

## The Psychological Implications of Continuum Deprivation

A fundamental premise of the Continuum Concept is that we are endowed by our creator with inalienable rightness. All human infants are born with the innate feeling of being comfortable in their own skins. They come into the world with a "Bill of Rights", expecting to feel that they are welcome, worthy and lovable. When, instead of being given what is their right and due according to the laws of nature and evolution they are deprived of the uninterrupted attachment that Continuum treatment provides, they become burdened with an intellectually created "Bill of Wrongs. Feeling unwelcome and unworthy, they no longer experience happiness as the natural, internally experienced condition of human existence. Instead, happiness is converted from a right into a goal, an end, and a destination to be achieved through planning, effort and worry. Anxiety is the experience that accompanies the idea that we are separated from the objects or situations we believe that we need in order to be happy. Any thing obtained or achieved with the goal of making us happy never does so for more than a brief period of time. The fulfillment never lasts.

When an infant is separated from his Continuum birthright, he experiences a sense of rightness only as discrete, temporary episodes in time instead of as a seamless and timeless state of wholeness and completeness. The infant takes note of his own behaviors and the conditions surrounding his parents' responsiveness to his needs. Then he devises strategies that will recreate those conditions as often as possible. He identifies with the pain of separation and then sets up conditions which then must be met or psychic gateways which must be passed through in order for him to allow himself to be happy. Worse, he will forget that the happiness obtained is not some commodity available only at a price, but actually his inherent state of being and always accessible. A Continuum-deprived infant is like a wealthy man who unwittingly bargains away his fortune and then becomes a street beggar with no memory of his former wealth, panhandling on a street corner for pennies to buy back in dribs and drabs some small measure of the fortune that once was his. Every child raised without continuum treatment has an attachment disorder. It's just a matter of degree.

Even though that sense of rightness is a natural and permanent element of our being (spiritual traditions aver that it is our truest, deepest being), we separate ourselves from our awareness of it. We allow ourselves permission to reconnect with it only when, first, we

perform whatever rituals we have devised to recreate those conditions in the external world, and second, those conditions have been met to a greater or lesser degree. The degree to which the conditions have been met usually determines the degree of happiness we allow ourselves to experience. This is why for most people, falling in love is typically the highest degree of happiness one experiences in a lifetime. It essentially is bonding with someone whom you fantasize will give you constant adoration and attention, providing the appearance of vicariously fulfilling unmet Continuum needs. For others, that gateway is heroin or other addictive substances.

If, however, the infant receives Continuum treatment and then at six to nine months of age separates on his own initiative and at his own pace, then that sense of rightness is never lost and the sense of separation never solidifies in the psyche. Parents are present with them, but are not viewed with the same sense of either emotional neediness or antagonism as are "conventional" parents. Children of course are dependent on parents for their physical needs, but any sense of separation anxiety, clinginess or rebellion is absent. A functional ego develops, one not constantly tormented by the pain of separation, one which develops appropriate strategies to act upon the real world in order to get its needs met. A dysfunctional ego wastes energy by squandering it on developing additional strategies to cope with and palliate the gnawing feeling of separation, the "empty space" or "hole" it experiences inside.

Crying is the primal instinctual signal from an infant that something is wrong, and no cry should go unheard or un comforted. An infant denied Continuum treatment is experiencing the same inner panic and terror as a person who is running out of air while his head is being held under water, and is struggling to break through to the surface to take a breath. The idea of the "torment of the damned" undoubtedly originated in some obscure theologian's dim memories of his experience of continuum deprivation. The infant who cries himself into exhaustion time after time eventually acclimates to the feeling of deprivation. The process can be compared to starting at sea level to climb to the summit of a 25,000 foot mountain. One can survive and even adapt to the oxygen deprivation at high altitudes, but you will never be able to reach your peak efficiency or optimal health. Children denied Continuum treatment eventually get used to the physiological and psychic equivalent of breathing at 25,000 feet, but they go through life always feeling deprived, like there is something missing or something more to life than what they are experiencing. They just can't put their finger on what it is.

