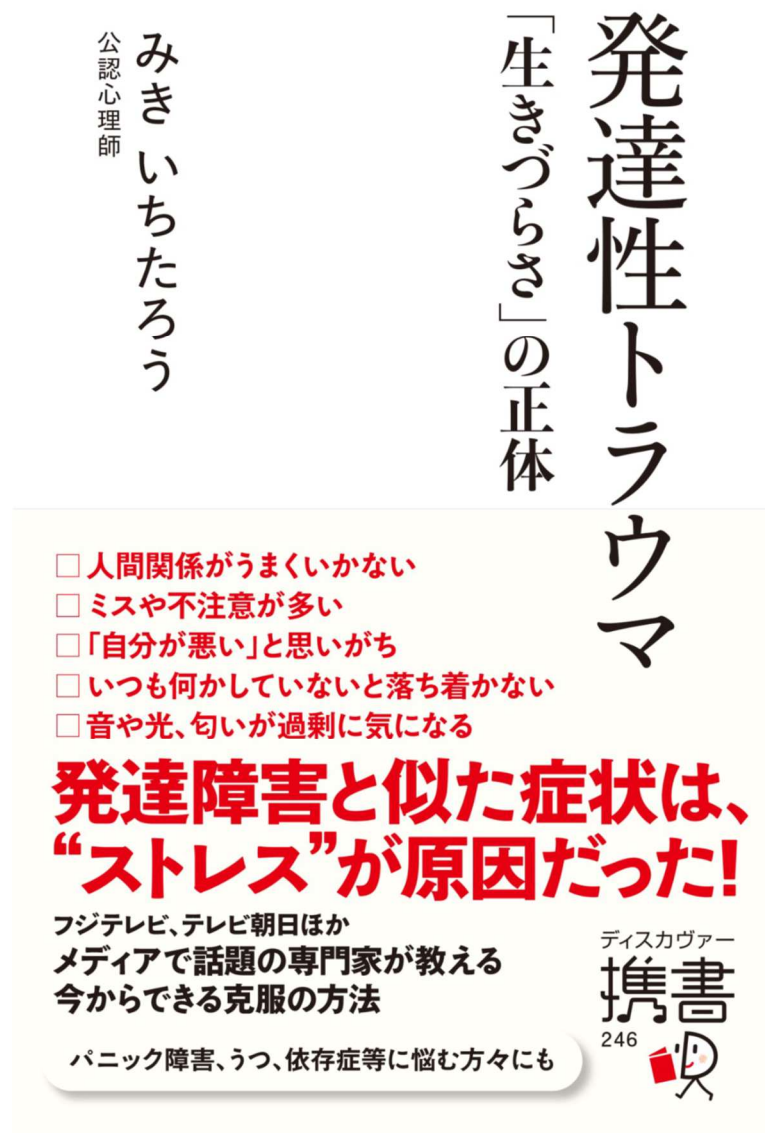


Developmental Trauma: The Real Cause of 'Ikizurasa'

Sample Translation – Excerpts for Publishers

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Introduction (Full Translation)

What Does Princess Mako's Diagnosis of "Complex PTSD" Mean?

On October 1, 2021, the Imperial Household Agency announced that Princess Mako, who had long been subjected to relentless media coverage and harsh public criticism regarding her marriage, had been diagnosed with *complex PTSD*. For most people in Japan, the term itself likely did not remain in memory; it was simply taken to mean that some kind of diagnosis had been given to explain her mental and physical distress.

PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) has traditionally been understood as a condition arising from a single overwhelming event—such as a natural disaster, a major accident, or the experience of war. In contrast, *complex PTSD* refers to the state of suffering that results from repeated exposure to severe stress over an extended period of time. The concept was first proposed by psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman and, after many twists and turns, was only recently recognized as an official diagnostic category.

As a licensed psychologist specializing in trauma and attachment disorders, I felt that this news marked an epoch-making moment.

Some specialists have raised objections to the diagnosis. Strictly speaking, according to the criteria, she might instead have been labeled with "adjustment disorder" or "depressive state." This is because the official standards for complex PTSD typically apply only when life-threatening stress or symptoms are involved.

However, the original purpose of any diagnosis is to guide the way toward appropriate treatment. The message conveyed by a label such as "adjustment disorder" is entirely different from that of "complex PTSD."

