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**CENTRO DI TERAPIA STRATEGICA DI UDINE**

Emanuela Muriana Tiziana Verbitz

Psicopatologia  
della vita amorosa



COLLENA  
DIRETTA DA  
GIORGIO  
MARDONE

SAGE

PONTE AILE GRASSE

# Tiziana Verbitz:

## ***PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF AMOROUS LIFE***

[www.terapiastrategica.fvg.it](http://www.terapiastrategica.fvg.it)

[t.verbitz@iol.it](mailto:t.verbitz@iol.it)



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***"More is known of love through the misery that it brings than through the mysterious happiness, which diffuses into the lives of men".***

Emilie du Chatelet



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# The misery.....



**Year 2012: 157**

**Year 2013: 179 more 14%**

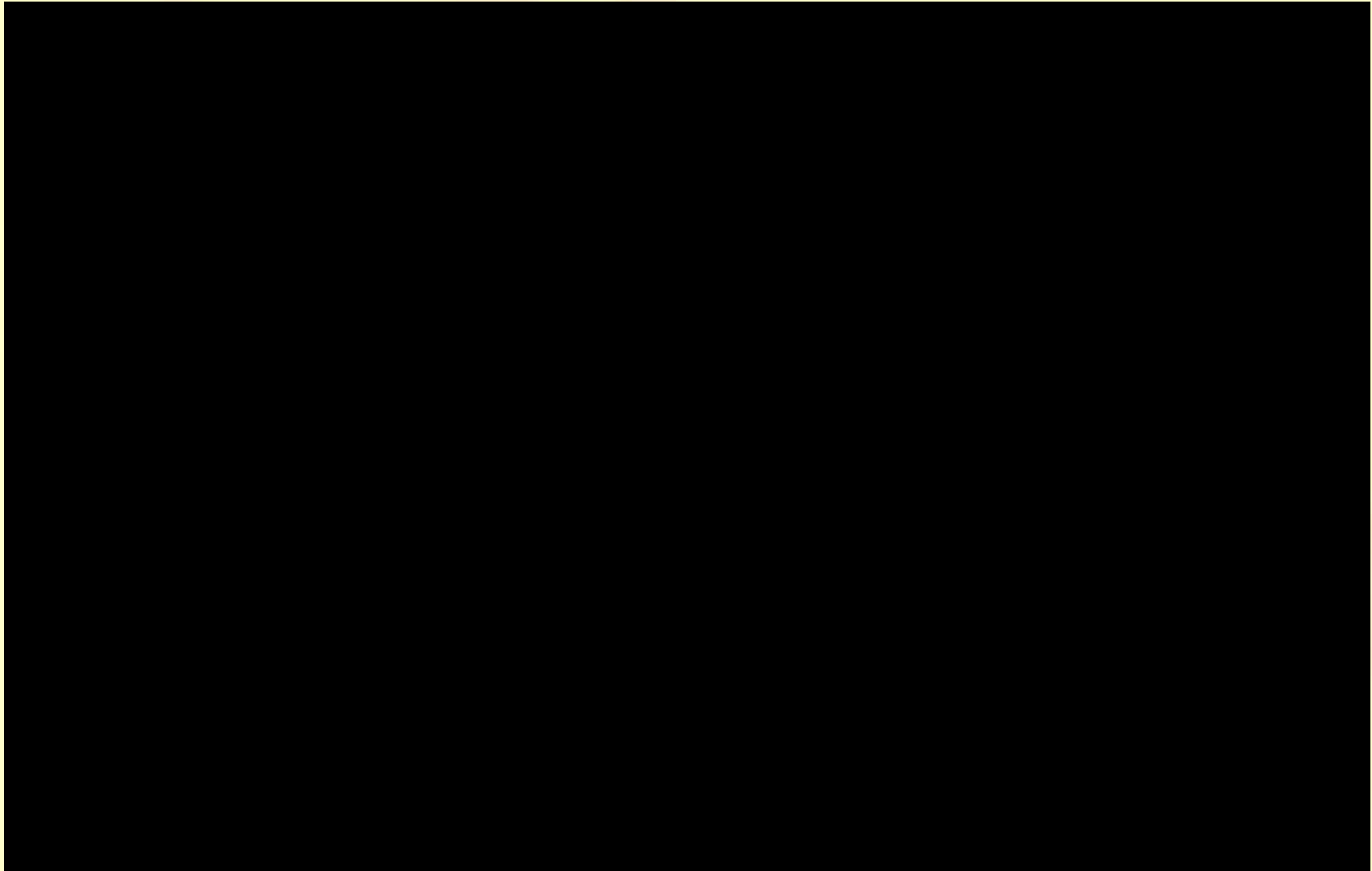
**Year 2014: one every 3 days**



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We will not talk about LOVE, but we will deal with the way people construct their own dysfunctional vision of a state of inevitable dysfunctionality: falling in love and love relationships.



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# Ingredients of Lovesickness:

- *Desire*
- *Sense of helplessness*
- *Frustration*
- *Rage*
- *Pain, grief*



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Theoretical construct of  
***how the relationship should be,***  
i.e. the very personal perception  
of love experience, conjugated in  
different ways with the individual  
needs.

All this leads to.....



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# SELF-DECEPTION





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*“Saying that Man is a rational and free being, seems to me a statement very close to falsity.”*

J. Ortega y Gasset



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## **SELF-DECEPTION**

**BELIEF**

**PARADOX**

**CONTRADICTION**





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Love is the most  
sublime or the most  
painful result of our self-  
deception.



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	Not at all true	A little true	Moderately true	Mostly true	Definitely true
