

Survivor Matters

A Newsletter for the Christian DID Community

Who Am I?

It's hard to imagine what could be more disconcerting than suddenly realizing that who you thought you were may not be who you really are. This is the rude awakening that generally accompanies being diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). In fact, much of the healing journey entails discovering and reclaiming who you really are.

Once you become aware of your dividedness, you might think that "who you are" is the sum total of all of your separate "selves." While they are certainly all a part of you and you are responsible for their actions, the truth is that not all of your identities carry the same weight of importance in defining who you are.

Going back to the very beginning of your life, we define your "Original Self" as the whole person that was created when God sent your spirit into the fertilized egg making its way to your mother's womb. However, even when overwhelming trauma led to the splitting off of other identities, this part has continued to embody your true identity most fully. It is anchored to the identity center in the right prefrontal cortex of your brain (J. Wilder).

By contrast, your dissociated alter-identities are anchored in the rear, problem-solving part of your brain. Being separated from your identity center, they were completely free to redesign their self-perception, including such things as their physical features, age, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs, values, and/or commitments, which they cleverly did to eliminate the intolerable psychological conflict(s) embedded in the trauma so that what was otherwise unbearable could somehow be tolerated.

An alter forced into prostitution, for instance, may have adopted a belief system that would allow her to participate without feeling shame and guilt. Being disconnected from your brain's identity center, the attitudes she exhibits should not be perceived as reflecting your true heart.

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In their structural model of dissociation, Nijenhuis, van der Hart, and Steele distinguish three levels of complexity in DID:

- Primary: The presence of a single “Apparently Normal Personality” (ANP) and a single “Emotional Personality” (EP).
- Secondary: The presence of a single ANP and multiple EPs.
- Tertiary: The division of the ANP into multiple personalities in addition to the presence of multiple EPs.

At the tertiary level of dissociation a new kind of separation occurs from the Original Self, resulting in identities which do not function out of the back of the brain but remain closely connected to the identity center in the front of the brain. We now refer to these as “primary identities.” Because they remain close to the identity center, the survivor usually claims that they all “feel like me.” For this reason, they are sometimes difficult to discern or differentiate.

Sometimes only a single primary identity separates from the Original Self. The role of this part is to function in life as a representative of the Original Self, who is withdrawn for the sake of protection. We call this part the “Primary Presenter” (often called the “Host” in the past). While the Original Self still carries the purest and strongest sense of identity for the person, the Primary Presenter comes close, in that he/she represents the major beliefs, values, and commitments of the Original Self, but often with a somewhat decreased strength of identity.

Complexity increases further when multiple primary identities split from the Original Self or Primary Presenter and remain closely connected to the identity center. Like the Primary Presenter, these additional primary identities usually progress in age along with the body and have a role that is broader than just enduring trauma. They generally handle various aspects of life for the person, though sometimes holding divergent perspectives from the Original Self. Some have called these “Core Splits” or “Presenters.”

Primary identities are not only more closely related to who you really are, but their issues affect your daily life to a greater extent than those of alter-identities. Identifying and resolving these issues will therefore bring stability to the system the quickest. In fact, doing so often eliminates the need for the dissociated roles played by many of the alters, resulting in their spontaneous integration.

Bringing the primary identities into unity also paves the way for the Original Self to re-emerge from its position of protection. This is what will bring the greatest stability, strongest sense of identity, and highest emotional capacity for eventually owning your entire history. This is also the pillar of self into which the other parts will merge as their memories are healed and their issues resolved.

Who Am I?

Sometimes I am sure who I am,
other times I wonder.....?
I have been broken,
Shattered into pieces
long ago as a child.

...

I was a man.
Two three strong men.
helping me to live, be safe.
I was a small child,
Two three little girls
Afraid of the outer world.
I was a woman,
Two three four five six?
Angry women filled with hatred and scorn,
Scared women filled with fear and pain,
Hardworking women, lazy women,
Compassionate women
Filled with God's love and understanding.
Shamed women believing they were filthy and dirty,
Born to be whores forever.

...

Which one of these people was me?
What if all of them were me?
How can I accept these difficult persons
With different beliefs, actions, feelings?

...

The shock....
They were me....
But where was the real me?
The one originally created?

...

Gradually...the different people
Gave their pain and beliefs to Jesus,
Allowing Him to cleanse them,
Heal them and comfort them.
They became part of me,
They became me.
Then....suddenly....
Without warning,
She appeared.
She....the original me.
...I was excited!
But . . . now I am unsure again.

...

Who is she?
Is she all of us,
Or is she none of us?
Do I want to be her or not?
Now I am confused again.
I struggle to be me(?)
I do not know who I am anymore.

So...

Who am I?