To those arguing that Continuum principles have yet to be validated with "scientific research", my response is that we've been running an ongoing global experiment on the outcome of Continuum neglect for at least the past 6,000 years. It's called "the world". The results keep coming in, and it's not good news. Children raised according to Continuum principles feel instinctively that "There is nothing to do, nothing to get, nowhere to go." They are perfectly content in the present moment, and yet they live happy, active, and productive lives every day: they do things and get things and go places, they play with each other and help their parents with household chores. Far from being unmotivated or lacking in ambition, they are simply not anxiously and compulsively driven to "pursue happiness". The flow of time is with them, not against them. Such children experience time as *kairos*, that timeless sense of enjoyment in the moment. Continuum deprived children instead are doomed to become perpetual prisoners of clock time, *chronos*. They become the slaves of schedules, timetables and deadlines, experiencing relief only when obtaining the temporary reprieve of appropriate contact and attention. From this imprisonment arises the familiar feelings of boredom, restlessness, impatience, and the need to "kill time."

Continuum-raised children do not have the same problems and worries that most Western children develop as they mature. Their problems are all external. There are no inner demons or monsters under the bed because every imaginary devil or demon has its origin in an infant who was denied the required comfort and security of in-arms contact. Continuum-raised children have fear, not anxiety, sadness, not depression, anger not hatred. Their emotional expression is appropriate to the objective conditions at the moment. Their innate survival and sociability mechanisms operate perfectly and appropriately. In other words, the psychological grounds for the development of oppositional behaviors, defense mechanisms or a shadow side of their personality are nonexistent.

The proposal of the birth trauma as an explanation of the source of human misery is untenable due to the fact that every other primate is born in exactly the same manner as humans are. They mature into well-adjusted, neurosis-free adults due to the fact that they receive the requisite immediate and constant contact with the mother until they are ready to separate of their own volition. Continuum treatment can override almost any vestige of discomfort or pain resulting from the birth process, even if that process was in fact fraught with traumatic complications. Whatever residuals may linger

dissolve within the matrix of consistent Continuum treatment. The post-traumatic stress disorder from which most humans suffer is not a birth defect. It is a continuum-deprivation defect, just as surely as neurological damage ensues from oxygen deprivation or malnutrition ensues from improper and inadequate feeding . The supposedly common human urge to "return to the womb", posited by many psychological theorists as a primal human longing, is nonexistent in primates, other mammals, and continuum-raised human children. Any theory based upon observations of abnormal representatives of a species, no matter how large is the population being observed, is flawed and must be rejected.

Primates and other mammals are all comfortable being what they are, are comfortable in their own skins. Chimpanzees are afraid of predators but they don't suffer from neurotic anxiety, traumatic memories or flashbacks when predators aren't around. Humans are the only species that has developed en masse the feeling of being uncomfortable with who and what we are. This is not a function of the separation experienced during the birth process, but rather a premature departure from requisite in-arms contact with the mother. The moment that happiness is no longer the normal, natural internal state of a living human being but instead is converted into a goal is the moment the dysfunctional ego is born out of dire necessity.

Following Continuum principles maintains psychological health in mothers as well as their children. Postpartum depression is another phenomenon nonexistent in Continuum societies and in mothers in our own society who have adopted Continuum principles. How could depression even gain a foothold in a mother who is in constant contact with her baby? Postpartum depression is a natural reaction to an unnatural condition of relationship between mother and infant. It is the direct result of a woman's denial to herself and to her child of an experience that instinctually she knows is essential to the well being of them both.

Continuum principles, and the behavioral results observed among those who practice them, clearly demonstrate that children are not naturally bad and in need of firm direction or punishment to socialize them. Nor are they in a state of emotional and moral neutrality which then needs to be nudged and encouraged in a constructive direction by positive extrinsic and intrinsic reinforcers lest the child become spoiled, antisocial or sociopathic. Liedloff emphatically asserts that common sense alone rebukes the position that "a species with the characteristic of driving its parents to distraction by the millions" could ever survive

the demands of evolutionary progress. Animal babies do not deliberately misbehave in order to get attention from, control, or seek revenge upon their parents. Continuum raised infants do not require "instant gratification" of their external needs when they finally separate as independent children. Manipulative whines and tantrums are nonexistent. They are perfectly comfortable in the present moment and are patient in awaiting the fulfillment of their needs and desires. Similarly, they are naturally social and obedient, desirous of learning culturally appropriate behavior from their parents and following their parents' example and directives gladly, immediately and without question or challenge. They naturally want to please their parents, because their parents have denied them nothing.