I would feel deep despair if my partner left me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sometimes I feel I can't control my thoughts; they are obsessively on my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel happy when I'm doing something to make my partner happy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would rather be with my partner than anyone else.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd get jealous if I thought my partner were falling in love with someone else.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I yearn to know all about my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want my partner physically, emotionally and mentally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<b>Not at all true</b>	<b>A little true</b>	<b>Moderately true</b>	<b>Mostly true</b>	<b>Definitely true</b>
I have an endless appetite for affection from my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For me, my partner is the perfect romantic partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sense my body responding when my partner touches me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner always seems to be on my mind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want my partner to know me -- my thoughts, my fears, and my hopes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I eagerly look for signs indicating my partner's desire for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I possess a powerful attraction for my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get extremely depressed when things don't go right in my relationship with my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



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Self-deception is a real and continuous process of illusion and disillusion: we are constantly victim and persecutor.



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Self-deception not only, for its nature, **isn't** something wrong, but it is the **necessary process** to move on, toward a possible partner.



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Self-deception has an  
***“operative”***  
valence.





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A belief (“she is the right one!”)

+

a need to satisfy

=

**Self-deception**

( but only when we meet the other one)



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Falling in love is an  
**INVENTED REALITY,**  
that can become a self-  
fulfilling prophecy.



