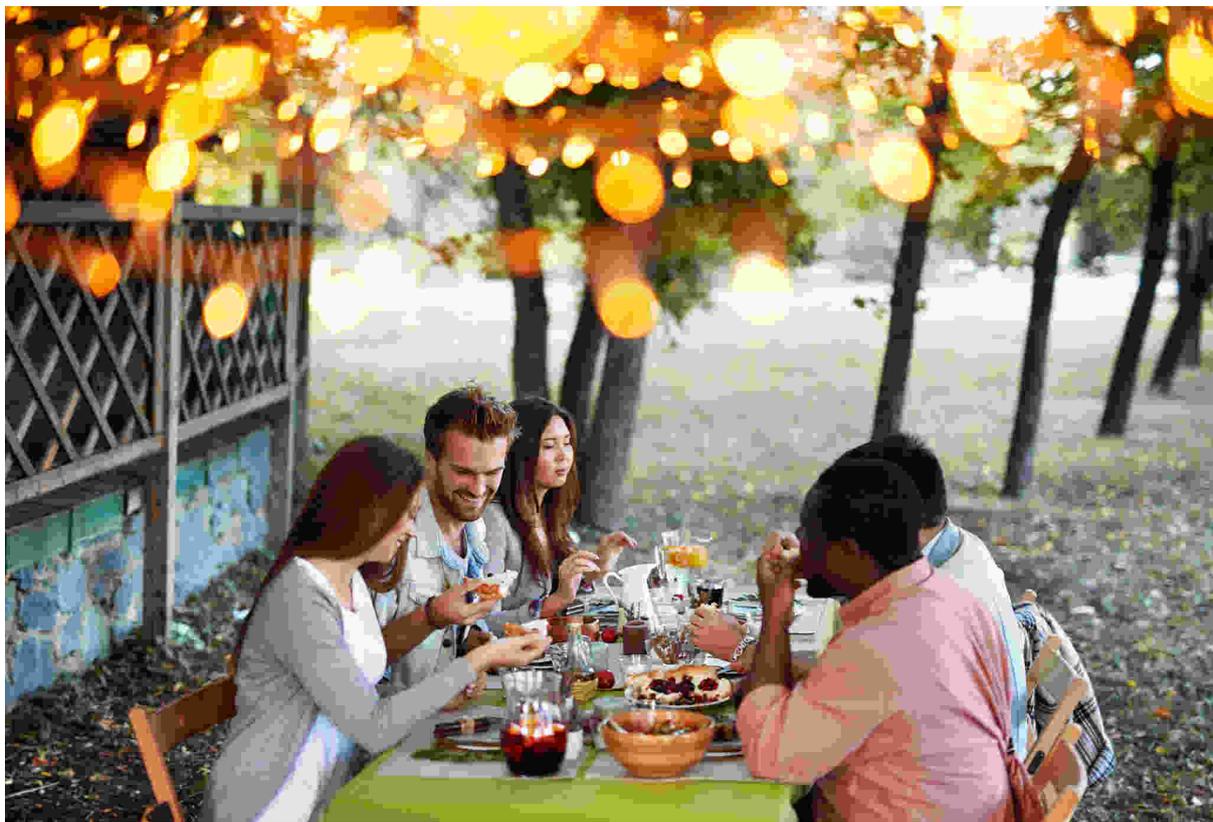


Community, Discipleship and Family

One of the most important capacities stolen through the betrayal of abuse is the ability to trust.

I remember during my own journey screaming at God - "It's not enough to survive. My heart may still be beating, but if I can't give or receive love, what's the point?!"

For a person to be restored after living through the violation of those closest, that one must be restored in the presence of new safe, healthy relationships, community and a Family.



At the beginning of my journey I was meeting with a counselor once or twice a month via Skype. In between sessions I would find myself huddled in a corner of my apartment after being punished for seeking help, unsure how to move forward, how to live or if I should even go on. Eventually, I was able to begin counseling once a week, but even once a week felt like we were barely scratching the surface. I knew I had to get deeper.

As soon as my pastor found out more about my history I was asked to stop attending certain meetings. Then a few weeks later I was asked to stop coming altogether. He still agreed to help me along my journey, but effectively cut me off from any community. I was also informed I shouldn't touch anyone or any food anyone else would eat.

I felt like a living plague; naturally I began avoiding all human contact... except in the cult, since they didn't seem to have the same notion. I found anywhere I had a deficit in my life the cult was quick to supply an answer to my need. Make no mistake every failure of the Church in the realm of love is capitalized on and exploited by the cult to maintain dominion in a person's life. I was constantly being accessed between each counseling session and reprogrammed in an attempt to keep aspects of me cult-loyal. I felt like the hamster wheel was closing in on me and the clock was ticking. At some point I knew I wouldn't be able to continue. I had already tried to escape 5 years before and it did not go well.

COMMUNITY

It wasn't until I was invited to join a Church assembly and I moved halfway across the country to be in community that real progress began. I have found that for deeper work to occur there must be a certain level of stability in the presenter life. This includes being in an environment where various needs that were once only met in hostile or perverse sexual ways can now to be filled in healthy ways. As a child, part of my conditioning was to associate sex with every emotion or need I experienced. If I was hungry before I ever got food I was assaulted sexually. If I was tired I wasn't allowed to sleep until there was a sexual encounter. Anger, pleasure, anxiety, pain... all these feelings were only allowed to be expressed through sexuality.

