

Fearful Symmetry



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著者:Novick, Jack/ Novick, Kerry Kelly

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Using data from infant observation, and child, adolescent, and adult analyses, the Novicks explicate a multidimensional, developmental theory of sadomasochism that has been recognized as a major innovation. According to the Novicks, each phase of development contributes to the clinical manifestations of sadomasochism. Painful experiences in infancy are transformed into a mode of attachment, then into an embraced marker of specialness and unlimited destructive power, then into a conviction of equality with oedipal parents, and, finally, into an omnipotent capacity to gratify infantile wishes through the coercion of others. By school age, these children have established a magic omnipotent system of thought which undermines alternate means of competent interactions with reality. In adolescence and adulthood it becomes increasingly hard for them to deny, avoid, or distort reality without resorting to escalating self-destructive behaviors. Sadomasochistic phenomena are the source of severe resistances and counterreactions in all phases of therapy. This book helps clinicians recognize and overcome these blocks to treatment progress and success.

Here can be found an introduction to the Novicks' reformulation of the therapeutic alliance, and their distinctive contributions to the transformations of memory and the termination of treatment.

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