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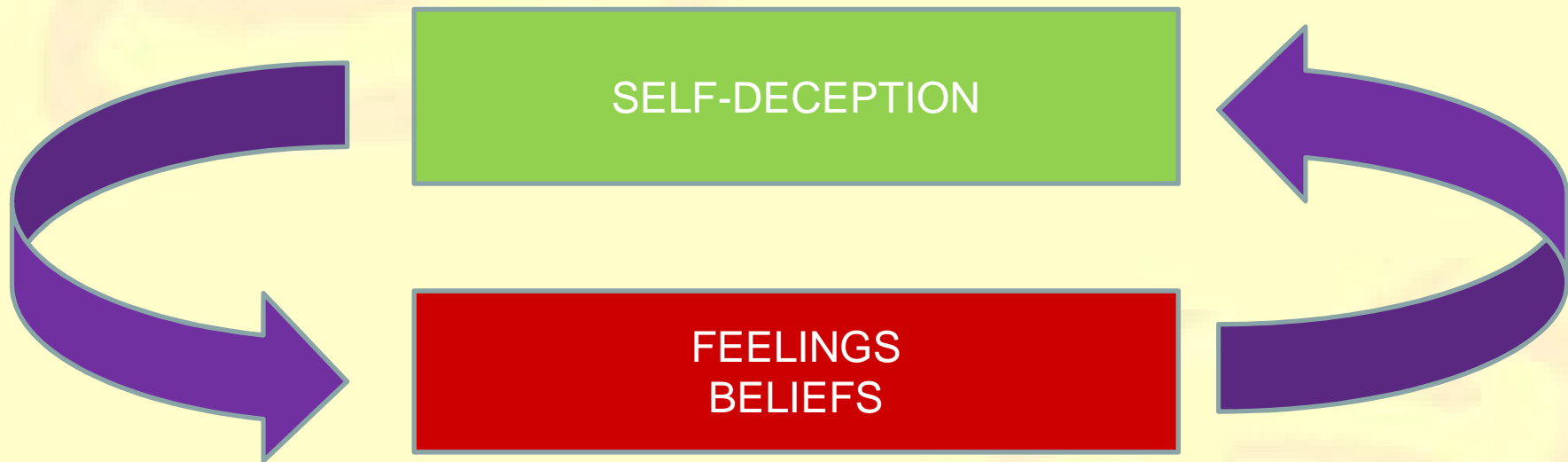
**Self-deception  
leads us to move our  
attention to  
what is working.**



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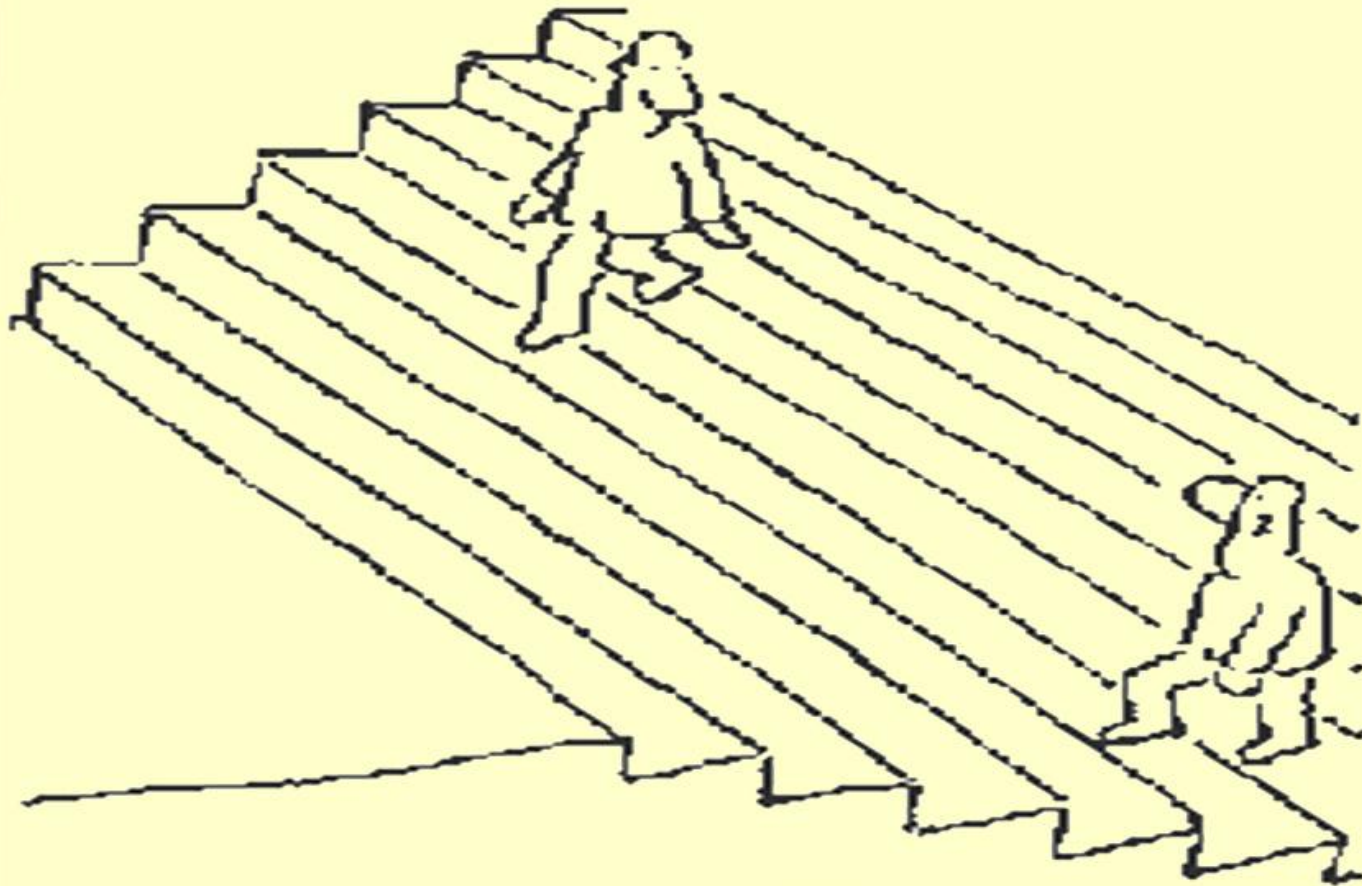




