

How can a person be so cruel? Can I save a narcissist? Is all of this my fault? What is abuse? Am I perhaps narcissistic myself? How can I leave this toxic relationship? Will this unbearable pain ever stop? Is there a way out of this hell? Am I allowed to - and will I ever - be happy again? Can trauma be healed?

This book describes the widespread impact of trauma across generations. It draws attention to the resulting problems that occur in many relationships - dramas that seem unimaginable yet unfold behind closed doors in the midst of our society. With numerous firsthand accounts from those affected, typical manipulative and abusive behaviors as well as dysfunctional relationship patterns are explained.

The book shows ways to free oneself from toxic relationships and to process trauma. It not only offers support to victims of abuse in bringing light into the darkness and finding their way back from the inner chaos of mere survival to truly living again. It is also aimed at relatives and helping professionals - in short, at anyone who wishes to engage with this increasingly urgent topic.

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His approach is characterized by unconventionality, pragmatism, and a strong focus on solutions, which sets him apart from conventional methods. His expertise is based not only on high-level professional training and continuing education, but also on many years of working with people and, above all, on personal experience.

With a focus on trauma and abuse, leadership, and personal development, his work extends throughout the entire German-speaking region and beyond, reaching clients worldwide.



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BORIS PIKULA
EXPANDED SECOND EDITION

THE GIFT OF PAIN

Trauma Resulting from Narcissistic
Abuse and Toxic Relationships
Understanding, Accepting, and Healing

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"Sometimes you must hurt in order to know, fall in order to grow, lose in order to gain, because most of life's greatest lessons are learned through pain." - Nagato (Naruto)

"Every life experience, no matter how 'tragic', contains a hidden lesson. When we discover and acknowledge the hidden gift that is there, a healing takes place." - David R. Hawkins




Table of contents

Reader reviews	8
Perface to the second, expanded edition	11
Perface	13
The Legacy of Trauma	17
Trauma – A State Without Words	23
BATMAN or JOKER – We Always Have a Choice	26
The Anatomy of Manipulation and Abuse	31
The Development of Toxic and Narcissistic Personality Traits	33
Narcissistic Abuse	40
Relationship with a Narcissist – A Look Behind the Mask	48
Am I a Narcissist?	51
Characteristics That Can	
Increase Vulnerability to Narcissistic Abuse	52
Covert and Overt Narcissism	56
Red Flags	58
Trapped Between Grandiosity and Shame	59
Manipulation – The Tool for Power and Control	63
Love Bombing	63
Gaslighting – Psychological Brainwashing	65
Cognitive Dissonance	66
Drama, Games, and Sabotage	67
No Guilt and Remorse	69
Projection	69
Lies	70
Devaluation, Provocation, and Reactive Abuse	71
Triangulation	73
Promiscuity and the Purchase of Sex	74
Social Isolation and the “Flying Monkeys”	79
Word Salad	80
Silent Treatment and Ghosting	80
Hoovering	82
The Final Phase	83
Trauma Bonding	84
Signs of a Toxic and Manipulative Relationship	85
– in a Nutshell:	
The Toxic Relationship	89
Growing up in a Toxic Family System	91
Black Sheep and Golden Child	96
Dysfunctional Relationship Patterns	98
The Psychodynamics of Compulsive Relationships	102

Possible signs that can contribute to dysfunctional and compulsive relationship patterns in adulthood – in a nutshell:	105
The Cycle of Repeating Patterns	106
The Toxic Love of a Narcissist	107
What You Should Never Say to a Narcissist	110
Leaving a Toxic Relationship	115
Time Out – Time With Yourself, Time for Yourself	123
The Healing Process of Acceptance	125
Grief	129
From Surviving Back to Living	133
The Consequences of Abuse and Trauma	135
Breaking the Silence	138
The Traumatized Brain	143
The Rational and the Emotional Brain	144
The Classic Trauma Responses	148
Fight or Flight	149
Freeze	150
Collapse, Submit, Shutdown	152
Fawn, Please and Appease	154
Cry for Help, Attachment	155
The Key Characteristics of Trauma	157
Flashbacks	157
Dissociation	157
Chronic Emotional Numbness	162
Heightened Startle Response	163
Depression	163
Trauma-Induced Shame	164
Moral Injury	167
Self-Harm	169
Suicide	170
The Capacity for Relationships	172
Approaches to Coping with Trauma	175
The Model of the Three Inner Parts	182
Self-Protection: Setting Boundaries	184
Working with Triggers	187
Emotional Awareness	190
Dealing with Emotions	193
Putting the Horror into Words	198
The Safe Place	200
Revising the Belief System	202
And What Now...? In a Nutshell	205
Afterword	206
Acknowledgements	210
The Gift of Pain	212

Reader reviews

By a fortunate coincidence, I came across your book and absolutely devoured it. For the first time, I finally felt understood.

