

ClearMinds



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MAGAZINE

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well, holidays...

By Ms. Hacer Subasi

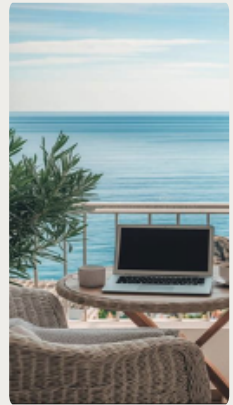
When the break is in the change.

By the time June came to a close and summer had fully arrived, I decided it was the right moment to step back from my usual intense work routine. But instead of a traditional holiday, I treated this pause as a chance to dive deeper into my doctoral thesis.

With the extra focus, I made significant progress, especially on the data collection phase — a stage I'd long anticipated as one of the toughest. It involved navigating a maze of permissions, applications, and selecting the right participants: mothers and their children.

One of the biggest milestones was securing the license for a research scale I had chosen for its exceptional ability to measure my study's variables with both depth and precision. The process wasn't simple — the creators maintain strict copyright rules, and the scale is rarely used worldwide. But clearing that hurdle brought not only a sense of achievement, but also the excitement of being the first to test this tool in Türkiye.

I simply shifted my focus, and in doing so, found a refreshing grounding, and mindful rhythm that left me recharged in the best possible way. It reminded me that sometimes the best kind of break isn't about stepping away completely, but about changing the scenery — both around us and within our own minds. As I return to my regular work, I carry with me not only progress on my thesis, but also the calm clarity that this 'change of air' has brought.



In Turkish, there's an old expression : instead of saying “I’m going on holiday,” people would say “I’m going for a change of air” (tebdil-i hava). That’s exactly what this summer felt like for me. It wasn’t ‘tatil’ — a full stop — but rather a change of work



Did you Know ? It isn't only about the child...

One of the most common things parents say when walking into the therapy room is:

"We just need some help with our child's behavior."



By Sara Caroppo, MSc

It makes perfect sense. When a child is struggling—especially in ways that are disruptive or emotionally intense—the instinct is to focus on the child as the source of the problem. What often goes unnoticed, however, is how deeply a child's behavior is connected to their environment, particularly to the tone, reactions, and emotional cues of their caregivers.

Why Is it important to work with parents too ?

As a Child Psychologist, I work closely with parents. Not to judge or criticize, but because parenting plays a central role in shaping how children learn to regulate their emotions, respond to challenges, and build relationships. Change begins in the family system, not just within the child.

Everyday Parenting and Behavioral Psychology :

Many parents are already applying psychology in daily routines—often without realizing it.

- Positive reinforcement happens when a parent praises a child for helpful behavior, such as tidying their room. If sincere and consistent, this praise increases the likelihood of the behavior being repeated.
- Negative punishment involves removing a valued item or privilege, such as screen time, following unwanted behavior. The goal is to decrease that behavior over time.

These ideas go back to BF Skinner's work in behavioral psychology. In his famous "Skinner's Box" experiments, he showed how behavior can be shaped by rewards or by removing rewards.

Children, like adults, respond to environments in patterned ways. If misbehavior consistently draws attention, it is reinforced. If calm behavior is ignored, it may fade. These quiet associations can be remarkably enduring.

When Effort Begins to Fade

Another important concept is learned helplessness, developed by psychologists Martin Seligman and Steven Maier.



his occurs when, after repeated setbacks or unclear responses from caregivers, a child begins to believe their efforts don't make a difference. Over time, they may stop trying altogether.

Children in this state may appear anxious, disengaged, angry, or unusually passive. This is rarely laziness or defiance. More often, it signals that something important has been missed. When adult feedback is unpredictable or overly critical, even well-intentioned children can lose confidence in their ability to create change.

The Messages Behind the Moments

Every interaction between parent and child carries meaning. A raised eyebrow, a soft tone, a pause, a quick reaction—all of these shape a child's understanding of themselves and the world. That's why child therapy often begins with parents reflecting on the messages they send, often unintentionally. Behavior is never random—it's communication, a response to what the child has learned about safety, connection, and expectation.

When parents respond with more awareness and consistency, the change is often visible in the child. Parental involvement is not simply part of the process—it is the process.



Helping a child thrive means looking beyond the child alone. It means recognizing that every gesture, word, and response is shaping their world. Change begins not only in therapy, but at home.



Understanding Trauma Bonding

Have you ever felt like your attachment to a person is keeping you stuck rather than helping you grow?



