body, you are "lying down." Find what is keeping you from saying and believing these healthy mantras.

Step 4. Exercise your volition.

Step 5. Complete an action in your behalf, felt as emanating from your own volition.

Step 4. Identify and clear up any unilateral contracts.

AGENCY: MANTRAS

1. I am not bad. I haven't done anything wrong.
2. I am not bad because I couldn't fix my mother (father, sister, brother etc.). And, I am not bad because I can't fix _ _ _ (Current target.)
3. I am not selfish when I think of myself, or act in my own behalf. I have a right to my own body-voice, my own body, my own toothbrush, to know what I think and want and to ask for it.
4. I don't have the power over, control of, or responsibility for other people's lives. I was taught that I had these powers. This is a lie I now tell myself.
5. When I take responsibility for the well being of others, to change how they feel, no matter how positive my intent, it's invasive and cripples them. I undermine those I try to fix.
6. Agency is just a habit that I do not have to continue.
7. Only in my body can I know the difference between an act of caring and an act of agency.
8. I will not abandon myself when I most need my own support.
9. This is not a crisis, only my agency habit makes me think it is.
10. I have a right to my own internal life, my own thoughts, hopes and dreams, and I'm not bad if I don't tell anyone about them.
11. I have a right to feel good about myself, it doesn't mean I'm narcissistic or grandiose.
12. I have a right to my own soul, my own destiny, my own personal communication with God.
13. I do not have to depend on someone else or wait for them to do my life.
14. The end of agency is not the end of love. It is the beginning.

Note: Between partners, a positive adult affirmation is powerful and healing.

Example: You're a good man (woman). You haven't done anything wrong. I love you and, we are going to work this out.

*note
affirmation
of a couple*

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STEPS OUT OF CHARACTER STYLE FRAGMENTATION

Remember, on one side of the range is the person with a high fear of abandonment, who's anxiety lessens if they can secure closeness. On the other side is the person with a high fear of inundation. If this person can create more distance their anxiety lessens. The person in the middle has both fears. There is nowhere to go to relieve this anxiety.

This dilemma creates new coping traits to deal with intimate relationships. These traits cause them to miscalculate and miss the qualities of the human spirit that generate attunement. Empathetic attunement is lost when there is a struggle in regard to the bond or breathing room in a relationship. When there is a struggle for both it becomes impossible.

If you are in the middle, check out both ends of the balancing act, the abandonment and inundation profiles. The cluster you haven't learned to attenuate is probably the one that will cause trouble for you in the long run. Each of these are unique and separate body experiences. It is only in the body that you can really understand or accept who you are and what you do.

Any of the characteristics in your cluster, when they don't work, can and do cause fragmentations. Living with your character style means accepting who you are, while not letting your inherent traits, fears or longings rule or control your life and intimate relationships. For good sex, you particularly need C-H-C . . . This is not a crisis . . . A sense of humor . . . Personal courage.

Done In Your Journal

Step 1. Write out the traits in your cluster (listed below), they are your character style triggers. Identify which of your traits you are now asserting, have become exaggerated, rigidified and to cause fragmentation?

Step 2. Discover the physical, emotional and thought pattern symptoms of your active character style traits? What in your scenario contributed to this theme of yours? Write your memory in the first person present. What was the belief formed from that experience, what were your feelings and fears? What feeling does this memory evoke in your body now, where? Which of your character style traits does this memory evoke?

Step 3. Access the state of your relationship's bond, attunement or breathing room fragmented?

Step 4. Follow the inside/outside exercises in your journal. Inside requires reality testing and the outside requires action.

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CHARACTER STYLE PROFILES

Abandonment Character Style Profile

1. No Matter What, It's Never Enough.
2. Haunted By Eternal Undefined Longings
3. No Boundaries: There's No Such Thing As Too Close
4. Cling And Constellate Around Something Or Someone
5. Gives too Much Then Feels Like A Victim
6. Hyper Body Awareness, Sensuality & Vulnerability.

