

The Value of Distinguishing Primary Identities and Alter-Identities

1. Understanding who the person really is
 - a. Primary identities represent the true identity of the person.
 - b. Alter-identities represent adaptations made to cope with trauma.
 - 1) Their role was indispensable to the person's survival, making them the true "heroes" of the system, deserving of much honor and respect.
 - 2) They also carry the critical pieces of history that the primary identities must be able to own in order for healing to occur.
 - 3) A person should never be judged by the character traits of an alter-identity.
2. The role of alters in the therapy process

While the role of alters is enormously important in the person's survival, their role is not crucial in the healing process.

 - a. Their main usefulness is in providing information concerning one's dissociated history, but even this is not crucial to gaining healing, as God can bring forward the necessary memories to the primary identities.
 - b. Their needs, when they surface, should be acknowledged and addressed, but purposely meeting and addressing the needs of every alter is not necessary and will prolong the healing process.
 - c. The most efficient way to bring healing to the alters is to address the intolerable conflicts of the primaries that led to their formation. This can occur without ever interacting with the alters.
3. Improving stability
 - a. Primary identities usually handle life unless they encounter a situation that stirs an intolerable psychological conflict for them.
 - b. Instability in the system is usually a result of the primary identities being overwhelmed by such a conflict and abdicating their roles, shifting life to the alters.

Alters are designed for a narrowly defined job and are not equipped to handle life for extended periods of time, giving rise to frequent switching.
 - c. The solution is not to focus on the alters but on the primary identities.

Identifying and resolving whatever was overwhelming or intolerable to the primary identities will enable them to return to taking charge of life.

 - 1) Try to determine what happened in the person's life at the time the shift to instability occurred and address this issue.
 - 2) Sometimes you can "talk through" to the primaries even if they are not out front. Often they will respond from inside in a way that whoever is out front can hear and report.

4. Making the healing process more efficient
 - a. Resolving the conflicts of the primary identities eliminates the need for dissociation whereas resolving the conflicts of the alters does not.
 - b. Resolving the conflicts of the primary identities allows healing to flow to the entire chain of alters created to handle that particular conflict, healing many identities at once, whereas healing brought to the alters is limited to the alter involved and does not transfer to the primary identities or any other identities.
 - c. Resolving the conflicts of the primary identities hastens the release of the Original Self, as this will not happen until the primary identities are in agreement as to how they view the trauma and the perpetrators. This means that major conflicts regarding denial and perpetrator-loyalty must be resolved first.