

Source Memories and Trauma

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Content Warnings:

- Ableism.
 - Abuse mentions.
 - Cringe subreddit mentions (referring to hate subreddits such as r/systemscringe).
 - Trauma discussion.
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There's a lot of things that tend to come up about the source memories of alterhumans. Fictives, fictionkin, factives and anyone else with memories of another place or time are common in the community, and they can all have differing opinions on if those memories "actually happened". The thing is, some people tend to contest those memories as being entirely "made up" and dismiss any benefits or issues that might come from them, even going so far sometimes as to accuse those who have exotrauma of faking, being insensitive or ableist.

It's important to acknowledge that whether you, your system (if you have one) or any others around you believe your source memories to be spiritual in origin or psychological or anything else, they're still memories that can affect you and should be treated the same as any other memory you have of the current physical world. It doesn't matter if the memories are good or bad, spiritual or psychological, what matters is that you feel things as a result of them and that isn't something to be dismissed.

Things from your memories might not be "real" in the sense of physically happening here or even anywhere depending on your beliefs, but that does not matter because they can still very much affect you. You have these memories of things from elsewhere or another time or body and they are real to you because you remember the feeling of going through them. You remember, regardless of "true reality", those things in your memories and so, you react in appropriate ways. Maybe you had something nice happen in source so you remember things associated with that event fondly even here. Maybe you had something bad happen in source so you instinctively avoid things related to it here. Even without realizing, your memories are your experiences and they can affect many things. Your experience shouldn't be downplayed just because they aren't proveable to have physically happened.

If memories need to be "real and physical" to count toward being something you should respect, what about people with psychosis? We're fortunate enough to not experience horrible hallucinations very often but we do get them and they're terrible when they want to be. Hallucinations are decidedly not real in the sense that they aren't physical, but you still live through it and deal with it. And sometimes, you can get traumatized from it. Hallucinations and delusions can be absolutely debilitating and if source memories are a psychological phenomenon too, then they really aren't all that different in how they can affect people. That's not to say that source memories can't be spiritual either--If your memories are spiritual, you literally did experience them. They are just as real to your experiences as any other, regardless of "actual" origin.

Plenty of traumagenic systems have introjects with source memories that mirror their own body's trauma but it's not always exact. Are those memories also to be dismissed because it's not the real deal? What about trauma from inside a headspace itself? For some systems, headspaces aren't as physical as the outerworld and for some, no harm can happen in them. However, there's a lot of issues that can come up in headspaces or within systems in general that are entirely abusive--is that real enough to not be shoved aside or harassed over?

Memories are messy and the fact that source memories are so often downplayed or dismissed is upsetting. People have gotten angry at and harassed others over experiencing exotrauma just because they simply have it. In the past, we've gotten our spaces online raided and had images posted to cringe subreddits simply because we and others described exotraumatic experiences. It's not just the subreddits of course, there's been plenty of personal experiences in the plural community itself we've had that follow the trend--and we're not alone. Every so often a post shows up talking about how people with exotrauma are ableist, lying, attention-seeking or insensitive for daring to say they have exotrauma. It's a recurring thing we see on and off and it's always as sadening as it has been.

People who are affected by their source memories deserve to be able to find coping skills and find others who have similar experiences. You shouldn't have to wonder if you'll be taken seriously for your exotrauma. You should be allowed to take the time to heal just as anyone else would. It doesn't matter if you have exotrauma, this-world trauma or no trauma at all, everyone should be allowed to talk about their experiences and get whatever help they need for themselves. It's that simple.