

CASE: THE WOMAN WHO CHOKED HERSELF

SOME ASPECTS OR PRINCIPLES BEHIND TREATMENT
OF PATHOLOGICAL MOURNING

How the defense of identification leads to psychosomatic
symptoms

The role of resistance in pathological mourning

CASE: THE WOMAN WHO CHOKED HERSELF

Presenting problem: The woman J is invalidated by her symptoms, is stressed, out of work.

She suffers from chestpain, pain in the throat, headache, fatigue, breathing problems, sleeping problems, impaired temperature regulation, impaired acid regulation and struma with 8 cysts in the neck-throat area (not cancer).

In addition to anxiety she experiences frequent crying, worrying, guilt and self-blame and occasional suicidal thoughts. She also fears to establish a close relationship.

Her ex-husband committed suicide 10 years ago.

She has had 45 hours of psychotherapy since 2005 with no effect.

She tried out several types of anti-depressants with no effect.

DUAL CONCEPTS IN PSYCHOSOMATIC REACTION

SYMPTOM ROOT:

FUNCTION:

IDENTIFICATION



often work in pairs...



SOMATIZATION

**Wanting to understand
- substitute for closeness or love**

**Self-punishment
- substitute for anger or guilt**

Reflecting anxiety

**Deflecting attention away from
feelings**

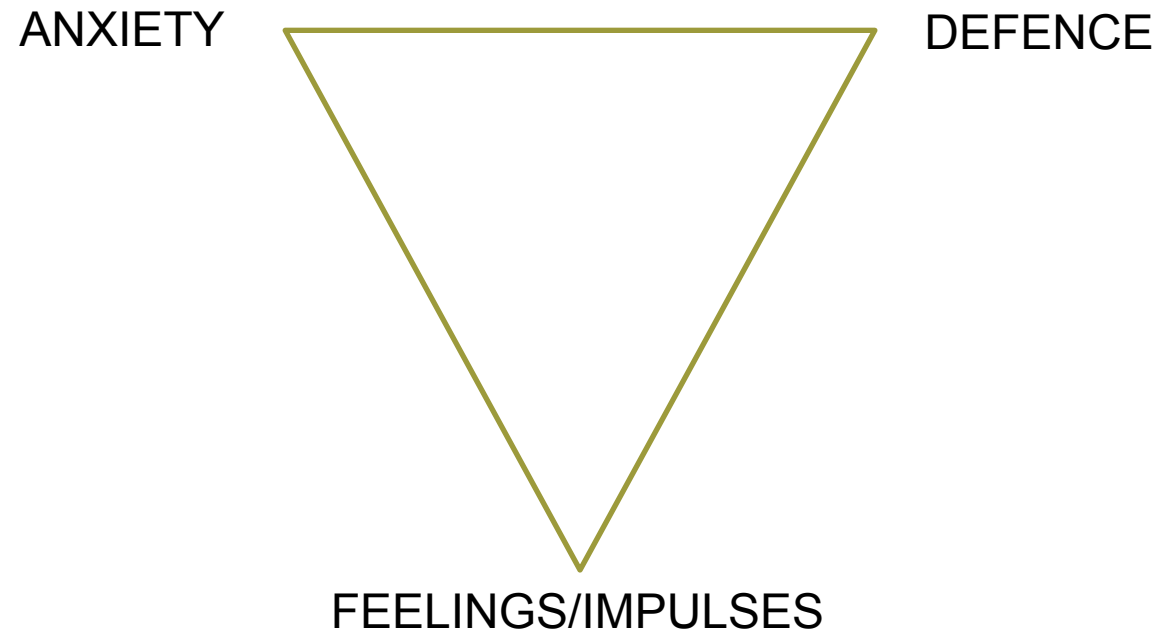
Pathological Mourning

There are healing facilities in the mind as well as in the body to overcome trauma of loss.