I have been in a relationship for six years now in which there is a complete lack of communication. My wishes and needs are neither seen nor heard. We repeatedly go through the same pattern of conflict, which is - of course - always my fault ("I have to treat you this way"). It is a recurring cycle of on-and-off phases filled with devaluation, constant criticism, declarations of love, withdrawal of affection, promises to improve, one-sided blame, and much more. I only experience love and affection when I comply with his wishes.

I am trapped in endless thought loops, struggling with self-doubt, and yet somehow, I still have to remain strong. I am afraid of harming my children if I stay in this destructive relationship. I want to break free. I do not want them to grow up believing that such a relationship is normal - a relationship in which a woman must constantly endure being demeaned.

Your words truly hit the nail on the head. I am 37 years young and have been in therapy for four years, which, however, went extremely wrong and left me even more broken. In March of this year, I experienced a breakthrough: narcissism was the missing puzzle piece - and the root of all evil is my mother.

Since then, I have been able to distance myself quite well from my entire toxic environment, except for the equally narcissistic mother of my five-year-old son. I feel helpless and do not know how to protect myself and my son.

After a 17-year on-and-off violent relationship and my "discard" last year in the cruelest way - when my entire living environment was taken from me and I was completely excluded and isolated - I fled in extreme distress to a women's shelter. I also found a trauma therapist who has helped me.

Since then, I have been trying to find myself again, to emerge from the abyss, and to fight for my life. It is all unbelievable - one endless nightmare.

How incredibly beautiful and healing it has been for me since then to meet people who know what I am talking about, who can understand and feel because they have had to experience and feel it themselves.

Your book was recommended to me. After reading just the first few pages, I knew how much it would help me heal. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I am seeking support after a 20-year relationship with a pathological narcissist with borderline disorder and sadistic traits. The diagnosis comes from the psychologist we saw for couple therapy.

He moved out over a year ago, and I did not take him back. But I am not doing well. Among other things, I suffer from flashbacks, depression, crying spells, and I wake up at night drenched in sweat, hyperventilating.

What completely confuses me is that I miss him, even though I know he would destroy me. It feels like a connection where he is pulling the strings. I cannot explain it. I feel hypnotized and listen to all the cruel things he says. I simply cannot manage to stop him or walk away until he is "finished" with me. I need help to detach from him. Your book has given me some initial clarity in this regard - I practically devoured it. Thank you!

My two children and I have been living separately from my narcissistic husband for about a year and a half now. My 13-year-old daughter has developed anxiety and social phobia. My 11-year-old son is on the autism spectrum (early childhood autism).

Since the physical separation, my children have been doing better. I have applied for sole custody. My daughter especially does not want to see her father. He does not accept this and refuses to leave us alone.

He speaks badly about me to friends and acquaintances and threatens me with the words: "You will regret the day you were born." No one is helping us - neither the court nor the authorities. My children and I are completely at his mercy.

I am more than grateful that I stumbled upon this book.

Preface to the second, expanded edition

When this book was published in its first edition in May 2024, after several years of work, I had no idea that ten days later, my girlfriend would take her own life, as a result of her severe trauma from abuse in childhood and adolescence. How devastating this news was, is something one cannot even begin to imagine unless one has experienced it oneself. The loss was – and still is – unfathomable, the pain unimaginable. So where, one might ask, was the “*gift of pain*” in all this? It felt as though I had shot myself in the foot with that title. The entire book seemed ironic.

But that was not the case at all. From our human, earthly, limited perspective, some things in our lives may not seem to make sense – especially when taken out of context. Often, we only recognize connections in hindsight. The phrase “*gift of pain*” is not about finding joy in pain or believing that growth is impossible without it. Nor is it about perpetrators giving a “gift” to their victims through abuse. As I mention in various parts of the book, it is rather about taking responsibility for one’s own feelings. How I would have loved to blame God, the universe, circumstances, or other people for the unbearable pain of my loss! But pain and joy, love and grief, are deeply intertwined. Some things hurt simply because the love is real. One cannot exist without the other – this seems to be part of the package of our lives on this planet. We have influence over some things in life, but not over many others. What is within our power, however, is the choice of how we respond to experiences that lie beyond our control.

