

## TESTIMONIAL

As time goes by I find it harder to remember the horror that lies behind me. This is, I think, because of the effects on memory the mere passing of time has. Also undeniably, part of this will be because I don't want to remember what unimaginable horror I've existed in. Last but not least, it is attributable to the treatment that defied all my expectations and showed me that, thanks to modern technique, miracles can happen.

From as early on as I can remember, I have lived a life filled with constant feelings of insecurity, fear of social interactions and incapability to engage in normal social interactions. I always felt very unsafe, unbearably lonely and anxious. Due to very serious problems my parents were experiencing and the death of my father when I was four years old, they were not able to provide me with the safety I needed so badly. And due to me being traumatized at a very young age, possibly in combination with genetic factors, I was not able to reach out and internalize the support that, I guess, was offered to me by my mother at better times.

When I compare my childhood to the stories other people tell me about their childhoods, I can only see that what they are describing is terra incognita to me. I have no happy memories, no memories of having fun with other children, no memories of being playful, of discovering the world, or of discovering myself and experiencing the changes children ordinarily go through as they get older. I guess in other words I could say that there was not much of a 'me', other than a child filled with fears and insecurity.

As I grew older I developed a lot of feelings of irritation and anger. Also I became very dependent on people around me, in very unhealthy ways. Social interactions were a source of stress for me as I felt unbearably insecure and because I could not connect with people or take their perspective. At the same time I desperately needed people around me because if I were left alone for too long a time I would experience unbearable panic attacks. The social interactions I did have depended heavily on my ability to mimic the apparent desired reactions and feelings one ought to have in social interaction. I was almost completely incapable to care for other people and empathy and love were as well almost completely unknown territory for me, although I felt things like that now and then for my parents, in a very limited way.

As I grew older things got even worse. Out of nowhere incomprehensible feelings of hate and rage developed that consumed me completely and that I felt I could not exert any control over. I was plagued by continuous fantasies of hurting people in the most gruesome ways. Besides that I was consumed by unrelenting terror. Apart from that, I had no feelings or emotions. I felt nothing, completely cold-hearted, not being able to be touched by anything, to care for anything. I felt like I had no past, nor a future, as if time didn't exist. I was not able to project an image of myself into the future, as there seemed not to be an 'I' or a 'me'. And as I was not real, so were other people not real to me. The only desire I had was to use people and to inflict pain upon them.

As all kinds of therapy and medication failed me, I was offered neurofeedback as a last resort. And as

treatment progressed, unimaginable changes started to take place in me. First of all, the panic attacks, fear and terror started to disappear and my concentration started to improve greatly. Later on I started to experience feelings of caring for people. Empathy started to develop. As treatment progressed I became increasingly able to experience love for the people around me, as well as feelings of gratitude and, due to my past, I had to confront feelings of guilt. I became able to form a mental image of other people, when they were around me but also when they weren't. It was as if there was a real 'me' developing, as if 'I' started to exist for the very first time. Social interactions became increasingly less scary and instead I started to develop more and more a new and genuine interest in people, looking forward to social occasions and enjoying different kinds of social interaction - small talk as well as more intimate and meaningful social contacts. I became increasingly able to initiate actions on my own and to follow them through - coming from a place where I was paralyzed by an all-consuming apathy that I was absolutely incapable to fight. Also I started to develop a hunger for general knowledge, thanks to which I started to enjoy reading books and papers and watching documentaries.

As I understand it, the changes I have experienced are normally considered to be dependent upon the interaction with another person. Parents or otherwise therapists. However I received no psychotherapy at all during my NF-treatment. I consider this to be no less than a miracle, for which I am grateful every day. Although the antisocial me is still somewhere inside me and takes over control now and then, I have good hopes that it will fade out more and more, provided that I keep having access to neurofeedback for a long enough time. I feel like I am becoming a whole person, enjoying to develop different aspects of my being and increasingly capable of contributing in a worthwhile manner to the lives of the people around me.