



THE BODY REMEMBERS

SOMATISATION AND DISSOCIATION



by Carolyn Spring

I hate my body. It was there, always there, during the abuse. My mind went away but my body could not. My mind could forget. We parcelled up little chunks of our mind, bit by bit and sent them off into dim little rooms where they could be forgotten and not heard. We didn't want to watch, we didn't want to see. But our body was there.

Our body remembers. It always remembers, and it doesn't lie. Sometimes our mind looks on and we're at war – always at war sometimes it seems – our body reacting like it can remember what our mind cannot. It pulls away, it arches, it hurts, it screams, it recoils, it goes limp, it aches with tiredness, it refuses to settle, refuses to sleep. It's confusing. Sometimes, our mind can't remember anything. 'Why

is our body reacting?' we think. Because our body hasn't forgotten. It's learnt to react and it just keeps on reacting. We've trained our mind not to react, to look away, to pretend we weren't there, to pretend we don't know. But our body doesn't lie.

Sometimes our body talks to us. It tries to tell us stuff we don't want to hear. Our body remembers what we cannot. It shouts about it, clamours to be heard. Our mind won't listen, it won't hear it. So our body hurts. Really hurts. Sometimes the pain is so bad, our mind wants to go mad. Literally mad. Anything but feel that pain. Our body shouts, shouts, shouts *It hurts, it hurt! It can't have hurt, says our mind, because nothing happened.* But our body doesn't lie.



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Every day our body hurts, every day it's too-tired. Too-too-tired. *Why is it so tired?* thinks our mind. *It's got nothing to be tired about.* It's tired about a long time ago. It was so tired then, yanked out of bed, taken out, nasty things, nasty nasty things at night. It hurt, it hurt. Now again the body is telling us, *it hurt.* When they hurt us with knives, our mind wasn't there. It couldn't be there. But the body was there and it wants us to know. We don't want to know. So we're always at war.

Then if we don't listen the body tells us again. Again and again. Pain, chronic pain, chronic awful unbearable pain. Every day. And smells, smells that can't be there, sounds we can hear but we know can't be there, that feeling, that weird yukky awful feeling on our skin, and our whole body cold and cold and colder even though we can't be that cold. We can't be that cold. The thermometer says it's 28 degrees in here. We can't be that cold. But the body is remembering, and it's telling us that we were cold. And our body doesn't lie. It doesn't know how to lie. It just tells us how it is, how it was.

Our mind isn't very good sometimes at telling what's what. What was then, what is now – all a muddle, such a muddle. Our body breathes too fast, our heart going pitter-patter-pitter-patter too-too-fast. Sick feelings in our tummy, numbness



in our fingertips, wet feelings where we don't want wet feelings. Our mind doesn't understand. Maybe there's something wrong with us, maybe we're poorly. Maybe we're not. Our body doesn't lie. It's just remembering.

It remembers the pain as bad as it was then. Sometimes we cry, sometimes we scream, sometimes we pass out because the pain just hurts so bad. But there isn't a knife now, no-one's hurting us now, there's no blood now. It can't be hurting this much. Our body is just remembering. Then slowly, bit by bit, slowly-too-slowly, our mind remembers too. Horrible things to remember. Heart-hurting, brain-searing horrible things to remember. But when we remember, when we say it, when we tell it, then suddenly our body stops remembering. All of a sudden, like a dam has burst. All of a sudden it stops shouting at us, because we've listened. Our body doesn't lie. It's just remembering. I'm trying not to hate my body. •

