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PATHOGENIC BELIEFS AND GUILT IN HUMAN EVOLUTION

Implications for psychotherapy

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Introduction

This chapter discusses the therapy process as one in which people, motivated by a drive for wellness and life satisfaction, work with the therapist to change their pathogenic beliefs and overcome their problems. Many pathogenic beliefs are related to an exaggerated sense of responsibility for others, and people with psychological problems are often suffering from a conflict between self-interest and a concern for others, resulting in maladaptive interpersonal guilt.

The capacity to form beliefs and to engage in problem solving and planning are evolved psychological mechanisms in *Homo sapiens*. In addition, our species, adapted to larger group living and stable group composition, has a highly developed capacity for altruism, empathy, sympathy and guilt, along with a levelling mechanism, all of which contributed to sharing and other successful social adaptations in the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness (EEA). However, in post-EEA culture, behaviour associated with these adaptive psychological mechanisms may sometimes be 'mismatched' with contemporary conditions, and contribute to disturbances in the guilt system and the development of pathogenic beliefs and dysfunctional behaviour.

To date, much psychoanalytic theory has assumed the unconscious mind to be rooted in disorganized, aggressive, antisocial and individualistic motivations, and has failed to recognize that self-interest can also be advanced by seeing others prosper, and that there may also be powerful unconscious prosocial motivations. This chapter suggests that the evolved social mentalities for altruistic and caring behaviour have been fundamental to human evolution, and can operate at both conscious and unconscious levels to produce serious internal conflicts, inhibitions, and psychological problems that bring people to therapy.

It is proposed that patients begin psychotherapy with an unconscious plan to change their maladapative beliefs and overcome problems, particularly those connected to guilt, shame and inhibitions. They do this through a process of testing

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PATHOGENIC BELIEFS AND GUILT

their pathogenic beliefs with the therapist. Several assumptions, common in clinical practice, are questioned: the belief in resistance, the belief in neutrality, and the focus on process and transference interpretations. It is suggested that successful therapy is an intimate, kin-like social activity regulated by normal rules for helpful human interactions, and that optimal therapeutic technique is highly case-specific.

The evolution of pathogenic beliefs and guilt

Adaptation

An evolutionary perspective on psychological problems and their treatment centres on the fundamental principle of adaptation; through time, evolution has shaped life at every level of organization to be adapted to the environment in which it evolved. Understanding psychopathology and treatment in terms of ultimate adaptations in evolutionary history, on the one hand, and local adaptations or adjustment to the current environment on the other, forms the foundation of evolutionary psychotherapy.

Illimate adaptations have been selected by an evolutionary process, while local

Ultimate adaptations have been selected by an evolutionary process, while local adaptations have not themselves evolved, as there has not been time for evolution to shape them. However, local adaptations make use of mechanisms evolved as ultimate adaptations. For example, a child's inclination to imitate the behaviour and cultural style of his or her family is an ultimate adaptation, permitting the child to fit into his or her family and to carry on the culture. However, the actual behaviours that the child adopts are local adaptations. Psychological mechanisms, embedded in the structure of the mind, are ultimate adaptations. Shaped by selection and serving the 'ultimate' purpose of survival and reproduction, they provide a link between evolution and behaviour (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992a, b). Psychological problems may be particularly well understood and treated from the perspective of both local and ultimate adaptations (Glantz & Pearce, 1989; Gilbert, 1989, 1992, 1995; McGuire & Troisi, 1998; Sampson, 1992, 1997; Slavin & Kriegman, 1992; Stevens & Price, 1996; Weiss, Sampson & The Mount Zion Psychotherapy Research Group, 1986; Weiss, 1993).

Common psychological mechanisms in *Homo sapiens*, such as the proneness to comply with others, the ability to learn through imitation, and the capacity to feel guilt, shame, and other self-conscious emotions, are ultimate adaptations that serve to ensure survival at various levels of organization. Local adaptations, however, may or may not serve the ultimate purpose of survival and reproduction. While in most cases local adaptations contribute to survival, in some instances they result in maladaptive behaviours and lead to psychopathology.

Psychological mechanisms

The mind as posited by Freud and his followers was ruled by disorganized antisocial and maladaptive unconscious processes (Freud, 1895/1950; Freud

1900/1950; Isaacs, 1983; Klein, 1927/1975; Kernberg, 1967). In contrast, modern cognitive and evolutionary science is demonstrating that the human mind – including the unconscious – is an organized set of evolved mechanisms that makes local adaptation possible (Bowers, Regehr, Baltharzard & Parker, 1990; Cosmides & Tooby, 1992a; Dorfman, Shames & Kihlstrom, 1996; Kihlstrom, 1987; Lewicki, Hill & Czyzewska, 1992).

Human cognitive and emotional capacities are psychological adaptations shaped by evolution for the pursuit of basic biological goals such as survival, reproduction, kin investment, and reciprocation (Buss, 1999; Cosmides & Tooby, 1992a, b; Gilbert, 1989, 1997; McGuire & Troisi, 1998; Nesse, 1990, 1994) in the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness (EEA) (Bowlby, 1982/1969; Glantz & Pearce, 1989). These mechanisms or 'social mentalities' (Gilbert, Chapter 6, this volume) provide the means by which people are able, through behaviour, to adapt to their environments, and to function successfully in work, social relationships and procreation. The structure of the human mind, its ability to solve problems, to form beliefs and expectations based on prior experience, to assess for danger and safety, to make plans and carry out actions, to communicate with other people, and to engage in social relations, involves mechanisms that are used in local adaptation. The capacity to experience and express emotions that serve as a call for attention and action is another psychological adaptation (LeDoux, 1996; Nesse, 1990; Nesse & Williams, 1994; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990; Gilbert, 1989, 1997).

People are highly motivated to adapt to their environments, and when psychological problems interfere with functioning, people want to resolve them and recover. Thus people begin psychotherapy determined to overcome their problems. In a cognitive psychodynamic theory developed by Weiss (1986, 1993) and often referred to as Control Mastery theory, it is posited that patients, motivated by a biological drive for wellness and life satisfaction, work with the therapist to modify the conscious and unconscious distortions and problem-causing beliefs that may underlie their inhibitions, symptoms and maladaptive behaviours.