When we walk the path of healing, we have no choice but to decide to face our uncomfortable feelings and grow emotionally through them. The path of healing is the path of love. The alternative would be to try to avoid unpleasant feelings through ignorance, suppression, denial, and projection. But the boomerang will most certainly return sooner or later – most likely in the form of toxic behaviors and/or illness.

It has now been a good two years since the first edition (in German language). Despite the immense weight of my grief, there was also good news: the book received a very positive response from readers. Numerous messages showed me that it helped many people open their eyes, gain clarity, and realign their lives. Some wrote that it was the best book on this subject, and one person even described it as “their Bible.” I am very happy and grateful for this.

All of this, together with further valuable experiences in working with those affected, led me to publish this second, expanded edition – the first in English – with several corrections, additions, and improvements, which you now hold in your hands.

I hope this book continues to contribute to a deeper understanding of this important topic and to help many people build and maintain healthy relationships, as well as understand, accept, and heal trauma.

Munich, January 2026
Boris Pikula

Preface

I just can't understand it! How can a person be so cruel? Can I save a narcissist? Is all of this my fault? What is abuse? Am I perhaps narcissistic myself? Do I just need to try harder? How can I leave this toxic relationship? Will this unbearable pain ever stop? Is there a way out of this hell? Am I allowed to – and will I ever – be happy again? Can trauma be healed?

These or similar questions likely occupy anyone who has ever experienced some form of abuse or has otherwise had to deal with toxic people. As someone affected myself, they caused me many painful moments and countless sleepless nights in which I no longer knew how to move forward or what was “right” and what was “wrong.” My brain felt as if it had been put through a meat grinder. I felt like I was going insane. I seemed addicted like a junkie and unable to break the toxic cycle. Although working with trauma is one of the main focuses of my professional work, the true impact that abuse – especially narcissistic abuse – has on the psyche, the mind, and the body only really became clear to me when I found myself in a toxic *relationship*.

The process that this acquaintance set in motion was brutal, and the pain that resulted from it was unimaginable. Yet somewhere deep inside, I sensed that there was a gift waiting for me. I was willing to walk through hell. It was the only way anyway. And hell, it truly was! But it taught me things that I probably would never have learned otherwise, because it would have been too painful to face them voluntarily. Only then did I truly realize how much influence my own deep-seated – and evidently not yet fully healed – wounds from physical violence and psychological abuse in my childhood and adolescence still had on my life after so many years.

The path through hell taught me a deeper acceptance of myself and helped explain my past self-sabotage, suicidal thoughts, dissociations, deeply depressive phases, and excessive self-destructive behaviors.

Yet even more frightening was the realization of the true long-term effects and the societal infiltration not only of narcissistic abuse but of abuse in general and trauma – as well as the related fact that unresolved trauma is passed on from generation to generation (transgenerational trauma).

No one who becomes entangled in an abusive spider's web suspects at the beginning of the relationship what lies ahead. Hardly anyone has ever been informed that something like this actually exists, which is why there is a widespread and deeply mistaken understanding of it. Few people can imagine that some

individuals – such as narcissists, sadists, psychopaths, and sociopaths – are wired completely differently from themselves. Often, the realization only comes after significant abuse has already taken place and one is desperately searching for help to somehow save one's life and emotional well-being. There is a lack of understanding of how such people truly function because most of us are simply not like that. The often-preached phrase *"till death do us part"* can, in the case of narcissistic relationships, actually become a very fateful self-fulfilling prophecy.

For many of us, abuse already began in childhood, and for those who grew up in a toxic environment, abusive behavior became "normal." For this reason, later in life we tend to cling to this old "normality" and attract people to whom we assign the task of somehow completing us. If we learned early on that we were never enough and not lovable, we long for anything that seems to compensate for this supposed deficiency. We accept every moldy crumb of affection to feed our thirsty soul and try to maintain our dream image of an ideal person – the image that the narcissist willingly promises us. They will offer us what we forbid ourselves to have: love, validation, success, prospects, security, and joy. Even when we begin to sense that something is wrong and every internal alarm bell is ringing – if we want to preserve our idealized image and what feels familiar, we are forced to deny the truth.

