

Trance-induced heautopsia as a therapeutic tool

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Heautopsia

autoscopy, autoscopic syndrome, phenomenon of Doppelgänger

= visual (pseudo)hallucination or illusion of one's own body image

perception of one's own body outside of one's person

Incidence

- rare in waking condition
- epileptic aura
- extreme situation
(out-of-body-experience)
- lesion of temporal or
parieto-temporal region
- physiological exhaustion
- delirium
- near-death-experience
- often in dreams

Setting

120 inpatients

**Therapeutic Community
psychodynamic and systemic approach**

group 10 – 16 clients

2:45 hours

- **„dream journey“**
- **painting**
- **speaking about the experience**

“Dream journey”

Approaching a river

Another person or gestalt, or yourself, on the other side of the river.

“....and I don’t know whether it is you or another person or you in a younger age or older than you are now or a part of you or somebody you know who may appear strange or somebody you don’t know but who may appear familiar.....”

Crossing the river. In the middle of the bridge meeting the other person or gestalt.

Client proceeds to the opposite shore, whereas the other person crosses in the opposite direction.

Intrapsychic protection

Problem: in a group every client has his own story and traumata and his own associations

Dilemma: too much or too little protection

→ Protection not only possible by rapport or checking where a client is in the process.

Solution

- **direct suggestion of safety boldly...“ as in this process you experience yourself to be safe and protected“**
- **induction of intrapsychic protection**
 - **“only as far as it is possible for you...” (safety of intensity)**
 - **“with that intensity or mildness that’s exactly appropriate for you” (safety of intensity)**
 - **“because your inner wisdom already knows, which form of relaxation is good for you now” (safety of modality)**

- **”...and as a part of you is able to give protection, another part of you at the same time may be able to dive into a deeper level of relaxation, so that this part quite on its own and in a very personal way can be open to receive a message from within you, while another part is watching over you very carefully ...”**
(safety by way of dissociation; inner protector)
- **“my words are only a handle...” (freedom)**
- **suggestion of allowance**
primary level:
“You *can* start out on your inner journey... in your time...”

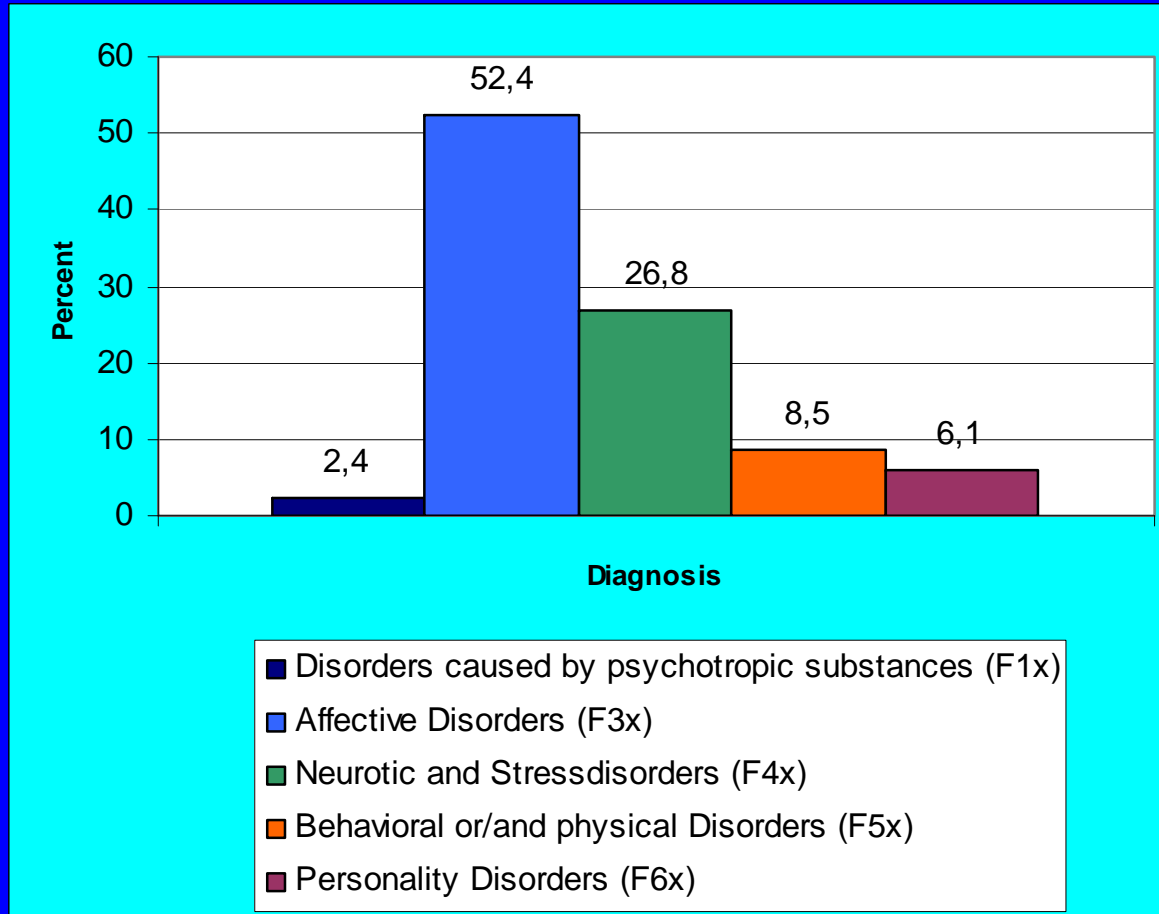
secondary level i.e. allowance to give allowance
“And you *can*, when it is time for you, *choose* in all your freedom to *decide, whether* ... and how far ... you try ... and you can return any time you wish. “

