

Synbalance® - Positive change in traumatized emotional responses

I. Experience prior to language development

When does life begin? Birth certificates seem to give an answer, but actually nine months must be added to the age calculated since life starts immediately after conception. As various studies have shown, emotional memory has its origin at this point. Traditional science typically recognizes pregnancy as beginning immediately after fertilization and implantation. However, for a woman, an undefined amount of time generally transpires before her intuition and feelings confirm her pregnancy. Findeisen designates this period as the imaginary relationship phase.ⁱ Even then, the mother is establishing contact with the burgeoning life within her. This may take place long before she receives medical confirmation of the pregnancy. Let us consider the following scenario: In the embryo's "world" or system which is a closed one, there is complete dependence on the love and affection of the mother. She breathes, eats, and lives her life and the embryo lives within her. For nine months, the unborn child is totally incorporated in the biological processes of the maternal organism and the mental wellbeing of the mother. Thus, as early as the eleventh week of pregnancy, the unborn child's heartbeat is in direct relationship to that of the mother: it is twice as frequent as hers. If the mother's pulse increases through increased physical exertion or stress, the child's pulse reacts in the same way although its organism has not

experienced these stressors. Similarly, the greater part of the substances which the mother ingests finds its way into the child's organism. Concurrently the embryo is aware whether its mother loves or rejects it, whether it is wanted or not. The embryo feels accepted, loved and protected, resonating with the mother – or not. Even as a little bunch of cells, the embryo knows and becomes inwardly aware if there is a secure tie to the mother.

Life begins in a firework of ecstatic feelings through the affection, attraction and love of the parents for one another. Once fertilized, the ovum continues to depend on the mother's love and affection. The mother, for her part, is emotionally dependent on the father. If she is loved by him and if they feel affection for one another, then the mother feels safe and secure and is able to pass this feeling on to her unborn child. Fedor-Freybergh describes this relationship as follows: "The child's environment before birth is the uterus, the womb. The uterus is a part of the mother. The mother is a human being with her own history, with parents and a home environment, a childhood, dreams and disappointments, needs and sacrifices, successes and setbacks, with passions and pain, love and aversions. She exists within a world in which there is a government and an anonymous power structure. Favor and preference play roles there as does envy. The mother also has an occupation. She may be a student or work in a factory, where she perhaps works a shift. She might work on a farm or be unemployed. She may be wealthy or poor. She may

drink a lot of or little alcohol. She might be a chain smoker or not smoke. Perhaps she has an addiction. Her nights may be spent alone in her bed, waking up from nightmares, screaming and ridden by fear or terror. Perhaps she experiences a phase of love, spending blissful nights with her partner.”ⁱⁱ On the beginning and duration of life, Fedor-Freybergh goes on to write: “At the latest, the life of an individual begins at conception and exhibits continuity at least until the hour of death. (...) What is more, we must say that human life begins at least two generations earlier, namely in the homes of the maternal and paternal grandparents.” The authors of “Unwanted children” write: “Whatever the mother does, feels, thinks, says, eats and drinks, is absorbed and processed by the child for its growth and development. Whether moving, stationary or reclining, feeling love, fear, interest or struggle – all this is the habitat of the child. For the child, the womb is the universe. Its view of the world is formed here. All later experiences and attitudes are based on and rest on it as does a house on its foundation.”ⁱⁱⁱ

II. How dreams that originate from the period prior to language development manifest themselves

A child lives within the mother for nine months, inside the cosmos of her feelings. If the mother accepts the pregnancy and emotionally speaking, reaches out to (i.e. enters into relationship with) the little group of cells, the child is able to trust in the common homeostasis even at that early stage and continue its development, deeply internalizing a sense of well-being,

safety and security. On the other hand, if the mother does not reach out to the child because she does not want the pregnancy or because her present situation is extremely difficult at that time, the little human being will constantly try to establish contact with the mother, and feelings of helplessness and forlorn become anchored in the child.

