

# The Complete Picture

## Characteristics of an Adult Child

### The Laundry List

- 1) We became isolated and afraid of people and authority figures.
- 2) We became approval seekers and lost our identity in the process.
- 3) We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism
- 4) We either become alcoholics, marry them, or both, or find another compulsive personality such as a workaholic to fulfill our sick abandonment needs
- 5) We live life from the viewpoint of victims and are attracted by that weakness in our love and friendship relationships.
- 6) We have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility and it is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves. This enables us not to look too closely at our own faults.
- 7) We get guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.
- 8) We become addicted to excitement.
- 9) We confuse love with pity and tend to "love" people who we can "pity" and "rescue".
- 10) We have stuffed our feelings from our traumatic childhoods and have lost the ability to feel or express our feelings because it hurts so much (denial).

- 11) We judge ourselves harshly and have a very low sense of self-esteem.
- 12) We are dependent personalities who are terrified of abandonment and will do anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to experience painful abandonment feelings which we received from living with sick people who were never there emotionally for us.
- 13) Alcoholism is a family disease and we became para-alcoholics and took on the characteristics of the disease even though we did not pick up the drink.
- 14) Para-alcoholics are reactors rather than actors.

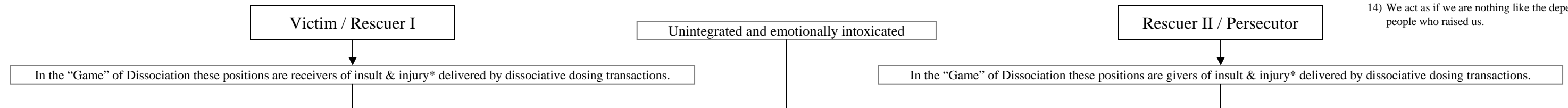
### The Other Laundry List / The Opposite Laundry List

*A Reaction Formation List; "It Will Never Happen To Me"*

1. To cover our fear of people and our dread of isolation we tragically become the very authority figures who frighten others and cause them to withdraw.
2. To avoid becoming enmeshed and entangled with other people and losing ourselves in the process, we become rigidly self-sufficient. We disdain the approval of others.
3. We frighten people with our anger and threat of belittling criticism.
4. We dominate others and abandon them before they can abandon us or we avoid relationships with dependent people altogether. To avoid being hurt, we isolate and dissociate and thereby abandon ourselves.

- 5) We live life from the standpoint of a victimizer, and are attracted to people we can manipulate and control in our important relationships.
- 6) We are irresponsible and self-centered. Our inflated sense of self-worth and self-importance prevents us from seeing our deficiencies and shortcomings.
- 7) We make others feel guilty when they attempt to assert themselves.
- 8) We inhibit our fear by staying deadened and numb.
- 9) We hate people who "play" the victim and beg to be rescued.

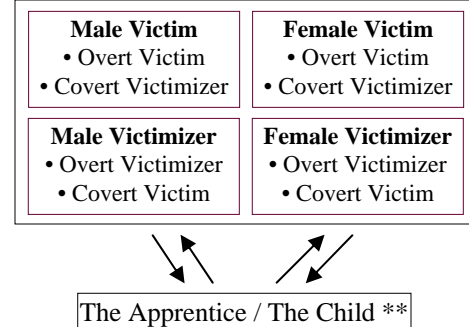
- 10) We deny that we've been hurt and are suppressing our emotions by the dramatic expression of "pseudo" feelings.
- 11) To protect ourselves from self punishment for failing to "save" the family we project our self-hate onto others and punish them instead.
- 12) We "manage" the massive amount of deprivation we feel, coming from abandonment within the home, by quickly letting go of relationships that threaten our "independence" (not too close).
- 13) We refuse to admit we've been affected by family dysfunction or that there was dysfunction in the home or that we have internalized any of the family's destructive attitudes and behaviors.
- 14) We act as if we are nothing like the dependent people who raised us.



### Completing the Cycle of Violence

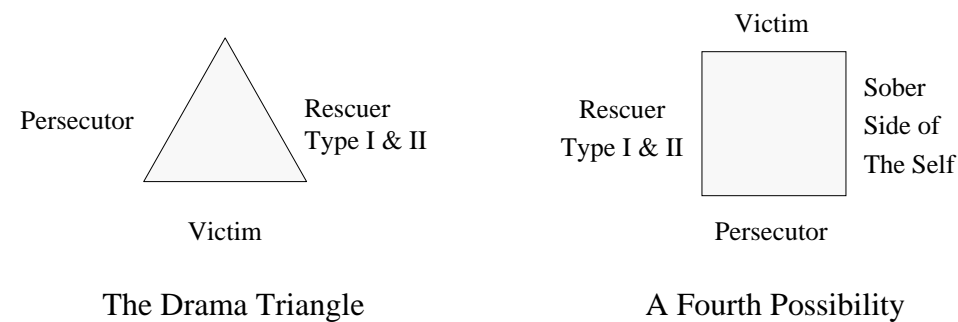
*Closing the Circle*

Positions in The Game of Dissociation

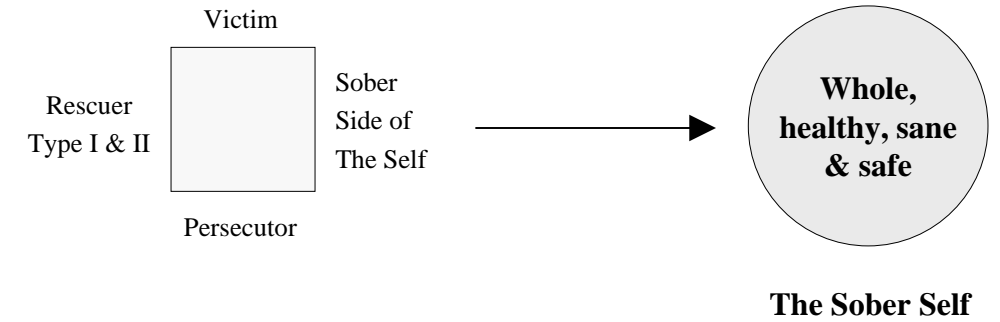


### Bringing the Family Drama to a Close

(Withdrawing from the Game of Dissociation)



