



**Romeo Dallaire with Jessica Dee Humphreys. *Waiting for First Light: My Ongoing Battle with PTSD*.** Toronto, Penguin/ Random House 2016. 186 pp. Hardback CAD\$28.00.

Embellished brief summary from the book jacket and narratives in the book: Roméo Dallaire is a retired lieutenant-general, retired Canadian senator, and celebrated humanitarian. In 1993, LGen Dallaire was appointed force commander for UNAMIR, a United Nations peacekeeping force in Rwanda. He struggled valiantly to prevent and then to halt the intertribal genocide waged by Hutu extremists against Tutsis and Hutu moderates.

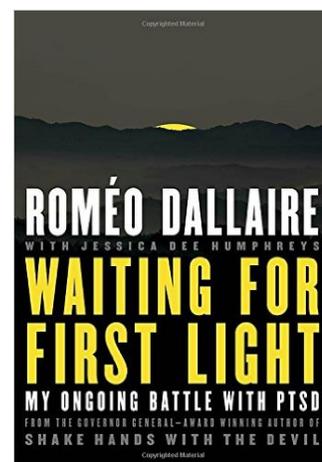
In the course of his brilliant work, he bore witness to the Rwandan genocide. His Governor General's Literary Award-winning book, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, exposed the failures of the international community to stop that genocide. It has been turned into an Emmy Award-winning documentary as well as a feature film; it has also been entered into evidence in war crimes tribunals trying the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. Dallaire has received numerous honours and awards, including Officer of the Order of Canada in 2002 and the United Nations Association in Canada's Pearson Peace Medal in 2005. His second book, *They Fight Like Soldiers, They Die Like Children*, was also a national bestseller. Since his retirement, he has become an outspoken advocate for human rights, mental health and war-affected children. He founded the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, an organization committed to progressively ending the use of child soldiers worldwide through a security sector approach.

I was deeply moved by this book, which includes very open, graphic details of Dallaire's struggles with the profoundly traumatizing experiences he endured. His multinational U.N. peacekeeping force was small and woefully under-supplied with essentials for his mission, including food, water and office supplies, not to mention ammunition for self-defense.

When the massacres began, refugees from the incredibly brutal, murderous genocide streamed into his peacekeeping compound. When their numbers swelled to 30,000, he had to take the heart-wrenching step of denying entry to any further men, women or children – even though they were certain to be killed because they had no other safe haven available. His limits were those of available space. Never mind that they had no food or other provisions to offer the refugees, other than a few crumbs from their own rations.

Dallaire and his troops were ordered by the UN to return to their countries of origin. Dallaire refused this direct order, knowing that if they left then the 30,000 refugees would all be immediately killed.

Dallaire's pleas for food and other supplies were woefully unmet. He was helpless to do more than



offering sanctuary to these refugees. And many of them had witnessed or experienced the brutal sexual abuses and hacking to death of family, friends and strangers as they fled the violence wreaked upon their communities – often by people they had lived with and known most of their lives.

Dallaire managed to save these refugees in his compound, but had to work late into the night to attend to all of the problems of his troops under his command, the refugees, the UN, the media and more. He found it increasingly difficult to sleep, even when he was utterly exhausted.

On numerous occasions Dallaire left his compound in response to reports of brutal mass rapes of women and girls, and of tortures and murders of men, women and children. Almost always, the only thing he and his men could do was to bear witness to the massacres.

It was also incredibly stressful for him to deal with his Canadian chain of command and authorities in the UN. No one responded with any interest at all to his plea for help in dealing with the genocide.

Dallaire kept hoping and seeking to find something more he could do to help, but all he got for his efforts were ever more disappointments. He had great difficulties falling asleep till the early hours of the morning, and when he did manage to doze off he suffered nightmares in which he kept revisiting the atrocities they were witnessing daily.

