Trauma and Meaning

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The central point in the recovery process after traumatization is the integration of the traumatic experience into a meaningful context in the person’s psyche. However, there is no consensus on the best method to achieve this goal, as well as on the healing factors in post-traumatic therapy. On this background, we present the personal existential analysis as a method for the treatment of traumatized people. In our experience with war victims, traumatic experiences could spontaneously shed an additional light on the existential elements of life including its meaning. When the traumatized victim failed to elaborate the existential content of his/her traumatic experience, the symptoms became the most important way through which he/she communicated. Through the method of “protective questioning”, personal existential analysis helped the individuals in integrating their traumatic experience into a meaningful attitude towards the trauma and life. The work on biographical elements supported the process of integration. In our experience, authenticity in the therapeutic relationship is the most important healing element.

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