

Review of: "Viewing trauma as a developmental process emerging from chronic repeated experience and reiterated meaning-making mental processes"

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This is a well researched, methodically developed article that proposes an innovative perspective on the developmental as distinct from single incident impact of trauma. I think the authors make a cogent case that some if not many traumatic injuries later in life are the result of repeated assaults that echo and reinforce prior and perhaps originary traumatic experience. This hypothesis makes much sense given the multifaceted contexts of psychosocial development and pattern of chronicity we often see in association with pathogenic environments. That said, I also think the authors overplay their thesis and fail to adequately account for the power of single incident traumas in other cases, which are clearly traceable in psychohistories, and far outweigh the subsequent assaults if present in given developmental contexts. I also think the authors overemphasize the need for therapists to provide specific therapeutic interventions for the multiple repeated traumas that the authors claim are so pervasive. There are plenty of examples, and I speak from personal as well as professional experience, where the organic relationship between clients and well trained, highly attuned therapists is more than adequate to foster in depth, enduring transformations, despite and perhaps even in light of problematic outside environments. Put differently, for some and perhaps many clients, there is no need to offer the rather callibrated (and calculated) array of interventions to deal with their traumas, repeated and otherwise. The relational-cotextual factors researchers such as Bruce Wampold and John Norcross have identified, such as cultivation of the therapeutic alliance, therapeutic empathy, genuineness, warmth, willingness to collaborate, and support for what deeply matters (has profound meaning) for clients are key, it seems to me, to this organic brew that can significantly address trauma, and even repeated patterns of trauma that have heretofore proved so disabling. The overarching provision of therapeutic presence, as Geller and Greenberg and others have pointed out is also integral in many of these cases. To sum, I think the authors have contributed a stimulating and evocative perspective that deserves further research, but that is one valuable standpoint in a complex mix of standpoints that have proven healing to traumatized clients, and that the phenomenology of anxiety reveals core elements that the authors underappreciate in their zeal for a more neuropsychological and mechanistic model of developmental trauma.