Dallaire alternates sharing in the book the details of his Rwanda genocide experiences, stepping aside from these horrors to describe the horrors of his return to Canada after he requested to be relieved of his command. No one was interested in what he urgently wanted to share. Rwanda was viewed by Canadian authorities as a civil war and not as a genocide. The media were likewise unresponsive to his efforts to enlist interest and support for the Rwandans.

Dallaire felt he had abandoned the Rwandans, after failing to help in much of anything beyond providing sanctuary for 30,000 men, women and children who would otherwise certainly have been slaughtered. This number was a tiny drop in the bucket next to the 800,000+ murdered in the genocide. He started drinking. He continued to have major difficulties sleeping. He received varieties of medications, struggling with side effects of drowsiness and clouded thinking, on top of the brain fog he experienced from his traumas. He had a therapist whom he saw weekly.

He found himself irritable and often provoked into anger with his wife and children. Because of this and because he did not want to relocate his children repeatedly, he lived in an apartment in whatever location he was posted to for his work. He visited at home on weekends.

While many would readily diagnose that he had PTSD, Dallaire prefers the term, Operational Stress Injury (OSI). He believes that this dignifies the soldiers (and other first responders) who are overcome by the intensity of the stresses they are forced to face, rather than pathologizing them with a medical diagnosis. The high rates of suicide in soldiers returning from deployments in modern day areas of intense conflicts gives this project great urgency. As he notes, the use of the term 'injury' would also put their overwhelm responses into the general category of injuries – which the Veterans Associations/ Services in Canada and elsewhere are known to honor and treat with more prompt and proper attention.

Despite his medications and therapy, Dallaire reached a point of being suicidal. He made several serious suicide attempts, but in each case was thwarted by unforeseen circumstances. The most noted of these were interventions of his extended family. He came to feel that the universe He gave up on killing himself by suicide, but continued drinking heavily and suffered from chronic sleep deprivation and depression. His primary personal coping mechanism has been to continue working at an intense pace all day and through much of the evening and night. He speculates that he probably was on some level seeking to work himself to death.

In a drunken stupor, he found himself in a park, too confused to make his way back to his apartment, he begged people passing by to put an end to his misery and kill him. He was hospitalized, and was helped more intensively to deal with his Operational Service Injury.

But he continued then, as he does today, to work at an incredibly intense pace, late into the day and early hours of the morning. And when people approach him for speaking engagements, involvements in other projects, as in serving as a Canadian Senator, he took on those responsibilities as well. Dearest to his heart is the project of helping reform, and if possible, prevent the use of child soldiers.

I come away from reading this book feeling incredibly enriched. The insights Dallaire offers on the dehumanizations of war and violent conflicts are profoundly helpful. The need to help soldiers prepare for extraordinary stresses when deployed into conflict zones and, if necessary, the need to develop better ways to help them with operational stress injuries are continuing challenges. Veterans' support groups are particularly recommended.

My one disappointment in Dallaire's recommendations is that he never mentions the newer ways of addressing severe stress that can provide rapid and deep transformations and releases of operational stress injuries. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) in particular (EMDR web ref), and rapidly growing new approaches Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), Thought Field Therapy (TFT) (ACEP, web ref), have research databases confirming excellent benefits for PTSD in civilians and veterans. The method I developed called Transformative Wholistic Reintegration (TWR), a combination of elements from EMDR and EFT, likewise has shown excellent benefits in clinical use, and has several advantages over EMDR and EFT. It does not produce heavy emotional releases like EMDR does, thereby avoiding retraumatizing users and allowing users to have the benefits of TWR outside the therapist's office. It also can be used discretely, so nobody knows you are de-stressing when you are in public. Users of EFT commonly report they are embarrassed to be tapping on themselves in public. TWR also has a very simple protocol, so people remember how to use it when they are triggered and in distress. This is in contrast to EFT, which they may not be able to use when they are in a panic state because of its complex protocol.

A research article in this journal (Edwards, 2016), demonstrates TFT clearing civilian PTSD symptoms in Rwandans, who had suffered for 15 years with post-genocide trauma, in a single session. Best of all, this method is so simple that people who have learned it can teach others, with the cascade of paying it forward, helping many thousands of others.