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*“We were given a wonderful gift: our perceptive mind, and a useful servant: our associative mind. Unfortunately, along the time, we have forgotten the gift and have transformed the servant into our master”*

**A. Einstein**



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**Self-deception,  
once «installed»,  
becomes  
the referring parameter  
for thought and action.**





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**The more self-deception  
is flexible, the more it is  
functional.**



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It becomes dangerous  
when it doesn't fit the  
situation or when the  
person, incapable to  
manage it, clutches at it.



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***"The truth that survives is simply the lie  
that is pleasantest to believe."***

**H. L. Mencken**



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**Self-deception is NOT a stable  
frame:**

**At a certain point it can  
stagger, crack**

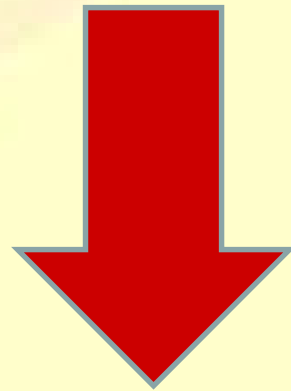


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# Self-deception staggers



# DISSONANCE

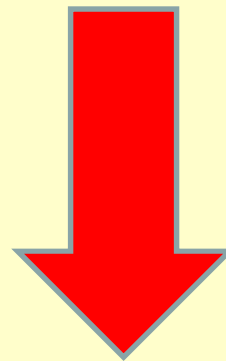


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To reduce dissonance:  
acceptance, or



**ATTEMPTED SOLUTIONS**



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## The therapist can operate on 3 different levels:

- The sequence: sensation-emotion-cognition (=replace a dysfunctional self-deception with a functional one).
- Behavior (=change the behavior of the patient in order to convey a new self-deception).
- Environment (=change partner's ideas, feelings, behaviors).





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**When self-deception staggers:**

**anxious and somatic reactions**



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# **When self-deception staggers, there are two possible outcomes:**

- Self-deception crashes, breakes up.
- Self-deception stiffens.



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## **When beliefs downfall:**

*“For him/her I am no longer what I believed I was!”*  
**(illuded-deluded by himself)**

*“He/she is no longer what I believed he/she was!”*  
**(illuded-deluded by others)**



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In any case the very first reaction –  
even before any A.S.- is

**INCRECULITY:**

“it cannot be true...”

“I never thought this could happen”



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Incredulity can change into **waiting**:

...waiting for things to change...

...for something to happen...

And waiting can become **renunciation.**



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Or incredulity can change in active fight:

the struggle to restore the original belief  
and self-deception.



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# Disillusion

is a necessary step in order to create  
a new, more functional self-deception.



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The new self-deception can evolve  
in two different ways:

- “You are not the Prince Charming I believed you were....but...”
- An “active” renunciation.