I remember my childhood very clearly. When we talked among friends, there was hardly anyone who had not been beaten by one or both parents. As children in the early 1970s, we almost regarded violence within the family as normal. That was just the way it was. Many of my friends and classmates from that time – both girls and boys – later developed behavioral problems in one form or another: physical symptoms such as autoimmune diseases, medication abuse or alcoholism (as they often had known it from home), falling into the drug scene, repeated dysfunctional relationship patterns, depression, or even suicide. My first great love, Susanne, took her own life ten years later after we separated at the age of 24. As I later discovered, abuse by her father toward her and her brothers at home had not been uncommon.

In this book, I would like to offer help to those affected so they can find their way back to life from the hell of abuse and the inner chaos of trauma. I also want to provide relatives, therapists, and anyone else with a better understanding and draw attention to the dramas that many people cannot imagine, yet which increasingly take place among us in society behind closed doors. Furthermore, the aim here is not to isolate certain people, pathologize them, or place them into diagnostic boxes, but rather to point out dysfunctional, unhealthy, and sometimes extremely destructive – indeed often brutal, criminal, and violent – behaviors in interpersonal relationships and to raise awareness of the resulting societal problems.

It was not an easy task to merge and summarize the connections between narcissism, abuse, dysfunctional relationship dynamics, and the resulting consequences of trauma in a way that is understandable and practical. Abuse can hardly be worked through without some knowledge of trauma – and conversely, without understanding the dynamics of abuse, it is difficult to understand trauma and address and overcome it effectively. The impulses and healing approaches mentioned here do not arise from ornate, overly intellectual theory; rather, in my experience they have repeatedly proven themselves in real life – both in my own life and in the lives of my clients. Nevertheless, these are options, not *one-size-fits-all solutions*.

To avoid diagnostic nitpicking and academic hairsplitting, the term narcissist in the following context is used broadly to describe toxic, destructive, sadistic, and criminal behaviors in which the perpetrators show very little or no empathy, no willingness to change, and no capacity for self-reflection. At the same time, I would also like to warn against abandoning personal responsibility and labeling every person whose behavior does not always meet our expectations as a *narcissist or psychopath*. All of us can show narcissistic traits at certain moments or sometimes appear emotionally cold. Just because someone offends us does not mean they are a narcissist. Nor does it mean that someone is a narcissist simply because they argue well and we begin to doubt ourselves, because we are lied to, or because we receive a declaration of love and are called a *soulmate*.

All of us can sometimes react unfairly, hurtfully, or meanly under certain circumstances. We all want recognition at times. We all make mistakes, and no one is perfect. We all have our psychological defense mechanisms that help us navigate certain situations in life. I, too, have crossed other people's boundaries, sought attention, or withdrawn in offense and tried to punish someone through silence. I, too, have sometimes simply been an asshole. However, it is part of our responsibility as human beings to engage our higher reasoning, to consider different perspectives, to question and expand our own model of the world, to correct our mistakes, and to seek solutions. This is where the narcissistic personality differs. It can be rigidly self-absorbed, at times malicious, brutal, and sadistic, extremely egocentric and drama oriented. It is neither interested in solutions nor in personal growth and instead manifests in recurring toxic patterns without any willingness to change them.

If I repeat myself in certain places, it is to illustrate connections more clearly or to allow the information to sink more deeply into the nervous system, because some things may indeed seem "hard to imagine" to some readers.

A small trigger warning: many of the personal accounts in this book contain descriptions of abuse and other traumatic events. All of the individuals affected experienced abuse in some form during their childhood, as had the generations before them. All names and identities have been changed to preserve anonymity. Any resemblance to actual people is purely coincidental.

The Legacy of Trauma

„Denial of the consequences of trauma can wreak havoc with the social fabric of society.“ – Bessel van der Kolk

Traumatized people traumatize people. What does that mean? To better understand this statement, let us rewind the tape a few decades, back to the last century – to the end of the Second World War in 1945...

