

# On the Same Wavelength: How our Emotional Brain is shaped by Human Relationships

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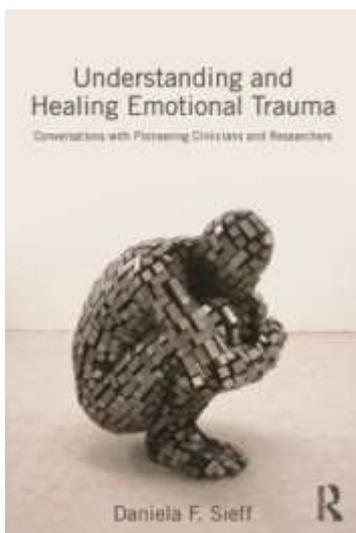
## Chapter Summary

Our earliest attachment relationships have long-lasting effects on the structure our emotional brain, our relationships with ourselves and others, and our psychological well-being.

Good enough early nurturing fosters the neural networks (located in the right hemisphere of the brain) which enable us to regulate our emotions healthily. We grow up trusting our emotions (be they painful or joyful) and capable of responding to our social world appropriately. As a result, we develop an embodied, deeply-rooted and implicit sense of inner security.

In contrast, poor early environments compromise the development of the right hemisphere, leaving us struggling to respond to our social world appropriately, and unable to regulate our emotions healthily. Unregulated emotions overload the system, and because we cannot tolerate being emotionally overloaded for long periods of time, we unconsciously learn to dissociate from our emotions and to prevent them from reaching awareness. If we turn to dissociation on a regular basis, dissociative neural pathways become engrained in our developing brains to create emotional instability, a nebulous sense of disconnection, and an implicitly embodied feeling of fundamental insecurity. At this point, dissociation, which began as a defence, has become embedded in the structure of our developing personality and part of our character.

Repair is not achieved by making the unconscious conscious: rather it depends on restructuring the emotional brain itself through building new neural networks. Achieving this requires relationally-based, emotionally-focused psychotherapy with an empathic therapist who is an active participant in the process. Healing occurs primarily through non-verbal, right brain, implicit connection between therapist & patient.



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