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Empathy as method toward identification the debut of the prodrome of schizophrenia

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The phenomenological and morpho-analytic methods are nonspecific but undoubtedly extremely important in approaching the symptoms of the pre-schizophrenia period. Because of the one side approach of these methods, the assistance of empathy, as used by Kohut, can provide more clinical information, but it is difficult to quantify in research.

Expanding on Kohut's views, psychotic states are primarily disorders of the self. The psychosis underpinnings are organically and attributionally experientially determined. Therefore, the self does not develop with a cohesive organized core of personality in these conditions.

Using empathy as an observational tool requires attunement to the patient emotional state. Empathy components are affective, as well cognitive, with brain metabolic correlates between interviewer and patient in an empathic interview. When two minds are connected, a state of alignment is created. In the pre-schizophrenia state that resonance, the alignment is missing. The reverberation of that empathic connection is replaced by the "black hole" that swallows resonance, and creates in the empathic examiner the frightful experience of being in the presence of someone whose humanity has now been hijacked, and only the opaqueness remains as sad reminder of a mind that was like ours. These observations need to correlate with clinical picture, as may also occur in other organic illnesses.

With the use of the methods available, the identification of the experiential changes can be delayed because of many factors. Using empathy as a tool, along with the existent methods, may bypass some of the difficulties of early identification of the prodromal symptoms.