

Practical information

WHY DO MEMORIES KEEP COMING BACK?



When we experience threat, seemingly neutral aspects of the situation (e.g. colour, smell, location) are automatically recorded and associated with the threat. And therefore with danger! Later, these neutral aspects become threatening stimuli that remind us of the trauma, reactivating the fear in the same way, as if we were in danger.

On a biological level, anything that reminds us of the trauma becomes a threat and places different parts of the brain, like the amygdala, which is involved in the recognition of emotions, fear and danger, on alert.

The neurons activated at the time of the trauma are therefore reactivated by a simple reminder of aspects associated with the traumatic memory. The fear experienced means memorisation of the trauma is amplified. As a result of this fear, our memory records the entire traumatic scene, including unimportant details. They become automatic triggers that will reactivate the traumatic memory and fear in an uncontrolled way.

The brain can no longer control the repeated reappearance of traumatic images and obsessive thoughts. The emotional control tower (the prefrontal cortex) therefore struggles to function.