Part of healing is allowing each of these experiences to be separated out from one's sexuality and given a proper context. This can only be done in a gracious, patient, kind community that is unashamed and lovingly confrontational. Survivors need a people that will be willing to speak truth and hold them to the same standard of honor the Lord invites us all to. We may think we deserve certain exclusions due to our victimization, but by empowering us to come up higher we begin to overcome what once held us captive.

As one continues along the journey there is a necessity for transitional bonding objects. As young, nonverbal aspects come forward, with them comes the need for a safe person to bond to. This bonding relationship is complicated, messy and often painful, but *oh so* necessary. Once a survivor's heart begins to open up and entrust access to the darkest places, both to him or herself and another, only then can truth, love and light finally penetrate.

As a counselor, friend or family member who has been trusted with access, I honor you for being willing to walk into places where many will not. While a survivor is coming into present tense reality often the past will over-shadow the present. He or she will be prone to use you as an object of projection and you may find yourself in the heat of intense transference/counter-transference dynamics playing out. **The survivor is not doing this intentionally.** This is a vital part of the journey out. The experience and emotions of the past, once quarantined and sequestered off in some remote part of self must now be allowed to be processed, metabolized and re-acclimated to the present. They may act as if the past is being repeated right in front of them and you are the primary abuser! At this point how you respond is extremely important.

Yes, they are being unreasonable.

Yes, they are losing it and it appears all the trust you gained just flew out the window.

No, you are not responsible for this,

BUT if you are able to successfully navigate this and help them see where they are today and give them room to express the grief, anger and pain of the past as it relates to the true perpetrator, it is *a huge victory*. **Each trigger a survivor has is an opportunity.** If we can learn to see the opportunity through the chaos, we can make progress much faster in build trust in the most unlikely circumstances.

DISCIPLESHIP

For a programmed multiple the mind is a place of sophisticated devastation. It is a fallacy to believe that integration brings the relief needed from pain. It does, in one sense, relieve the immense pain of separation, but integration also allows all the pain one has been avoiding for a lifetime to find a home in the present. Separate, this pain was like a dull delocalized ache, but integration brings it fully into view. Often the deepest pain is connected to what we believe about ourselves based on how we have allowed key events to define us. These are called "core beliefs". These beliefs drive our reality and how we interpret present and past events, even how we perceive the future. Integration by itself does not resolve core beliefs. The mind must be renewed.

In the same way one was programmed in the cult through systematic bombardments and repetition, I find this method can be somewhat adapted for good! The more I fill my mind with Truth, consciously and subconsciously, the less I am assaulted by lies. Through the journey, I have learned my tendencies and many of my core beliefs, so I have Scripture verses hanging all around that counter those lies with calculated Truth. When I sense stress rising or more emotions surfacing from the past I will play [Scripture Lullabies](#), listen to the Word recorded online or other soothing music. There are times when lies and the Liar need to be addressed head on and confronted with Truth. It is important to verbalize the Word of God and use it as a weapon against darkness. This post is not primarily concerned with Spiritual Warfare, but [these articles](#) have been of immense value to me.

I do not assume reading Scripture will be easy for any survivor. The man who raised me was a pastor and the Word was used extensively for programming in my life. My relationship to the Word and with the Lord has grown and changed, but it has not been easy nor quick. The key, which should be no different than anyone else, is to approach the Word with a heart cry of, "Father please open my understanding and give me eyes to see and ears to hear" and then be faithful to continue the discipline to seek Him even when the pain is excruciating. Often the pain is just more emerging and I will stop and give room for more to be here.

FAMILY

To have fellowship and be known outside of incest and incessant promiscuous encounters can be completely foreign to someone coming from a cult background. Often sex is considered far less risky than being known through simple things like verbalizing a feeling or allowing someone to gaze directly into the eyes. To be seen and known as one truly is has never been condoned and was often condemned and the true self has been buried beneath a fractured facade.

Family is to be a place of belonging and being known; a place of safety, peace and growth. I believe with all my heart that God wanted family and this partly inspired His Creation and then the gift of His Son. This deep abiding desire in the heart of God can be found reflected in His children, even the most marred. To be known and loved is a deep human need. As members of the Body of Christ we are His ambassadors to be His hands and feet and bring men and women into a living knowledge of their Father by His Spirit. I can't think of anyone who needs this ministry more than survivors of SRA/DID. I don't know of a single survivor that had a safe, healthy relationship with their father. Actions can be a greater doorway to the heart than words. Tell me you love me and I will listen with my ears. Show me you love me and I will listen with my heart.

Part of healing is the making of new memories. We can't just toss out all the old thinking patterns, experiences, attitudes and ways of life; we must *displace* them by replacing them with Truth. Just as it is in the physical, nothing exists in a vacuum. Building new memories to draw on when times are difficult is critical. Many of us have not developed properly in emotional or spiritual ways. There is no magical fix for this. We must learn and grow beginning from the place we left off, even if we've been halted in infant stages of development. None of us was meant to live in isolation. If the Family of God is not going to provide this place where survivors can experience the Love of Christ, then who will?