

A short Story about Place or how we do everything to belong to a system

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As human beings we can only survive by being part of the system, the family, or community; and we have to find our place within this respective system or community. Ideally, this place should feel natural and be reliable and safe. Personally, I call this place a "nest." To belong to a system is one of our basic needs. The importance of this place is often underestimated. We also forget that during the hundreds of thousands of years prior to the emergence of our modern civilization we were only able to survive within a community (tribe, clan). Possibly, this elementary need is genetically anchored in human beings. In tribal cultures, the worst punishment was, and still is, to be excluded from the community. It is often equated with the death sentence. Even today, the loss of place - such as losing a job, being expelled from a club, or the termination of a friendship - is still experienced by us as something terrible.

A somewhat milder form of being excluded or expelled is when people stop talking to you. The feeling of isolation is always stressful for us humans. Today, we live in a high-performance society. Due to our excessive drive for perfection and self-optimization (higher, faster, further...), we overextend ourselves. In this day and age, more and more people are seeking ways to decelerate and be mindful. But what is really the problem here?

The feeling of security when integrated in the system is vital for us humans. It does not always mean that we have to be in the middle of it all. There are many ways and possibilities of being part of a society or system. Being part of a system and having a place in it is essential - a basic need - and we do everything for it.

On the other hand, being isolated from the community or a system is stressful, irritating, gives us the feeling of instability, a feeling of being alone, a feeling of loneliness, and some people experience this as a life in darkness - a life lacking orientation. All we want and need is having a secure position in a system.

Significant in this story of place and belonging is our personal mother-child relationship. Years ago I came up with the following idea: During pregnancy, while the child is still connected through the umbilical chord to the mother, this sense of belonging is unequivocal. The place of the child in utero is secure. Once the umbilical chord is severed, the child's sense of belonging is not necessarily secure any longer. In general, a child is able to do anything to get what it needs from its mother. Moreover, hormonal changes following pregnancy have such a positive effect on the mother, which is supposed to ensure the child a good start in life.

There are many factors that play a role in this situation:

- How well did giving birth go?
- How well did mother and child bond after birth?
- How does the mother accept the child after birth?
- Were there complications while giving birth so that the child was separated from the mother?
How was childbirth for the baby?
- How does the baby take up contact to its mother and how does it perceive the situation?

The baby can only come into life through the mother and can only survive with the mother. Did this go smoothly? Were there any ruptures in the relationship between mother and child? Even if this happens

unconsciously, the child will have a completely different perception as the mother and it will make its decisions instinctively.

For example, when the child is separated from the mother due to medical reasons and is kept at the children's ward, possibly intubated and connected to infusion drips, then it will experience this situation as absolutely threatening and existential. Even though, today, mothers are permitted to accompany the child, the situation is still extreme for babies. Emotionally speaking, the baby is completely alone in the world and must cope with this situation on its own - for the child has the instinct to survive. However, the baby is most definitely feeling confused, is in a highly stressful situation and is most likely panicking. The entire situation is perceived from an emotional stand point and is highly stressful for the baby. It is continuously making guts decisions. From this time on, the child's point of view on life will generally be a destructive one - the glass is half empty. The yearning for the mother, the need for contact with the mother, the fulfillment of its basic needs by the mother have all be interrupted. This longing is not fulfilled. Thus the baby's place and sense of belonging cannot be securely ensured, which has life-long consequences.

In contrast, it is also possible that everything goes well between mother and child. However, the child can be frightened by something, and because it is frightened the child decides that the "glass is half empty." One of the many possibilities in this scenario. For better understanding, I like to use the following constructed situation as an example: A mother and her child on her arm are enjoying a happy moment together and are enjoying a happy and healthy relationship. Suddenly, somebody is ringing up a storm

at the door and other stressful events take place simultaneously, such as the phone rings or an ambulance or police car passes by with its sirens etc., and both mother and child are startled or frightened. In most cases, the mother will put the child back into its crib in order to clarify the situation and then return to the child to return to the moment of harmony. However, the child may have an entire different perception of the situation and may have experienced the situation under considerable stress and in fear. In the mean time, the child may have gone through a subconscious decision-making process and stored this information subconsciously.