The capacity to form beliefs

The ability to form beliefs based on experience begins in early childhood (Baron-Cohen, 1995; Gelman, 1990; Leslie, 1988, 1994; Leslie & Thaiss, 1992; Premack & Premack, 1994; Stern, 1985). Small children, like scientists, have been shown to generate theories about the world and test hypotheses derived from them (Kagan, 1984; Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997; Gopnik & Meltzoff, 1997). Expectations and beliefs are formed even before children are able to communicate verbally (Lewis, Alessandri & Sullivan, 1990).

Throughout life people form new beliefs and expectations, based on new experiences, while often holding on to those formed earlier. In most circumstances, beliefs mediate locally adaptive behaviour and the capacity to form theories and beliefs is evolutionarily adaptive. However, when a child grows up in a dysfunctional family or a disturbed broader socioeconomic environment, beliefs which

PATHOGENIC BELIEFS AND GUILT

may have been locally adaptive in the context where they were formed become pathogenic and may lead to maladapative behaviours and psychopathology (see Liotti, Chapter 11, this volume).

Pathogenic beliefs

Children are particularly vulnerable to the development of pathogenic beliefs because they lack prior life experience by which to judge what is going on in their families and what happens in their interactions with others. Children are likely to believe that what happens in their families is what is supposed to happen; it is all that they know. They are likely to consider even severely disturbed parental behaviour acceptable, or something for which they themselves are responsible (Bowlby, 1982/1969). For young children, parents are the ultimate authorities, representing truth and morality (Weiss, 1993). Children work to adjust to the family environment, to maintain their connections to their parents and siblings, and to make a contribution to the family. The beliefs that children develop are part of their efforts at local adaptation.

Social behaviour in many primate species is primarily learned by imitation (Bernhard, 1988; Boesch, 1996; Whiten, 1998), and human children often directly imitate their parents and other caretakers, with little capacity for judgement about the effectiveness or functionality of the behaviours imitated. In their attempt to make sense of the world, to establish decision rules governing behaviour, children develop beliefs and systems of beliefs that rationalize parental behaviours. Additionally, children are often confused by psychological causality and tend to have an exaggerated sense of responsibility for their loved ones, the result of adaptive mechanisms aimed at maintaining relationships and supporting the family (Bowlby, 1982/1969; Modell, 1965, 1971; Weiss, 1986; Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1983).

For example, when a girl grows up in a family with a frightening alcoholic father, she may develop the belief that men are supposed to be frightening. When she later begins the process of mate selection, she may maladaptively choose a mate who resembles her father, following her mother's decision in mate selection. Or a girl who grows up with a depressed mother may develop the belief that women are supposed to be depressive, and in adulthood she may demonstrate maladaptive symptoms like her mother, based on imitation, identification and loyalty to the family.

The girl with a depressed mother may also believe that she is responsible for her mother's chronic unhappiness and is obligated to try to make her mother happy. Research has demonstrated that children often attempt to engage or even cheer up depressed mothers (Cohn, Campbell, Matias, & Hopkins, 1990; Mulherin, 1998; Radke-Yarrow et al., 1994; Tronick, Als & Brazelton, 1977; Weiss, 1993). When a child fails in this endeavour she may develop the belief that she is a failure and this belief may inhibit her from the successful pursuit of normal goals. Pathogenic beliefs are grim and constricting, predicting danger for the person holding them, and danger for their loved ones.

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Pathogenic beliefs about harming others

Particularly common pathogenic beliefs are those predicting that a person's pursuit of normal goals will cause others to suffer. Based on the psychological mechanisms of altruism, empathy, sympathy and guilt and related to caretaking behaviour (Batson, Fultz & Schoenrade, 1987; Gilbert, 1989; Scott, 1958), people are often excessively worried that pursuing their own interests will cause harm to others.

Sevier, 1997b; O'Connor, Berry, Weiss & Gilbert, 1998; Weiss, 1983, 1986, 1993). & Sampson, 1997a; O'Connor, Berry & Weiss, 1999; O'Connor, Berry, Weiss & Ferguson, 1996; Harder, Cutler & Rockert, 1992; O'Connor, Berry, Weiss, Bush Stegge, Miller & Olsen, 1999; Ferguson & Stegge, 1998; Ferguson & Eyre, 1998; others, and result in symptoms, inhibitions and dysfunction (Bush, 1989; Ferguson, ruminating and maladaptive sense of interpersonal guilt related to fears of harming not she is successful. These types of pathogenic beliefs give rise to a pervasive, sibling may develop the belief that if she fulfils her academic potential, she that her natural talents are in fact the cause of her sibling's dysfunction, whether or will make her sibling suffer by comparison. She may even develop the belief mother without purpose. Or an academically gifted child with a learning disabled the pathogenic belief that to leave home and be independent will leave the life is focused entirely on her children - even past their adolescence - may develop father's feelings of inadequacy. Or a person who grows up with a mother whose father may develop the pathogenic belief that his or her success will accentuate the For example, a person who grows up with an unhappy and unsuccessful

The evolution of altruism and guilt

related family, and the group (Buss, 1999; O'Connor et al., 1997b; Sober & Wilson, motivation may be described as egoistic. Recently, several evolutionary biologists reciprocation. In both inclusive fitness and reciprocal altruism, the underlying explanation for altruistic acts performed for non-kin, with the expectation of of the gene (Dawkins, 1976) even at the expense of the altruistic individual. individuals who are genetically related, and that lead to the maximum reproduction theory (Hamilton 1963, 1964) explains acts of altruism that are aimed at helping altruistic acts aimed at the good of the group. Sober and Wilson (1998) have hypothesized that group selection is a factor in behaviour increases fitness at the level of the group, in between-group competition. levels of selection - including selection at the level of the individual, the genetically and psychologists have described altruistic behaviour as best explained by multiple Reciprocal altruism (Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981; Trivers, 1971, 1985) provides an been attributed to a number of motivations and ultimate purposes. Inclusive fitness 1998; Wilson, 1977, 1989; Wilson & Sober, 1994). In group selection, altruistic Altruism, a subject of discussion in both psychological and biological theory, has

While altruism, empathy, sympathy and guilt may contribute to holding people, groups and families together, to reconciliations in situations of conflict,

in some cases they may be associated with the kinds of pathogenic beliefs and self-sacrificing behaviours associated with psychopathology and maladaptive interpersonal guilt.

