



Laurence Heller: A radical approach to working with shame and the body.



Dr. Heller has a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and was in private practice for over 35 years before he retired to dedicate his time to teaching and writing. He is the author of the bestselling book *Healing Developmental Trauma: How trauma affects self-image, self-regulation, and capacity for relationship*.

TOP EMBODIMENT TIP: Be aware of the importance of embodiment, but do not try and push it.

Connection

- Connection is both our deepest desire and our greatest fear.
- The spontaneous movement in all of us is towards connection, health and lightness.
- Regardless of how withdrawn and isolated we have become, or how serious that trauma we have experienced on the deepest level: just as a plant moves spontaneously towards sunlight, there is an impulse to move towards connection and healing.
- Both shock and developmental trauma involve dissociation. Dissociation helps humans bear the unbearable.
- Embodiment can be re-traumatizing as dissociation is protective and the body may not know how to cope.

Developmental trauma

- When needs are constantly unmet, the normal reaction is for a protest to occur. At a preverbal age this looks like crying. When needs are chronically not met, the protest amps up, and this can lead to rage and anger. Although rage is natural, feeling it leads to shame, as well as problems internally (to infants' bodies) and externally.
- Externally, anger and rage can cause anger in the parent and this can risk/jeopardise the attachment bond.
- To safeguard this bond, infants then dissociate because it is the only way to suppress primary raw emotions.

Core Need	Survival Adaptation	Strategy to Protect the Attachment Relationship
Connection	Foreclosing connection Disconnect from body and social engagement	Children give up their very sense of existence, disconnect, and attempt to become invisible
Attunement	Foreclosing the awareness and expression of personal needs	Children give up their own needs in order to focus on the needs of others, particularly the needs of the parents
Trust	Foreclosing trust and healthy interdependence	Children give up their authenticity in order to be who the parents want them to be: best friend, sport star, confidante, etc.
Autonomy	Foreclosing authentic expression, responding with what they think is expected of them	Children give up direct expressions of independence in order not to feel abandoned or crushed
Love-Sexuality	Foreclosing love and heart connection Foreclosing sexuality Foreclosing integration of love with sexuality	Children try to avoid rejection by perfecting themselves, hoping that they can win love through looks or performance

Resources

- ❖ **Books:** *Healing Developmental Trauma* - Heller and LaPierre
- ❖ **Courses:** www.narmtraining.com/
- ❖ **Website:** <https://drlaurenceheller.com/>



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