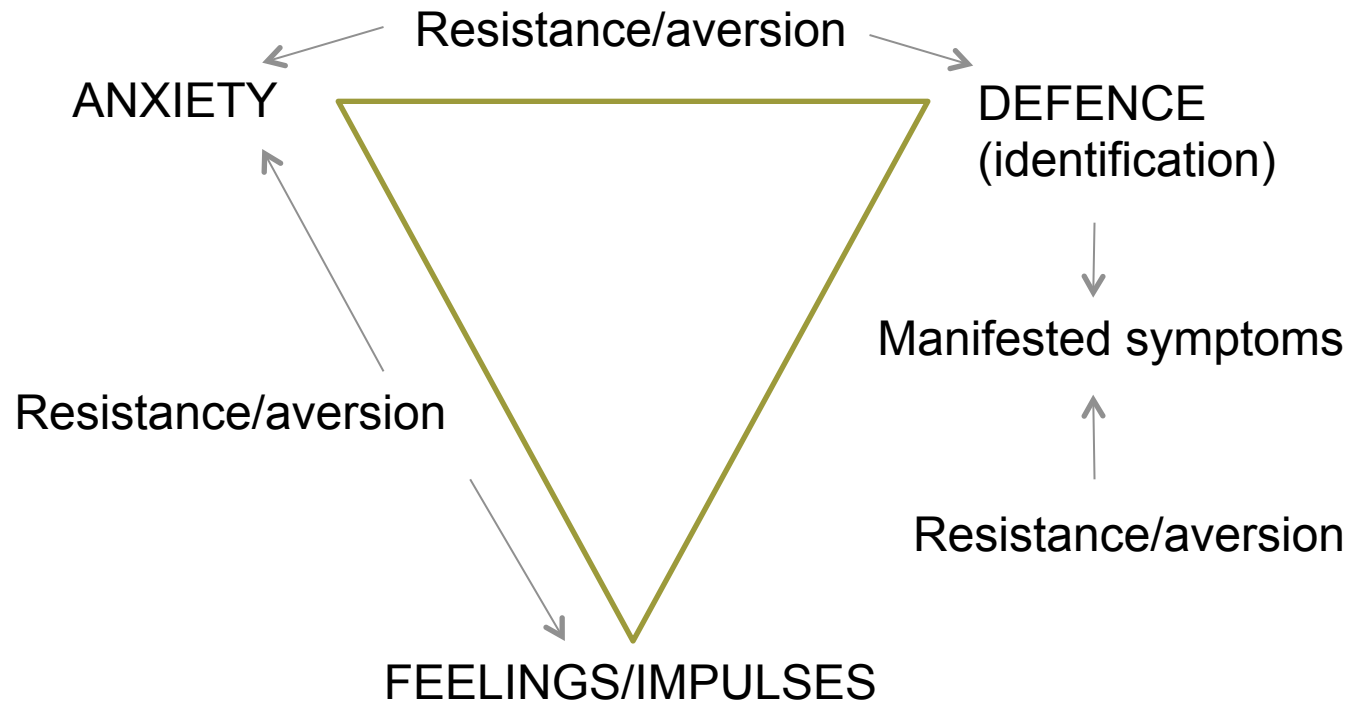
Sometimes these facilities stall or cease to succeed in the resolution of the trauma – hence symptoms emerge and persist.

Why?

THE TRIANGEL OF CONFLICT (Malan)



**THE TRIANGEL OF CONFLICT
AND THE RESISTANCE BUILT-UP**



Quotes...

Psychosomatic pain – is not reflecting emotions, but deflecting attention away from them

John E. Sarno

The difference between how we *think* we "should feel" about a situation or event in our lives and what we *really* feel becomes psychogenic...

Douglas Hoffman

Any part of us that we do not love will be alienated and become more and more demonized
Jung

Carl Gustav

What you resist persists

Carl Gustav Jung

Quotes...

There is nothing to fear but fear itself

Winston Churchill

Any part of us that we do not love will be alienated and become more and more demonized

Carl Gustav Jung

What you resist persists

Carl Gustav Jung

Beyond the Pleasure Principle (S. Freud)

- The Pleasure Principle is regarded a *fundamental guiding dynamic* in all mental life, that is, seeking pleasure, avoiding pain
- Trauma reactions torment the victim with painful memories, thoughts, feelings, nightmares and other invalidating symptoms
- Freud (1920) speculated the existence of a primitive dynamic, hidden in the unconscious that precedes (overrules) the Pleasure Principle
- He formulates a dark and sinister "demonic power" lurking underneath with strong self-destructive purposes
- The idea that there is something dangerous inside lingers on: something we should fight (conflict)

Beyond the Pleasure Principle (S. Freud)

- **When we realize a traumatic event has happened, we cry out "Oh NO".**
 - **We associate our reactive feelings with the situation and say NO to the feelings as well as to the situation**
 - **We fear we cannot live with or contain the strong emotions – and we resist them as something bad**
 - **According to the Pleasure Principle, we perpetuate resistance every time unwanted delayed feelings advance themselves from within**
 - **The resistance corrupts and stalls the healing function of emotions**
 - **The "demonic power" is nothing but our own resistance**
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