The capacity to feel guilt is an evolved psychological mechanism, an adaptation to group living, serving the purpose of maintaining social ties and holding people together (Baumeister, Stillwell & Heatherton, 1994; Gilbert, 1989, 1997; Tangney, Wagner & Gramzow, 1992; Tangney & Fischer, 1995). Connected to caregiving behaviour and a sense of responsibility for others, guilt is based on the capacity for empathy and sympathy, the ability to feel another's distress (Batson, Fultz & Schoenrade, 1987; Caporael, Dawes, Orbell & van de Kragt, 1989; Hay, Nash & Pedersen, 1981; Plutchik, 1987; Sagi & Hoffman, 1976; Simner, 1971). Guilt takes this capacity a step further; not only are people able to feel another's discomfort, they also take responsibility for it and try to relieve it (Chapman, Zahn-Waxler, Cooperman & Iannotti, 1987; Eisenberg et al., 1989; Olthof, Ferguson & Luiten, 1989; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, 1983; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow & King, 1979; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, 1983; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, 1983; Sahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow & Chapman, 1990). Guilt links empathy to altruistic behaviour (Eisenberg-Berg & Chapman, 1979; Hoffman, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1982; Thompson & Hoffman, 1980;).

The evolution of guilt in humans provided a mechanism by which both genetically related and non-related people in a social group could successfully stay connected to one another. This may have occurred when environmental conditions made larger and more stable group formation a more adaptive strategy than the smaller and more unstable group composition noted in many higher primates (Maryanski, 1996). Under conditions in which stable group composition, larger group size, and the presence of the pair-bond are particularly adaptive forms of social organization, guilt provides a psychological mechanism that mitigates the effects of within-group competition. A person who feels harmed by another is often more willing to forgive the harm-doer, and to maintain the connection, upon perceiving that the person who harmed them feels guilty (Worthington et al., 1999). Guilt is an unpleasant emotion, and when people feel guilty they are inclined to make restitution and increase the probability of conflict resolution (Adams, 1965; Baumeister, Stillwell & Heatherton, 1994; Walster & Berscheid, 1973).

Thus guilt is ordinarily highly adaptive, and in recent years the adaptive form of guilt has been studied empirically (Gilbert, 1997; Tangney, Wagner & Gramzow, 1992; Tangney & Fischer, 1995). The maladaptive functions of guilt have also been described by clinicians (Modell, 1965, 1971; Neiderland, 1961, 1981; Weiss, 1983, 1986, 1993) and studied empirically, demonstrating a significant correlation with depression and other psychological symptoms (Ferguson et al., 1999; Ferguson & Stegge, 1998; Ferguson & Eyre, 1998; Ferguson, 1996; Harder, Cutler & Rockert, 1992; O'Connor et al., 1997a, b; O'Connor, Berry & Weiss, 1999; O'Connor et al., 1998; Zahn-Waxler, Cummings, Iannotti & Radke-Yarrow, 1984; Zahn-Waxler, Kochanska, Krupnick & McKnew, 1990).

PATHOGENIC BELIEFS AND GUILT

Survivor guilt

literature (Bush, 1989; Friedman, 1985; Modell, 1965, 1971; Neiderland, 1961 distress by Exline and Lobel (1999), and as survivor guilt in more clinically-focused referred to as inequity guilt by Baumeister and Leary (1995), outperformance or when they believe they are better off than others. This kind of guilt has been guilt. People tend to feel survivor guilt when they survive the death of a loved one. O'Connor et. al. (1997a) have focused on the proneness to survivor or outdoing 1981; O'Connor et al., 1997a, b, 1998, 1999; Weiss 1983, 1986, 1993) Informed by a clinical perspective, Weiss (1983, 1986, 1993), Bush (1989) and

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of a loved one. most literal kind of survivor guilt is that which people tend to feel after the death or hearing about an airplane crash, a major fire, or an epidemic of illness. The feel survivor guilt towards strangers, for example when seeing homeless beggars, know loses a job, is diagnosed with an illness, or is otherwise suffering. We ever guilt when hearing about a friend's misfortune, for example when someone they impulse in hunter-gatherer groups (Boehm 1993, 1997). People feel survivor Survivor guilt serves as a levelling mechanism, promoting group cohesion and inhibiting within-group competition and may be associated with the levelling

jealousy may constitute a way to build up the disabled sibling, in order to reduce because of the extra parental care the disabled child receives. This expression of it is common to have a child express jealousy towards a disabled sibling, ostensibly and an attempt to make things equal between siblings (Webster, 1998). For example, that sibling rivalry may sometimes be a manifestation of unconscious survivor guilt step in this sequence serves to make things equal, to momentarily put the witness the guilt that the more fortunate sibling feels. in the same position as the victim, thereby reducing survivor guilt. There is evidence anxiety and thoughts of punishment, 'that's going to happen to me too'. The last followed by feelings of guilt for their 'selfishness'. This may then be followed by many people initially feel a moment of relief that they have not been so inflicted, example, when a friend announces that she has been diagnosed with a serious illness, quite aware of it, although they may notice feelings of discomfort and anxiety. For The experience of survivor guilt is often unconscious - that is people are not

especially true within the close social group or family (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark survivor guilt, the algorithm related to cheater detection must be turned inward are thus alert to their own penchant for cheating; that is in order for a person to feel evaluate whether their situation is equitable when compared to that of others. People dependent on people being able to assess their status in relation to others, and to algorithms that evolved to assess social exchange and detect cheating (Cosmides comparisons and to evaluate equity in social exchange, employing the specific If people feel they have obtained more than others, they tend to feel guilty. This is & Tooby, 1992b). Survivor guilt, a reversal and/or inhibition of competition, is 1973; Modell, 1965, 1971), and extends to the larger social environment. The capacity to feel survivor guilt is linked to people's ability to make social