After six horrific years and more than 60 million deaths – including soldiers, civilians, and children – the war was finally over. But what did all the survivors do with the horrific experiences of those dark years and the images in their minds? What happened to the memories of murder, violence, terror, torture, humiliation, racism, rejection, betrayal, rape, abortion, separation, deportations, flight, abuse, famine, disease, and other unimaginable atrocities? Where did they place all this horror? What did they do with their feelings of pain, grief, fear, shame, guilt, disappointment, bitterness, hatred, anger, helplessness, and powerlessness – in a time when it was far more shameful and difficult to open up or even seek therapeutic help, assuming such help was available at all? It was a time when people lived by the motto: *“I don’t need anyone - I can help myself,”* including my own parents. It quickly becomes clear that since then there has not been much true processing of these experiences, except perhaps on a superficial level in the form of financial reparations, memorial days, or monuments. Little thought was given to the possible psychological aftermath and long-term consequences of the war years. What seemed far more important was to return to “normality” as quickly as possible – a reaction that was understandable after such a harsh time, yet it also meant that no real processing took place.

And since then, there has not been only the Second World War. There have been many, many other wars. Some time ago in the United States, the so-called *“22 Push-up Challenge”* was launched. In this campaign, people performed push-ups to raise awareness of the high suicide rate among war veterans due to psychological suffering – 22 deaths per day. That number alone speaks volumes. In Germany, the suicide rate is around 30 lives per day (see chapter *Suicide*). 6) And what about the tens of thousands of migrants who, in recent years, have fled not only to Germany but to many other countries as well, seeking refuge from environmental disasters, war, and displacement to save their lives? What about the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict or the Israel-Palestine conflict or most recently USA/Israel-Iran? Or all the more subtle forms of human behavior that mostly occur in the shadows of society yet can likewise lead to trauma

or at least have a retraumatizing effect – such as human trafficking, organized crime, forced prostitution, but also poverty, homelessness, or institutions such as prisons, psychiatric facilities, or hospitals, where, unfortunately, inhumane treatment is not uncommon? It already begins with birth – the very first step into life. How much abuse occurs at this stage, where medical systems often decide over the heads of women what is supposedly best for them and how, when, under what circumstances, and where they should give birth: “According to a report by the World Health Organization from 2019, 42% of women (in a worldwide survey) reported experiencing physical or verbal abuse or discrimination during childbirth in healthcare facilities. (...) We provoke birth trauma through the use of steel instruments, bright lights, rubber gloves, the smell of antiseptics and anesthetics, loud voices, or the sound of machines.” 1)

What do all these people do with the dark experiences that continue to ferment inside them? What effects does all of this have on their surroundings and on future generations? Who asks these people what they carry within themselves every single day, when outwardly only symptoms are diagnosed – symptoms that place them into categories and reduce them to abstract statistics?

The long-term consequences of unprocessed trauma inevitably find their way to the surface. Sooner or later, they catch up with every person. The question is not “if,” but “when.” In this way, experienced horror is passed on from generation to generation and, over time, has led us to live increasingly in a traumatized society – one that at best treats symptoms but rarely addresses the root cause. The dysfunctional behaviors that sometimes result from this gradually become accepted as “normal.” People prefer not even to imagine the unimaginable, especially since it often takes place well hidden in the shadows of society. But looking away comes at a price. I have witnessed the effects of the transgenerational inheritance of trauma firsthand in my own family and among relatives. I see them every day in my practice working with people.

The collective and transgenerational transmission of unresolved trauma – often expressed in the form of abuse – occurs primarily from parents to their children. Traumatic experiences are stored in the body at the cellular level and in the subconscious, where they often take on a life of their own because the painful and unbearable emotions associated with them are managed through survival strategies (see also *The Classical Trauma Responses*) and psychological defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, projection, and dissociation. This can manifest in many ways, sometimes quite insidiously – for example through social tolerance of irresponsibility and victim behavior, or through the cultivation of a moral double standard that constantly seeks the devil in others. It can also appear

in increasing tendencies toward violence and misogyny, rising levels of abuse, ever more brutal films, and addictive behaviors of all kinds – such as drugs, sex, and alcohol – as well as extreme ideologies or dramatic relationship conflicts. Repressed and denied horror eventually finds a vent – often in the form of horror itself. Trauma does not simply disappear by ignoring it. The only thing that disappears is the self of the person who carries it. Trauma ultimately means an inner split, created in the hope of never having to face the terror again. In the short term this may seem to work, but in the long run it proves to be an illusion with dramatic consequences – especially when traumatized individuals with dysfunctional behavioral patterns occupy positions of power where they can make decisions that affect the population, the environment, or even the entire planet, and therefore the future of humanity. In this, the legacy of trauma becomes visible.

“Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.”
– Ted Perry

While the media mainly prides itself on attention-grabbing headlines about abuse involving well-known personalities, largely excluding narcissism or only touching on it superficially in tabloid jargon, and while trauma is usually discussed only in relation to war veterans and refugees, the number of sexual, physical, and narcissistic abuse and acts of violence against children, adolescents, and women in the shadows of society increases drastically every year.

According to German police crime statistics 2), cases of child sexual abuse in Germany rose by 6.3 percent in 2021 to over 15,500 cases. About 74 percent of victims were girls and 26 percent boys – an average of 49 minor victims per day, an alarming figure. Approximately 1.2 million men in Germany purchase sex daily (see chapter on *Promiscuity and the Purchase of Sex*). 7) Not without reason is Germany referred to as the “brothel of Europe.” 3) Roughly every seventh to eighth adult in Germany was a victim of sexual violence during childhood or adolescence. Among women, this affects every fourth to fifth. Statistically, every third day a woman is killed by a partner or ex-partner in Germany. Worldwide, around 89,000 women were killed in 2022. More than half of all femicides is committed by family members or partners.

According to the Ministry of the Interior, 240,547 cases of domestic violence were reported in the same year alone – an increase of 8.5 percent compared to the previous year. Perhaps this is partly due to increasing public awareness and the breaking of taboos; numbers must always be viewed in context. Nevertheless, there were 157,818 cases of intimate partner violence, an increase of 9.1

percent. Eighty percent of victims were women; 78 percent of suspects were men. 133 women and 19 men were killed by their partner. More than 82,000 reports involved family violence, with simple bodily harm being the most common offense. Sexual abuse most frequently occurs within the immediate family. It also occurs within the extended family and social circle – friends, neighbors, or others who know the child well and have established a level of trust. Some children are “resold” to paying customers, for example, through certain forms of surrogacy or via the darknet. Approximately 90 percent of perpetrators are male and 10 percent female. Although the majority of these crimes are committed by men, it is not a question of gender but of the individual. Women, too, can be brutal and abusive. According to statistics, almost all perpetrators share a primary desire for power and superiority. The number of unreported cases is far higher than official figures suggest. According to the World Health Organization, 4) an estimated one million children and adolescents in Germany alone have experienced or are experiencing sexual violence by adults. That means one to two children in every classroom. Globally, according to a statistical analysis by UNICEF, 300 million girls and boys experience physical or verbal violence by their caregivers at home. 5)

One wonders how so much violence can remain hidden. Children and adolescents who have been victims of abuse are labeled with diagnoses due to resulting symptoms – labels that contribute to nothing other than obscuring the truth: their unbearable childhood trauma, to which they were helplessly exposed through no fault of their own. Many of these traumatized victims grow into adults who continue the legacy in some form and may, consciously or unconsciously, later become perpetrators themselves.

„Trauma is perhaps the most avoided, ignored, belittled, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering.“ – Peter Levine

A child who experiences abuse or neglect loses a part of their soul – their innocence and their basic trust in themselves and in the world. In order to somehow cope with this pain and betrayal, the child must develop mechanisms that allow them to regain a sense of control, often by developing dysfunctional behaviors or by numbing and distracting themselves through addictions of all kinds.

To this day, diagnoses are often made that merely describe the symptoms of people who struggle day after day to make it through life in survival mode. Not infrequently (though not necessarily), behind labels such as borderline personality disorder, eating disorders, treatment-resistant depression, chronic anxiety, alcoholism, ADHD, autism, asthma, skin problems, bedwetting, memory disorders,

hypersensitivity, addictions, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, epilepsy, as well as psychosomatic complaints of all kinds, autoimmune diseases, chronic pain conditions (such as fibromyalgia), cancer, and narcissistic personality structures, unresolved trauma may be hidden. These traumas are not always caused solely by war or abuse. Sometimes they can occur unintentionally and even without malicious intent. Yet a healthy approach to trauma is far from being up to date within an outdated, one-sided, power-based system whose rigid categorizations focus primarily on illness and disorder. Instead, such a system can lead to retraumatization. Those who seek help are often met with misunderstanding, indignation, and mistrust by the very people from whom they had hoped to receive support.

During my most recent stay in a psychosomatic clinic, I encountered entirely new dimensions of gaslighting within a medical context. The clinic in question was supposed to be a leading institution in its field and did not hold back in its positive self-presentation. Accordingly, I expected to be in good hands there. The stay was primarily planned to help me get my eating disorder under control, and after the preliminary consultation, I felt rather optimistic.

