

DEFINITION OF SURVIVAL STRATEGIES; THEIR PLACE IN STRESS AND TRAUMA

Introduction

We have been talking about survival strategies. What are they?

Definition



Level of operation

“Old mammalian” brain MacLean (1973) / that is the midbrain, including the limbic system and primitive cortex.

Survival strategies function on a level between reflexes and instincts, and abstract functioning. They have rich two way connections with both the reptilian hindbrain and mammalian forebrain.

Description of Survival Strategies

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- LEVEL - *midbrain, limbic system, primitive cortex*
 - *primitive mammalian*
 - *between instincts and abstract*
- **FINITE NUMBER, INFINITE COMBINATIONS**
- **BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL**
- **ADAPTIVE AND MALADAPTIVE**
- **SPECIFIC TO APPRAISALS**

Finite number of survival strategies with infinite potential combinations.

There are only eight survival strategies, but like the notes of an octave they may combine in an infinite multitude of combinations which can produce many 'symphonies' of traumatic stress and fulfilment.

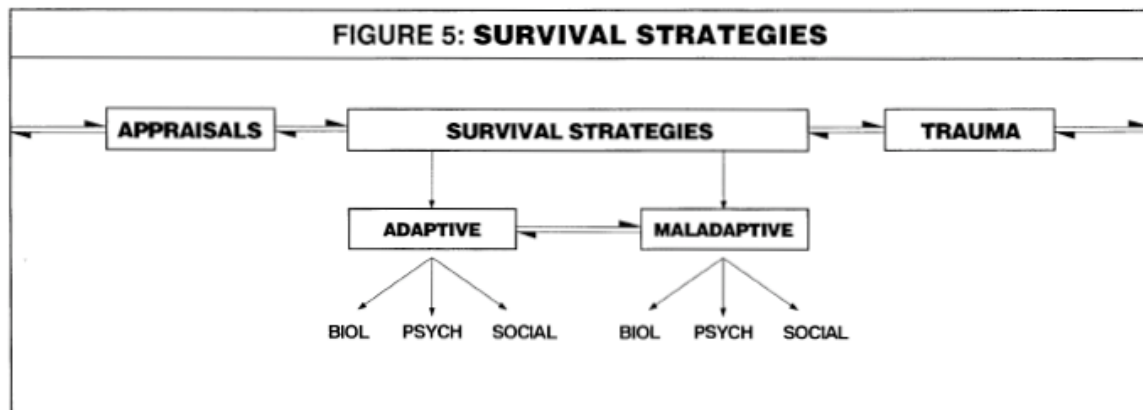
Survival strategies are evoked by appraisals of circumstances

SURVIVAL STRATEGY	APPRAISAL
• Rescue	• <i>Must save another</i>
• Attachment	• <i>Must be rescued</i>
• Assertiveness/goal a	• <i>Must achieve goals</i>
• Adaptation/goal surr	• <i>Must surrender goals</i>
• Fight	• <i>Must remove danger</i>
• Flight	• <i>Must escape danger</i>
• Competition	• <i>Must win out</i>
• Cooperation	• <i>Must share</i>

Biopsychosocial Nature.

Each survival strategy has biological, psychological and social aspects which together act as functional units.

Adaptiveness and maladaptiveness



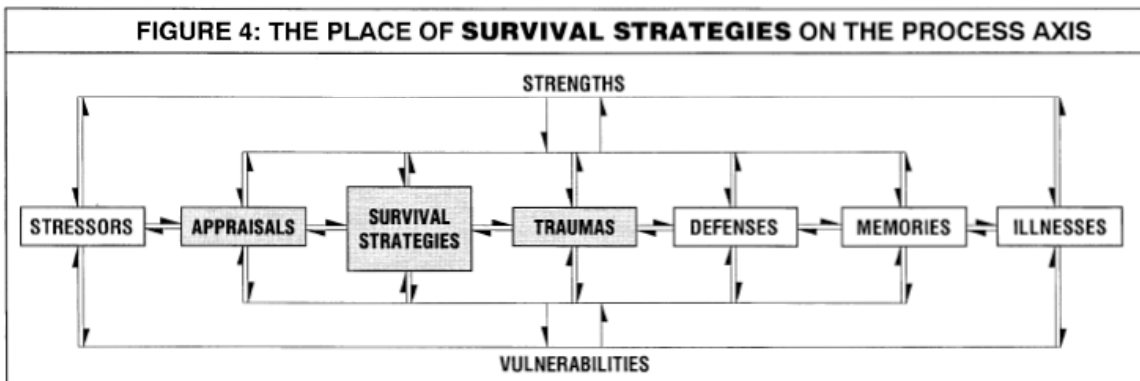
Survival strategies may be adaptive or maladaptive according to circumstances.

Fulfilment and Trauma



Adaptive survival strategies are the bases of fulfilment, while maladaptive survival strategies contribute to strain, traumas, symptoms and illnesses.

Place of survival strategies in the Process of Traumatic Consequences



The dynamic process toward fulfilment has not been well studied, at least not in traumatology. Though we will trace fulfilment dynamics, it will not be as rich as the dynamics from stressors through trauma to illnesses.

This process you see in the above figure starts in traumatic situations where stressors give rise to appraisals as to which stress responses or survival strategies would be most useful. If these strategies fail trauma may develop. It may be mitigated (or future

similar traumas avoided) though defences of which dissociation is the most basic and currently studied, though there are other defences, as we will see. If one survives traumas they and defences become imprinted in memories. Survival strategy stress responses, their intense traumatic imprints, defences and memories lead to compromise equilibria called illnesses or disorders. The whole process is modulated by strengths and vulnerabilities.

In the next seminar we will look in more detail at the segment of this figure between Appraisal and Trauma; in particular we will look at the details of survival strategies.