

# Return from Exile: Beyond Self-alienation, Shame and Addiction to Reconnect with Ourselves

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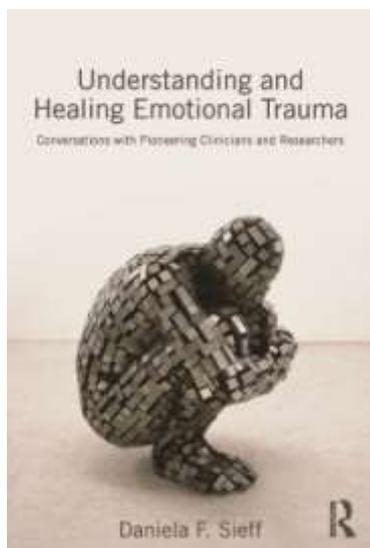
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## Chapter Summary

In essence, emotional trauma occurs as a result of a discrepancy between an individual's inner and outer world. If our environment cannot give us what we need to grow, we have no choice but to dissociate parts of ourselves, and abandon aspects of our internal reality. In time, we become self-alienated. Out of such self-alienation flows shame: an all-pervasive, embodied sense of being fundamentally defective as a human being. Shame distorts and poisons our relationship with ourselves and others.

In a misguided attempt to alleviate the suffering born of dissociation, self-alienation and shame, we look *outside* of ourselves for healing. Whatever appears to offer us respite risks becoming the subject of an 'addiction'. However, the relief is an illusion. In our inner world, nothing has changed. Rather, our misguided attempt to heal exacerbates dissociation, deepens shame, and intensifies self-alienation.

Real repair requires that we turn inwards and forge authentic, compassionate and responsible ways to reconnect to ourselves. We must come to know our shame from inside our embodied experience, engage with our pain, and acknowledge our fear. We must discover how we abandoned ourselves, dismantle our old defences, and build a life that is rooted in our internal reality – a reality that includes the legacy of our woundedness. The feelings involved in this process can be strong, deep and, at times, overwhelming. Frightened by those feelings, we look for easier options. However, if we aspire to recover from our trauma, and to embrace the life that is authentically and uniquely ours, then we have no choice but to undertake this challenging inner work.



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