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Psychosomatics today: From unresolved trauma and loneliness to good relationships

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Psychosomatics, as a complex interaction between mind and body, is increasingly understood through integrative and transdisciplinary models that incorporate psychodynamic, cognitive, interpersonal, and social perspectives. This editorial explores psychosomatics within the context of unresolved transgenerational trauma, loneliness, and depression, emphasizing the central role of attachment patterns and emotional regulation in the development of interpersonal functioning. In the recent books of our team, we have approached the concept of psychosomatics through the issue of unresolved transgenerational trauma (Marčinko et al., 2023), loneliness and depression (Marčinko et al., 2024), and we have also proposed a solution through strengthening good relationships (Marčinko et al., 2025). Our team considers attachment models to be essential for the fundamental image of the self and for the formation of relationships, so that interpersonal relations in this sense can be understood as ranging from loneliness, which represents a lack of capacity for good relationships, to closeness, which reflects the ability to form and maintain good relationships (Marčinko & Sutara, 2024). In this context, what part of the profession calls emotional intelligence clearly represents the foundation of understanding and regulating emotions. The problem of loneliness is not being alone, but feeling alone, i.e., feeling emotionally disconnected. The paradox of modern civilization is that we are increasingly digitally connected, while at the same time loneliness is rising; therefore, the World Health Organization also uses the term "epidemic of loneliness," thereby emphasizing the public health significance of this problem. The WHO established the Commission on Social Connection in 2023 to address the growing problem of loneliness and social isolation on a global level.

Previous research of our team has demonstrated significant connections between the level of personality organization, pathological narcissism, shame psychodynamics, and multiple indices of mental health disturbances (Marčinko et al., 2014, 2020a, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b; Jakšić et al., 2017, 2022). All of these parameters are essential to a psychodynamic understanding of psychosomatic phenomena. Dysfunctional shame was part of maladaptive psychological reactions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Marčinko et al., 2020a, 2021a). Pathological narcissism is related to problems of maladaptive shame, which may increase the sense of loneliness. Narcissistic vulnerability appears to be more strongly related to negative parenting and interpersonal forgiveness than narcissistic grandiosity, while it also represents one of the underlying mechanisms of the relationship between negative parenting and interpersonal forgiveness (Marčinko et al., 2020b). Complex personality factors and psychopathological syndromes, such as personality disorders, can only be understood and treated through multiple theoretical perspectives, such as psychodynamic, cognitive, and interpersonal models of personality disorders (Marčinko et al., 2021a). Psychodynamics is highly important in the treatment of patients with personality and eating disorders (Marčinko, 2015; Marčinko et al., 2021a), as well as suicidal patients (Marčinko et al., 2018).

The so-called instant culture associated with social networks creates pressure for emotions to be resolved quickly, without introspective processing and clear reflection, which opens space for psychosomatic reactions. Constant stimulation of the unconscious, combined with the compulsion to repeat as an automatism and the strengthening of narcissistic patterns, also promotes immature psychological defense mechanisms that leave little room for uncertainty and tolerance of discomfort. Psychodynamic mechanisms indicate that intensity overrides reflection, and that there is a crisis of critical thinking – information is not lacking, but psychological space for reflection is (the need for quick solutions becomes stronger than understanding).

Furthermore, complex personality pathology can only be adequately understood through multiple theoretical frameworks, including psychodynamic approaches, which are also essential in the treatment of personality and psychosomatic problems. Our team propose an integrative biopsychosocial-spiritual approach to

psychosomatics, emphasizing empathy, relational capacities, and the strengthening of meaningful interpersonal connections as a protective factor for mental health.

Our team is soon planning a new book, "Psychosomatics Today," along with an accompanying course at the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb, where we aim to present theoretical models as well as practical (psychiatric-psychotherapeutic) implications of psychosomatics in contemporary times. Within the conceptual framework developed over many years by Professor Miro Jakovljević, we approach this issue in an integrative and transdisciplinary manner, respecting a culture of empathy alongside the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual determinants of mental health (Jakovljević, 2024a, 2025a). In this regard, the role and immense scholarly contributions of Professor Norman Sartorius are of exceptional importance (Jakovljević, 2024b). Our journal, Psychiatria Danubina, has a clear mission to advance science and mental health, as well as to improve relationships among social groups (Jakovljević, 2025b, 2025c).

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