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# The Life line, a qualitative assessment tool for resilience: its use with an incest victim

From theory to practice: assessment of resilience-based intervention programs - Bucharest (Roumania) – 27 octobre 2017

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## Introduction

- Incest is considered a **traumatic experience** as it can lead to consequences. However, these consequences can **vary** in their **intensity**,
- This finding raises question about the detection of the **protective factors** implicated in the consequences of this type of trauma.

## Method and Case Presentation

### ➤ The Life line:

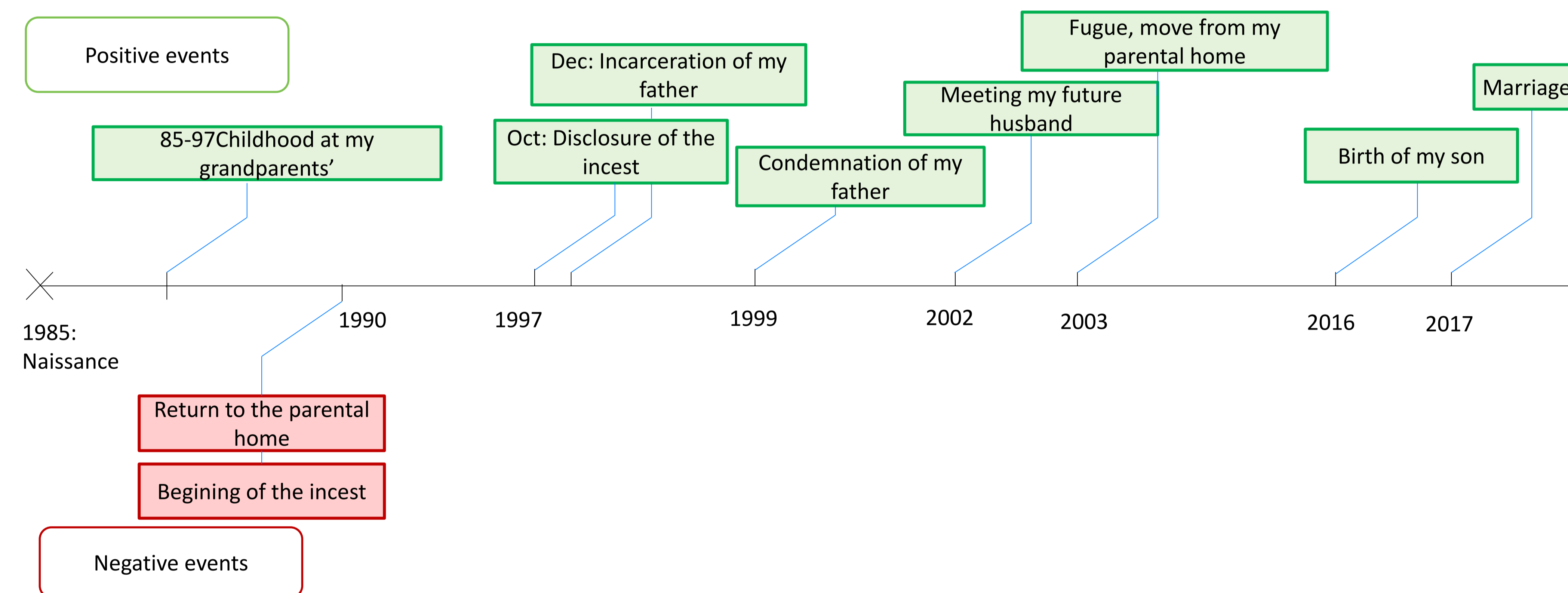
By synthesizing the major life events of participants in a graphic way, the Life line draws on the participants' subjectivity as it collects informations characterized by their perceptions and their representations of the past, the present and the future (Burrick, 2010).

### ➤ Procedure:

- The resilience was assessed on the french translation of the Resilience Scale (Wagnil et Young, 1993; translation by Ionescu, Masse, Jourdan-Ionescu et Favro, 2009)
- An interview was then conducted during which the participant was asked to draw and comment on her Life line.

### ➤ Presentation of the case study

- Myriam is 31 years old, she is an only child. She is married and works as a specialized educator;
- She was **abused** by her **father** between the ages of 5 and 12;
- High level of resilience:** 149 (the level can vary from 25 to 175)



- The first event Myriam writes on her Life line is the incest she experienced. All the other events she writes are positive. She says : « *Accepting the incest I experienced helps me make my way through life. I don't like to say that I rebuilt after the abuse, I built despite what happened* »;
- About her family relationships, Myriam says that she moved away to the other side of the country to isolate herself from her family. She says that she is not in touch with her father anymore but she keeps a close relationship with her mother; when talking about the incest, Myriam says: « *For a long time I thought it was my fault, I thought that I was responsible for my father's behaviors. Today, I understand that I was just a kid and that I didn't do anything wrong, he is the perpetrator* »;
- Myriam concludes the meeting saying : « *Psychologically, I think I'm starting to overcome the consequences thanks to the self-help groups, it makes me think a lot, it's a real work for me. Psychological work helps me as well. I also go to the osteopath, I start to get to know myself and to develop self-confidence* »;
- About the Life line, Myriam says: « *It's an interesting exercise, it allows to bring order to the events we experienced and to have a visual representation. It allows me to make connections about my life* » .