By Moni El Ramlawy, MA

Trauma bonding is a confusing emotional attachment that forms between a person and someone who repeatedly harms, manipulates, or mistreats them. It's a relationship where "love" feels inconsistent. It's a relationship fueled by cycles of abuse and intermittent kindness. This dynamic can occur in romantic relationships, family systems, friendships, and even workplaces.

So... what is "trauma bonding" really?

At its core, trauma bonding happens when abuse is paired with moments of warmth or affection. Your brain starts to think the comfort you feel after being hurt is the same as love or safety. Over time, the nervous system learns to crave those "good" moments, even if they are rare, because they temporarily soothe the pain caused by the same person.

This cycle creates an emotional dependency - making it difficult for someone to leave, even when they know the relationship is harmful.

You may read this and think, how did I get stuck in this pattern? Or how did this even begin? This kind of relationship usually begins with affection and connection until criticism, neglect, manipulation, or emotional withdrawal begins. The type of abuse may be emotional, physical, or sexual. Then comes the reconciliation - apologies, affection, or small acts of kindness. Then there's a sense of calm. The cycle then resets and creates hope for lasting change.

This cycle creates an emotional dependency - making it difficult for someone to leave, even when they know the relationship is harmful.

Why do people stay?

There is often a misconception that staying in such a relationship is about weakness. However, the reality is sometimes rooted in attachment needs. If a person experienced neglect or inconsistent caregiving in childhood, unpredictability can feel familiar - even "normal". Another reason is, there's always hope for change. Small acts of kindness feel like a breath of fresh air and proof that things can be different. Other times, people stay out of fear when control, intimidation, financial dependence, or isolation are involved. They feel trapped.

Breaking the Cycle

Healing from a trauma bond takes time, safety, and support:

- **Recognize the Pattern:** Naming what's happening can reduce shame and confusion.
- **Create Distance:** Physically and emotionally stepping back helps break the pattern.
- **Seek Support:** Trauma-informed therapy, support groups, or trusted friends can provide perspective.
- **Rebuild Self-Trust:** Learning to listen to your instincts and boundaries is key.
- **Address Underlying Trauma:** Understanding your attachment history can help prevent repeating the pattern.

Trauma bonding is not a sign of weakness – it's a human survival response. Breaking free requires compassion for yourself, a recognition of how your nervous system has adapted, and steady, consistent support.



Freedom doesn't just mean leaving the harmful relationship – it also means learning to build connections where safety and love are not conditional.



Learn exactly what panic attacks are and some effective ways on how to manage them

Have you ever had the experience of suddenly your heart pounding, your chest feeling tight, and your thoughts begin to race, but nothing dangerous is actually happening



By Dalea Alawar, PsyD

The confusing reality of a panic attack: your body's built-in alarm system has gone off when there's no real threat. It feels very frightening in the moment! In this article, I aim to help you understand how and why a panic attack happens, and what you can do to switch off that alarm system in your brain.

First, let us start with explaining what a panic attack is. A panic attack is like your body's fire alarm going off by mistake. This alarm is designed to keep you safe from danger, also called the fight-or-flight response. When it goes off at the correct time, it's extremely helpful and often lifesaving, such as how alert you become when a car swerves at you.

But sometimes, this alarm gets triggered when there's no actual danger, maybe because you're stressed, tired, worried, or your body is sensitive to certain changes (like how coffee can cause a racing heart). When this happens, the brain misreads normal body sensations as a sign of danger and sets off the safety alarm.

Here are some symptoms of a panic attack: Rapid heartbeat; shortness of breath; sweating or shaking; dizziness or lightheadedness; or a strong feeling of dread.

Because the symptoms feel so intense and uncomfortable, your mind may start thinking something terrible is happening, like a heart attack or losing control, which makes the panic stronger. The important thing to remember is that panic attacks are not actually dangerous and they always pass, even if they feel scary. Here are some tips to ease the intensity of a panic attack:

1. Empty out all the air from your lungs and then breathe at a slower rate. Rapid breathing makes your panic stronger. It also feels harder to breathe because you aren't emptying out all the air from your lungs before you take in more air. So, blow out all the air, as if you are deflating a balloon, and then take slower breaths, so you can go back to breathing naturally. If you're having a hard time doing this, breathe in and out of a straw or into a paper bag.

2. Relax your muscles. This sends the message to your brain that you are not actually in real danger.

3. Put your hands in icy cold water. : Or splash very cold water on your face or put an ice pack on your neck. This sudden change in your body's temperature can snap your body out of "danger" mode.

4. Get out of your head and into your present moment :

What fuels a panic attack are all the racing thoughts you are having. Shift attention away from your mind by engaging in the 5-4-3-2-1 technique:

- Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.