Inundation Character Style Profile

1. Often loyal & Dependable But Separate & Removed: I Am What I Am.
2. Cut-Off From Feelings & Sensations.
3. Defined, Rigid Boundaries & Assumptions.
4. Literal Black & White, Right or Wrong Solid Way Of Being.
5. Both Physical & Emotional Armoring: Not Much Goes In Or Out.

Abandonment-Inundation Character Style Profile

- ✓ 1. Automatic No : Nobody Can Tell Me What To Do.
- ✓ 2. Have An Idea How Things Should Be And Cling To It.
- ✓ 3. Treat Self As An Object, Treat Others The Same Way.
- ✓ 4. Authenticity Gap: Tend To Lia Up Or Lie Down.
- ✓ 5. Intimate Relationships Are: Not Too Close And Not Too Far Away.
- ✓ 6. Feel Split-Off From; Feelings, Aliveness, Self, Body, Soul.

CHARACTER STYLE - REALITY TESTING

Inside/Outside Exercise

When any of the arenas cause fragmentation your perspective becomes distorted and your character style is liable to take over. It's hard to know the difference between what is coming at you from the (outside) world, other people, especially your lover, and what is more directly about you and the perspective you have when fragmented. If you don't discover the contribution you make to your own fragmentation (inside) you will remain stuck. Without reality testing, differences, misunderstandings or rigid ("no one can tell me what to do," "getting an idea and clinging to it," etc.), stubbornness is bound to escalate. The problem won't become resolved and you will feel less and less seen heard, understood, supported, loved, or cared about. Deal with your own underlying issues or your partner will not feel safe enough to admit his or her part. Then, deal with what actually happened (outside) in the relationship, otherwise, a wall of distance builds and you stay fragmented. On a scale of 1-10 how much of your fragmentation is caused by your own inside assumptions? How much is coming at you from someone or something on the outside?

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INSIDE: Find out if there is any reality to your upset.

Check your assumptions: What do you think happened? How does this fit with your character style traits? Example: "Am I fragmented because I have an idea of how it is or ought to be; because I think someone just told me what to do; because of my lack of boundaries?"

Check your balancing act: "Is the bond of my relationship really threatened or broken? Do I really have to be angry, indignant, hurt or withdrawn to get enough breathing room? Is the lack of attunement just a sign that my character style is acting up? Am I fragmented because someone just acted as if they were separate from me, or because they got too close?"

Check your crisis meter: See if you have gone back to an old habit of making a crisis where there isn't one. "This is just my character style acting up. I don't have to make a crisis out of it. I'm not a 3 years old helpless a victim. I can accept my character style with humor. Let's see how I have escalated the problem this time."

Check your intention: What are your intentions toward your partner? Are you hurt, trying to get even, control, or change your partner? Do you believe your partners intention is positive toward you, the bond, the breathing room, and the attunement between you? Check it out if you think your partner has a negative intention toward you; or it will fragment you.

OUTSIDE: If your partner really is triggering your fragmentation just writing about it is not enough, you must do something. This takes courage.

Take Action: Your fragmentation won't go away if there is something on the outside, coming at you that is undermining to you, especially if it's because of your character style. Example: if your partner constantly keeps you waiting, won't be on time, won't make commitments, etc. set limits that will keep you from being in a perpetual state of fragmentation. Your partner can't stop your feelings of abandonment, nor be perfect all the time, but, if they can't make a reasonable commitment, you may not belong with them.

Take an affirmative stance: Make what is coming at you, your idea so that you will not become immobilized in you reactive 'automatic no' response. Example: "I won't make love with you at 5:00 but I will at 5:30." Or, "I'm going to ___ even though you want me to." You must first respond to your desire to say "no", then find what you can do. If your partner never even gets close to what they want hope is lost.

Bracket Off: How can you take care of yourself if you can't immediately act? Although you may not be able to get out of your fragmentation if you don't take an action that is needed, you may find temporary relief by, bracketing off or postponing the action until later. But, to avoid a deeper fragmentation, be sure to set a specific time with yourself to readdress the issue.

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Paxil
Celexa
Prozac