

Trauma-Informed Stabilization Treatment

(TIST): a New Approach to Working
with Self-Destructive and Addictive
Behavior

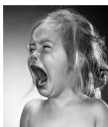
MODULE ONE LIVE SESSION

Janina Fisher, Ph.D.
www.janinafisher.com

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Our bodies mobilize the same defensive systems as all mammals

We either
cry for
help



We try
to fight



Or flee



We
freeze
and try
to be
invisible



Or we submit
in humiliation

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Triggered and dysregulated, the body
continues to anticipate danger

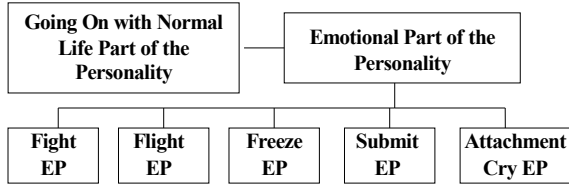
*“When neither resistance nor escape
is possible, the human system of self-
defense becomes overwhelmed and
disorganized. Each component of the
ordinary response to danger, having lost
its utility, tends to persist in an altered
and exaggerated state long after the
actual danger is over.”*

Judith Herman, 1992

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Secondary Structural Dissociation:

BPD, Bipolar Disorder, DDNOS

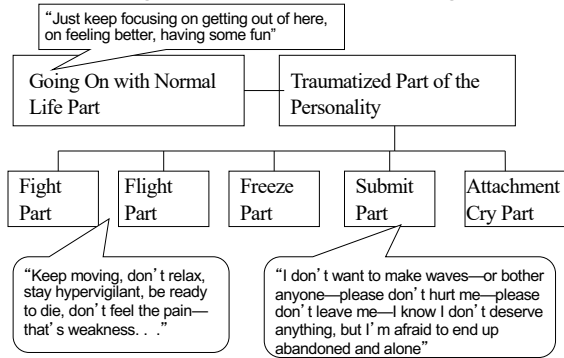


The Emotional Part of the Personality becomes more compartmentalized: separate subparts evolve reflecting the different survival strategies needed in a dangerous world

Van der Hart, Nijenhuis & Steele, 1999

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The parts are driven by competing ways of surviving under threat and danger



From Van der Hart, Nijenhuis & Steele, 2006

Fisher, 2012

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The parts are not experienced as 'parts of me' but as:

- Overwhelming emotions: desperation, despair, shame and self-loathing, hopelessness and helplessness, rage
- Chronic expectation of danger: hypervigilance, fear and terror, mistrust, "post-traumatic paranoia"
- Body sensations: numbing, dizziness, tightness in the chest and jaw, nausea, constriction, sinking, quaking
- Impulses: motor restlessness, 'hang-dog' posture, impulses to "get out," violence turned against the body
- Beliefs: "I hate myself," "No one cares," "I'm not safe here"

Fisher, 2012

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Or the parts are experienced as:

- Loss of ability to communicate:** client becomes mute, shut down, unwilling to speak, can't find words
- Voices:** usually shaming, punitive, controlling
- Constriction:** withdrawal, social isolation, agoraphobia
- Regressive behavior:** loss of ability for well-learned skills, personal hygiene, ADLs, social engagement
- Increasing preoccupation with helpers:** the only safe/unsafe place becomes the office/hospital/house
- Alternating dependence and counterdependence**
- Unchecked self-harm, suicidality and addictive behavior**

Fisher, 2014

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Internal Struggles = Parts Trigger Each Other

Hyperarousal-Related Symptoms:
Fight becomes critical and judgmental, triggering shame and hypoarousal
Flight acts on impulse to engage in addictive behavior
Fight threatens suicide, pushes away sources of support
Attach cries for help, further activating Fight/Flight, and the Freeze part panics

Hypoarousal-Related Symptoms:
Escalating unsafe behavior triggers shutdown:
Submit's shame triggers Fight's anger; Fight's judgment increases shame and hopelessness

Ogden and Minton (2000);
Fisher, 2006
*Siegel (1999)

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“De-coding:” identifying “parts”

- Signs of internal conflict:** inability to make decisions, stuckness, trying to stay safe alternating with acting out, alternating sobriety and relapse
- Emotions:** intrusive, overwhelming and out of proportion
- Noticeable shifts in mood or behavior:** e.g., from neutral or fearful states to anger and acting out; asking for extra appointments, then not showing up; trust alternating with mistrust
- Autonomic arousal patterns:** collapsed, numb, passive states versus angry or desperate or suicidal states
- Cognitions:** “I am worthless and hopeless,” “I know you are going to leave me,” “I can't trust you,” “I trust you completely”

Fisher, 2014

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Noticing 'who I am' moment to moment

•We assume that 'we are what we feel:' but what "I feel" could be a spontaneous response to the present moment, the implicit memory of a part, or a survival response. Further, what we make meaning of feelings which then affects what we feel about what we feel

•To resolve trauma and to increase impulse control, survivors need an active prefrontal cortex. Asking the client to notice with curiosity and avoid interpretation facilitates prefrontal activity. Noticing thoughts, feelings, physical reactions and impulses as 'parts' also increases activity in the prefrontal cortex

Fisher, 2020