The evolution of survivor guilt

Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness (EEA). From paleoanthropology and and egalitarian social environment and culture (Boehm, 1993; 1997; Cosmides & of high variability of essential nutrient sources, leading to a highly co-operative EEA societies were based on a foraging, immediate return economy, in conditions the study of contemporary hunter and gatherer society, it has been suggested that The capacity to experience survivor guilt was an adaptation to life in the Tooby, 1992b; Itani, 1988; Power, 1988; Service, 1966; Tumbull, 1968; Woodburn,

contributes to fitness (Hawkes, O'Connell, Blurton-Jones, Alverez & Charnov, sharing food with grandchildren and even with women of childbearing years changes were associated with delayed maturity, and depended on adults being O'Connell, Hawkes & Blurton-Jones, 1999). Beginning with Homo ergaster, there and promotes provisioning to offspring into adulthood. infants (O'Connell et al., 1999; Wood & Brooks, 1999; Wood & Collard, 1999; willing to share food with children, adolescents, and even grown women with were dietary changes including the use of tubers, which required cooking. These are unable to provide all of their own food until late adolescence (Charnov, 1993; themselves through foraging immediately after weaning. Human children, however, rearing. Juvenile chimpanzees, in contrast to humans, are able to provision for infants, children and young mothers is a necessary phenomenon in human child Wrangham, Jones, Laden, Pilbeam & Conklin-Brittain, 1999). Grandmothers' 1998). Guilt at inequality creates an internal discomfort in the absence of sharing Survivor guilt is a proximate motive for sharing, and adults sharing food with

small-scale human societies for a long enough period to have evolutionary egalitarianism 'in which it is considered immoral for one person to have more status others are held in check by other members of the group, creating an enforced psychological mechanism. situation in the ancestral social environment, making survivor guilt an adaptive consequences, noting that to be better off than others in the group was a precarious or resources than others'. Wilson suggests that this social force was common in has noted that in many hunter-gatherer groups individuals who strive to dominate (Tooby & Cosmides, 1996, p. 133). D.S. Wilson (personal communication, 1996) ment (McClelland, 1985) or what has been noted as the 'appetite for individuality' Cosmides, 1990, 1996), along with a drive to uniqueness and individual achievedrive to help others, to equity and fairness (Baumeister, Stillwell & Heatherton, Cosmides & Tooby, 1992b; Gilbert, 1989; Sober & Wilson 1998; Tooby & 1994; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Caporael 1997; Caporael & Brewer, 1995; As part of their evolution as a social organism, people exhibit a highly tuned

purpose of promoting social cohesion (Kent, 1993), it appears from ethnographic and primate studies, to develop most dramatically in environments in which to be extensive. While sharing, and particularly food sharing, may serve the social In highly egalitarian cultures, sharing on the part of the whole group appears

proneness to feel uncomfortable when faced with another's discomfort. into a behaviour between non-related adult higher primates, in conjunction with the between infants and parents in many species, may have extended through selection in some cases by sharing (de Waal, 1996; de Waal & Lanting, 1997). Begging, seen and bonobos respond to begging behaviour first by exhibiting discomfort, and then share food with one another. It has anecdotally been reported that chimpanzees highly adaptive strategy (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992b) for dealing with times of more, antecedents to survivor guilt may be seen in higher primates who regularly scarcity. Proneness to survivor guilt may have contributed to this adaptation. Furtherthe food source is highly variable, such that the widespread sharing of food was a

> success will harm others. The resulting psychological symptoms and suffering are what bring many people to therapy. of success and achievement as the result of an often unconscious concern that their contemporary environment, many people stop themselves from the normal pursuit with pathogenic beliefs, psychological problems and resulting dysfunction. In the EEA, in the post-industrial era it appears to have become increasingly associated by selection pressure related to group living. Although highly adaptive in the In summary, it is hypothesized that the proneness to survivor guilt was developed

Survivor guilt and psychopathology

a central focus in an evolutionary psychotherapy. concern for others may represent a nature-culture mismatch problem (Bailey & cause others to suffer. This common contemporary conflict between self-interest and Wood, 1998; Bailey, Chapter 3, this volume; Buss 1999; Cosmides and Tooby, common pathogenic beliefs in contemporary culture are related to this conflict. within an individual, and indeed within a changing culture (Asano, 1998). Many particularly in industrial and post-industrial culture - they may come into conflict well together in the social environment of the EEA, in post-EEA cultures - and of each is highly culture-specific, and even within a unified culture, there exists achievement, appear to exist in all cultures and people. The relative importance and to maintain equality, and the drive to care for the self and to seek personal 1992; Glantz & Pearce, 1989). This conflict is often unconscious, and may become These centre around the belief that a person's individual success or happiness will variation among individuals. Furthermore, while both drives may have functioned individual achievement (Tooby & Cosmides, 1996). Both the drive to care for others in work and reproduction supports self-interest and the drive to uniqueness and the drive to care for others and the maintenance of equality, the need to be successful While the need to maintain attachments and social cohesion in the group upholds

Implications for evolutionary psychotherapy

The patient's plan for therapy

evolved adaptation'. This capacity to plan mediates goal-directed human activities are adaptations to the problem of decision making . . . the capacity to plan is an including psychotherapy. have cognitive mechanisms whose function is planning, . . . and these mechanisms Weiss, 1993, 1998). As noted by Tooby and Cosmides (1990: 406), 'human beings Curtis & Nathans, 1989; Silberschatz & Curtis, 1993; Weiss & Sampson, 1986 goals, patients set out to work with the therapist to modify the pathogenic beliefs and impediments to local adaptation. Motivated by the drive to pursue normal life When people begin therapy, it is with the purpose of overcoming their problems beliefs and problematic behaviours (Fretter, 1995; Rosbrow, 1993; Silberschatz. 1986, 1993) - people begin therapy with a plan to work on their specific pathogenic (Miller, Galanter & Pribram, 1960; Bowlby, 1982/1969; Sampson, 1990a, b; Weiss the environment for danger and safety and to solve the particular problems they face Organized by an adaptive unconscious mind - shaped by evolution to evaluate that contribute to their problems, and to change their dysfunctional behaviours

concern negative views of the self and exaggerated worries about harming others. disclosing and mastering adverse prior experiences that led to their maladaptive deal with this is often a part of the patient's unconscious plan. underlies many pathogenic beliefs, and developing strategies to more effectively The conflict between concern for status and ranking and worry about others often have been out of reach. The pathogenic beliefs that patients commonly work or these beliefs, overcoming their pathogenic inhibitions, and pursuing goals which beliefs, having new experiences both in and out of therapy that will help change The patient's plan for treatment - which may be unconscious - usually includes

