

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910781432703321
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Titolo	Shattered states : disorganised attachment and its repair / / by Kate White
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Boca Raton, FL : , : Routledge, an imprint of Taylor and Francis, , [2018] ©2012
ISBN	0-429-91914-X 0-429-90491-6 0-429-48014-8 1-283-34153-0 9786613341532 1-84940-944-7
Edizione	[First edition.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (238 p.)
Collana	BOWLBY
Disciplina	616.85 616.85/21 616.8523 616.8588
Soggetti	Dissociative disorders Psychoanalysis
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	"The John Bowlby Memorial Conference Monograph 2007". Includes index.
Nota di contenuto	COVER; CONTENTS; ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS; ABOUT THE EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS; Introduction; CHAPTER ONE Attachment theory and The John Bowlby Memorial Lecture 2007: a short history; CHAPTER TWO The infanticidal origins of psychosis: the role of trauma in schizophrenia; CHAPTER THREE Disorganized attachment and the therapeutic relationship with people in shattered states; CHAPTER FOUR Shattered shame states and their repair; CHAPTER FIVE "You can kill me with what you say": working with shattered states and the breakdown of inner and outer, self and other, from an attachment-based perspective APPENDIX IAPPENDIX II; INDEX

Recent research in the fields of attachment and trauma is once more pointing to the contribution of early relational failures to extreme psychic suffering. 'Disorganised' patterns of attachment, identified in children whose caregivers are simultaneously a source of fear and a source of comfort, have been linked to the development of both dissociative and so called 'borderline' disorders in adult life. The conference was to bring together speakers able to extend our thinking and bring insights from attachment theory and psychoanalysis to the current debate about the links between the traumatic disorganisation of attachment relationships and more severe mental and emotional distress - dissociative states, borderline experiences and psychosis - as they emerge in clinical practice. The papers in this volume have in common a committed insistence upon placing human relationship at the centre of their accounts of extreme psychological suffering, both as the source of injury and, most hopefully, as the potential agent of repair. In this respect, they contribute fittingly in his centenary year to the continuation and extension of John Bowlby's pioneering work for the understanding, treatment and relief of such suffering.