It was at one of Dallaire's public presentations in Guelph, Ontario, that I recently saw him for the first time in person. I have been a long-time admirer of Roméo Dallaire and of his outstanding contributions to our world. I had watched his film, "Shake Hands with the Devil" several times previously and highly recommend this too. If you have any opportunities to hear him tell it like it was and is, and how it could be so much better, I cannot recommend him highly enough to you.

This book is very highly recommended!

#### References

ACEP [http://www.energypsych.org/?Research\\_Landing](http://www.energypsych.org/?Research_Landing)

EMDR <http://www.emdr.com/research-overview/>

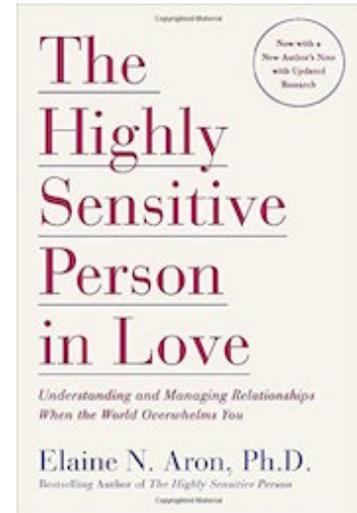
Edwards, Jenny. (2016). Healing in Rwanda: The words of the therapists. *International J. Healing and Caring* 15, 1-18.

TWR <http://twrapp.com>

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**Elaine N. Aron, PhD. (2000). *The Highly Sensitive Person in Love: Understanding and Managing Relationships When the World Overwhelms You*. New York: Broadway Books. 261 pp. \$14.95**  
References 8 pp. Index

Elaine Aron is THE name on this subject. Her book, *The Highly Sensitive Person* (1996), identified those 15-25 percent of people who are more in touch with their feelings, have highly developed sensory organs, are more sensitive to the world around them – including the spiritual dimensions - than the other 80-85 percent of people. That's the good news about the highly sensitive person (HSP). The challenging news is that HSPs are also more prone to suffer from excesses of sensitivities, such as loud noises, rough fabrics in clothes and aggressive people.



Aron focuses in this book on sensitivities between HSPs and their partners. The majority of HSPs are often more reflective, highly intuitive, less impulsive and more cautious in engaging in new experiences – such as relationships. A minority of HSPs, however, are also high sensation seekers (HSS), and these individuals may actually crave and generate intensity. HSPs also tend to be more aware of their environment, are concerned with social justice, and distressed when seeing or hearing of injustices done to other people or to the environment.

A majority of non-HSPs demonstrate the opposite of most of the above sorts of variables. Partnering with an NHSP therefore has its challenges and benefits. In satisfying relationships, the NHSPs will have to acknowledge that their HSP partners have different ways of experiencing the world and relating to it. They will have to accommodate to their partners preferring more reflection and discussion about issues before making decisions and taking action; expressing their emotions more openly and intensely; being intuitive; and being sensitive to nuances of interactions – in ways the NHSP might never have considered or experienced before. On the benefits side, NHSPs will bring awarenesses and skills in dealing with the outer world that will contribute substantially to the relationship. NHSPs will learn to how to better recognize, understand and deal with other people's emotions.

I particularly appreciated Aron's discussion of the innate, essential spirit of individuals and what John Destein identifies as the prevailing spirit, which

“is our culture's teaching about what works for the majority. In the case of love, it says that infatuation is not the best guide for choosing a life partner, marriage requires compromise and accepting disappointments, and falling in love outside of marriage leads to impulsive actions that damage a lasting commitment. Prevailing spirit becomes our personal view for most of our lives, especially for most HSPs, and it is a fine and necessary perspective. But so is essential spirit, the deeper, juicier, bodily-instinct level that nourishes the direct, more practical prevailing spirit. HSPs intuit the critical need for essential spirit as well. And we sense that one of the opening through which essential spirit reaches the surface of life to revive ourselves and society is through falling in love...

