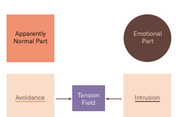
Following a trauma, structural dissociation can develop whereby the Self becomes fragmented into the apparently normal part and the emotional part. The emotional part holds trauma memory 'too much' and the apparently normal part exists independently of the emotional part and just wants to go on with life, ultimately holding trauma memory 'too little'.



When a tension field is introduced, the apparently normal part tends to react with avoidance. It avoids anything trauma-related and defends against it. In contrast, the emotional part intrudes when triggered by a tension field.

More stress and trauma can prompt a second division with several trauma-focused parts, otherwise known as emotional parts. This is due to the fact that, during the primary division, the emotional part that holds trauma is stretched beyond capacity and divides into 2 or more subsystems (Panksepp).

- Marked by loss of connection between systems.
- Rigid switches without choice of communication.
- Loss of self-observation capacities.
- Survival systems often connect to young vulnerable ego states.
- Fight, flight, freeze, collapse, submit (people pleasing) responses are common.

During the tertiary division of structural dissociation, multiple trauma-focused parts present and more than one apparently normal part develop (Panksepp) which govern our presence and participation in the world.