All this takes place prior to the child’s ability to understand and express his or herself through language. In their article, Kahrs and Schubbe^{iv} write that research with human beings confirms what has been shown in tests performed on animals: stress experienced by mothers exerts harmful effects on the unborn young. The authors of the above-mentioned article emphasize that the degree of harm inflicted on the development of the brain of the fetus can be compared to the effect of poison. In general, a negative correlation between stress and the growth of the fetus can be ascertained. The more stress a mother experiences, the worse the conditions are for the development of the unborn child.

The most difficult and most dramatic phase in a child’s further development is its birth. This event marks the moment when the child becomes a person whose reality can be experienced outside of the womb. Certain essential biological functions (breathing, digestion, blood circulation, the elimination of wastes) operate independently from the maternal organism from that point on. At first, the child remains intimately linked to the mother both biologically and emotionally through their many and varied physical contacts. Even bodily functions, now

separated, remain tied to one another in rhythm for a long time. However, compiling experience will henceforth be gained on the basis of independent organic and biological processes.

The birth itself can bring great difficulties for both the child and the mother. Various circumstances can lead to stress for the mother and for the child with the consequence that the feelings related to these stresses may be internalized. If, for example, the umbilical cord was wound around the child's neck, it could not move freely without stress in the womb. If the birth process was also delayed, the child might internalize life-threatening feelings. The numerous and diverse impressions received in the womb and during birth are absorbed like a sponge and internalized as emotions. Emotions thus experienced are registered, but they are not linguistically structured and therefore cannot be linguistically recalled. They remain part of the child's overall experiences and can influence the way his/her life is perceived and the path his/her behavior takes at any later time, without any conscious knowledge of being rooted in very early experience. The emotional world of the mother protects but can also harm the psyche of the unborn child. This function is similar to the biological function of the placenta. The world of the mother's emotions creates the breeding ground for what will later be firmly anchored as the offspring's convictions about the nature of his/herself. The self is the construct of statements about oneself in which rich emotional impressions are later organized and stored as language.

If the mother rejects the child emotionally as described, fear may be the predominant emotion in the child. Curiosity and autonomy may be lost and the developing brain may be patterned on uncertainty and fear. Should conflicts arise in later phases of life, a strong foundation of positive convictions about the self, necessary for conflict resolution, may be lacking. Even when we as human beings rationally understand the causes and conditions for our problems, we are hardly in a position to change the convictions we hold about ourselves when the background for them is missing. What can we do to repair the dysfunctional convictions we hold about ourselves?

III. The interaction of brain structures in anchoring convictions about the self

When we study our brain, we find that in addition to the cerebral cortex, which is characterized by its folded structure, there is a brain lying directly beneath it which has been the subject of research in recent years: the so-called limbic system. This is a precisely demarcated section of the brain with its own coloration.

Numerous connections link it with the cerebral cortex as well as to the centers that control our central bodily functions (such as breathing, circulation, heart rate, blood pressure, appetite, sleep and sex drive).

The emotional enrichment of our experiences takes place in the limbic system, in the interior of our brains which includes stimulation through various positive and negative feelings, the enabling of movements (the so-called "starter

functions”), substantial influence on eye movements and the coordination of aural impressions/input. In addition, it includes the most important structures (the two hippocampi) through which the transfer of short-term memory to long-term memory occurs. Here is where the nerve tracts linking the two halves of the brain (cerebral hemispheres) cross paths of which one, generally the left hemisphere, regulates willfully controlled actions as well as verbal and abstract thinking, while spatial sense, imagination and the subjective perception of time are processed in the right hemisphere. The limbic system is the oldest part of the human brain, phylogenetically speaking. Servan-Schreiber explains, “In fact, the emotional brain often functions independently from the cortex. Language as well as perception and recognition can only influence this to a certain degree: A feeling cannot be commanded to become stronger or to disappear just as one cannot command one’s ratio to speak or to be still.”^v The function of the limbic brain is to keep us alive. “It follows the idea that the emotional brain knows the body much better than the cognitive brain does. For this reason one often reaches the emotions over the body more easily than using language.”^{vi}

In traumatic situations, harmonizing the verbal and reason-orientation of the cortex on the one hand with the emotional demands of the limbic system on the other is not possible. It follows from this that we cannot impact our feelings through language alone - but feelings are what convey meaning to life. Happiness does not come from talents, fame, power or

wealth. Feelings determine whether we are happy and see a purpose in life.