From the viewpoint of essential spirit, falling in love involves a marriage that HSPs in particular long for. It is a marriage between the deep instincts, or essential spirit, and our everyday feelings, desires, and values, which are usually tamed by prevailing spirit. To wed these two, our deep instincts and surface feelings, is to create a state of wholeness that humans have lost as they have become more rational and civilized...” (p. 114)

Aron provides excellent, clear and succinct summaries of factors that are important to consider in choosing a relationship and in deciding whether or not this is likely to be a good, long-term match. These include attachment styles; critical aspects of relationships throughout your potential partner's life; developing a healthy and harmonious sexual relationship; how to harmonize HSP and NHSP styles of relating; and much more.

I also very much like Aron's acknowledgments of the spiritual dimensions, which are further aspects of the HSPs' deeper awarenesses. "The best minds have been frustrated with the question of how to deal with the love/hate within human nature, particularly when infused with a passionate desire to serve a Greater Other, be that a love, leader, nation, or God. These issues re HSPs' work...." (p. 225).

This book is very highly recommended to anyone who is aware of the Highly Sensitive People among us.

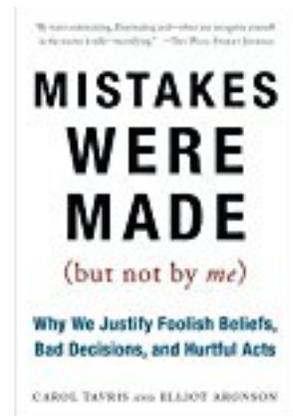
## Reference

Aron, Elaine N. *The Highly Sensitive Person – How to Thrive When the World Overwhelms You*. New York, NY: Broadway Books 1996.

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**Tavris, Carol and Aronson, Elliott. *Mistakes Were Made (but not by me)*.** Orlando, Harvest/ Harcourt 2007. 292 pp. \$15.00 References 37 pp. Good index.

Carol Tavris and Elliott Aronson, both social psychologists, present very helpful discussions on a broad spectrum of examples of how people develop and hold onto their perceptions and beliefs, and how they deal with information that contradicts their previous experiences and beliefs. Central to their discussion is the experience of *cognitive dissonance*. This is where we encounter something that contradicts our past experiences, which forces us to re-examine whether our previous beliefs need to be changed in the light of our new experiences.



Many if not most people are reluctant to change their beliefs – in matters large and small. They will find some reasons to reject the new information rather than re-examine what they currently hold to be true and valid.

This is true as well for courses of action that people have chosen. Rather than re-examine their reasons for deciding to go in a certain direction, people will justify and argue for their initial choices in what they are going to do – even if this may appear far-fetched to outside observers.

Those who understand the intricacies of cognitive dissonance may generate this state of mind deliberately in order to manipulate people into doing their bidding. Tavris and Aronson illustrate this with the interactions of lobbyists and politicians.

Politicians as a group are infamous for being corrupt. We may well ask, “Is it just corrupt people who run for elections or are they normal, honest people who get corrupted in the processes of being elected and serving their terms of duty?”

An extreme example is that of Jeb Stuart Magruder, who had started out an honest man when he came to work for Richard Nixon. Magruder played a key role in setting up and executing the Watergate break-in. He then further compromised himself by lying under oath in defense of his and other people’s actions.

Magruder’s first step down the slippery slope of cognitive dissonance was when Bob Haldeman, the Nixon advisor who had just interviewed him for the job of Presidential Special Assistant, viciously chewed out an aide over the minor oversight of not having Haldeman’s golf cart waiting and ready for local transportation when they left the building. Magruder dismissed this inappropriate behaviour, justifying it as okay in the context of “the sheer *perfection* of life there... After you have been spoiled for a while, something as minor as a missing golf cart can seem a major affront.”