As I will also discuss in Chapter 2, had the diagnosis been "adjustment disorder," the impression could have shifted responsibility onto Princess Mako herself, obscuring the seriousness of the situation—so severe that it threatened her very existence. Moreover, it would have diminished the diagnosis's power to warn society about the role of media reporting and public opinion.

Furthermore, situations like Princess Mako's—being suddenly attacked by those around her through harassment and forced into isolation—can happen to anyone. For children especially, family and school constitute their entire world. For people struggling

with the daily burden of *ikizurasa*—the “difficulty of living”—this diagnosis carries profound meaning.

Developmental Trauma as a Cause of Complex PTSD

Another reason this report struck me as epoch-making is that complex PTSD is closely related to the theme of this book: *developmental trauma*.

When you first encountered the term “developmental trauma” in this title, what impression did it give you? Perhaps you thought, “*I’ve heard of developmental disorders, but what does this mean?*” Or perhaps, “*Why is trauma attached to the word developmental?*” In any case, I suspect it drew your attention in some way.

“Developmental trauma” refers to the trauma sustained in childhood that often serves as the cause of complex PTSD. Chronic and repetitive stress experienced within the family, at school, or in other childhood settings frequently underlies complex PTSD. (Of course, as in Princess Mako’s case, stress experienced in adulthood can also result in trauma, including complex PTSD.)

For this reason, developmental trauma has recently come into focus as a key to understanding the origins of *ikizurasa*. The fact that complex PTSD is now officially recognized as a diagnosis means that its underlying factor—developmental trauma—will also become more widely acknowledged.

Bessel van der Kolk, a leading authority on trauma research, has written in *The Body Keeps the Score* that “our society is now entering an era in which trauma is becoming centrally recognized.” This does not mean that the concept of trauma is being carelessly expanded or misapplied. Rather, it signals that, in light of accumulating research, we must reconsider what conditions are essential for living fully as human beings—and what forces threaten to destroy them.

That Sense of “Ikizurasa” May Come from Developmental Trauma

The progress of trauma research has not always been smooth, hampered by strong feelings of aversion or indifference. Both complex PTSD and developmental trauma

required a long time to gain recognition. Yet in recent years research has accelerated rapidly, and trauma is now seen as something that can be addressed more directly in everyday life.

In the meantime, other terms have stepped in to describe the experience of *ikizurasa*: “adult children,” “personality disorders,” “developmental disorders,” “new-type depression,” and “highly sensitive person (HSP).” Yet these concepts have had limitations. They seemed somewhat fitting but failed to explain the whole picture. They offered reassurance by naming a condition but did not always provide clear solutions for individuals. As a result, such concepts have tended to appear, spread, and then fade away in succession.

In conclusion, when we look at *ikizurasa* through the lens of “developmental trauma,” many things become comprehensible, and practical pathways to care emerge. Until now, trauma has often been imagined only as PTSD—symptoms caused by specific extreme circumstances such as war, natural disasters, or sexual assault. But the full scope of trauma is far broader than that.

Professor Kosuke Tatsuki of Kyoto University’s Institute for Research in Humanities has similarly observed that only certain kinds of trauma seem to enjoy privileged status in diagnostic and therapeutic terms. He warns that, because discourse tends to privilege PTSD, other forms of psychological wounds risk being forgotten or hidden. He stresses the importance of shedding light on these other forms—traumas that may be described as “part of the everyday landscape,” or those that persist as taboos within family discourse and continue to exert indirect but lasting influence on the individual.

The Aim of This Book

In this book, drawing on recent research findings as well as my own clinical experience and personal encounters, I aim to shed light on the sense of *ikizurasa* that readers may be struggling with, by examining it through the perspective of trauma—specifically, developmental trauma.

Excerpt from Chapter 1 of *Developmental Trauma: The Real Cause of "Ikizurasa"*

(This is a partial translation provided as a sample; the full text includes additional cases and analysis.)

What Does “Trauma” Really Mean?

When you hear the word “*trauma*,” what kind of image comes to mind?

Does it seem like something far removed from your own life—a condition suffered only by those who have gone through extraordinary experiences? Perhaps you have heard the term but are not quite sure what it means. For many, trauma feels unrelated to their own circumstances.