If we cannot reach our feelings through language, can our feelings be influenced and changed by any other techniques?

And how can we free ourselves from persistent negative emotions? At this point, it is necessary to use a method addressing the inner world of emotions from the prenatal phase of life. The basis for life is already laid in the womb in the form of trust in one’s abilities, trust in the abilities of others (relationship, love) and trust in imagined capabilities.

After birth, our outer senses (e.g. sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) are refined. Therefore therapy approaches which include the sense organs are likely to succeed when treating disorders which have occurred during or shortly after birth. The coordination of emotional impressions takes place night after night in the 5-10 minute phases of deep sleep during which the rolling of the eyeball under the eyelid can be observed (REM – rapid eye movement). This is when the day’s experiences are evaluated which we perceive as dreams. When this processing is successful, the experiences even assume a spatial dimension (we “see clearly”) and are able to “file” them in our long-term memory and call them up much later.

When REM sleep does not take place, it is just as damaging to health as if the complete night’s sleep were missing. One possibility of freeing patients from negative feelings is by therapeutically-guided coordination eye movements as they naturally take place in the so-called REM sleep phases. The only method making use of this to date is EMDR (Eye

Movement Desensitization Reprocessing). Servan-Schreiber reports on EMDR: "EMDR works mostly because it calls up the traumatic memory with all of its various components – visual, emotional, cognitive and physical – and then stimulates the 'adaptive system for the processing of information', which has until that point not been able to 'digest' the disruptive cast of mind. (...) Just as one knows that certain natural herbs and plants can activate the self-healing processes of the body after physical injury, the eye movements employed by EMDR find application as a natural mechanism that accelerates healing after a mental trauma."^{vii}

IV. How Synbalance® can change traumatized emotional responses positively

Employing the Synbalance® method, areas of traumatic emotion are addressed using a "detour". This is done by means of so-called "affirmations" or "belief statements" which are positively formulated sentences. When a person has positive fundamental beliefs, he/she is anchored by a positive self-image or convictions. If this is missing however, the positive feelings that are lacking cannot be altered by means of language but rather through a non-verbal therapy.

I call this Synbalance®. Synbalance® works with thousands of positive affirmations - belief statements – in conjunction with the therapeutic application of the REM phase through which negative convictions about oneself are replaced by more positive ones.

Generally speaking, a small number of sessions are necessary during the course of a year. The periods of time between sessions are generally fairly long so that the new inner emotional life can be filled out with actions.

ⁱ Barbara Findeisen, "*The Psychological Importance of Pre- & Perinatal Life*", Congress on Embryology, Therapy and Society, Nijmegen, Netherlands, 2002.

ⁱⁱ Peter G. Fedor-Freybergh, "*Seelisches Leben vor und nach der Geburt*", LinguaMed, Neu-Isenburg, 1997 (translation by author Hildegard Diebel).

ⁱⁱⁱ Helga Häsing and Ludwig Janus, "*Ungewollte Kinder*", p. 74, Rowohlt, Reinbek, 1994 (translation by author Hildegard Diebel).

^{iv} Claudia Kahrs and Oliver Schubbe, "EMDR in der Schwangerschaft", www.traumtherapie.de.

^v David Servan-Schreiber, "*Die neue Medizin der Emotionen*", p. 19, 35, 106, Wilhelm Goldmann, Munich, 2006 (translation by author Hildegard Diebel).

^{vi} David Servan-Schreiber, "*Die neue Medizin der Emotionen*", p. 19, 35, 106, Wilhelm Goldmann, Munich, 2006 (translation by author Hildegard Diebel).

^{vii} David Servan-Schreiber, "*Die neue Medizin der Emotionen*", p. 19, 35, 106, Wilhelm Goldmann, Munich, 2006 (translation by author Hildegard Diebel).