That first impression was quickly overshadowed by the fact that upon arrival, I was informed that I would first need to undergo trauma therapy before they could address the eating disorder.

Work on my trauma was then simply initiated. I tried to remain flexible and open to it, only to be told a week later that I would have to switch therapists on short notice and that I could not continue therapy unless I finally gained weight.

There had been no prior explanation, discussion, or warning – nor any concrete plan as to how or where I was supposed to gain weight. The issues that had already been raised in trauma therapy were not revisited, and I was simply left hanging. Every attempt on my part to address this was cut off and replaced with vague reassurances.

I did not receive eating-disorder-focused therapy, nor were there any supportive interventions offered. Instead, I was instructed to consume nutritional supplement drinks independently several times a day – something that was neither discussed with me nor monitored. I was expected to handle it on my own.

What happened next is obvious: I “took the opportunity” and continued fasting.

The trauma that had previously been “touched upon” was addressed once more — but only to inform me that I had experienced so many terrible things that it could not possibly be true. They were convinced I must be lying. The existence of police reports and medical evaluations was irrelevant.

For the following three weeks, all therapy was canceled, and I spent the time in my room. The only mandatory activity was daily exercise. Of course, I thought that was great — because it allowed me to continue losing weight undisturbed. And when I did lose more weight, the professional staff reacted with great astonishment, as if they had never seen it coming.

The only solution they could think of was to threaten me with transferring to a locked ward every time I cried or failed to comply with their demands. In the end, they discharged me — at a significantly lower weight than before — against the medical advice of the physician who had referred me.

— Lena, 24 years old —

The general mental and emotional state of health in our society today can therefore be regarded as a catastrophic epidemic. People are more interested in what is wrong with individuals without considering what has happened to them. Accordingly, the way people treat one another often becomes inhumane. Yet an attitude based on ignorance — “*I don’t understand this*” — is hardly helpful if we truly want to understand others. Behavior must always be viewed in its context to understand what lies behind it, rather than judging with a moralizing finger. Only then can problems be addressed at their actual roots. The same applies to narcissistic and abusive behavior, which represents a very serious societal problem whose effects are already producing grave consequences at every level. *Climate change* is not only environmental — it is also societal.

Collective trauma cannot be healed by looking away because it is uncomfortable or by constantly blaming someone else. It can only begin to heal when we look directly at it and learn to take personal responsibility.

- 1) Gabor Mathé, The Myth of Normal
- 2) Source: BKA, <https://www.bka.de/>
- 3) Source : <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/leben/prostitution-unionsfraktionsvize-baer-deutschland-ist-bordell-europas-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-230912-99-159934>
- 4) Source: <https://beauftragte-missbrauch.de/themen/definition/zahlen-zu-sexuellem-kindesmissbrauch-in-deutschland>
- 5) <https://www.unicef.de/informieren/aktuelles/presse/-/gewalt-gegen-kinder/277028>
Source: Arbeitsstab der Unabhängigen Beauftragten für Fragen des sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs, <https://beauftragte-missbrauch.de/>
- 6) <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Gesundheit/Todesursachen/Tabellen/suizide.html>
- 7) <https://bsd-ev.info/kunden-12-millionen-freier-taeglich/>

Trauma – A State Without Words

„He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss also gazes into you.“

— Friedrich W. Nietzsche

Trauma is a state of complete shock and speechlessness. Most traumas are carried silently by people who try to cope with them on their own. For decades, I myself did not know that I carried trauma within me and fought desperately against windmills. Those affected often find it difficult to “grasp” what they have experienced, because sensations are hard to access and the words to describe what happened are often missing. Where there are no words, there are images and reflexes that present the past as if it were the present — appearing in the form of flashbacks or nightmares.

Very simply and metaphorically speaking, these images are located in the right hemisphere of the brain, while the left hemisphere — the one that could give these images words and thus file them away as “the past” — is effectively “switched off” in this regard. As a result, traumatized people are often unaware that they are constantly reenacting and reliving their past, and they may blame present circumstances or people for their emotional tsunami. People with trauma are not reacting to the present moment but to an event from the past. In a sense, traumatic memories are matrices of wounds from the past that repeatedly appear, crying out to be processed and healed. But if we are not living in the present, where are