ABSTRACT

Internal loss and unconscious phantasy in adolescence

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This paper presents an analytic psychotherapy case study of an adolescent female not attending school, and discusses object relations, phantasy, and psychic defense caused by internal loss. Client/therapist separation brought back enactment of internal loss of the client's mother in infancy and she was thrown into a temporary state of confusion. The therapist's recognizing her psychic movement and denied depressive affect brought on therapeutic progress. However, if the client could not stay in a depressive affect mood, manic defense would be chosen again. To identify whether acting out behavior which appears to be appropriate is a manic defense or one which brings growth, it is crucial to have a proper viewpoint from which to diagnose whether the client's psyche is in the old self controlled by infantile phantasy (P-S position) or in the newly acquired self more based in reality (D position). Staying in a state of depressive affect provides adolescents with power to think about themselves and a model to survive subsequent loss in their lives.

Key Words: adolescent, internal loss, unconscious phantasy, psychic defense, depressive affect