

Survivor Matters

A Newsletter for the Christian DID Community

Are My Memories Real?

Flashbacks and dissociated memories coming back through alter-identities can be very unsettling. Many of them may seem to be out of the realm of normal human happenings and can cause a lot of doubt regarding their reality.

Let me assure you that a “How can this be true?” response is quite normal in DID. If these events were not beyond the bounds of normal human experience, they would not have required dissociation. The dissociation allowed your primary identities to live as if they never happened. Now as the memories return, they will not only seem very foreign to you but will likely be just as overwhelming, triggering a denial defense.

Wondering whether they are truly memories or just a production of your imagination is equally legitimate because of the unusual and traumatic nature of their content. The truth is that the mind is suggestible and can certainly produce imaginative images. These rarely are of your conscious construction but are more apt to arise from your sub-conscious mind based on fears you might be entertaining or ideas that have been planted through things you have read, heard, or been told. Even questions asked by well-meaning helpers can be suggestive in nature and affect your sub-conscious mind.

Thankfully, because dissociated traumatic memories are handled differently by the brain than ordinary memories, they have some unique characteristics that can help to distinguish them from imagination. Becoming aware of these can be extremely helpful in evaluating their reality.

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Normal memories are processed through the hippocampus, where they are translated out of their original sensory state. Therefore, remembering them does not include a re-experience of the sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile (touch) experiences of the original event.

Dissociated traumatic memories bypass the hippocampus, however, and are more apt to remain in their original sensory state. Therefore, if a memory comes back to you with activated senses, you can know it is a real memory. You can imagine visual images but not sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile experiences.

Another indicator of a true traumatic memory is if it is accompanied by body sensations. You have memory capacity in every cell of your body. Therefore, in some sense your whole body remembers what happened to it, and *while your mind is suggestible, your body is not*. Therefore, if the body sensations of the original event re-occur along with the images of the memory, this is another indicator of its reality. In fact, if your body reacts in any way (e.g., tightening, jolting, shaking, developing hives or red blotches) during the recall of the memory, that usually indicates that your body is confirming its reality.

Another indicator of a genuine traumatic memory is if it came into your mind in response to a trigger. This is normally the only way that these dissociated memories will come into the mind of the primary presenter.

Other less concrete indicators of reality for your memories include if they explain other symptoms or reactions in your life, if symptoms disappear when the memory is healed, or if they contain an accurate portrayal of something you would never have normally encountered (e.g., a crematorium or specific medical instrument) or an element of surprise that you know you would never have imagined. Imagery experiences that occur without any of the above validations are not necessarily imaginative but should be considered iffy.

Time and Life

He has walked with us every day of our lives

He has wept with us and laughed with us

He knows every part of who we are

He knows what man has done to us

and how man has broken us

into shattered parts of one person....

He Longs to restore all that has been shattered

All the pain and suffering that has happened

He longs to heal

Are you willing to let go and Let Him come in.

Are you willing to press in and embrace Him

He is waiting to embrace you

He Loves you More than you could ever imagine

He Loves every part of who you are

I hear Him saying don't give up, I'm right here

Grab hold of Me

For I will never leave you nor forsake you

for I have created you in My Image

He wants to restore all of you that you might

become one with Him

(excerpted from poem by DJ)

Survivors Share...

I saw a picture of a dark night, with raging waters in the sea. At the beach, I saw GOD carrying a little child. Then I saw GOD holding my hand, walking with me, and said to me "I have always been there. I am still here." *Hannah*

*"He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul"*

(Psalm 23:2-3; NASB)

After I understood the material about ADID, I was able to apply it on myself: synchronize with the parts first and then do issues with them, dealing with the false beliefs, vows and contracts, and solve their issues. *Anon*

I remember the Lord saying to me about 7 years ago, that there was a part of me that He would not let them touch, and that part of me was pure. I sobbed with the realization that there was purity within me, a part My God would not let them touch. *Leanne*

God's Resources

Among the amazing resources that God offers those of us who are His children is the opportunity to submit to His loving care and oversight of our lives. He not only offers to yoke Himself to us so that He can help carry our load but to treat us as a Shepherd cares for his sheep.

When we allow Him to enter this role, we can be assured of the best care possible, as He intimately knows and understands the condition of each of His sheep, where we are wounded and the specific kind of care that we each need in order for our souls to be restored. He will even carry us on His shoulders when we are too weary or broken to walk by ourselves.

As we train ourselves to look to Him for guidance in all things and willingly submit to Him, He will keep us from danger and lead us to the best kind of nourishment, refreshment, and rest. He knows that we need each of these and wants to supply them in abundance. None of His sheep will lack any good thing.

When difficult times come, He will stay right with us with His goodness and love. When we wander astray, He will prod us gently with His rod. When we really get into trouble, He will lovingly extend His staff to us, providing a way out of our predicament.

Learning to trust Him as our loving Shepherd will relieve many pressures on our lives and enable us to receive His goodness and mercy on a daily basis. One day He will vindicate us before our enemies, allowing them to see the honor that He heaps upon us even as they await His judgment.

A Helpful Resource

Multiple Identities

Understanding and Supporting the Severely Abused

By Diane Hawkins

This book will provide further understanding of the dynamics of memory and many other aspects of DID. (\$20)

Available at <http://www.rcm-usa.org/Books.html>

How to Separate Past Trauma from Current Reality

At the beginning of my healing journey I found that I struggled with comments that people would make about why I could not separate the past traumatic memories from the present. My triggers were the main reason that I could not separate the two. Here is what I learned over the years of healing that helped bridge the gap for me between past trauma and present reality. I learned to identify all my triggers, from overwhelming sounds, sights, colors, objects, words, sentences, etc. I wrote them out and read them through. Once you know them, you can try to avoid them. I also learned, when I did encounter one, how to counteract it and stay grounded. For example, what my therapist suggested was to tap my knee and this is what I began to do when I would feel ungrounded. At the same time I would tell myself, "I am safe now, stay in the present, you are not in that place anymore."

Another contributor to bridging the gap between the reactions of past trauma and the reality of the here and now was connecting in co-consciousness. Co-consciousness comes more often after you realize that the trauma of the past is not the present anymore. Finally, it is important not to load yourself with guilt over things you cannot control or help. This is something I had to stop doing. The more consistent I was in grounding myself when triggers happened and the more I connected with my parts I was able to be, the more I was able to stay in the present. *-Lynn*

Keep on Going

Today Satan will try to stop me
Fear will tell me to give up
Doubt will produce dark clouds over me
Today I might just feel tired and down
But Jesus said: "If you endure you win,
it's how you end not how you begin"
Today might be one of the hardest days
Satan might send his men to bring more confusion
I might want to give up 'cuz the pain is just too much
The hurt that screams inside,
The anger that wants to roar,
The emotions that want to take over
They all might be too much
But TODAY and EVERY other day
I'm not going to give up
I belong to Him who WILL keep me safe.

-Yolandie

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