

# THE CORE OF YOU?

## COMMITMENT IN SPOUSES OF THE MENTALLY ILL

Background painting "Soul paints" by user Sarjana Sky www.flickr.com Changes made to the original work

### BACKGROUND

- Losing a beloved - a common experience for spouses of mentally ill people
- Relationality in pastoral theology – a process without "the core" self (McClure 2010)
- Disability theology: Varieties of love (Swinton 2012)

Painting "Faceless watercolor 2" by user Howard Jefferson www.flickr.com



### METHOD

- 16 spouses/partners
- Semi-structured narrative interviews
- Visual elicitation method
- Narrative holistic content analysis + modifications

### RESULTS

#### THE MAIN TYPES OF COMMITMENT



Photo "Commitment" by user Son Ta www.flickr.com  
Changes made to original work

#### A) LOVING THE RESPONSIBLE, "CORE YOU"

- Forgiveness: the call to responsibility taking as sharing

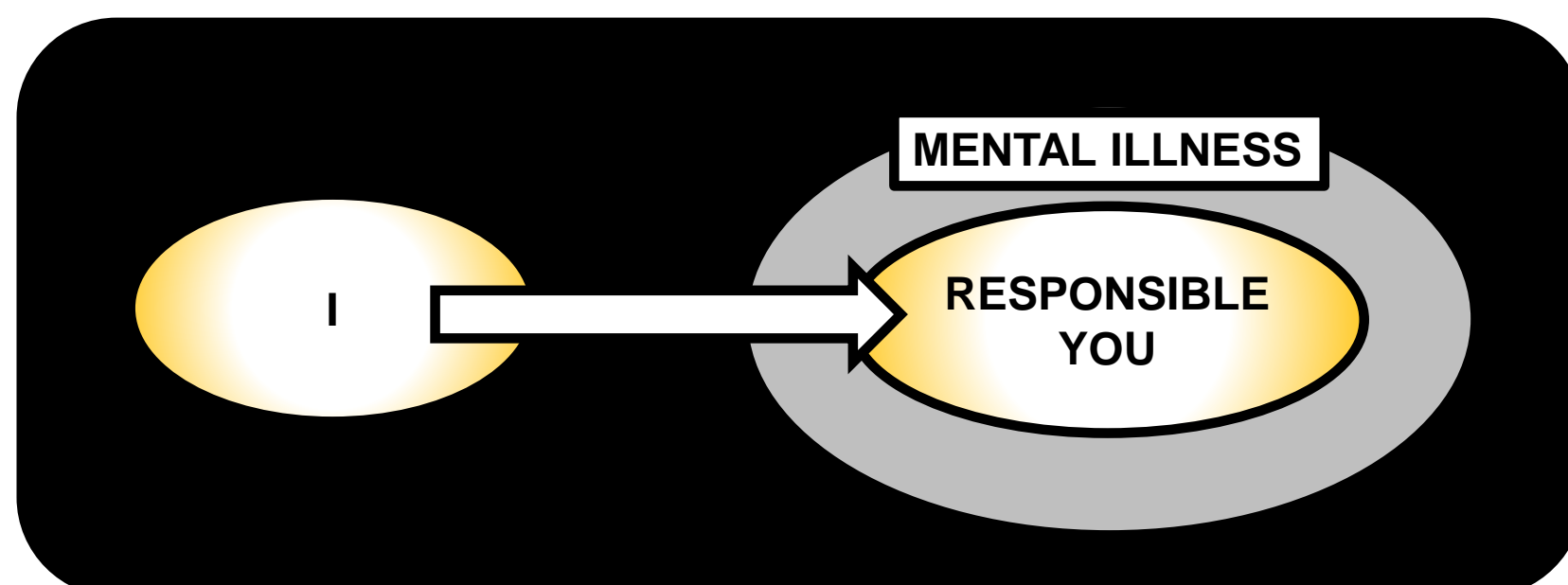


Figure 1 Commitment to the responsible you

#### B) LOVING WITHOUT THE RESPONSIBLE, "CORE YOU"

- Reciprocal, mysterious love
- Function of forgiveness as the call to sharing ceases

### DISCUSSION

#### COMMITMENT - SHARING BEYOND THE IDEALIZED RECIPROCITY

##### RELATIONALITY WITHOUT

##### "THE CORE" SELF:

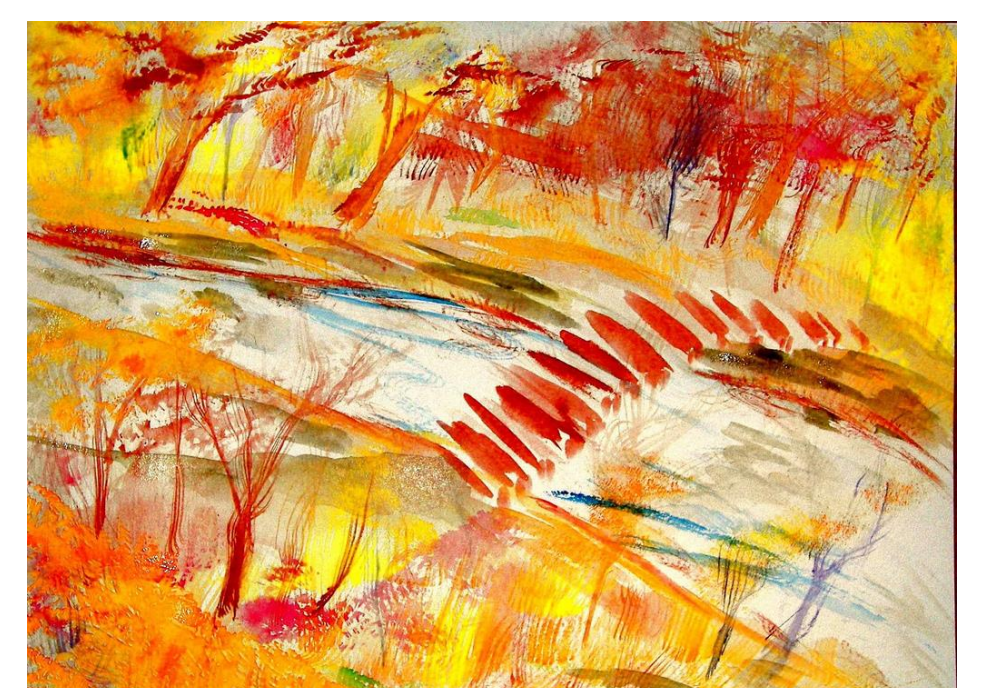
- Inability to fully address stable commitment to another person
- Ability to discuss love as independent from "the core you"
- Forgiveness as spousal "bridge building": The mentally ill spouse's repentance and responsibility?



Photo "Feathered" by user Steve Krave www.flickr.com

##### DISABILITY THEOLOGY:

- Commitment as unrecognized mode of genuine reciprocity



Painting "Go over the bridge and to the right" by user Jim O'Neil www.flickr.com

### REFERENCES

- McClure, Barbara J.** (2010). Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling. Reflections on Theory, Theology, and Practice. Eugene, Oregon: CASCADE Books.
- Swinton, John** (2012). Reflections on Autistic Love: What Does Love Look Like? Practical Theology, 5, 259-278.

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