

Uncovering the Secrets of the Traumatized Psyche: The Life-saving Inner Protector who is also a Persecutor

Donald E. Kalsched and Daniela F. Sieff

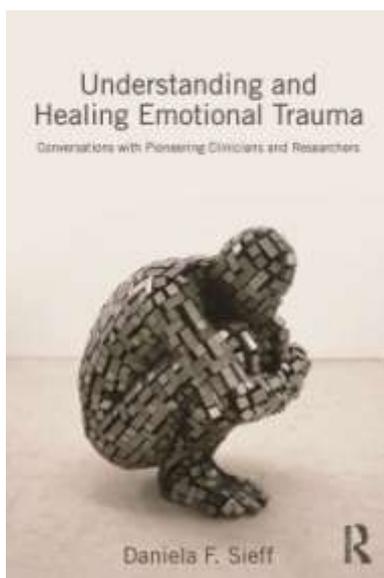
In: Sieff, D.F. (2015) *Understanding and Healing Emotional Trauma: Conversations with Pioneering Clinicians and Researchers*. Routledge, UK

Chapter Summary

The psychological system created when a child is traumatized is life-saving but has a terrible down-side. The normal reaction to unbearable pain is to withdraw from the cause of that pain; however when we are children, and it is our caregivers who are causing pain, we cannot physically withdraw, so withdrawal happens at a psychological level instead. We dissociate. Our relational and creative potential, which in happier circumstances would animate and vitalise our life, goes into hiding in the unconscious. At the same time, another part of the psyche moves to the forefront to become its protector.

This protective system vehemently avoids anything that appears to carry a risk of re-traumatization, but tragically it sees danger in the very opportunities that would bring us healing, fulfilment and meaning. Thus it sabotages these opportunities, perhaps by creating an insidious belief in the hopelessness of our life, or by fostering a vicious, scare-mongering inner critic. It may also sabotage these opportunities by spiriting us into a world of fantasy or addiction.

Rather than providing genuine protection, this psychological system is ultimately life-denying and self-traumatizing. The inner protector becomes an unwitting inner persecutor. Healing requires that we move beyond the protector/persecutor, enter into our brokenness, and reconnect to our buried potential, as well as to the original pain. It is a difficult and challenging process. The fairy story of 'The Handless Maiden' brings the archetypal dimensions of this system to life, and describes how we can move beyond it.



Cover Image: Antony Gormley, *Apert VII*, 2002, Variable mild steel blocks, 79x51x59cm, 213kg

To read full chapter please click below to buy book:

Amazon UK	Amazon USA	Amazon Canada
Amazon Germany	Amazon Italy	Amazon France
Amazon Spain	Amazon Brazil	Amazon Mexico
Amazon Australia	Amazon Japan	Amazon China