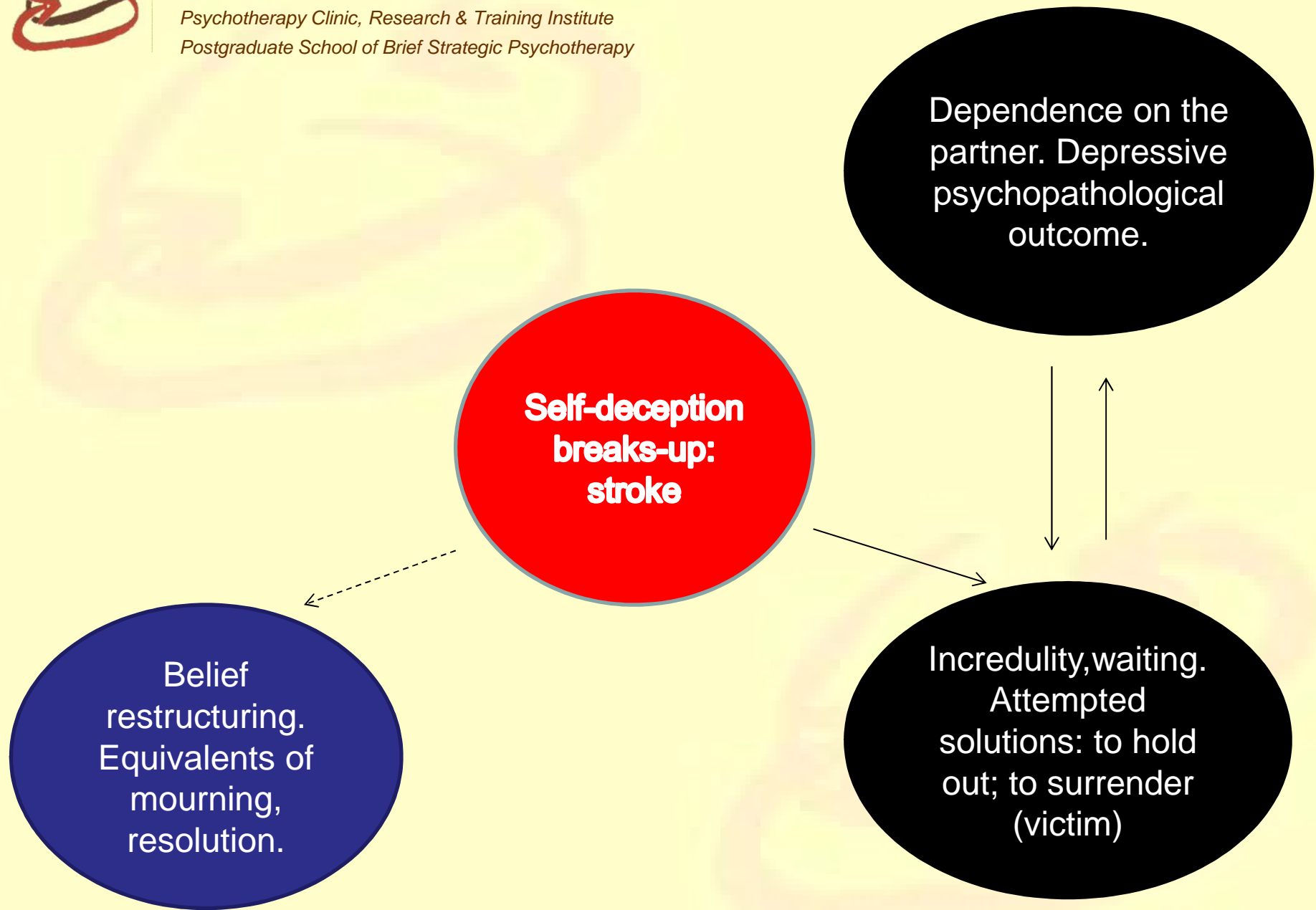




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The dysfunctionality  
is closely tied to  
the rigidity  
of ***self-deception***



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*“What people usually call  
Destiny, is mostly only the totality  
of the foolish things they have  
done”*

A. Shopenhauer



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When self-deception  
staggers, it doesn't  
necessarily break:  
instead of breaking up, it  
can **stiffen** .