"Panic attacks can feel intense and frightening, but they are not harmful. The more you practice calming techniques, the more confident you will feel in handling them. Over time, your body learns that these symptoms are just false alarms, not real emergencies."

"With patience, self-awareness, and practice, you can reduce the power that panic attacks have over you and regain a sense of control"



Your Partner, Your Symptom ! A Different Way of Seeing Relationships

Have you ever thought of your partner as symptom—a choice that reveals something of the unconscious?



By Yassine Tayi, MSc

This is an invitation to look at relationships from a different perspective, inspired by Jacques-Alain Miller's thesis, "The Partner as a Symptom."

Let's start with a quick definition of a **Symptom** :

In Lacanian psychoanalysis : the symptom isn't simply a fault but it's the way the subject's system holds together; it's what organises their system. It's the ugly duct tape on a leak : seeing it disturbs you but tear it off before you get to understand it's role, and you flood the house."

Which brings us to today's theme: partner-as-symptom. Seen through this lens, what we call "dysfunctional" in a relationship may be precisely what sustains it. your partner might often be your symptom, « your duct tape ». what most irritates you is tied to what draws you in.

Example: you're meticulous; you like everything tidy. Surprised, you fall for someone delightfully chaotic. At first it's charming; Move in together and, suddenly, you're arguing about where things belong — while still oddly glued to each other. A duct-tape fit, if you like.

How does this operate in a relationship? What do we unconsciously seek?

Individuals don't enter love with what they have so much with what they lack. "To love is a wish to be loved" In that sense, each of us seeks to be loved for our leak — the bit the duct tape covers — rather than the functioning facade.

A simple (cliché) vignette : Let's know see how that might operate in a relationship.

For an "X" reason, Person A is looking for a partner — a **duct tape** — with the following description: "someone who can provide for me." In love-terms : "If my partner provides, they love me — then I feel loved."

For a "Y" reason, Person B is looking for a partner — yes, **their duct tape** — with the following description: "someone to provide for." Love-terms : "If I provide, my partner loves me — then I feel loved."

Once upon a time in Dubai – Fate, Tinder, Cupid, take your pick – Person A meets Person B. Match made. It works as long as, A keeps asking and B keeps providing. The circuit runs; both feel loved.

When the symptom shifts :

We might think it's all sorted, but then comes the challenging part.

Life happens, A or B are evolving; their symptoms start shifting – A wants to *be more independent*; B doesn't want to *define their worth through providing* to other. then the squeaks, the leaks and the slips starts :

B : "Oh, you only love me because of what I have, not because of who I am." "I'm a person, not a wallet with legs!"

A : "I don't want an allowance; I want to feel held." "You buy things so you don't have to be here!"

then the relationship keeps leaking, evolves, finds another set-up, reinvents itself to keep going, or breaks. *And what happens when it breaks?* Well, if neither of the two knows the "X" or the "Y" reason we stated earlier, then guilt, anxiety and insecurities fill that void.

The relationship metaphor

Imagine two large gears that don't actually touch. Between them is a small, slightly dented gear. That little gear squeaks, sometimes slips, and isn't perfectly shaped – but it's what allows the two larger gears to move together. Remove it, and both stop turning. That "dented gear" is the symptom: it may not work smoothly, but it's what keeps the whole system alive



What we take from it ?

Here's the strange beauty: even when relationships are difficult – or gloriously singular – they're chances to learn about ourselves, our symptoms, our X's (exes) and our Y's (whys).

- This only confirms the truth of these phrases we often hear – «My other half», «My life», «My loved one». It's less an attempt to possess the other (still illegal, by the way) and more a way of saying the partner mirrors and sets in motion parts of myself I don't quite have a hold of.

I'll hope you enjoyed this as much as I did writing it – take it as a cheeky challenge to think differently, not a licence to start calling your partner 'my symptom' instead of 'my love'."



"To love is to give what e don't have, to someone who doesn't need it" Jacques LACAN

BRAINBREAK

Word Search: All about Relationships !

"Take a mindful pause and explore this relationships-themed crossword!
Can you find all the hidden words about trust, connection, and love?"

Clearminds Word Search — Relationships



Find these (→ or ↓ only):

LOVE
PARTNER
SYMPTOM
CONFLICT
CONNECTION
BREAK
SPACE
FRIENDS
TRUST
CARE



Let's reflect!

"Can't spot them all ? Take a moment to reflect on the ones that slipped away."

"Single, taken, or it's complicated – this puzzle still wants a date with you!"

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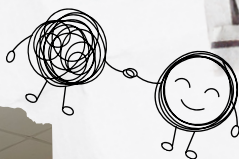
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