

# Table of contents

## **Introduction — 1**

What is the meaning of the label fibromyalgia? — 1

What are the settings of fibromyalgia? — 2

Long lasting musculoskeletal pain, long lasting widespread pain and fibromyalgia — 4

References — 6

## **Section I: The developmental phase of symptoms — 9**

### **1 Fibromyalgia seen through the life histories of the afflicted women — 11**

1.1 Introduction — 11

1.2 Our study — 13

1.3 What did we find? — 17

1.4 An overstrained self as a child — 18

1.5 An adult woman with an unprotected self; high load, self loading and dissociation of unmanageable mental content — 20

1.6 Compensating strategies — 24

1.7 Discussion — 27

1.8 Why women? — 28

1.9 Chronic illness — 28

1.10 Limitations — 29

References — 30

### **2 Dissociative and self-loading patterns in adult life — 33**

2.1 Introduction — 33

2.2 Our study — 35

2.3 Our findings — 38

2.4 Discussion — 47

2.5 Is “unsuccessful” dissociation ... — 49

2.6 ... effective in a fibromyalgia development process? — 49

2.7 The I myself scale — 50

2.8 Limitations — 51

2.9 Acknowledgements — 51

References — 52

### **3 Psychological, psychobiological and environmental patterns during the developmental phase — 55**

3.1 Environmental stressors — 55

3.2 Psychological and somatic load from trauma as accidents — 56

3.3	Abuse and neglect — 56
3.4	Localized pain, high load, monotonous tasks, or bullying in working life — 58
3.5	Relentless load from premorbid over activity — 59
3.6	Aging — 59
3.7	Difficulties sleeping — 60
	References — 62
<b>4</b>	<b>Increase in mental load: life events as triggers of generalized pain — 65</b>
4.1	Mental load — 65
4.2	Discussion — 67
	References — 67
<b>Section II: Living with fibromyalgia — 69</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>The phase of living with fibromyalgia — 71</b>
5.1	A continued high level of mental load — 71
5.2	Reduction of cognitive functioning — 72
5.3	Discussion — 73
5.4	Could such a tentative model be verified? — 75
	References — 76
<b>6</b>	<b>Variation in the level of pain — 77</b>
6.1	To live under stress and to be more reactive to stress when stress induces more clinical pain — 77
6.2	Pain inhibitory function and invariability in pain — 80
6.3	Naturalistic data — 81
6.4	Working conditions at work and at home — 81
6.5	Sleep — 83
6.6	Exercise — 84
6.7	Emotions and emotional processing — 86
6.8	Suppression, dissociation, and pain — 88
6.9	Dissociation — 89
6.10	Being overactive — 90
6.11	Association is the opposite of dissociation, suppression, or controlling — 90
6.12	Group treatment, significant others, and substantial gaps in pain — 92
6.13	Addressing emotional processing deficits — 94
6.14	Addressing ANS unbalance — 96
6.15	The ANS and biofeedback — 96
	References — 97

**7      Dissociation interferes with gaps in pain — 101**

- 7.1      Introduction — 101
- 7.2      Level of symptoms — 102
- 7.3      Gaps in pain — 102
- 7.4      Psychosocial processes and fibromyalgia processes connected — 103
- 7.5      The study — 103
- 7.6      This is what was found — 105
- 7.7      Keeping distress out of sight — 107
- 7.8      Discontinued crisis or not accepting — 109
- 7.9      Not planning a pain gap — 110
- 7.10     Losing the unplanned pain gap — 111
- 7.11     Acceptance/creating pain gaps — 112
- 7.12     Discussion — 113
- 7.13     The fragile balance of the pain-gaps — 114
- 7.14     Adapting to impairment — 115
- 7.15     Dissociation — 115
- 7.16     Transformation as rehabilitation — 116
- 7.17     Limitations — 117
- 7.18     Acknowledgement — 117
- References — 117

**Section III: Recovery from fibromyalgia — 119****8      Women's narrations on the process of recovery from fibromyalgia — 121**

- 8.1      Introduction — 121
- 8.2      Our sample — 123
- 8.3      What did we find? — 124
- 8.4      Strong but not enough to be weak — 125
- 8.5      Increase in mental load – development of fibromyalgia — 128
- 8.6      Challenge of fibromyalgia — 129
- 8.7      Decrease in mental load – symptom remission — 131
- 8.8      On parole – strengthened enough to be weak — 132
- 8.9      Discussion — 133
- 8.10     Patterns compared — 134
- 8.11     Transformation as a remedy? — 135
- 8.12     Implications for treatment and prevention — 136
- 8.13     Methodological considerations — 137
- 8.14     Conclusions — 137
- 8.15     Acknowledgements — 138
- References — 138

## **Section IV: Environmental, psychological and psychobiological fluctuations — 141**

- 9 Factors influencing onset, level of symptoms, gaps in pain, recovery and maintenance — 143**
  - 9.1 The onset — 143
  - 9.2 Environmental aspects — 143
  - 9.3 Psychological aspects — 144
  - 9.4 Psychobiological aspects — 144
  - 9.5 Level of symptoms — 145
  - 9.6 Psychobiological influence — 145
  - 9.7 Psychological influence — 146
  - 9.8 Environmental influence — 148
  - 9.9 Gaps in fibromyalgia pain — 149
  - 9.10 Psychological context — 149
  - 9.11 Environmental regulation — 150
  - 9.12 Recovery — 150
  - 9.13 Psychobiological processes — 152
  - 9.14 Environmental context — 152
  - 9.15 Maintenance as in a maintained level of stress? — 153
  - 9.16 Psychological functioning — 154
  - 9.17 Impaired cognitive functioning is a part of a cognitive-emotional pattern — 155
  - 9.18 Psychobiological dysregulation — 157
  - 9.19 Working life — 159
  - 9.20 Knowledge and power — 160
  - 9.21 Discussion — 161
  - 9.22 Chronic or traumatic stress: cognitive and physiological correlates — 162
  - 9.23 Inflammation — 164
  - 9.24 Considerations on treatment. What are the targets and the means? — 165
  - References — 167

## **Section V: Acknowledgements — 173**

- About the author — 175
- Acknowledgements — 175

## **Index — 177**