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Self-deception is preserved,  
despite the facts: it is  
impossible to take –  
emotionally- note of the facts,  
even if they are very clear to  
the reason.



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The person tries to  
realize a **change 1**,  
because incapable to  
realize a **change 2**.  
(P. Watzlawick)



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# Possible Attempted Solutions:

- To wait
- To remember  
(in order to maintain one's  
own belief unchanged)



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**When these A.S. don't work:**



**sense of helplessness**



**renunciation**



**depression**





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But the solution of a  
dysfunctional self-deception  
can rely only on the  
**recognition** of one's error of  
judgement.



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Sometimes self-deception  
doesn't break up because  
the person is **not disillusioned  
enough.**



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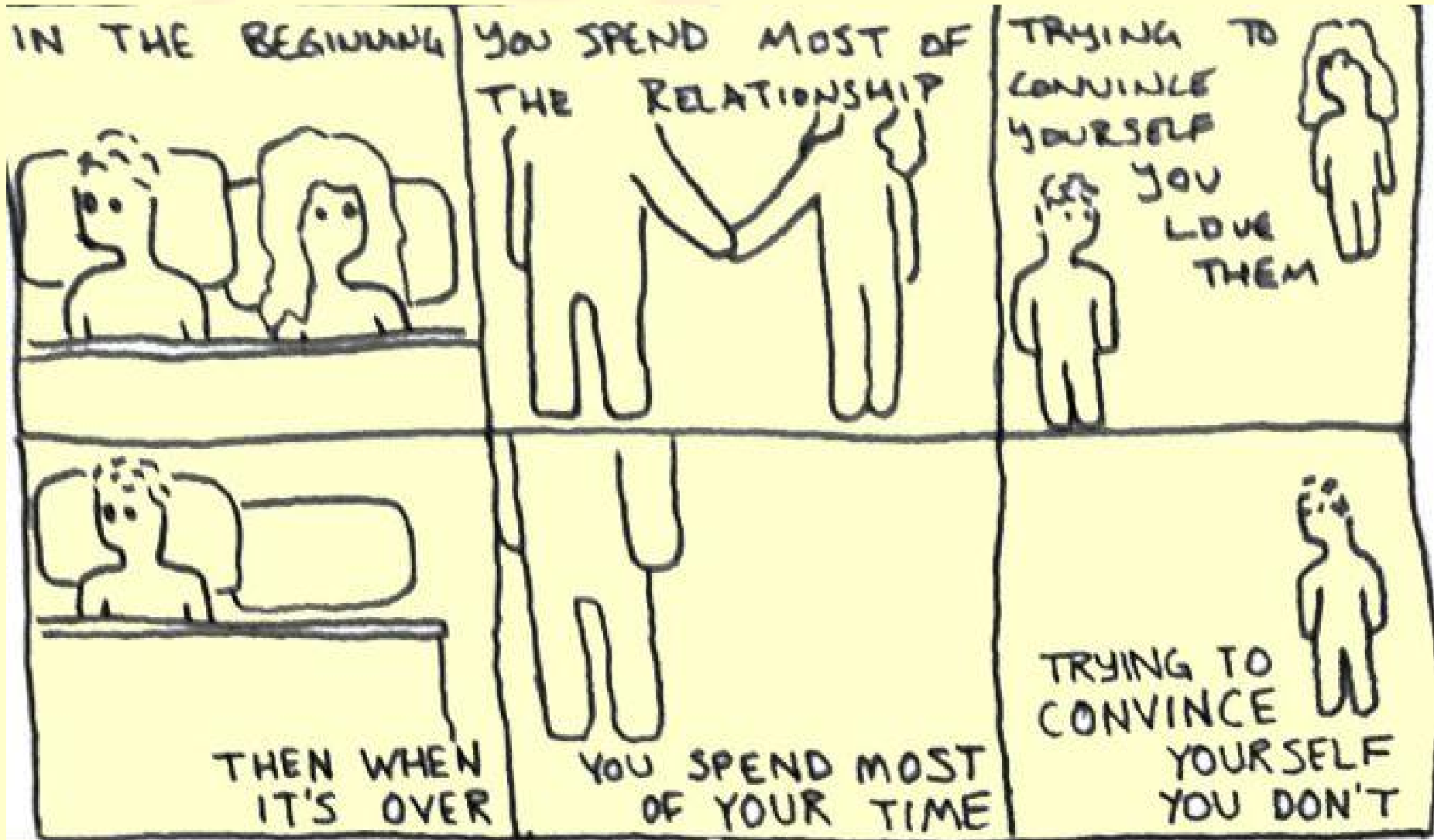
**Disillusion is necessary in order to break the disfunctional ideation in favour of a new -this time functional- self-deception.**