Orna

"What helped to bring me to the point of allowing God to become part of my healing was when I realized I had nothing to lose. In other words, if I asked Him about where He was during times of severe trauma, and He didn't respond or if He responded according to my belief about Him, nothing would be. However, what changed everything was finding that His response was drastically different from what I had expected. I found Him to be compassionate, loving, concerned, tender, and even grieved at what had happened to me." Angela

*"... I will love him and will reveal Myself to him."
(John 14:21c; NET)*

"I had no desire to have a relationship with God as Father. I was fatherless and believed the lie that what you don't have, you don't miss. The breakthrough came when a friend gave me the scripture of Mt. 11:27, and I was challenged to ask Jesus to show me the Father. The Father then broke through by putting two enduring pictures into my mind of me as a very young child with Himself. Experiencing this was totally outside of anything I had ever known before, but it changed me forever." Margaret

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God's Resources

In 2000, God clearly told me in a vision that the number one thing He wants abuse survivors to know are the resources that they have in Him. These must therefore be powerful assets that will make a significant difference in enabling you to obtain inner healing and victory over the darkness.

I believe, in fact, that these resources are what enable a Christian to live the extraordinary life Jesus said in John 10:10 that He came to give us. Therefore, if any of us is not experiencing a quality of life that is higher than that of any non-believer, we are probably not fully taking advantage of the resources God has provided for us.

Usually this is because Satan has blinded our minds to comprehending their full magnitude, or he has caused doubt and unbelief to keep us from utilizing them. He seems especially adept at jumping into trauma situations to plant lies in our minds about God and His goodness, knowing they will be most deeply imprinted through these types of experience.

In cases of ritual abuse, Satan's subtle suggestions to a traumatized mind are coupled with direct efforts perpetrated by deceived cult members, who desperately want to destroy the person's view of, and relationship to, God. This is a high priority because they know that God is the only one who can provide the power and the resources to overcome the spiritual bondages and false beliefs that they are relying on to keep the person under their control.

Many of you have been manipulated in this way. My earnest prayer is that God would open your eyes and you would be willing to question the source of your beliefs about Him and to find out the truth for yourselves so that you become masters of your own beliefs. This is the first step to being able to pursue the extraordinary quality of life that God wants you to have.

A Pertinent CD

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How Do I Build a Relationship with God?

As I shared in the first newsletter, I firmly believe that my relationship with God was a significant factor in leading me to wholeness. While I realize that many of you may view this with great skepticism, others may wonder how you can build such a relationship yourself.

If you have never received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, this is how a relationship with God begins. Without doing this, you are eternally separated from Him because your sins are incompatible with His holiness. His love for you is so great, however, that He sent His own Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for your sins through His death on the Cross. By simply believing that Jesus did this for you and accepting Him as your Savior, you will receive eternal salvation and become part of God's family (Rom. 3:23-26; 5:8-10; John 1:12; 3:16).

At this point Satan's dominion over you ends (Col. 1:13). While entities of darkness may still remain bound to you through legal grounds that were established in your life, they cannot control you or even express themselves through you without the consent of some part of you.

Because Satan doesn't like losing you from his dominion, He will try hard to make you doubt your salvation. This is when you need to stand firm on the promises of God. Only as you are secure in belonging to God can you begin to build a relationship with Him.

Question & Answers

Q: How do you know when you have found the Original Self?

A: The Original Self represents the heart, or central essence, of the person and will therefore have subjective qualities that are unique from all other identities. These include an enhanced sense of identity, range of emotions, quality of life, stability, and relational capacity for connecting to God and others. All other parts of the system are "doers," who are fulfilling a job. The Original Self is the only part of the person who is very comfortable in "being" without having to "do." Any identity that does not have qualities that distinguish it from all other identities is probably not the Original Self. While sometimes arrested at the age of withdrawal from participation in life, the Original Self usually progresses quickly to adulthood when safety to resume a role in life is restored.

Q: Why does God allow the journey and the suffering to last so long?

A: This is an honest and legitimate question asked by many. Only God can truly answer it, and the answer may not be simple. Possibilities that make sense to me include:

- God does not violate human will. He needs the cooperation of the person in order to bring victory in his life. Primary identities, the parts that represent your true self, who are holding allegiances to darkness, may deter the outworking of God's will and prolong your journey. This is a good reason to give priority to resolving the spiritual conflicts of your primary identities.
- God seems more invested in what He can do in a person's life through difficulties than in rescuing him from them. This includes developing and strengthening his inner character and bringing him to a greater understanding of Himself and the resources He provides for obtaining victory. (See Ps. 119:67, 71; Rom. 5:3-5; 2 Cor. 4:8-10; James 1:2-4 as well as the CD offered on page 3.)