But trauma is not something that exists only in a distant world. It manifests in the everyday troubles, difficulties, and *ikizurasa*—the “difficulty of living”—that so many of us experience. Trauma is, in fact, much closer to us than we might think.

This book takes a closer look at the ways trauma shows up in everyday life, beginning with real cases of people struggling with symptoms rooted in developmental trauma.

Case 1: Struggling with Nervousness

Tsuyoshi, a man in his forties working as a sales manager, has long been troubled by how easily he becomes nervous. During the company’s morning meetings, he often sweats from his hands and back while speaking, and sometimes his mind goes completely blank. Meanwhile, his colleagues and supervisors seem at ease, even adding humor to their remarks.

He tries to emulate them but rarely succeeds. With careful preparation, he can manage, but he feels insecure about being unable to speak off the cuff. Now that he manages subordinates, the pressure is even greater.

At the start-of-year policy presentation, he somehow gets through his speech, but the effort leaves him completely drained. Recently, after visiting an osteopath for fatigue, he was asked: “*Do you know what it means to be natural? You’re always tense.*” That comment made him realize he did not actually know what it meant to be relaxed.

He believed that drinking alcohol each evening to “take the edge off” was his way of being natural, but he has come to doubt whether that truly counts as being at ease. Without alcohol, he feels he has no idea how to relax at all.

A Sense of Distress Without a Clear Cause

As the examples in this chapter show, trauma can give rise to symptoms such as chronic tension, over-adaptation, difficulty forming natural relationships, declining performance, emotional dysregulation, lack of confidence, addiction, and panic attacks. These cases, while anonymized and reconstructed, may sound familiar. You may even find yourself thinking: *“Wait—could such everyday struggles really be caused by trauma?”*

Although the situations differ, all of these cases can be understood as stemming from **developmental trauma**. What they share in common is that, during formative stages of development, the individuals were exposed to persistent and chronic stress in environments such as the family or school. Common sources include parental conflict, family dysfunction, bullying, or harassment.

What unites these stories is the deep confusion of not knowing why life feels so difficult. Many people do not know where to turn for help, cannot put their suffering into words, and feel that neither counseling nor medical treatment will truly resolve their pain. They are left feeling helpless, adrift, and unseen.

Why Trauma Books Didn’t Resonate With Me

I, too, once struggled with *ikizurasa* rooted in trauma. I suffered from chronic tension, over-adaptation, and a constant sense of guilt. Sometimes I felt as if I were piloting myself from inside a robot, disconnected from my own emotions. Even when I felt joy or sadness, it did not show on my face, leaving me painfully isolated.

I read many books in search of answers, but they did not resonate. At the time, trauma literature focused on war, disasters, rape, or abuse—subjects that felt far removed from my own experience. I remember thinking: *“This isn’t about me. My struggles aren’t here.”* It took a long detour before I understood that my *ikizurasa* was also trauma.

“Does Trauma Even Exist?”

In my search for solutions, I encountered the claim that *“trauma doesn’t exist.”* The bestselling book *The Courage to Be Disliked* popularized this Adlerian idea, stating: *“We do not suffer from the shock of our experiences, but from the meanings we assign to them.”*

Some present this as self-help encouragement, yet the message is striking—and many reviews led with the headline *“Trauma Does Not Exist.”*

Others have denied trauma by citing controversies over the reliability of childhood abuse claims in the U.S. “memory wars.” Even some doctors in Japan once told me, *“Trauma clients are rare. It’s not a common issue.”*

I, too, once thought, *“Maybe trauma doesn’t exist. Maybe I should just try harder.”* Even as a sufferer, I doubted its reality.

The History of Trauma: Attention and Forgetting

Trauma has historically cycled between recognition and denial. Political motives once discouraged acknowledging war trauma, while within families, there was resistance to admitting the reality of abuse. Because trauma was first recognized through disasters, wars, and abuse, the concept was long defined only by those events, leaving everyday trauma outside the conversation.

As a result, many people carrying hidden *ikizurasa* never realized they were trauma survivors.

In recent years, however, research has begun connecting everyday struggles with trauma. We are finally entering a time when these once-overlooked experiences are being recognized for what they are.

