

## [Why a new e-journal for psychotherapists?](#)

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The idea to start *E-Journal of Psychotherapy Research* came into being a few months ago, after a working dinner in a beautiful little town on Lake Garda, close to a recently held convention. Discussion at that dinner focused around how to best help adult clients who complained about conflicts with a parent. It was at this point that a colleague started outlining his methodology, which could perhaps be described as “identifying with a mother or father cleansed of their own pathology”. As an example of this, he talked about depressed female clients who complained about their relationship with a mother who belittled them. His therapeutic intervention involves explaining to the client that their depression is the result of “identifying” with their mother’s own “pathology” (be it anxiety, pessimism, lack of self-worth etc.). This “pathology”, however, is not their mother’s true nature, but rather a sort of parasite housed within her that concealed the person she really is: a true mother would be serene and value her offspring. “Because children identify, consciously and subconsciously, with the parent of their same gender since childhood, you also identify with this pathology and tend to reenact it in your relationships with others”. He further advises his clients to stop and imagine their “true” mother, that is a mother cleansed of the pathology that, unfortunately, have possessed her and tends to transfer itself to her own daughter. “This pathology wears your mother’s face as a mask: you believe it truly is her, you come to identify as your mother this sickness that shadows her real nature, which is, in fact, positive. This same pathology also takes hold of you.” He goes on to explain to his clients that by identifying with that true mother, instead of the mother’s pathology, they can, little by little, uproot and remove the depression they had absorbed over the course of the time spent identifying with this female mother figure, who had been twisted by depression herself.

“But doesn’t this mean” someone objected, “that they will feel some obligation in helping their mother, hoping she will change?” My colleague answered that this risk was neutralized by explaining to the clients that the parent’s “pathology” couldn’t be eradicated by the child. The child has to accept that they can’t eliminate it; they can only try to not let it transfer to them.

At this point, someone else objected that such a description of a psychological pathology as irreversible might imply biological inheritance and thus give the client the impression that the illness could have been passed down to them genetically. My colleague responded to the objection by stating that the parent’s pathology was being described as the result of a wrong relationship, an error in social input.

This is what I was able to take away from this conversation and I felt that this method could work in a variety of situations involving psychological suffering. What helped to tip the scales in convincing me of this was that, a few weeks prior, I had met Albert Pesso in Boston and had seen him conducting his “structures”. With them, and through quite a complex methodology, he leads his clients in the experience of imagining within their own pasts an ideal mother and father, completely different from reality, a mother and father who satisfied their needs left unfulfilled throughout their life story.

I was then able to use much of what I learned that night for the benefit of some of my own clients.

This led me to think that, at this moment in the history of psychotherapy, there are perhaps not an insignificant number of colleagues who, in the secrecy of their own studies, have forged new and useful tools, which could be fruitfully shared with the professional community.

The field of psychological treatment saw an initial period of monopoly by psychoanalysis and then, from the '70s onwards, other schools were established; such as the cognitive behavioural school or the systemic therapy school. The approaches that tend to value functional cognitive schemes associated with emotional experiences within sessions, on the other hand, have remained on the fringes up until recent years, just as Matteo Selvini observes during the course of our broadcast interview with him. Some of these methodologies are thus utilized by only a select few or are ignored altogether.

The hope is that this e-journal might be able to publish articles in which new ideas or new applications of existing theories could be showcased in a concise form, so as to be easily serviceable, without of course neglecting the rigorous referencing of works that may have contributed to the birth of these new methods. We recognize that it isn't always easy for a psychotherapist, when they are so involved in therapeutic work, to move from an internal point of view of their method in order to describe it from an external, intersubjective one. Therefore, we will also consider manuscripts that are in development, with the goal of creating synergy between author and reviewer.

We wish to help authors share their work within the professional and scientific community without however having to compromise its intellectual property. Incidentally, the psychologist who invented the "identifying with a mother or father cleansed of their own pathology" method is called Gianpiero Stringari and he conducts his own professional private practice in Trento.

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