

1. Abstract

Many clients have experienced behavioral therapy, psychoanalysis, or other verbal psychotherapy. They do not (or no longer, or only up to a point) believe in the effects of verbal therapy. However, at the beginning they are very quickly overwhelmed by breathing and body exercises. They want to do everything right, to progress, thereby becoming victims of high expectations, reducing their body consciousness, worsening their symptoms, and hampering the development of a therapeutic relationship. This is where a touch (contact) intervention becomes a valuable complement: clients do not have to achieve anything beyond observing and – to the extent of their possibilities – communicating. Expectations are reduced and the therapeutic relationship begins to take hold as effect (power) factor. However, especially in the touch intervention, the line between „not having to talk“ and „not being able to talk“ seems quite thin. The former occurs when the body relaxes moderately. The latter happens in conjunction with a sudden increase or decline in tonus or with vague bodily perceptions, thoughts, and fantasies. This is dissociation. Those affected often do not realize that they are dissociating, even though their lives, relationships (including their relationship with their own bodies), and bonding capacity are compromised.

In this thesis, the author reviews the manifestations and possible neurological and psychogenic origins of dissociation. In particular, it looks at dissociation as a consequence of early trauma during the pre-speech development phase and reaches conclusions for the therapy of dissociative adults. It presents the AKPT concept of extended countertransference and shows how it can be applied to work with dissociative clients. In search of forms of communication promoting contact, it proposes a model of communication appropriate for development, and examines the possibilities and limitations of the touch intervention. A case study illustrates the application of the concepts and models presented.