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Conceptualization and Treatment Considerations

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Pride in the Psychotherapy of Relational Trauma:
Conceptualization and Treatment Considerations

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“Pride in the Psychotherapy of Relational Trauma:
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Abstract

While shame has attracted renewed interest in both research and clinical practice, pride as emotion and as part of traumatic, mind/body states have been given scant attention in the psychotherapy literature. The following article is a step toward correcting that oversight. As with shame, pride lies at the heart of self, other, and relationship, and thus is central to our work as psychotherapists, and more specifically with survivors of relational trauma. I begin by outlining a common experiential pathway from aliveness and what I term “pro-being pride” to shame and dissociation. Next, I describe three pride subtypes as acute, emotional processes, one maladaptive (“better me pride”) and two adaptive (“good enough me pride” and “pro-being pride”), and then two maladaptive, chronic pride subtypes that are the consequence of relational trauma, and reflect different degrees of dissociation in relation to pride (“not me pride” and “no me pride”). For each pride subtype, I offer brief vignettes to show how these phenomena may show up in psychotherapy. To more fully flesh out these concepts, four clinical psychotherapy sessions with four different patients display for the reader a few of the many ways pride appears, disappears, reappears and, in turn, can be worked with in psychotherapy. The emphasis is on identifying and working with adaptive pride, particularly pro-being pride, when treating relational trauma survivors of abuse and/or neglect.

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