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Self-deception can rely on:

- the idea of how Love **must** be;
- the experience of a satisfactory relationship, in which pleasure has been of primary importance.



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When disillusion is not enough to turn pleasure in rage or fear, the original self-deception keeps unchanged.


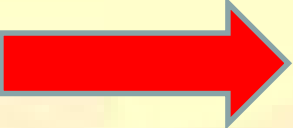


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Possible outcomes when pleasure turns into rage, but the basic belief keeps unchanged:

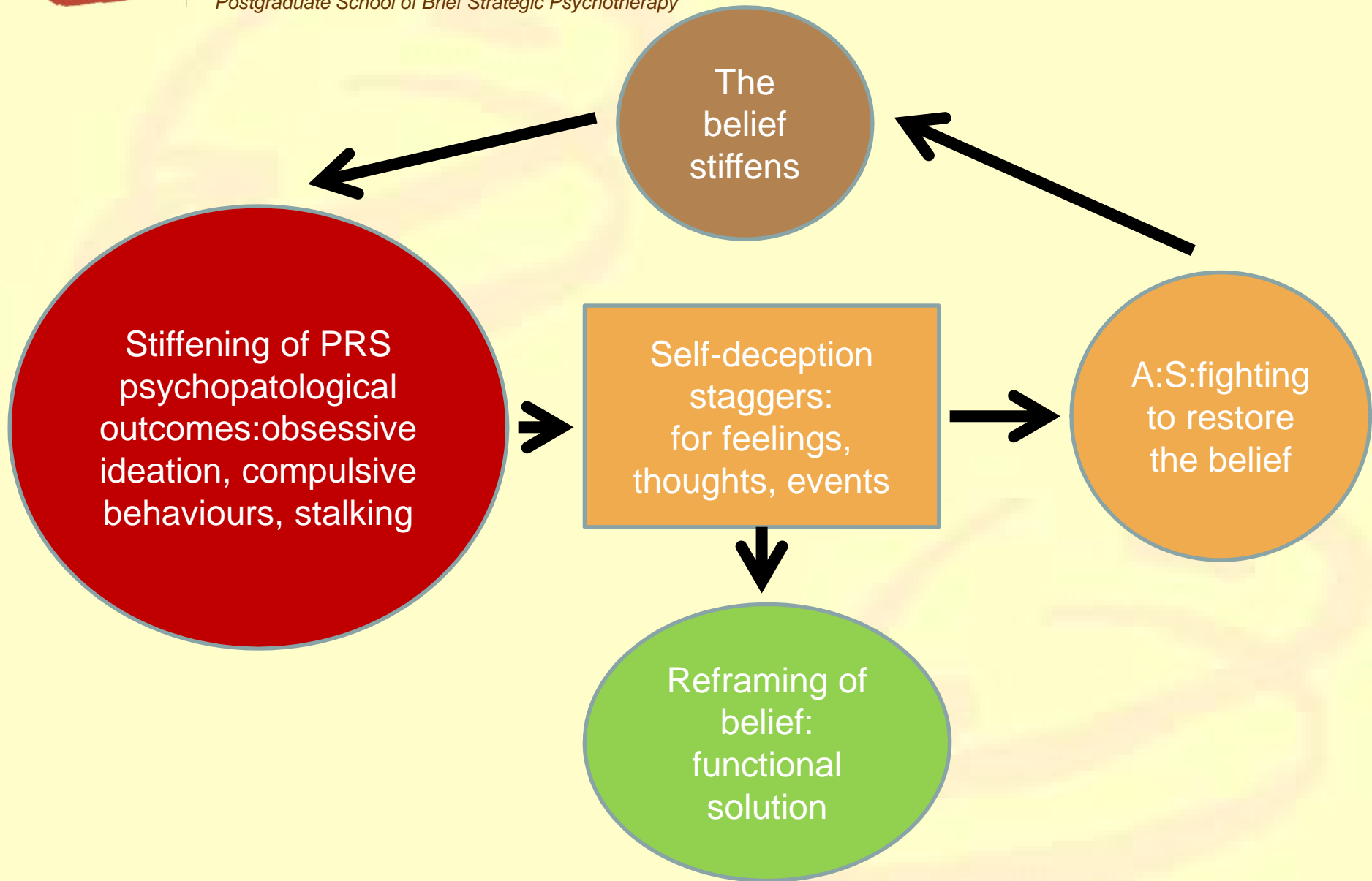
- Rage against the other one   
compulsive behaviour/stalking/  
criminal acts.
- Rage against oneself   
depression/possible suicide.