Sample

	Female	Male	Total
N	N = 62	N = 20	N = 82
Age	M = 41.0 SD = 12.4	M = 46.1 SD = 9.7	M = 39.4 SD = 12.8

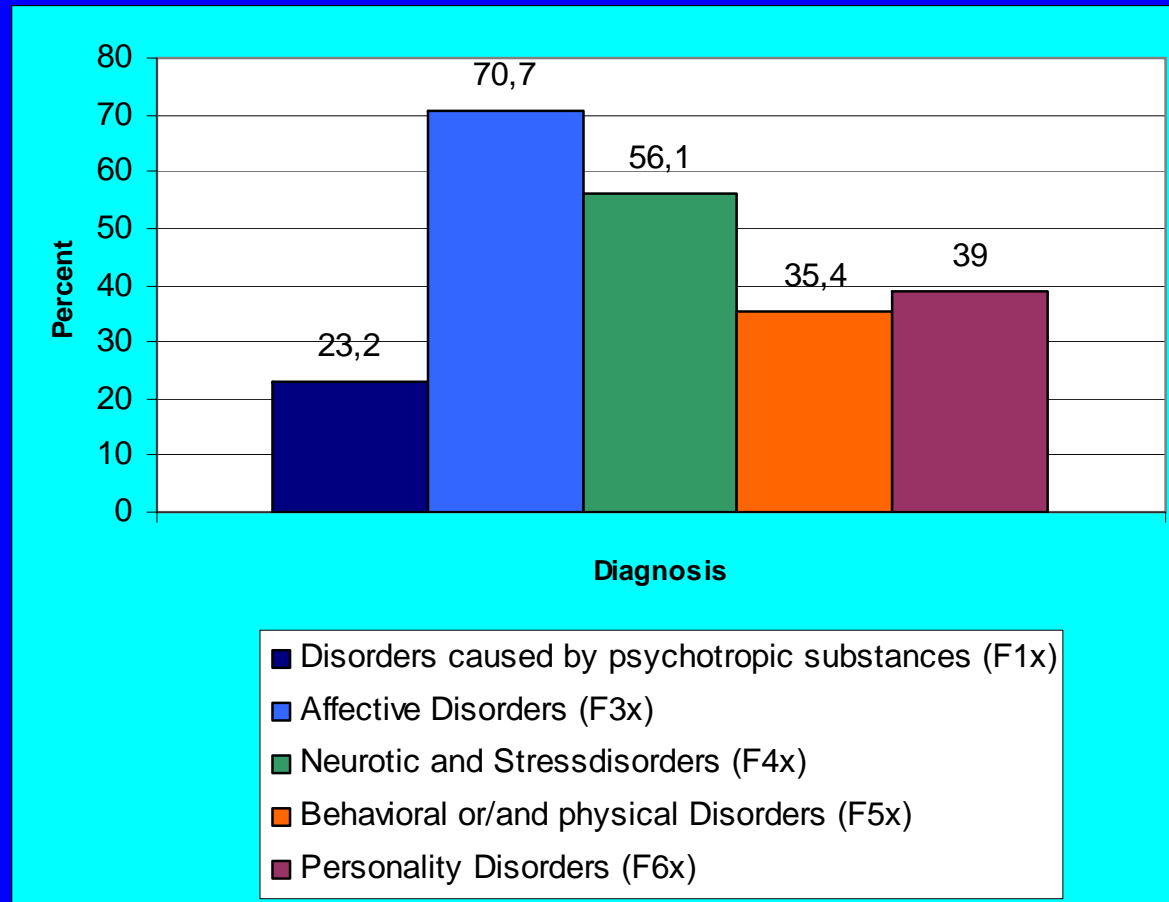
Primary Diagnosis

ICD-10-Classification



Comorbidity

ICD-10-Classification



Perception of another figure

	Frequency
Could you see another figure?	62 (75.6%)
Could you feel another figure?	41 (50.0%)
Could you see its face?	33 (40.2%)
Could you see its eyes?	17 (20.7%)

