

The Carter-Jenkins Center

presents



Marianne Parsons

Child, Adolescent, and Adult Psychoanalyst,
London



Working Psychotherapeutically with Children and Adolescents Who Resort to Violence



Themes of the paper

- Is there a difference between aggression and violence?
- Why does someone act violently?
- Are there developmental factors that set someone on the road to violence?
- Are there danger signs or triggers that we can be alert to?
- How can we work with patients who are violent?
- These points will be illustrated with 3 clinical examples

Differences between aggression and violence

Aggression:

- a major source of energy
- vital for progressive development
- necessary for assertion and protection of self and other
- necessary for effective learning and work
- necessary for separation and autonomy
- it can be used constructively or destructively

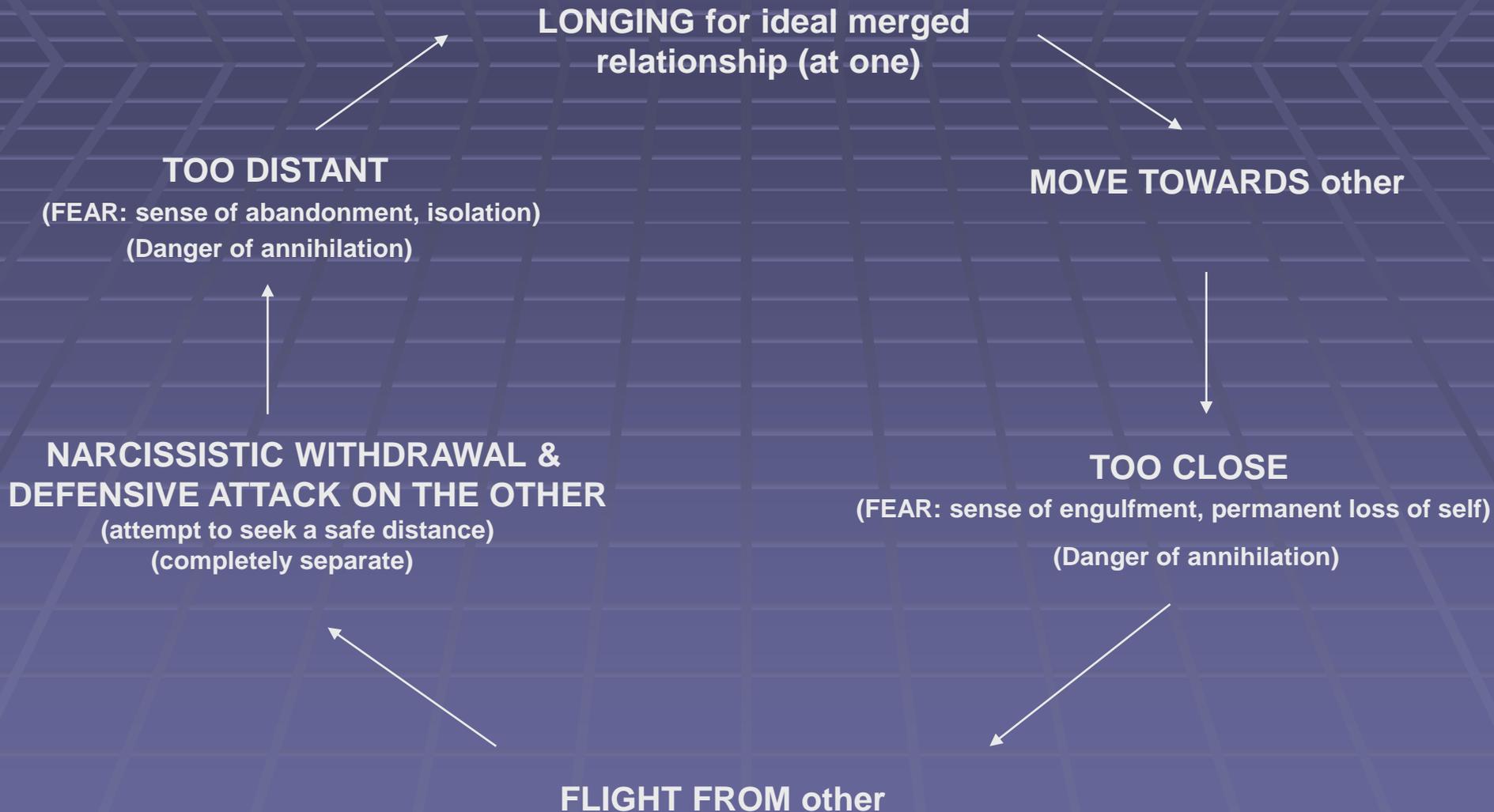
Violence:

- A physical attack on the body of another person when this is not developmentally age-appropriate or in response to real physical danger

Causes of the violent act

- The most primitive (physical) response to a perceived threat to the integrity of the psychological self
- An attempted solution to the overwhelming unprocessed trauma of being helpless in the absence of a protective other.
- Self-preservative violence erupts to destroy the person who threatens psychic annihilation of the self

THE 'VICIOUS CIRCLE' OF THE CORE COMPLEX



Developmental sources

- Deficient emotional development leaving aggression unbound by love
- Lack of mother's protective function leading to the building of a rigid internal barrier
- Parental attitudes and handling
- Distorted superego development

Danger signs or triggers to violence

Fears and anxieties :

- Helplessness
- Humiliation
- Fear of annihilation in relation to **core complex** terrors of engulfment and abandonment

Implications for working with the violent patient

- Don't focus only on aggression but acknowledge health and strengths
- Consider the developmental factors, dangers and triggers
- Empathise with his feelings, thus offering the missing protective function, but recognise his fear of intimacy
- Try to establish a safe setting but understand that he will be frightened of you
- Be very careful not to seem dismissive, intrusive, humiliating or punitive
- Be aware that his primitive anxieties will trigger your own
- Recognise his potential violence whilst being receptive to his needs
- Perceive him as both a perpetrator and a victim

REFERENCES

- FRAIBERG, S. (1982) Pathological defences in infancy. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. 51
- FREUD, A. (1949) Aggression in relation to emotional development: normal and pathological. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. 3/4 Int. Univ. Press: New York.
- FREUD, A. (1972) Comments on aggression. In: *Psychoanalytic Psychology of Normal Development* (1982) Hogarth Press: London.
- FREUD, S. (1920) Beyond the pleasure principle *S.E.* 18 (pp. 27-31)
- FURMAN, E. (1992) *Toddlers and their Mothers*. Int. Univ. Press: Madison, CT
- GLASSER, M. (1996) Aggression and sadism in the perversions. In: *Sexual Deviation. 3rd edition*. Rosen, I. (ed.) Oxford Univ.Press
- GLASSER, M (1998) On violence: a preliminary communication. *Int. J. Psa.* 79:887-902
- HEIMANN, P. & (1972) The psychoanalytical concept of aggression: an integrated summary, *Int.J . Psa.* 53: 31-35.
- VALENSTEIN, A (1973) The concept of cumulative trauma. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child Vol.18*. Int. Univ. Press: New York.
- KHAN, M.
- WINNICOTT, D.W. (1961) Adolescence: struggling through the doldrums. In: *The Family and Individual Development*. (1965) Tavistock: London.
- WINNICOTT, D.W. (1963) From dependence towards independence in the development of the individual. In: *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (1982) Hogarth Press: London.

Working Psychotherapeutically with Children and Adolescents Who Resort to Violence



A Carter–Jenkins Center

production



The End

copyright 2009

