

THE HAUNTED SELF



Structural Dissociation and the
Treatment of Chronic
Traumatization

Onno van der Hart
Ellert R. S. Nijenhuis
Kathy Steele

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Life is an ongoing struggle for patients who have been chronically traumatised. Many patients have substantial problems with daily living and relationships, including serious intrapsychic conflicts and maladaptive coping strategies. Their suffering relates to a terrifying and painful past that haunts them. Even when survivors hide their distress beneath a façade of normality – a common strategy – therapists often feel besieged by their many symptoms and serious pain. Small wonder that many survivors of chronic traumatising have seen several therapists with little progress and that quite a few have been labeled as untreatable.

In this book, three leading researchers and therapists share what they have learned from more than 65 years of collective experience treating and studying chronically traumatised individuals. Based on the theory of structural dissociation of the personality in combination with a Janetian psychology of action, the authors develop a model of phase-oriented treatment that supports patients in learning more effective mental and behavioural actions to become more adaptive in life and to resolve their structural dissociation. This principle implies an overall therapeutic goal of raising integrative capacity, in order to cope with the demands of daily life and deal with the haunting remnants of the past, with the “unfinished business” of traumatic memories.

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