Who was that figure?

(Multiple responses possible)

Me	8 (8.6)	My husband	3 (3.2)
Me, but with other appearance	5 (5.4)	My wife	2 (2.2)
Me, but in other figure	6 (6.5)	My daughter	2 (2.2)
Me, but younger	13 (14.0)	My son	2 (2.2)
My mother	5 (5.4)	Other known person	27 (29.0)
My father	6 (6.5)	Other unknown person	14 (15.1)

Experiencing oneself

	oneself	oneself, but with other appearance	oneself, but in other figure	oneself, but younger
Personality Disorder (F 60.5 - F 60.8, F 61.0)	3	-	-	7
Borderline- Personality Disorder (F 60.3)	-	-	2	-
PTSD (F 43.1)	2	-	-	6
Eating Disorder (F 50.0 – F 54.4)	1	5	-	1
other	7	2	6	7

Basic emotions

Categorisation of emotions?

Problem: what are *basic* emotions?

Plutchik (2000) 8 acceptance, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, anticipation, joy

Casriel (1972) 5 fear, rage, pain, love, joy

Johnson-Laird, Oatley (1972) 5 happiness, anger, fear, disgust, sadness

Ekman (1992) 6 surprise, happiness, anger, fear, disgust, sadness

Tomkins (1962) 8 surprise, interest, joy, rage, fear, disgust, shame, anguish

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Personality Disorder without Depression

Basic emotion	Experiencing			
	oneself	oneself with other appearance	oneself in other form	oneself but younger
fear	-	-	-	1
anger	-	-	-	-
joy	-	-	-	1
pain	1	-	-	-
desire/ expectancy	-	-	2	-

Depression and Personality Disorder

Basic emotion	Experiencing			
	oneself	oneself with other appearance	oneself in other form	oneself but younger
fear	-	-	-	-
anger	-	-	-	-
joy	-	-	-	7
pain	1	-	-	-
desire/ expectancy	-	-	-	2

Depression without Personality Disorder

Basic emotion	Experiencing			
	oneself	oneself with other appearance	oneself in other form	oneself but younger
fear	2	2	-	2
anger	-	-	-	-
joy	2	1	-	8
pain	-	1	1	2
desire/ expectancy	1	-	2	1

Case 1

Peter, 45 years, representative of a drug-company and high-ranking official in a lesser known church, suffering from

severe Depressive Episode, Burn-out Syndrome, Somatization Disorder, Diabetes mellitus

In trance he experienced

himself (1) as a 6 year old boy and

himself (2) as a younger man of approx. 30-35 years. Both were on this side of the river. It was „very pleasant“.

He saw himself (3) as somewhat older („or my father“) on the other side of the river.

„It was very pleasant up to the moment when we merged (not met!) on the bridge.“

Then „unpleasant feeling, because I walked further on as an amorphic figure“.

Problem: - cannot distinguish between himself and his father in certain aspects
- merging with the father („unpleasant“)

Solution: - being separate from the father and
- being able to protect his inner child

Case 2

Claudia, age 39 years, is a secretary, submitted to our clinic because of severe Depressive Episode, Binge-eating Disorder and Dependent Personality Disorder.

In hypnotherapy she experienced joy, till she came to the bridge. She could see and feel herself at the age of 2 ½ years.
„I was able to grab her, lift her and hug her.“

First sad, that she was so utterly alone as a young child.

Then „great joy that the girl finally reached home - within me, in my chest“.

Problem: < I'm alone (and dependent) > (old pattern)

Solution: < I'm with me, and protect and console myself > (new pattern)

Conclusion

Many patients tend to see or feel other persons and not themselves, when the induction leaves multiple options open.

There is little evidence that the way a person's alter ego is experienced, depends on his nosological diagnosis.

Trance-induced autoscopy seems to create a symbol of the main problem *and* the solution in *one* image – the problem being experienced with a different emotion than the solution.