find it hard to accept the hypothesis of the patient's plan for positive change in to homeostasis in the case of family-based therapy. Although many practitioners in-therapy behaviour is not ruled by resistance, nor is it motivated by the tendency purposes or adversarial. Patients have agency in the conduct of the therapy, and their process. In our approach, patients and therapists are not assumed to be at cross of change calls into question several common assumptions about the therapeutic The hypothesis that patients have a plan for therapy and are the primary agents

survivor guilt and psychological symptoms, submissive behaviour and depression strivings. Recent empirical research demonstrated a significant correlation between survivor guilt was likely to result in psychological problems when it was linked to of survivor guilt to the guilt people feel when they believe they are better off than irrational pathogenic beliefs that led to the suppression of normal developmental pathology as well as to evolutionary theory. Weiss (1983, 1986, 1993) noted that other members of their families, and linked it to the development of psycho-Second World War prison camps, having witnessed the brutal murder of their by Neiderland (1961, 1981), who described the suffering of people who survived (O'Connor et al., 1997a,b, 1998; O'Connor, Berry & Weiss, 1999). families at the hands of Nazi Germany. Modell (1965, 1971) expanded the concept the wake of his father's death (1897/1960), and was then brought into focus In the clinical literature, survivor guilt was mentioned in passing by Freud, in

PATHOGENIC BELIEFS AND GUILT

therapy, they do not find it difficult to imagine that patients plan their resistance to (Weiss, 1998). therapy, a widely held assumption in traditional psychodynamic psychotherapy

The therapist's task

others. Through these efforts, the therapist helps the patient to modify his or her developed, attempts to reframe problems in an evolutionary perspective, and helps understand the patient's pathogenic beliefs and the conditions under which they patients learn to negotiate the conflict between self-interest and concern about hypotheses about the patient's case-specific plan for treatment, attempts to Assuming a patient's planfulness and motivation for health, the therapist forms

The evolutionary psychotherapist is always asking basic questions:

- 'What was the adaptive purpose of this belief or behaviour when it developed?'
- in the environment was the patient responding to?' 'What were the particular conditions that contributed to this problem, and what
- with? 'Who in the social group was the patient trying to help, protect or comply
- problem? 'Who might the patient have been imitating when he or she developed this
- perspective?' 'How might we reframe this problem in an evolutionary and ethological
- problem?" 'What normal biological motivational systems have been inhibited by this

therapist, the therapist is also asking: In reaction to current moods and experiences that the patient brings to the

- 'How does this problem relate to the patient's concern about status and
- 'How does this problem relate to the patient's worry about others?

mechanisms to which they are connected. the local adaptation for which they developed, and the ultimate psychological lems are put in an evolutionary perspective and normalized in terms of clarifying Informed by these questions, patients' life histories, pathogenic beliefs and prob-

aware of their antisocial feelings and personal ambitions, their jealousy, anger and to primary biological motives; however, concern about others is often less conscious many patients were chastised by parents for 'selfishness' and this often becomes competitiveness, but they may be less aware of their worry about others. As children than is concern about the self. For example, patients often come into therapy well Concern for others as well as self-interest and concerns about status, are linked

> care-giving motives. impulses, therapy conducted from this perspective focuses on people's prosocial imitations of disturbed parents. In contrast to therapy which emphasizes antisocial current environment, and in many cases, as the result of the patient's unconscious the patient's effort to adapt to a dysfunctional family system or to a disturbing unconscious greed, competitiveness, jealousy, lust or destructiveness, but as harmful behaviours may be understood and interpreted, not as a function of behaviours may be interpreted and reframed in prosocial terms. Even apparently conflict between ranking and care-giving may be made explicit, and experiences and an underlying and pathogenic component to patients' self-definition. In therapy, the

therapist pointed this out, Susan felt relief and one of her pathogenic beliefs was but by identification, attachment, and unconscious loyalty to her mother. As the there. Susan's imitation of her mother was driven, not by hostility or competition, who had locked Susan and her siblings out of the house, pretending she wasn't this ever happened to you?' and it emerged that she had been imitating her mother whom Susan was trying to help, comply with, or imitate. She asked Susan, 'Had The therapist questioned the adaptive purpose of this behaviour, and wondered inferred that she was an evil person, harmful to others and deserving of punishment. she wasn't there, leaving him outside and frightened. From this experience, Susan cruel to her younger brother. She locked him out of the house and pretended that be a cruel person. To illustrate, she disclosed that as a child she was sometimes to depression and self-hate. In therapy, Susan revealed that she believed herself to For example, Susan is a 40-year-old woman suffering from proneness

Testing in therapy

a failure, will test these beliefs with the therapist. She hopes that by passing her tests, others, may test the therapist by describing a success, to see if it will be perceived disconfirm them. For example, the patient who believes her success will harm the therapist will provide evidence that her beliefs are not true, and thereby help to in her job because to be successful would make her unsuccessful brother feel like to be depressed because her mother was depressed, or that she is supposed to fail to be a failure because her parents told her she was a failure, or that she is supposed guilt, shame, fear and inhibitions. The patient who believes that she is supposed response from the therapist, with implications for the irrational beliefs that lead to 1993). That is, patients initiate highly directed concrete actions designed to elicit a - test their pathogenic beliefs, in order to change them (Rangell, 1969; Weiss, 1986, In therapy, patients carefully and deliberately - although often outside of awareness

when she has hopes that the therapist will disconfirm her pathogenic beliefs, she tells When the patient feels a sense of safety – established by tests early in treatment – of danger and safety (Sampson, 1990a,b; Weiss & Sampson, 1986; Weiss, 1993). The process of testing the therapist proceeds according to the patient's assessment

humanistic, interpersonal, family and cognitive-behavioural therapy. of conscious awareness. This process cuts across many therapies - psychodynamic she expects the therapist to confirm her pathogenic beliefs, she withdraws, does her pathogenic beliefs and makes progress. When the patient feels endangered, little self-disclosure, and fails to make progress. And most of this goes on outside the therapist her secrets, reveals usually hidden experiences and feelings, tests

the patient's planning of a test becomes explicit, as the following example illustrates and unconsciously plan the specific tests that occur within the therapy. Sometimes While patients have a broad overarching plan for therapy, they also consciously