Of course, it could also have only been startled by the noise and remain completely unimpressed by the situation. Parents and especially mothers have no influence on how children experience and interpret these kinds of situations. Time and again, I've had mothers tell me that all of a sudden something was different and they had no idea how it happened. It must be said that our perceptions are our choice and other people have no influence on our perceptions.

There are also cases in which mothers reject their own children and give them away. The result is always the same for the child. But even in events later on in childhood, there are situations where the child may feel deeply hurt, angry, distraught or defiant, which can lead to the same result. From the child's point of view, the situation is existential. In contrast, grownups experience the same situations very differently. Basically, it is the child's point of view that is crucial and not how we as adults experience the situation. Children store what they experience in their cellular memory with the respective consequences. Also our survival reflexes play an important role - our fight, flight and play-dead reflex. At least

one of these reflexes can be activated in situations perceived as existential. In contrast to other mammals, this activated reflex can remain active, i.e. we are always restless, can never stay in one place, feel hounded, always have the feeling that we have to fight or would prefer to disappear into thin air or make ourselves invisible. Depending on how our reflexes have been activated, they can have an enormous influence on our lives. Moreover, our unfulfilled needs also play an important role in situations which are experienced as stressful.

In addition, there are our beliefs systems, our hopes and longings, that work like computer programs and run on our life. Babies, toddlers and children make intuitive and subconscious survival-strategy decisions. They do everything to belong and to find their place in the framework/system of the family. We basically survive by meeting the expectations placed on us by our parents, our environment, and later on in life by our school and our work. I have chosen to use the terms "expectation fulfilling asylum" and "functional unit." Without us even noticing, our conceptual world is based on fear. For example, we are prepared to perform at the highest level or renounce our own desires (etc.) out of fear of losing our place, our sense of belonging. Possibly, this is the reason why we try to test our courage, no matter how crazy this dare may be.

Especially in our western culture, consumerism and competitiveness predominate, and the survival strategies of the "glass is half empty" are greatly encouraged. This has serious implications on our society. It is mainly our value system and our humanity that suffer deeply. It must be said that in our modern world feelings are a hindrance if we want to succeed. To reach our goals, to be somebody, to be

successful: we sacrifice our soul. And the price we pay are our feelings, our capacity for empathy and our compassion. In order to be a part of this system, to be a winner in our modern society, we sacrifice our humanity. Human beings as such lose their value. In this competitive culture, we only enter in to "friendly contact" if we see a monetary benefit or personal advantage. Increasingly, we are alienating ourselves from ourselves. Due to the enormous level of stress, we no longer feel ourselves and lose the perception for our needs. We no longer take note of the warning signals of our own body and rush through our scheduled-out life. We are surprised when we start having health issues and suddenly suffer from burn-out. We definitely don't have time for something like this, because we still need to achieve our many goals. We seek external validation, just as we seek our place and sense of belonging externally.

In the mother-child relationship, it is clear how important the sense of belonging to a system and thus the place in the system is (please also refer the department store story). Our place and our sense of belonging have an impact on how we behave in groups and what place we take in groups. It influences our future relationships, be it family, friends, at school or at work. There is no area in life that is not influenced by this. Also interesting here is the question I like to ask: "Where was your place in elementary school?, in class?." The way I position myself in class is generally the same way I position myself later on in my adult life.

I can not stress enough how much our basic and fundamental decisions affect our lives. Lency Spezzano argues that we are only a frozen moment from our childhood when we once had a tantrum. In my

opinion, it is the moment where we were extremely emotionally offended or traumatized. We had dissociated the pain and we decided there and then to view the world through a certain type of glasses. In general, our decision in this moment was “the glass was half empty.” We develop survival strategies and believe that these are part of our personality. We have mostly lost contact to who we really are. This all happened due to a subconscious decision, when we were vulnerable, hurt and confused. For us, the situation at the time was existential. It felt like it was about life and death. Even as adults in stress situations like this, only few are capable of deciding in a constructive manner: “the glass is half full”.

Now, we are grown up and are able to consciously choose what we want to feel. As we are no longer existentially in danger and we are able to live and survive on our own as opposed to the time in our childhood, we can make new and conscious decisions. We can fulfill the elementary need for a place ourselves. We are able to give ourselves a place, step out of our dependency and enter into our own personal responsibility by changing our point of view. We seek externally what we can only find internally.