Continuum-deprived children adopt their self-image and behavioral responses according to a different example. A child can never fully accept that his parents are wrong, no matter how wrong the parents' behavior seems to an outsider. The child will unquestioningly adopt his parents' attitude of him toward himself, internalize it, and recreate that dynamic indefinitely. Continuum deprivation brings to light the source of psychological resistance or reversal. Most therapeutic interventions and self-improvement programs are met with unconscious opposition, even though the person engaging in these practices really does want, on a conscious level, to get better. People unconsciously resist refuting their parents' judgment of them as being unworthy, unwelcome and unlovable. On an emotional level, a child cannot conceive or ever believe that his parents can possibly be wrong. He will maintain absolute confidence in his parents' judgment of his ultimate worth long into adulthood. Some, sadly, will maintain that judgment to their deaths. Trying to make positive changes by resisting this negative self-image is often futile. No child wants to be told by his parents that he's a "big boy" and should behave as one when he doesn't feel "big" on the inside. He wants to feel it on the inside so he can be the one to tell his parents, "I'm a big boy".

Our defense mechanisms and addictive behaviors are formed as a response designed to avoid or escape an experience that is genuinely experienced as the "torment of the damned". The reason why these behaviors resist change and are so difficult, if not seemingly impossible, to overcome is because it appears to the dysfunctional ego that giving them up would entail a return to this unspeakably hellish condition. It is perceived as a "fate worse than death", which is why so many people can consciously override their innate survival mechanisms and choose to take their own lives. The dysfunctional ego

would rather kill its owner than lose the control it has spent years struggling to achieve and maintain. Students of animal behavioral psychology are well aware of this mechanism, understanding that behaviors conditioned using negative reinforcement (removal of an unpleasant stimulus) are much more difficult, if not impossible, to extinguish than behaviors conditioned using positive reinforcement (presentation of a pleasurable stimulus). Neurologically, an infant is at the same level of development as the lab animals upon whom these types of experiments were originally performed, and so the mechanism that maintains this conditioned behavior is just as powerful in them as it is in experimental animal subjects. We carry psychically with us this conditioned reaction, even as we mature to more conscious and rational levels of development. Had these negative events occurred subsequently to our reaching these levels of maturity, we could easily have reasoned ourselves out of the emotional traps that these reactive behaviors have become. Issues that were set in stone during the pre-rational phases of development are notoriously resistant to the application of reason, which is why verbal psychotherapy is often ineffective with serious, deep-seated emotional disturbances and psychoses. Even with an otherwise seemingly mature and well-adjusted adult, there can occur events which symbolically activate the potential for re-experiencing the continuum-deprived state of abandonment and terror. A common example would be the breakup of an intimate relationship. What frequently occurs in that situation is that maturity precipitously drops away and all of the person's regressive reactions from infancy are dramatically and disturbingly expressed.

Children who are subjected to harsh discipline adopt their parents' negative attitudes and behavioral response styles and then sadistically inflict those behaviors on others who are less powerful than themselves. The phenomenon of identification with the aggressor (or neglecter) is based upon the premise that if we assume the same traits and behaviors of our parents in their "negative" aspect, we can begin to exert some degree of control over our getting our material and emotional needs met. If our expression of these traits is then rejected by our parents, they are then correspondingly disowned in our own minds and relegated to the unconscious realm, becoming the shadow elements of our personality. By this process, we cement materialism into our personality, and then project our shadow onto others, not realizing that we still hold the key to our fulfillment inside. We assume an external locus of control, act out the pattern in order to satisfy our cravings in the same manner as they were or weren't by

our parents, and abdicate our power to access our inner source of rightness.

This dynamic gives rise to that aspect of the dysfunctional ego called the "Pain Body" by spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle. The pain body is based in the realization that our parents don't love us in the way that we as humans are biologically programmed to require love and thus we are not worthy of feeling good. Since children will never follow the direction "do as I say, not as I do", they will follow their parents' example and withhold the requisite expressions of love from themselves. So if the child believes that his parents think that he is not worthy, then he will adopt that belief about himself and follow that example in how he views and treats himself. He will assume that he deserves to feel miserable and then will think and act in ways that are in alignment with that self-view. He will always create and attract people and circumstances to reinforce that negative emotional experience because it is what he expects and believes to be true. This is the source of masochism, the need of many people to seek and obtain desperately needed attention by having others inflict psychic or physical pain upon them. Even the stimulation of the pain from psychological and physical abuse is better than being ignored and receiving no stimulation at all.