The case of Denise

a prestigious law school and at the time she began therapy, she was highly successful to depression and anxiety. A brilliant and beautiful woman, she graduated from in her work. However, she was holding herself back in taking leadership at the firm Denise, a public interest attorney, came into treatment for a mild proneness

remember the partly unconscious process of planning her test of the therapist. tests, and was particularly compelling in that Denise was able to articulate and exemplifies the testing process, and the planfulness and specificity of the patient's interest in fashion and the impact that had on her sense of self-esteem. This of how her mother had made her feel badly about her appearance and her lack of reassured Denise about her appearance, and Denise then disclosed painful details dress down, more casually, to show you what a mess I am.' The therapist again do that. And I just realized on the days that I'm coming to see you, I deliberately day - draw a mental image of what you'll wear, what it will look like? Well I always thing. You know how you think about what you're going to wear to work the next thought of something, you know this is so embarrassing, I just remembered this abruptly, Denise relaxed, and a shy smile came across her face. She said, 'I just always look well put together, you always look great in my opinion'. At this point, I'm not well put together'. Again the therapist responded with reassurance, 'You with reassurance. Seeming dissatisfied, Denise continued, 'Well I don't look right, enough vegetables, I'm not taking care of myself'. The therapist again responded on your career, that's what you should be doing.' Denise continued, 'I'm not eating reassurance. 'You do take care of yourself, you're spending your time focused cook, I don't dress right, I can't take care of myself'. The therapist responded with altered that opinion. In one session, she said to her therapist, 'I don't eat right, I never care of herself, and her success as an academic and professional woman had not care of herself'. In compliance, she saw herself as a person who couldn't take as slightly flawed and inadequate. In adolescence, her mother frequently criticized her for not paying close attention to her appearance and fashion, for not 'taking always to be sensitive and caregiving to authorities, and that she was to view herself oped the pathogenic belief that she was not to be a 'star' or a leader, that she was self-centred and successful professional mother. From this experience she devel-As a child, Denise had been in a caretaker role in the family, tending to her erratic,

PATHOGENIC BELIEFS AND GUILT

siblings, that they found so disturbing in childhood and that they had to endure or otherwise traumatize them. In other tests, patients turn 'passive into active', that their parents that caused their parents or siblings to put them down, chastise them passively (Foreman, 1996; Weiss, 1993). is they actively imitate the traumatizing behaviours carried out by their parents or In some tests, patients do something to the therapist that they believe they did to

reassurance and acceptance, the pathogenic belief that the patients deserve rejection may act difficult or rejecting of the therapist, and when the therapist reacts with reject them, hoping that instead the therapist will be accepting. For example, they parents, they may offer the therapist tests that give the therapist the opportunity to hoping that the therapist will respond protectively. When patients felt rejected by protection, may test the therapist by threatening to carry out a dangerous action, protection. For example, patients who suffer from the belief that they do not deserve that call for a protective reaction, which would demonstrate that they deserve When patients felt unprotected as children, they may offer the therapist tests

may test the belief by bragging about their achievements, to see if the therapist will patients believed that their successes threatened the hierarchy in the family, they down by a parent, or of low status in the family, they may test this belief by giving feel threatened or disapproving. the therapist the opportunity to put them down or treat them as low ranking. When to respond when someone is overly demanding. Likewise, when patients felt put did not do enough for their families, and to obtain from the therapist a model of how them. For example, they may blame the therapist for being inadequate, and tell the therapist that therapy isn't helping them enough, in order to test their belief that they this belief by trying to make the therapist feel omnipotently responsible towards Patients who felt omnipotently responsible for parents or siblings may test

pathogenic beliefs. specificity and purposefulness of a patient's testing, and its relationship to a patient's shame, guilt, fear or confusion. The following case of Maureen demonstrates the it is often because patients are turning passive into active; that is, they are imitating the traumatizing parental or sibling behaviours that in childhood made them feel more for the patient, or to be accepting or rejecting, that indicates a patient's testing therapist feels pulled to provide reassurance or advice, to provide protection, to do When the therapist feels an aversive emotion, like shame, guilt, fear, or confusion, Therapists know when patients are testing by their own reactions; when the

The case of Maureen

hypothesized that Maureen was holding herself back out of survivor guilt towards she was working as a secretary, having dropped out of graduate school some years ment, finished a PhD in history from a major university. When she began therapy Maureen was a highly intellectual woman, who, after a number of years of treatbefore. She initially presented as full of shame and self-hate. The therapist

successful than her parents, who were from working class backgrounds. her parents, and her inhibitions had the purpose of keeping her from being more

her intellectual ambitions and talents seriously. brother and subsequently she became increasingly inhibited about taking herself and she developed the pathogenic belief that if she did well in school it would harm her feeling guilt and shame, certain that she had harmed her younger brother who had quiet, you will give your brother an inferiority complex'. Maureen remembered responded with anger, telling Maureen, 'Stop bragging, keep your success in school therapist. She vividly portrayed her pride at her accomplishment. Her mother her mother about something she had excelled at, as she had been doing with the story from her childhood. She described coming home after school, excited to tell her and praised her achievements. Maureen visibly relaxed, and went on to tell a accomplishments, in an almost exaggerated manner. The therapist, believing that returning to graduate school, she started to test the therapist by listing all of her learning and behaviour problems. In the wake of this and other similar experiences, Maureen was testing her belief that being successful would be harmful, encouraged In the course of treatment, as Maureen began to feel better and to consider

remember and describe this and other experiences, to which the belief had been an aging Maureen felt reassured, the belief was modified, and she was able to in the hopes of modifying the pathogenic belief. When the therapist was encour-In therapy Maureen tested this belief, repeating the experience with her therapist,

Broitman & Silberschatz, 1994; Silberschatz, Fretter & Curtis, 1986). describing new memories, feelings or experiences (Fretter, 1984; Fretter, Bucci relief and feels better. Often, as in the case of Maureen, the patient responds by that the patient is conducting - the patient often relaxes, demonstrates considerable particular pathogenic belief on which the patient is working, or directly passes a test especially when the therapist does or says something that specifically counters the When the therapist makes an intervention that the patient finds helpful - and

