

UNRAVELING THE CAUSE OF DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER (DID) THROUGH REGRESSION

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ABSTRACT

Regression means getting into the story. Regression Therapy derives its name from its method i.e. recovering and reliving past experiences cathartically. In the context of a person's present lifetime, this work is called Inner Child work. With associative re-living, associative catharsis happens and the physical body validates the experience because thoughts can be disputed but not the bodily experiences. Then the awareness comes to the client followed by understanding of the root cause of the presenting problem (here we may safely say that 'diagnosis' is realised after the therapy!). The aim of the current case study was to explore the underlying causes of "blacking out" episodes triggered by emotional stress especially because the client reported of having gaps in her memory. Regression method was used with help of emotional and somatic bridges. The regression unraveled the split of personality (DID) which was being used as a defense to deal with the stress. While taking case history and exploring her sub conscious mind dissociative symptoms had been observed but the understanding and clarity to the client is important. The client, a 24-year-old female, was in class 3 when she blacked out for the first time because of the ongoing fight between her parents and this became her way of dealing with stressful situations till it was discovered (at current age). Self-help techniques were taught to rewire the brain and to address the body memory. Mind is very powerful and works in many ways for survival, one of them being dissociation. The study highlights the efficacy of regression therapy in solving the mysteries of the mind.

Keywords: Dissociation, DID, Stress, Defense, self- help techniques

INTRODUCTION

Regression refers to the process of getting into the story by delving into a person's past experiences. Regression Therapy derives its name from this method wherein individuals recover and relive their past experiences cathartically. In the context of a person's present lifetime, this practice is called Inner Child work or age regression therapy. Regression, initially, remains a partial recall followed by an inner, associative re-living of these experiences. This process leads to associative catharsis with the physical body confirming it because thoughts can be easily disputed but not the bodily experiences. Once the body validates the experience then the client gets awareness followed by understanding of the root cause of the presenting problem (here we may safely say that 'diagnosis' is realised after the therapy!). During the case history intake and exploration of the sub conscious mind dissociative symptoms were observed. However, the client should get understanding and clarity on their own, without implanting preconceived ideas. The moment content of the sub-conscious mind comes to the conscious awareness, significant progress in the therapy is made. It is the prerogative of the client, how this newfound awareness followed and further guided by psycho-education, is used. Diagnostic feature of dissociative identity disorder,

according to DSM-5, is the presence of two or more distinct personality states or an experience of possession.

CASE DESCRIPTION

The client, a 24-year-old fully functional and intelligent female pursuing her masters in Psychology comes from upper- middle class Brahmin family. She was diagnosed with Emotional Unstable Personality Disorder – Borderline Type (EUPD) and Borderline-Personality-Disorder (BPD) in April 2022. She was on medication for the same from February 2022 to October 2023. Medication was stopped on doctor's advice due to side-effects including memory loss, weight gain, non-coordination between mind and body, hair loss, stammering along with anxiety. But the condition of blacking had persisted.

REASON FOR DIAGNOSIS

The client had gone for diagnosis because of her father who felt that the daughter wasn't listening to him, she had suicidal tendencies (having attempted 4 to 5 times), along with anger issues.

SUGGESTIBILITY SCORE: The client scored 42.30% on Physical Suggestibility and 57.69% on Emotional Suggestibility. The scores indicate good level of hypnotizability of the client.

PRESENTING COMPLAINT

The client approached the therapist to address her condition of sudden blackouts and falling down anywhere that lasted for two or three minutes. Following these episodes, she required 5 or 6 minutes for her sensory functions to return to normal and be active. However, she experienced a significant loss of energy during this recovery phase which took almost 10 minutes to resolve followed by tingling sensation all over the body.

Additionally, she struggled to remain in the same classroom when disagreements and arguments arose among her classmates which was often. This was becoming problematic for her, hampering her relationship with classmates, her studies and her attendance. The client also expressed her concern about having gaps in her memory i.e. she did not have continuous memory of any event. She remembered fragmented pieces rather than continuous memory. She clearly remembered that her blacking out episodes had begun when the client was studying in class three. She had blacked out for the first time because of the ongoing fight between her parents. The episodes of black outs continued with the frequency of 3-4 times per week till she reached class 10.

Overtime these episodes had become her way of dealing with stress, her defense mechanism to deal with the overwhelming situations, until they were recently unraveled at current age. At the time of the session, she was not on any medication for her condition, though she had been treated for depression for a year in the past.

CONTRACT AND REGRESSION

The therapeutic contract was explorative and it began with the exploration of the client's aura which did not reveal loss of consciousness or presence of any entity or attachment. In the personification room,

four inner children (ICs) were identified, healed and integrated. One inner child carried grief related to maternal grandfather's death, another held sadness because maternal uncle did not come along on the train, a third was associated with embarrassment from panicking in the tuition class, and the fourth represented loneliness stemming from a feeling that nobody listens to her.

Finally, the reason or reasons for blacking out was invited into the personification room. Client herself entered the room as the reason appearing dark and emitting negative vibes, and claimed of having been created by the client. Client remembered that she had developed the habit of talking to herself from a very young age. And here came the aha moment with the realization that the client had often felt stuck in a war between heart and brain. She used to feel that there are two sides of her, emotional and practical of which she had preferred the practical side most often.

The practical side was also invited into the personification room (first one was the emotional and suppressed side of the client). Both sides were made to stand in front of each other, heart appeared as the child full of emotions while the brain represented the adult which was the practical and controlling side.

