

Survivor Matters

A Newsletter for the Christian DID Community

Why Did I Split?

What causes a child's identity, or sense of self, to become fragmented? "That's easy!" you say. "Trauma!" You are correct that severe, early childhood trauma causes dissociation to occur. Researchers say that 95% of the time sexual abuse is involved in that trauma. They also say that in order for severe trauma to cause the initial dissociative response, it has to occur before the age of 8.

What happens at a neurological level is that when the amygdala, which is the organ in the brain that assesses a person's emotional response to a situation, becomes overloaded, it shuts down consciousness in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain, where a person's identity is normally rooted. Since the person still needs to be awake and function in the trauma situation, consciousness cannot be shut down completely. Therefore, a new place in the rear, problem-solving area of the brain is opened to support consciousness. In a split second of time this aptly chosen part of the brain finds an adaptive way to cope with the trauma and carries on with life as a substitute for the original self, which has no consciousness of the event.

If the child continues to experience further overwhelming trauma, this process can be repeated over and over with the formation of any number of new centers of consciousness, which become alternate-identities to help the individual cope with life. This condition, affecting up to 5% of the population, is known as Dissociative Identity Disorder.

In order to restore wholeness, or the singularity of identity, in a dissociated individual, one must understand the underlying cause of the splitting more fully than just recognizing that it was trauma. In other words, what was it in the event that made it so traumatic or overwhelming? Only as you understand this can you hope to reverse the process.

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In 1996, David Neswald introduced a concept to me that opened my understanding of DID in a phenomenal new way. It also opened the door to my grasping much more clearly what must be done to bring healing, something that had eluded me for the first nine years of my journey.

Neswald pointed out that the overwhelming element in the trauma is usually an intolerable psychological conflict. A psychological conflict occurs whenever a person experiences two or more opposing instincts, needs, feelings, desires, beliefs, or views of reality at the same time. When the discomfort created by such a conflict surpasses the amygdala's capacity for distress, the conflict becomes intolerable and can trigger dissociation if the child is under the age of 8 or has already learned to dissociate before that age. Usually this occurs when something threatens an instinct, need, belief, or view of reality that is held so absolutely that it seemingly cannot be compromised.

For instance, every infant and young child believes he absolutely needs a safe parent or caretaker for survival. Therefore, if the person in this role becomes abusive, this critical need can be intolerably threatened, causing dissociation. This allows an alter-identity to handle the abusive act while the primary self remains completely unaware of it and is thus able to continue believing that he has a safe parent or caretaker, sparing him of what would otherwise be unbearable distress.

If intolerable conflicts within the trauma events are responsible for spurring dissociation, then eliminating the need for dissociation requires identifying and resolving these conflicts so that they no longer seem intolerable. This can usually occur by identifying the beliefs that underlie them. When inaccuracies are found in these beliefs and they are replaced with truth, the nature of the conflict usually changes drastically and often is no longer perceived to be unbearable.

For instance, as a sexual abuse victim, I struggled greatly with owning the ungodly sexual experiences that were forced upon me. They intolerably conflicted with the high moral standards that I had adopted as a Christian.

This significant conflict was one that occurred not at the time of the original splitting but in my adult life. Nevertheless, it prevented the integration of all of my sexually abused alters.

Having identified the conflict, I pursued the beliefs underlying it by asking myself, "Why is sexual

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The Cruellest Words I've Ever Heard

The cruellest words I've ever heard are "I love you."

These three words from an idle tongue
destroyed my life and brought it to ruin.
The lips that spoke them first to me
were the same that sold me for a fee.

The cruellest words I've ever heard are "I love you."

These words tear me apart inside,
for I yearn to believe, but hear only lies.
The one who said, "I love you, Child,"
is one well-skilled in hidden guile.

The cruellest words I've ever heard are "I love you."

For the one who smiles and offers her hand
is the one who sold me to perverted men.
The very words that I long to hear
are the very words that bring me fear.

The cruellest words I've ever heard are "I love you."

Three little words that created a war,
there's two of me now—both are scarred.
One side is desperate for love from the heart;
the other is cynical and wants no part.

Two hearts respond to potent words "I love you."

One looks for love in everyone's eyes;
the other is hardened and bitter at life.
One is hungry for a gentle touch;
the other says, "No, it hurts too much."

Shani Christin (*Straight from the Heart*, p 16)

A non-dissociative person is able to hold two opposite emotions towards a person or event whereas a dissociative person is unable to own the two opposing emotions within themselves; hence the division." J.H.

