



**Presentation Title:** Approaching dissociative disorder patients difficulties with positive events and feelings

**Presentation Time:** 10:00 AM - 1:30 PM US Eastern Time

**Content Level:** Intermediate

**Abstract:** Dissociative disorder patients' journey towards recovery is often a long-term process with many obstacles along the way. Clinicians often experience being 'stuck' in the therapy together with the patient, although the treatment conditions seem to be 'good'. The patients often show difficulties with positive experiences and feelings, such as deserving to get help, being allowed to get better, eating and sleeping properly, receiving praise, building of alliance with the therapist, experiencing any pleasure. This is important, as the clinical literature suggests that traumatized individuals' tolerance for positive affect is a prognostic factor. Research findings indicate that the patients' is two-sided:

- 1) deficits in the ability to experience positive affect, and
- 2) negative affect in response to positive affect.

These findings suggest that treatment should include a focus on patients' negative affective responses to positive stimuli, in addition to a focus on patients' hedonic deficits. This workshop will focus on dissociative disorder patients' internal conflicts regarding positive experiences and feelings. The main focus will be strategies in treatment for working with these conflicts. The workshop will also include issues of: How to understand the patients' difficulties from perspectives of attachment-, trauma-, and dissociation theories.

**Learning Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Address negative affective interference in dissociative disorder patients
- Discuss research and clinical literature on traumatized individuals' difficulties with positive events and stimuli
- Link themes of attachment, trauma and dissociation to the problems of negative affective interference

**Presenter(s)**

**Ellen K. K. Jepsen, PhD**

Ellen K. K. Jepsen, M.D., Ph.D., has been affiliated with the Department for Trauma Treatment and Research Institute at Modum Bad Psychiatric Center in Norway since 2002. She specializes in assessment, treatment and research on adult patients with complex dissociative disorders. In addition to trauma-oriented therapies, she is trained in general psychodynamic and cognitive and behavioral psychotherapies. As a clinician, she has more than 18 years of experience in the treatment of adult inpatients suffering from complex conditions related to early relational trauma, in particular dissociative disorders. As researcher, she defended her thesis "Inpatient Treatment of Early Sexually Abused Adults: Dissociation and Outcome" in 2014 for the PhD-degree. The main

focus of the thesis was the impact of pathological dissociation on the treatment of adults suffering from a variety of disorders related to early sexual abuse. She frequently gives workshops in the assessment and treatment of complex PTSD and dissociative disorders and is a board member and national contact person for the European Society for Trauma and Dissociation (ESTD).

### **Timed Outline**

10 minutes - Introduction

60 minutes - In search of an optimized treatment for DD-patients, including statement of the problem

20 minutes - Clinical approaches

30 minutes - Break

50 minutes - Clinical approaches, continued

15 minutes - Future directions

10 minutes - Concluding remarks

15 minutes - Question and answer

### **Continuing Education**

The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD), #1744, is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Organizations, not individual courses, are approved as ACE providers. State and provincial regulatory boards have the final authority to determine whether an individual course may be accepted for continuing education credit. ISSTD maintains responsibility for this course. ACE provider approval period: 08/20/2020 – 08/20/2021. Social workers completing this course receive 3 continuing education credits.