

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

BOOK REVIEW: LE BOUT DU TUNNEL (AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL) - HOW TO HANDLE POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS PROBLEMS

The author of the book is the Swiss physician Daniel Dufour. Originally specialized as a surgeon. He has gained extensive experience on many missions organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in war regions as well as humanitarian crises around the world. He operated on more than 2,000 wounded persons, in both, the uniformed service and civilians. Later, he worked as a coordinator of this medical assistance at the ICRC. Since 1987, he has been staying in Geneva and devoted himself to victims of violent conflicts, who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Through his holistic approach to medicine, he aims to understand and influence both, the causes as well as the manifestations of this pathological state mainly from the standpoint of psycho-dynamic psychotherapy. The book has 200 pages; it was published in French in March 2018 by the Les Editions de l'Homme publishing house in Montreal, Canada, ISBN 978-2-7619-4840-1 (Fig. 1).



The author deals with the post-traumatic stress syndrome thoroughly. He has divided the book into 10 chapters. At first, he considers the causes of this relatively recent nosological unit and deals primarily with traumas and “traumatism”. The cause is always a physical or mental trauma. Traumatisms include psychological responses to traumatising stimuli, usually aggression, escape or stiffness. These responses are the essence of the response to traumatic experience. The study of this issue has developed especially after the first Gulf War (the Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations), in which a number of mostly American soldiers who were in combat suffered from PTSD afterwards. The author describes clinical cases, trying to cover a vast array of diagnostic options that may be related to traumatism. Traumas themselves are dealt with in Chapter 2. The third chapter deals with the three options in manifestations accompanying the post-traumatic syndrome. One possibility is that people are aggressive and violent, the second possibility is that they flee - “fuite” in French. The third option is being scared and lethargic. The affected people are inhibited and the stress effects accumulate. The author carefully describes the processes in terms of dynamic psychology. Chapter 4 deals with a response to an acute stress, which has three phases: a) phase after the acute stress; b) relaxation phase; and c) calming phase. They may be followed by signs of a recurring stress again. Chapter 5 discusses in detail the psychological sources of anger, rage or fury. Soldiers with PTSD may be angry at war, knowing they were fighting in the war, although they had not liked their participation. The sixth chapter discusses

the sets of psychopathological symptoms that occur in adult PTSD patients. They may also be found among children and adolescents, although in different situations. In the 7th chapter the author describes treatment options based on particular theories of the origin of the disorder. First of all, it is the neurobiological theory but other possibilities are discussed here as well. Among the psychotherapeutic methods there are mentions of hypnosis or of the spiritual healing technique of transcendental meditation. Mesotherapy, which is often used in France and Switzerland, is also important. Even osteopathy contributes to the treatment of the post-traumatic syndrome. Starting with the 8th chapter, the author focuses on the description of the treatments. At the beginning he deals with the question whether the disorder is fatal and whether it can be prevented or whether it is a physical message of the organism that signals "something is wrong" and "something has be done about that". The author favours predominantly global, holistic or integrative psychotherapeutic approach. He speculates about the relationship between quantum physics and non-standard healing practices and interpretation of this disorder. The connection between PTSD and current genetic and epigenetic research did not identify any major support for their significant role in understanding the PTSD. The 9th chapter deals with the psychotherapeutic treatment of an „inverted ego" type. It is a psychoanalytically inspired approach that describes the inverted ego that is labeled as "oge" acronym. It also describes treatment methods for fear, panic, and anxious anticipation. The chapter accentuates a spiritual approach to patients and their treatment.

Generally speaking, it is always necessary to identify the causes of the disorder, describe them, and to evaluate and understand the situation of the patient. The victim of a trauma should be given a chance to provide his view and comments on his state. The three main objectives in the treatment are : to clarify an image of one's own health, to regain one's creativity and, last but not least , to find the core of psychological problems. The final, 10th chapter summarizes the presented knowledge on the treatment of PTSD, how to cope with its psychological and physical difficulties. The author describes some case histories. The first is the case of a fireman Paul. The second deals with unbearable back pain that developed after an attack in otherwise healthy Veronica. At the age of 35, she had to undergo a variety of examinations but her treatment was unsuccessful until the PTSD was eventually diagnosed and treated. The chapter describes her gradual healing process, based on regaining the control of her ego.

In conclusion, the author claims that this disease can be treated, although the treatment is extremely difficult and requires the completely personalized individual approach. Soldiers sometimes fight for something that may not be directly in their interest. They are exposed to a "transferred" danger. They defend the interests of their country in a remote territory, which may explain the level of aggression they deal with. The situations and settings are in many cases very difficult to understand and it is hard to distinguish their true nature. There are additional open questions concerning the effects of hybrid wars and other hazards that are present in the world today.

The reviewed book may be recommended to professional psychologists, psychiatrists and medical doctors interested in psychosomatic medicine. It may be a valuable source of information for specialists across medical fields who are interested in the expanding scope of approaches to PTSD and also in the issue of less conventional evaluation and treatment of this condition.

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