Why These Works Matter (Revised)

A Groundbreaking Perspective on Understanding Trauma

This work is the first to clearly reposition trauma—not merely as a “psychic wound” but as a *stress disorder*—and to substantiate that claim with clinical evidence. By highlighting not only high-risk stressors such as abuse or disasters, but also the damaging effects of small, chronic stressors in everyday life, it reframes trauma as a universal human issue rather than a rare, exceptional condition. For this reason, it has been embraced not only by professionals but also by those directly affected.

From ‘Ikizurasa’ to Developmental Trauma

The book provides language for the vague but deeply felt “ikizurasa” (chronic distress, difficulty in living) that so many people experience. What was once dismissed as “personality problems” or “weakness” is shown to be rooted in developmental trauma—repeated stress in childhood within families, schools, or communities. This reframing allows readers to understand their struggles not as personal failings but as the result of identifiable mechanisms, opening a clear path toward healing.

Clinical and Scientific Relevance

The book aligns with the latest findings in neuroscience, psychiatry, and stress research. By explaining how chronic stress shapes brain function (amygdala overactivity, hippocampal shrinkage, prefrontal regulation failure, HPA axis dysregulation), it grounds psychological suffering in biological processes. This provides a bridge between scientific validity and clinical practice, making trauma understandable and actionable.

The “Fourth Developmental Disorder”

Drawing on Dr. Toshio Sugiyama’s concept of the “fourth developmental disorder,” the book illuminates how trauma-related symptoms (inattention, impulsivity, social fear) can closely mimic autism spectrum disorder or ADHD. By clarifying these distinctions, it prevents misdiagnosis and mistreatment, urging clinicians to assess both developmental history and current symptoms together. This approach has significant implications for accurate diagnosis and effective care.

Practical and Accessible

Through vivid case examples, readers can recognize themselves and their lived

experiences. The book empowers individuals to see their symptoms as understandable responses to chronic stress rather than as personal flaws. It also introduces concrete paths for trauma care, including body-based approaches and attention to social safety, resonating with both professionals and general readers.

A Hopeful Message

Above all, the book delivers a powerful message: “Your suffering has a reason—and it is not your fault.” By redefining trauma as a stress disorder rooted in everyday life, it lifts the burden of self-blame and offers a realistic, compassionate framework for recovery. This makes it not only a pioneering contribution to trauma studies but also a guidebook of hope for countless individuals and families worldwide.

Proven Market Traction

Over 40,000 copies sold across the author’s titles (Approximately 20,000 copies of each), with two complementary bestsellers from major Japanese houses:

- *Developmental Trauma: The Real Cause of “Ikizurasa”* (Japanese term meaning “chronic distress” or “difficulty in living”) (Discover Twenty One, 2023)
- *How to Let Other People’s Words Pass Through* (Working English title; also translatable as *The Skill of Not Taking Words Personally*) (Forest Publishing, 2022)

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- Ichitaro Miki https://www.brieftherapy-counseling.com/contact.html#contact_mail

Author Profile

Ichitaro Miki, Certified Public Psychologist

Graduated from Osaka University (B.A. in Western History, Faculty of Letters).

Completed Master's Program in Cultural Morphology, Graduate School of Letters, Osaka University.

Certified Public Psychologist (National License, Japan).

Member of the Japanese Psychological Association, the Japanese Society of Stuttering and Other Fluency Disorders, and the Japanese Association of Brief Psychotherapy.

Completed BDI Rebalancing program; LAB Profile Practitioner.

Professional Career

Miki began counseling during his university years. After completing graduate school, he worked at NEC Corporation, then at the Institute of Applied Social Psychology and the Osaka Psychological Education Center.

Later, he founded the Brief Therapy Counseling Center (B.C.C.), where he specializes in trauma care, attachment disorders, harassment, and stuttering.

He has over 20 years of clinical experience, drawing on both traditional counseling approaches (such as Rogers' counseling) and bodywork/brief therapy.

Media and Publications

Miki has appeared frequently in media (TV, magazines, newspapers, online). He has also served as a medical supervisor for TV drama productions.

His authored books have sold approximately over 40,000 copies in total.

Key titles include:

Developmental Trauma: The Real Cause of 'Ikizurasa' (Discover 21, 2023)

How to Let Other People's Words Pass Through (Forest Publishing, 2022)