## Conclusion

- Myriam's high level of resilience seems to be in line with her Life line that is mostly composed of **significant positive events**;
- Myriam knows that she experienced other negative events. She says : « *Today, I want to focus on what goes well in my life, on the positive things* ». She adds « *It's different for the incest, of course if was a negative event in my life, but today, I have learnt to cope and to live with it. This devastating event made me the strong person I am today* ». Thus, the negative events Myriam experienced do not seem to be psychologically integrated .
- Myriam 's Life line and discourse refer to the following protective and risk factors:

**Emotional expression:** Myriam says that she often meets with her psychologist and attends a self-help group every month

**Disclosure of the abuse:** Myriam disclosed the incest she experienced when she was a teenager

**Positive parental reaction:** Myriam is supported by her mother

**Positive institutional reaction:** After Myriam's disclosure, her father was incarcerated, judged and condemned

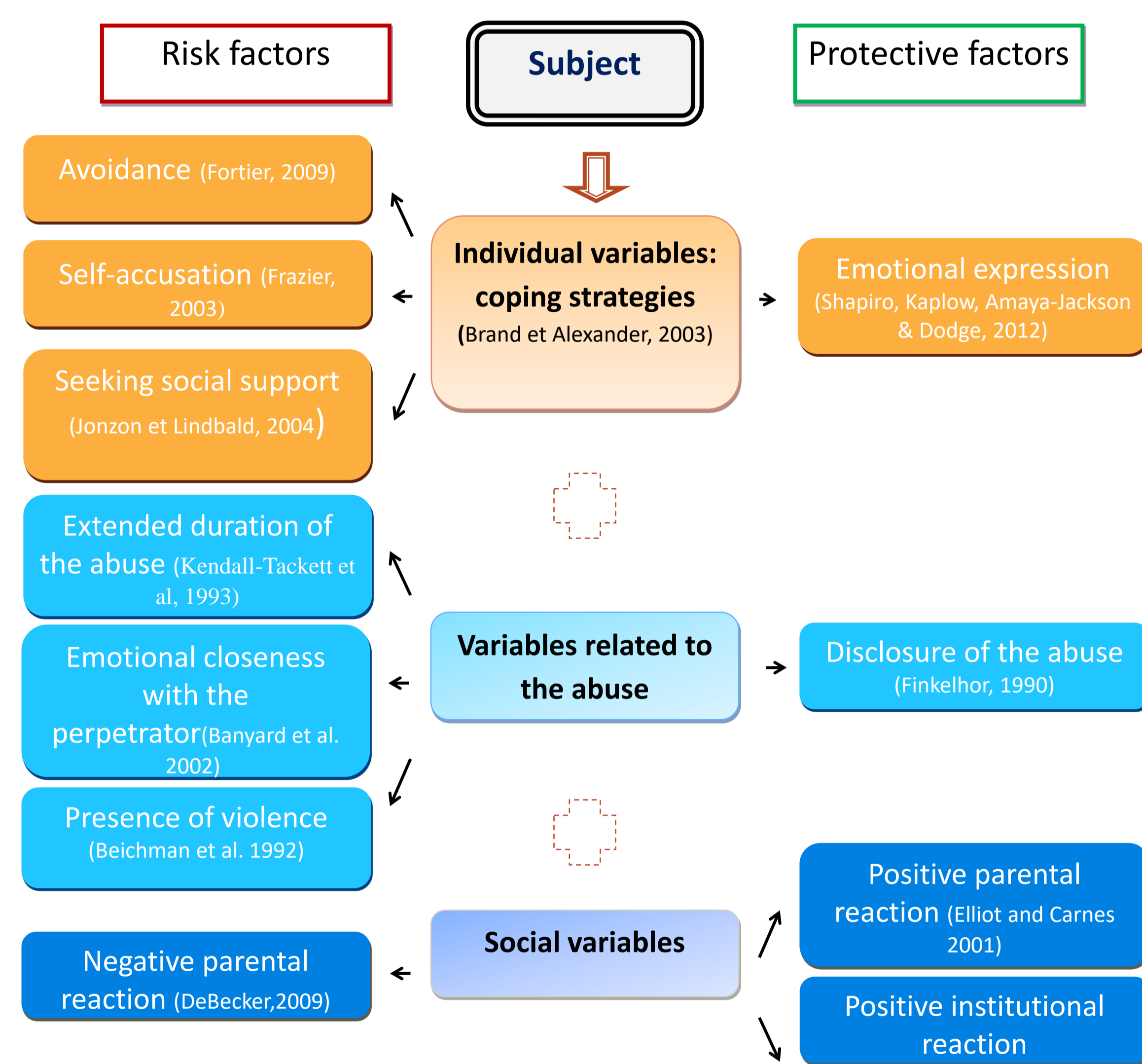
**Self-accusation:** For a long times, Myriam felt guilty and blamed herself for the abuse she experienced

**Length of the abuse:** 7 years

**Emotional closeness with the perpetrator:** Yes

- Myriam's case study show the relevance of the Life line in identifying the risk factors as well as the protective factors perceived by the individuals themselves. When writing their Life line, the individuals comment on their life stories. .
- From this case study, we can conclude that the Life line appears to be a relevant tool to **qualitatively** assess the resilience of incest victims by:
  - The **visual aspect** of the Life line as the life events are noted on the line;
  - The way the person **appropriates the guideline** and draws his Life line;
  - The **discourse** that accompanies the creation of the Life line.

### Risk factors and protective factors implicated in the trauma of incest



## Objective and Hypothesis

➤ **Objective:** To present the Life line as a relevant and efficient tool to **qualitatively** assess the resilience of incest victims from the risk factors and the protective factors at work in the resilience process.

➤ **Hypothesis:** The Life line will allow the identification of factors that stem from:

- The **individual** himself
- His **environment**
- His **family** and his **social circle**

In order to verify this hypothesis, we conducted a case study