STORY UNRAVELED

The story that surfaced was that during times of emotional stress, the child would take over causing the client to black out because she was unable to handle the overwhelming emotions. Once she regained consciousness, the adult would step in, taking control of the situation and calming the panicked people around her.

FINAL INTERVENTION

The 'Adult of Today' experienced memory gaps and the dangers of falling anywhere due to this constant conflict between the emotional child and the practical adult. Both sides were acknowledged, addressed, and integrated by the Adult of Today. The emotional child, which also represented the client's shadow side, was recognized, acknowledged, and embraced as part of the healing process.

POST THERAPY INFERENCES

The client was taught a combination of tapping techniques, breath work, and affirmations to practice whenever the body began showing signs of oncoming blacking out episode under stress.

The early bodily symptoms were body contracting, a sense of heaviness, everything spinning around (*'sab cheez ghoom jaati hai'*), darkness setting in (*'andhera ho jaata hai'*) and then collapsing. This approach helped rewire the brain to address and release the body's memory of these responses. The client regularly practiced the tapping, affirmations, and breath work for 20 days to be totally free from blacking out episodes. Regression session was done in November 2024 and till the time of writing this article which is February 24, 2025, she has not reported of blacking out again.

RATIONALE

Every problem has a cause or a starting point. And every problem has a solution. The key is to explore and look in the right direction to uncover both the cause and the solution.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Landry and Raz (2015), while exploring the neural correlates of hypnosis, have hypothesized that there are underlying mechanisms involved in hypnotic phenomena. Jensen et al (2015) in their review have summarized that a comprehensive model of hypnosis incorporating factors from biological, psychological, and social domains may ultimately prove very useful in comparison to restrictive models focusing only on just one or two factors. Roberts et al (2017) discuss the efficacy of clinical hypnosis for pain and procedural anxiety that has been well supported through numerous studies. Mohd Rafiq (2018) used Circle Therapy, one of the hypnotic interventions, to provide immediate relief from headache. Kosslyn et al. (2000) demonstrated that hypnosis is a distinct psychological state with specific neural correlates, rather than merely the result of adopting a role. Gupta & Sidana (2020), through single case-study approach, dealt with alcohol dependency due to grief using hypnotherapy. They highlighted the effectiveness of clinical hypnotherapy as an intervention to address the underlying conflicts.

Matejko, S. (2022) writes in 'PsychCentral' that the purpose of regression therapy is to find the root cause of present-day thoughts and behaviour wherein techniques are used to unlock subconscious memories that are influencing the behaviour. Ririi Trivedi, in her web page, while discussing the case of a girl with imaginary friends, writes that we humans having come on earth to experience life but during this experience humans collect baggage that become root cause of many problems. When the baggage is removed and understanding comes then things fall in place. Gary Elkins (2023), in his article titled 'Current Practices in Clinical Hypnosis: Research and Commentary' which is based on a survey to determine the most common clinical uses of hypnosis, has identified 36 applications of clinical hypnosis most commonly being stress reduction, well-being, surgery preparations, anxiety management, mindfulness facilitation (mindful hypnotherapy) and labor and childbirth. Hansen et al (2024), in their editorial, write that hypnosis is a powerful tool but biggest obstacles in its wider application are lack of conclusive studies and limited access to specialized journals.

Kirsten Weir (2024) writes that hypnosis makes an action feel more involuntary. Jones et al. (2024) in their systematic reviews have suggested that stand-alone hypnotic suggestions may improve pain outcomes in comparison to no treatment, waitlist, or usual care. Hapt et al. (2024) measured depressed patients with near-infrared-spectroscopy (fNIRS) and found that hypnotherapy was a promising alternative but its underlying mechanisms remain unclear. Hansen (2024), has opined that loss of consciousness does not protect against psychological injury, but what and how to talk to unconscious patients are very important. Hypnotic communication appears to be the adequate language in addressing the unconscious mind with suggestions that exert their effects unconsciously.

METHOD

AIM: The aim of the current case study was to explore the underlying causes of "blacking out" episodes triggered by emotional stress and the gaps in the memory. **RESEARCH DESIGN:** Single Case Study. **INCLUSIVE CRITERIA:** Adult presence, not using any medication, willingness to take responsibility, and readiness to change old patterns. **METHODS USED:** Aura Exploration and Personification Room (as used in Regression Therapy). Emotional and Somatic bridges were used for deepening the trance. **IDENTIFICATION OF THE ISSUE:** Split personality (Dissociative Identity Disorder, DID) and Associated condition identified: Shadow self.

CASE SUMMARY

Reaction to stressful situations vary from person to person and so do the coping skills. The management of stress also depends on factors such as age, understanding, and individual's capacity to handle it. The mind is incredibly powerful and employs various strategies for survival, one of them being dissociation. The present regression work demonstrates the effectiveness of regression therapy in unraveling the complexities of the mind, particularly in cases of dissociative identity disorder (DID). The exploration unraveled the split or the dissociation being used as a defense mechanism to the client who acknowledged it with grace, understanding, and insight. At the end of the day, what is important is that the client finds relief from the problem no matter which technique or method was used.

In the present case, regression unraveled that the client had developed a split of personality (DID) which was being used as a defense mechanism to cope with emotional stress. Though the dissociative symptoms were evident during case-intake, the client needed to gain insight through the exploration, only then the therapy could be most effective. Moreover, clear understanding of the root cause of the problem functions as an empowering tool shifting the client away from a sense of victimhood and motivating them to develop and practice different and healthier coping mechanisms.

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