The immediate effects of therapeutic interventions

or treats the patient as lower ranking, the patient is likely to become neurochemically & Spoors, 1994). As in other social relations, when the therapist is rejecting, critical a part of the patient's social network, support clique, or reference group (Dunbar Bailey, 1991; Bailey & Wood, 1998; Bailey, Chapter 3, this volume) and becomes patient (Bailey, 1988; Bailey & Nava, 1989; Bailey, Wood & Nava, 1992; Nava & they are best able to recover. The therapist is in a kin-like relationship with the problems in the context of close attachments, and it is in new close attachments that regulated by the normal rules for helpful human interactions. Patients develop their well-being (Troisi & McGuire, Chapter 2, this volume; McGuire & Troisi, 1987, regulation and deregulation of the patient's neurochemical and psychological The patient-therapist relationship, like other close relationships, involves the 1998). The therapy relationship is an intimate individual or group social activity,

PATHOGENIC BELIEFS AND GUILT

skin conductivity, and disclosed new material. a helpful interpretation, the patient relaxed as shown by decreased heart rate and skin conductivity and movement, in order to study the patient's reactions to the carried out by Pole (Pole, Ablon & O'Connor, 1997). The patient and therapist and neurochemical as well as cognitive and affective levels of organization (see also late the patient, causing direct and immediate positive changes on the physiological accepting, respectful, and provides helpful interventions, she is likely to help reguderegulated, and to feel shame, guilt or depression. And when the therapist is therapist's interventions. This research demonstrated that when the therapist made in a 16-session case conducted by Ablon, as part of a psychotherapy research project were monitored throughout, for physiological reactivity including heart rate, Troisi & McGuire, Chapter 2, this volume). Some evidence for this was gathered

The case of Maria

survivor guilt in the wake of her mother's death. of her family, in order to avoid feeling survivor guilt for being better off than her if she continued to pursue her own career interests, her husband would feel He also hypothesized that the patient felt worried about her husband, and feared that mother and to avoid sex-role guilt for doing something not traditionally 'feminine' was supposed to be like her mother and to sacrifice her own interests for those in order to take care of her children and to support her graduate student husband threatened. Finally, he hypothesized that the patient was suffering from immediate husband. The therapist hypothesized that Maria had the pathogenic belief that she in the early phase of the therapy. Maria's mother had, like Maria, sacrificed pursuing mother had died after a long and painful illness, an event Maria rarely mentioned in his professional development. Four months before beginning treatment her treatment complaining of depression, having dropped her own career aspirations her own interests for the sake of staying at home and taking care of her children and Maria was a 30-year-old woman, married with two children. She came into

her mother was dying. She was sitting with her mother in the hospital, her mother was emaciated and she was thinking, "I wish I was skinny like my mother, I wish and thoughtful. And within a few minutes she said, 'You know I just thought saying, 'I think maybe you were really afraid you would be better at roller blading she wouldn't be as good as he was, and quit entirely. The therapist responded, I was dying, to be with my mother'. She then spoke for the first time of her grief at of something very silly . . . ' and went on to describe a scene with her mother when his sense of manhood'. Maria replied quietly, 'No . . . no . . . ' and grew very still if her husband also got interested, she would become competitive, convinced that whenever she got interested in an activity - and gave the example of roller blading and putting herself down for what she related as her competitiveness. She said that her mother's death. than your husband, and if that happened, you feared you would be threatening In session 13, Maria was describing her feelings of jealousy towards her husband

therapist-patient interactions on the physiological, cognitive and effective level and worry about others in relation to people's problems, but the direct effect of the research conducted, demonstrates not only the importance of unconscious guilt and get a part-time job, in line with the career she had been pursuing. This case, and the therapy. After this session Maria become less depressed and was able to go out of safety, and allowed new painful material to emerge and be worked through in interpretation, even while she was saying 'No ... no ...', denying its accuracy. This indicated that the therapist's understanding of Maria's unconscious guilt and feelings of 'jealousy' - provided her with immediate relief and increased feelings worry about her husband - which had been covered up by what she thought were Maria's heart rate had dropped significantly immediately after the therapist's clinical impression. Furthermore, from the physiological data it was found that depression lifted, as demonstrated by the Beck Depression Inventory as well as by she had dropped out of her own graduate programme, she had been a much more conscientious and organized student than her husband. After this session Maria's to procrastination and sloppy study habits, and confessed that she knew that before and to her concern that she was better off than he was. She described his proneness Later in the same session, Maria admitted to her intense worry about her husband

Technique and case-specificity: Neutrality, advice, reassurance, self-disclosure

two-way social interactions including self-disclosure. It is believed that the therapist abstinence or neutrality. While it is also understood that the stance of abstinence and become manageable when the therapist avoids 'gratifying' the patient, through tions, in order to analyse them. It is assumed that unconscious material will emerge needs to attempt to be a 'blank screen' on which the patient may place her projecand practise what is referred to as 'abstinence', that is, the avoidance of relaxed is assumed that the therapist should maintain an attitude of inquiry and neutrality, accepted traditions of therapy. For example, across many schools of treatment it of treatment are highly case-specific and sometimes may contradict commonly of techniques, to select therapeutic strategies and attitudes specifically tailored to fact, when patients feel safe – that is when they feel less, not more, anxious – they (Gassner, Sampson, Brumer & Weiss, 1986; Pole, Ablon & O'Connor, 1997). In be associated with the emergence of new, previously unconscious, information been countered by empirical research demonstrating that a decrease in anxiety may increased anxiety results in the emergence of unconscious material. This has will raise a patient's anxiety, it is believed that this is a positive event, and that particular patients with their unique history and set of problems. Thus the techniques many psychoanalytically-informed therapies, the therapist is free to utilize a variety implications of the inherently disorganized and antisocial unconscious underlying psychotherapist working from an evolutionary perspective. Not constrained by the Many standard assumptions of therapeutic technique are called into question for the

reveal to the therapists their experiences and feelings, and when they feel endangered they withdraw.

From an evolutionary perspective with the assumption of an adaptive and organizing unconscious, particularly one with a specific mechanism for the detection of cheating, the possibility that a social and highly intelligent animal might consistently conceal important social information – that is be truly abstinent – seems highly unlikely. Patients are able to piece together important information about their therapists, despite therapists' efforts to be non-revealing. And the wisdom of avoidance of self-disclosure and ordinary two-way human interactions may be questioned in light of regulation-deregulation theory (Troisi & McGuire, Chapter 2, this volume). Many if not most patients respond to abstinent behaviour on the part of the therapist, or any other intimate kin-like relationship, by experiencing a sense of rejection, or at best, confusion. And for many, this is hardly a situation of optimal safety, conducive to intimate disclosures (Bailey & Wood, 1998).

