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words

Transitional object

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The majority of young children have a favoured 'object' to which they turn when stressed or sleepy. The psychoanalyst Winnicott's genius was to theorise this everyday phenomenon. The transitional object is 'transitional' in that it bridges the borderland between 'me' and 'not-me', safely containing children's desires and projections. With its nostalgic maternal resonance, the transitional object comforts and distracts when the parent is absent, helping the child to forge an independent sense of self. For Winnicott transitional objects are the prototype for culture and creative living. Psychotherapy is 'learning to play': re-establishing transitional space in a traumatising and unresponsive world.

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