I'm now able to understand that the healing of my internal conflicts, rather than continuing to focus on memories, is where I am being set free. I am beginning to trust God for my healing instead of trying to do it all by myself. C.

*"I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full."
(John 10:10b; NET)*

While I have been on this journey of inner system healing, I have found that God is the only stable source in my life. When I couldn't sort out the inner chaos, God helped me and my parts make sense of it all. There was an inner spiritual place where I and my parts would meet with God, and this became a place of strength and the glue to staying grounded. Without that, we would have felt lost in the maze of it all. R.

Survivor Matters is written by Diane Hawkins, M.A.,
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God's Resources

While many survivors struggle with believing in God's goodness or their need for Him in their healing journey, those who are willing to embrace Him are able to avail themselves of the many resources He provides that can drastically improve their quality of life and help them on their journey to healing. Many of these resources are gifts given immediately upon salvation with no effort required to obtain them except to appropriate them by faith.

For instance, a believer no longer has to worry about his destiny at the end of life. He is assured of going to heaven and spending eternity in a place far better than anything he experiences on earth. It will be a place where every human will live in the perfect design of his Maker, unhindered by evil or sorrow of any form.

Justice will also prevail in this place as God compensates everyone who has suffered at Satan's hand with a far greater degree of honor and glory. Considering the extent of pain and loss that abuse survivors have endured, the magnitude of this divine redress will surpass anything that can even be imagined. The truth is that the victories that Satan is able to gain in the life of a Christian are temporary. God always has the last word, and His compensations are eternal.

When heaven becomes a place of anticipation, it plays a huge number on the fear of death, which Satan and his followers desperately count on to keep ritual abuse survivors under their control. Those who can truly divest themselves of this fear have disarmed their perpetrators of one of their most powerful, manipulative tools.

This victory over the fear of death also plays a significant role in helping ritual abuse survivors overcome the power of the mind control programming to which they have been subjected. When they allow themselves to face the life and death conflicts, or double binds, that underlie the programming, their diminished fear of death, along with recognizing the trickery involved, will quickly defuse its power.

A Helpful Book

Multiple Identities: Understanding and Supporting the Severely Abused

Suggested donation: \$15.00
Available at www.rcm-usa.org/BOOKS.htm

How Did You Overcome Your Struggles concerning God?

- **I** began asking God to show me how He'd been there [in my abuse] even though I didn't think He had been. He showed me that He had preserved my mind, that I didn't go crazy, that I never got pregnant from the abuse, and that I had survived all of it. From that point on, I was able to see God in a different light, and I began to grow in my relationship with Him and to be able to trust Him far more than I'd ever been able to do before. -- Labyrinth
- **I** created a chart that I put in a prominent place. It listed some very simple truths about God Most High: He's good, kind, loving, etc. Then I listed things about the god of this world: he's mean, hateful, accusatory, etc. I learned that when I heard, "God hates me" in my head, to stop and check the chart—"Nope, wrong god." As basic as that was, it began helping to build my God capacity up enough to eventually be able to face the cult-loyals and their belief system. Anon
- **D**espite my fear and anger toward God, parts of me (perhaps my core self) knew that God was, in fact, THE answer out of my pain. So I chose to believe what the Bible says. I believed that God *would not* lie – that He *could not* lie. Thus, I chose to pursue the Truth and refused to give up that God is, in fact, a loving Father, and that the power of the finished work of the Cross to destroy sin can be appropriated in my life today, has allowed me to slowly surrender my heart to a loving Father who continues to show me who I really am in Him. Monica

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immorality so intolerable to me?" After some moments of introspection, I recognized deeply rooted beliefs that sexual sin is the worst sin there is and would leave me tarnished in God's sight for the rest of my life.

By that time I had learned that the most direct way for me to begin to challenge the truth of a belief was to ask God if it was true and to see if He would reveal anything to me. Although I couldn't imagine my beliefs being wrong, I was willing to do this.

I was shocked when God impressed upon my mind that what makes sexual sin so grievous in His sight is the lust in the person's heart. Since there was no lust in my heart when I was sexually violated, God looked at those experiences as simply mechanical acts without moral fault on my part at all.

The relief that flooded my heart was amazing, but even more astonishing was the fact that nearly 200 alter-identities were spontaneously integrated. I had resolved the conflict that had been keeping them separate from me, making it no longer intolerable and requiring dissociation.

(You can read more about the nature of conflicts, the role they play in dissociation, and how to resolve them to eliminate dissociation in my book *Multiple Identities* available at <http://www.rcm-usa.org/BOOKS.htm>.)