&&[Magruder, Jeb Stuart. *An American Life: One Many’s Road to Watergate*. New York: Athenum, 1974, p. 7. (from Tavis & Aronson, 2007, p. 36-7.)]

This was his first moral compromise, followed by many more in the course of his work under Nixon. By the time it came to the Watergate break-in, this crime was actually a much lesser one that Magruder agreed to, after vetoing a proposal by Nixon staff involving entrapments, muggings, sabotage, blackmailings and more.

The Watergate affair was a rather extreme example of cognitive dissonance. Many novice political candidates are innocent and honest in wanting to serve their electorate when they make their debuts in their political arenas. But very soon they are approached by people with vested interests who want to solicit their support for various causes. Some of these are wanting support for organizations that will serve the common good of their constituency. But many others primarily stand to garner profits mostly for the people who are seeking their candidate’s or office-holder’s help.

Professional lobbyists have honed their skills to a fine art. They start out by offering candidates small gifts that are of negligible, insignificant value: perhaps just a cup of coffee to start their day, or a cold drink on a hot day, or a good quality company pen. These are hardly something most people would refuse. Then the lobbyists take it up a notch, inviting them to a business lunch, where food and drinks are on the lobbyist. Next it could be a lunch or dinner on the golf course, or a dinner preceded by a baseball game or followed by a theater performance. And then there will be a quantum step forward into their pockets – with plane tickets to a golf resort or an event to the liking of the politician in a resort city.

Had the lobbyist started with something substantial, the candidate would have immediately rejected it. But who can be faulted for accepting a cup of coffee? The business lunch is a bit of a question mark, with a teeny weeny bit of cognitive dissonance between “I shouldn’t accept even a little bribe” and “But hey, this is a nice person whom I’ve met over a cup of coffee, and it’s not like I’m being paid a fee to do anything for him more than to listen about his company’s project, which we could do in my office, but we both have to eat lunch anyway, so why not eat together and I’ll have more time back at the office to work on my speech?”

The research on dealing with cognitive dissonance is absolutely fascinating. Once people overcome their hesitations and decide to take a new position on an issue they would not have considered accepting previously, they will find very creative reasons to explain and justify it. Then they will often develop further explanations, many of which are totally contrary to their openly declared previous opinions, to prove to themselves they have made a right and justified decision. Then, feeling awkward

about their further steps, they will develop ever more layers of arguments to justify these new steps. They end up going to extraordinary lengths and mental contortions to justify their series of decisions. And they hold onto them with a tenacity and rigidity that defies questioning, much less allowing for any changes.

The extremes to which people may go in service of resolving their cognitive dissonance is illustrated by people who predict the world is ending.

Tavris and Aronson summarize the classic study of fundamentalists, followers of a self-styled seer called Marian Keech, who predicted that on December 21 the world would end. She told them that believers who prepared for this apocalypse would be picked up by aliens in a spaceship and taken to safety. The faithful abandoned all they owned and awaited their rescuers on that day. When the earth did not end and no aliens arrived, logic would seem to dictate that these people who had made such strong statements of belief would abandon their leader and their beliefs in these predictions.

In contradiction to this common-sense prediction, those who had made these major statements of faith accepted Keech's explanation that *the world had been saved by the steadfast beliefs of this group*. The group's members proceeded to proselytize with even greater fervor than before. [Festinger, Leon, Riecken, Henry W. and Schachter, Stanley. When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of A Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World. Harper Torchbooks 1956.]

And the authors of this book are by no means free, themselves, of the tangles of reasoning of cognitive dissonance, when it comes to evidence for therapies that lie outside their range of training and experience as social psychologists. They disparage and dismiss the possibility that trauma memories could be valid and destructive to people who have suffered extreme stresses. They relegate such memories to their preferred, familiar category of post hypnotic suggestions that have produced false memories through the questioning of the therapists (p. 106-108). In the same manner, they disparage clinical judgment, suggesting that only evidence from replicated research can provide valid and useful clinical information for therapists.

Despite these criticisms, I believe you will come away enriched by this book, as I did.

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