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*“Falling in love is a process of  
the same nature and kind of  
political or religious  
conversion”*

Francesco Alberoni



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There is no correlation  
between the lasting time  
of the relationship and  
the rigidity of self-  
deception.



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The belief can be built  
with the sole ideation,  
even without a real  
relationship.



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**Probably love her**

PSYCHET & INFOTRIBU - ROMA



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The “need” is the  
generator,  
which maintains the  
belief.



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«Reframing» is the healthy process which makes possible to break the belief and to stop the process of dysfunctional self-deception.



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## 4 prevalent types of Attempted Solutions:

- The ones who surrender
- The ones who renounce
- The ones who resist
- The ones who fight



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## **To surrender**

Those who surrender, witness, powerless,  
the crash of their own self-deception.

Emotions: fear, sorrow, pain, shame,  
humiliation, helplessness.





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**= Mourning equivalents.**

It is necessary a “logical *saltus*” (“*he/she is not anymore indispensable for my survival*”), otherwise a **depressive pathology** is highly probable.



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## **To renounce**

To be incapable to make the  
“logical *saltus*”.

To be incapable to acknowledge  
informations from the emotions.

From a clinical point of view, the  
A.S. is: renunciation because of  
powerlessness, helplessness.



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**Generalization of negative  
events**



**Radical depression**



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Every negative event becomes, dramatically the confirmation of one's inability and therefore of one's unwantedness.

Risk of suicide.



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The aggressive reaction  
to frustration  
is proportional  
to the rigidity  
of destroyed certitudes.



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## **To resist**

The A.S. (“to resist”): an  
endless wait for things to  
change.

Very often supported by a  
*double bind.*



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**To fight**

**To fight in order to restore the original certitude.**

**Double bind (inside the relationship self-self)**

**with the original certitude.**

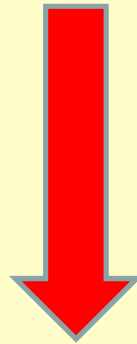


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Often victims who become  
persecutors



From suicide threat to stalking.



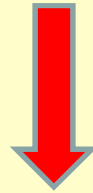


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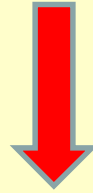
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If the A.S. (to fight) is repeated  
and repeated, self-deception  
stiffens even more



Loss of control



Destructive emotions



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Rage out of control



Paranoic ideation



Revenge



Persecution delusion



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*“There is no falling in love without illusion, there is no love without a little bit of delusion.”*

Emanuela Muriana, Tiziana Verbitz



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But...at the very end.....

What is love?



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**Love is.....**

**Supporting  
each other in  
old age.**