



Hidden Choices

focusing on the teenage phase in psychotherapeutic process

with **Merete Holm Brantbjerg**

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Patterns and locked roles originating from the teen years often don't surface or are addressed within a psychotherapeutic process. For many of us it is easier to look at our experiences from childhood and what they have left in us, than it is to look at imprints from the teenage phase.

These statements are based on my many years of experience in psychotherapeutic work, both with myself and with clients: How come?

There is often shame and avoidance connected to the patterns and experiences we bring with us from the teenage phase.

The roles between child and adult are simpler than the relationship between a young person, the adults and the surrounding society. As teens we are making more choices on our own. Our range of action goes further outside the container of the family and with that comes a higher level of responsibility.

Consequently, it can become more unpleasant to look at those choices we made that may still impact our relationship to ourselves and to others around identity and authority, perception of reality and perception of self - for better or for worse.

Reorganization in the brain:

Extensive development happens in the brain in the teenage phase. The prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that organizes our perception of reality and our impulses for action, is reorganized. The structure that has been created throughout childhood is changed and a new one takes form. This process opens up a possibility for new imprints or repetitions – with a high degree of chance and risk involved.

The experiences we have during the teenage phase leave a deep imprint in us, because they happen at a time when the brain is reorganized and because all existential issues are active.

By looking at imprints from the teenage phase we can gain an understanding of our relationship to identity development and maturation, and to some of our relational patterns. What did we do then – and what do we do today?

The focus of this workshop will be:

- ✚ **Identity development in the teenage phase** and the rest of our lives – phases and skills – resources and limitations.
- ✚ **Reality orientation** – how did I orient back then? How did I solve the dilemmas between my inner maps and the factual outer reality – and how do I solve them today? And do I want to look at that?
- ✚ Which **locked roles and functional roles** did I develop in the teenage years – and which of them are still active today in my relationships? These roles are typically formed around polarities like duty and pleasure, chaos and order, control and flow, containment and expression, defiance and compliance.

Who is the workshop for?

Therapists, counsellors, teachers and other professionals interested in exploring how the teenage phase impacts psychotherapeutic work.

Introduction to the method: In Resource Oriented Skill Training (ROST) psychomotor exercises are used to open up defensive patterns. Skills and resources held in the muscle-system are awakened and with that our capacity for regulating emotions and arousal-states can grow.

Through the process of “dosing” the body exercises are adapted to each participant, building inner authority. Negotiation between opening up or respecting and valuing defensive patterns as they are is supported.

The approach is based in knowledge about tension and low energy (hyper- and hypo-response) as defense-mechanisms represented in the muscles and connective tissue.

Regulation of low energy is being addressed first, which supports an unusual group-dynamic and inner dynamic: High and low energy behaviors are valued equally.

The goal of the method is to build a holding environment where emotions and survivalreactions can become mutually regulated, especially those states that have been held in isolation and dissociation. The psychomotor skill-training supports self-regulatory capacity – and systemic group-work is used to build the capacity for mutual resonance and regulation.

The psychotherapeutic growth process in the workshops happens through active exploration, systemic group-work and reflection.

Growth in your professional capacity is supported by widening your capacity for knowing and owning aspects of being human in your own body and mind – through direct experience in resonance with yourself and others.

Merete Holm Brantbjerg co-created **Bodynamic Analysis** (1985), a body-psychotherapeutic system developed in Denmark. She now specializes in **Resource Oriented Skill Training (ROST)** as a psychotherapeutic method, applying it to both developmental and shock trauma.

Merete currently leads body psychotherapy trainings and workshops in Scandinavia, London and North America and maintains a private practice for therapy and supervision in Copenhagen.

The name "**Moai**ku" - derived from "Motoric Haiku" - captures the poetic quality in a psychotherapeutic method that is focused on simplicity, repetition, precise individual dosing, resonance and 'here and now' presence.