The reason why "what you resist persists" when addressing the Pain Body or any dysfunctional behavior pattern is that you are resisting the force of nature itself and the entire pattern of millions of years of evolutionary history. Like Alex Forrest, the psychotic stalker in the movie "Fatal Attraction", this inner entity is saying, "I'm not going to be ignored!" If necessary, it will be just as ruthless in its demands for rightful attention as he was. The insistent troubling and troublesome voices that come from our damaged "inner child" are based in psychic structures that were created to respond to the deprivation of Continuum treatment and the ego's attempts to reclaim it at all costs. Those inner voices will always remain fixated at that infantile level and cause regressive behaviors and feelings until they finally get what they crave. What they crave is acknowledgment, blessing, forgiveness and gratitude. They want the parent to finally say "You're right. I'm sorry. I was wrong, and now I'm going to make it right."

The motivation for all inappropriate behaviors stems from the need for attention. All current psychological theories of human personality development are based upon a faulty premise of "normality", that is, that the developing humans being observed are "normal". They may be normal in the statistical sense of the word, but they are not natural

in the sense of being nurtured in accordance with the dictates of their true nature, in alignment with Continuum principles.

When appropriate pleas for desperately needed attention are ignored or punished, attention-seeking behaviors become increasingly inappropriate and escalate in intensity. They diversify into attempts to control the parents through power plays; committing acts of vengeance against the parents; or wallowing in a state of helplessness which demands a rescuing response from the parents. All four of these motivations derive from a single source: Continuum deprivation during infancy. All adult neurotic symptoms are simply regressions to childhood emotions and behaviors based in one or more of these motivations. Inappropriate behaviors are reflections of the kinds of treatment the child perceives itself as having experienced from the parents. Every inappropriate behavior arises out of a sense of deprivation and is an increasingly desperate and sophisticated attempt to fill the aching emptiness resulting from non-Continuum treatment. Physical restraint, verbal abuse and the pain of corporal punishment are forms of contact and preferable to the alternative. So the sequence is: Frustrated attempts to obtain required levels of attention lead to attempts to control. Frustrated attempts to control lead to anger and vengeance, or, if punished consistently, helplessness and resignation.

Troubled children want to be heard and to be held. They especially want to know that someone understands the pain they are in and can somehow help. All childhood misbehaviors are the result of escalating, increasingly desperate but thwarted attempts finally to get the Continuum treatment that is their natural right. Correcting such behaviors with punishment is the source of the "shadow" side of the personality. Correcting such behaviors with behavior modification results in more appropriate behaviors but does nothing to relieve the aching empty feeling that lies at their source. Behavior Modification as a means of modifying inappropriate behavior, while being more humane than corporal punishment, is also based upon a faulty premise – the assumption that misbehavior is an inappropriate response to a normal situation. Behavior Modification theory does not take into account that every misbehavior is an appropriate response to an abnormal situation, the emptiness and heartache of the child and the ongoing failure of parents to give the child what it really needs. The only true solution is the "Full-Contact Parenting" provided by Continuum treatment.

Some have said that Continuum treatment, giving “too much attention”, will “spoil” the child. Observations of Yequana society and children in our own society who have been raised according to Continuum principles demonstrate that nothing could be further from the truth. A child can only be spoiled by parents who capitulate to and reinforce manipulative and controlling behaviors, who give substitutes (food, candy, toys, TV, etc) for what the child is really craving. How does one differentiate between situations where needed physical reassurance should be given and those that are manipulative attempts at control? If you are holding the child while still going about your business and not letting the child dominate your behavior, not “stopping everything” to pay attention to the child, it is the former. If you are giving something to the child or doing something for the child that is a substitute for physical attention, it is the latter. Giving a child the physical contact he is craving is not spoiling, it is the most powerful and compassionate healing action that one can perform. It is a testament to the resiliency of the human nervous system that a modicum of appropriate contact can compensate for years of the deprivation and trauma that disrupted the continuity of that contact.

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