While a non-abstinent approach in which the therapist utilizes self-disclosure, or gives advice or reassurance, may be extremely helpful for many patients, it may be problematic for others. In order for some patients to feel comfortable they need the therapist to be in the role of an expert who is also a friend, who regularly engages in relaxed and friendly conversations, while other patients feel more comfortable with the therapist taking a distant professional approach. The methods by which the therapist helps to establish a therapeutic alliance varies tremendously from case to case, although many patients appear to benefit most from therapies conducive to establishing the therapeutic relationship as kin-like (Bailey, 1988; Bailey & Wood, in press; Bailey, Chapter 3, this volume). Because pathogenic beliefs ordinarily develop in kin relationships, kin-like relationships are more likely to facilitate a corrective emotional experience.

For example, a patient who grew up in a very distant family in which she was unable to feel close or important to her parents, began to feel safe with her therapist only after he had shared with her that he was in mourning for his mother who had died recently. However, another patient who grew up taking responsibility for her siblings, withdrew when the therapist used self-disclosure in an effort to use himself as a model related to a particular problem. His self-disclosure made her worry that she would have to care for him as she had had to care for her parents and siblings.

The case of Anna exemplifies a case in which a neutral approach might be counter-productive. Anna grew up in an alcoholic family system, with a mother who, severely impaired by alcohol use, was unavailable emotionally and unable to fulfil normal protective functions. Her father was usually at work, or when home was preoccupied with his work or with his wife's drinking. As a result, Anna was neglected and grew up feeling rejected, unlovable, and unprotected. She believed that she deserved neither help nor protection, and as a result was dysfunctional both in terms of protecting herself and establishing herself in a successful career or

intimate relationship. In therapy she tested the therapist by threatening to do something self-destructive, and by asking advice about career decisions. The therapist hypothesized that in order to help Anna modify her pathogenic beliefs, she needed to be overtly protective, and to be willing to provide the kinds of advice that children usually get from functional parents.

When Anna posited various possibilities related to career development, her therapist responded by engaging in active conversation, thinking over possibilities out loud, and giving advice and suggestions. Anna responded by making progress. And when Anna tested the therapist by hinting that she was going to take some potentially dangerous action, the therapist responded by telling her, 'Don't do that', maintaining that Anna deserved protection. Anna responded positively, becoming less guarded in therapy and more self-protective in her life. In this case an attitude of inquiry and neutrality would have been perceived as rejection and would have been counter-productive.

In contrast, Mark was a 32-year-old man who grew up with an intrusive, overly directive and advice-giving mother. In childhood he developed the belief that he was inadequate to make his own decisions and plans, and to do so would displease his mother and deprive her of a sense of competence and purpose. In treatment, he tested this belief by claiming that he couldn't make a simple decision or plan, and requesting advice. At first, the therapist took these requests at face value, and tried to offer helpful suggestions, after which Mark withdrew and appeared dissatisfied. By carefully noting Mark's reaction, the therapist realized her error and began to better understand the test Mark was conducting. She began to assume a more neutral approach to the treatment, responding to requests with questions, avoiding any specific direction or advice. Mark responded by relaxing and making progress, appearing more self-confident and able to make decisions. In this case, neutrality was most helpful to the patient.

The effectiveness of other commonly accepted therapeutic methods is also highly case-specific. For example, in psychodynamic treatment, it is often considered particularly helpful for the therapist to make transference interpretations, that is to bring the patient's attention to his or her relationship with the therapist, to explain current events and feelings in terms of the therapeutic relationship, and to then trace these feelings back to the family of origin. While this strategy may in some cases be helpful, particularly when the patient him or herself brings up the therapeutic relationship, empirical research has suggested that transference interpretations may often be counter-productive and lead to poor therapy outcome (Piper, Azim, Joyce & McCallum, 1991; Fretter *et al.*, 1994; Haglend *et al.*, 1993). A focus on 'in the room' interactions in many cases may result in the patient feeling uncomfortable, self-conscious and exposed, and may suggest to the patient that the therapist is feeling the need for attention. Not infrequently, patients respond to transference comments by withdrawing or attempting to placate the therapist.

Optimally, the therapist working from an evolutionary perspective has a wide range of behaviours available, and matches therapeutic technique to the case-specific needs of the patient. Techniques that provide conditions of safety for one

patient may constitute danger for another. The need for case-specificity applies to the frame of the therapy – the rules and parameters of the therapy relationship; the frame may need to differ according to the patient's unique history and problems. A patient who was frequently neglected as a child may need to have frequent phone contact with the therapist between sessions, before settling in with a sense of safety. The patient who was given little or no autonomy as a child may need evidence that the therapist is willing to let the patient set the terms of the therapy, to change or cancel appointments, before the patient feels comfortable and respected, and is able to make progress.

Conclusion

cognitive and emotional mechanisms that support group living. The human mind, many cases, resolve their problems. guilt and shame and overcome their inhibitions, patients make progress and, in as interpersonal guilt and shame. People with pathogenic beliefs are highly a person's relational world, and involve concerns about connections to others. They a person is likely to develop psychological problems that cause suffering, and this therapist. When the therapist is able to help patients alter these beliefs, to reduce designed. They work to change their pathogenic beliefs by testing them with the plan to change these beliefs and pursue the goals for which the human mind is motivated to master their problems. Patients begin therapy with an unconscious harming loved ones, and the resulting self-conscious and relational emotions such are particularly likely to involve profound loyalty to the family, concerns about suffering leads a person to therapy. Pathogenic beliefs are most often related to personalities lead to pathogenic beliefs that counter normal developmental goals, social behaviour. When maladjusted family structure and disturbed parental develop beliefs, from infancy on, that determine the decisions and plans that rule adapted to complex and interdependent social life, is specifically designed to planning and assessing for danger and safety, and containing highly developed an adaptive, organized and organizing unconscious mind, capable of complex pressures have resulted in our species having particular characteristics, including In summary, this perspective on evolutionary psychotherapy suggests that selection

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