### Completing the Recovery Process



## Characteristics of an Integrated Person

### The Flip Side of The Laundry List

- 1) We move out of isolation and are not unrealistically afraid of other people, even authority figures.
- 2) We do not depend on others to tell us who we are.
- 3) We are not automatically frightened by angry people and no longer regard personal criticism as a threat.
- 4) We do not have a compulsive need to recreate abandonment.
- 5) We stop living life from the standpoint of victims and are not attracted by this trait in our important relationships.
- 6) We do not use enabling as a way to avoid looking at our own shortcomings.
- 7) We do not feel guilty when we stand up for ourselves.
- 8) We avoid emotional intoxication and choose workable relationships instead of constant upset.
- 9) We are able to distinguish love from pity, and do not think "rescuing" people we "pity" is an act of love.
- 10) We come out of denial about our traumatic childhoods and regain the ability to feel and express our emotions.

- 11) We stop judging and condemning ourselves and discover a sense of self-worth.
- 12) We grow in independence and are no longer terrified of abandonment. We have interdependent relationships with healthy people, not dependent relationships with people who are emotionally unavailable.
- 13) The characteristics of alcoholism and para-alcoholism we have internalized are identified, acknowledged, and removed.
- 14) We are actors, not reactors.

### The Flip Side of The Other Laundry List

- 1) We face and resolve our fear of people and our dread of isolation and stop intimidating others with our power and position.
- 2) We realize the sanctuary we have built to protect the frightened and injured child within has become a prison and we become willing to risk moving out of isolation.
- 3) With our renewed sense of self-worth and self-esteem we realize it is no longer necessary to protect ourselves by intimidating others with contempt, ridicule and anger.
- 4) We accept and comfort the isolated and hurt inner child we have abandoned and disavowed and thereby end the need to act out our fears of enmeshment and abandonment with other people.
- 5) Because we are whole and complete we no longer try to control others through manipulation and force and bind them to us with fear in order to avoid feeling isolated and alone.

- 6) Through our in-depth inventory we discover our true identity as capable, worthwhile people. By asking to have our shortcomings removed we are freed from the burden of inferiority and grandiosity.
- 7) We support and encourage others in their efforts to be assertive.
- 8) We uncover, acknowledge and express our childhood fears and withdraw from emotional intoxication.
- 9) We have compassion for anyone who is trapped in the "drama triangle" and is desperately searching for a way out of insanity.
- 10) We accept we were traumatized in childhood and lost the ability to feel. Using the 12 Steps as a program of recovery we regain the ability to feel and remember and become whole human beings who are happy, joyous and free.

- 11) In accepting we were powerless as children to "save" our family we are able to release our self-hate and to stop punishing ourselves and others for not being enough.
- 12) By accepting and reuniting with the inner child we are no longer threatened by intimacy, by the fear of being engulfed or made invisible.
- 13) By acknowledging the reality of family dysfunction we no longer have to act as if nothing were wrong or keep denying that we are still unconsciously reacting to childhood harm and injury.
- 14) We stop denying and do something about our post-traumatic dependency on substances, people, places and things to distort and avoid reality..

\* Note: Insult and Injury = Punishment, abandonment, conditional acceptance, conditional care

\*\* "Oh, No! These are my choices?"

## Completing the Circle (in the Cycle of Violence)

To understand how the Cycle of Family Violence is transmitted (from parents to children) it is necessary to identify and delineate all of the components of the inter-generational transfer of traumatically generated internal addiction and emotional intoxication. These are: repetition of dialogue (self talk and self recrimination), re-creation of scenes (the symbolic movies in the mind) and situations (with real-time “stand-ins” - the “Replacements”) which together can be called “The Distractors”, the recapitulation of emotions (feels the same) through the reconstitution of the biochemistry (internal uppers, downers, pain-killers and thought regulators) and reconfiguration of the body (held the same way), all of which is called the process of traumatic reproduction (Freud/Ferenczi). This results in a predictable dissociative forgetting which leaves a person numb, unconscious and stuck in the past.

Children who are caught up in the frightening, erratic, chaotic and demoralizing environment of a severely dysfunctional family are constantly searching for clues and indicators as to what their highly conditional “providers” demand and will tolerate in meeting the basic needs of the children. The children have no way of knowing that their caregivers themselves are relying on a confusing, hurtful, “superstitious” mix of sane and insane behaviors and beliefs about survival that was passed on to them. The beat goes on with one generation pounding its insanity into the next. In order not to go completely mad children have to dissociate or partially separate from their unbearable reality. The dilemma of dissociation is that traumatized people can’t afford to forget what they do not want to remember. The memories of early trauma experiences represent how the world was, who to fear, and what must be done to maintain some degree of safety. Therefore, early trauma memories and emotions are always threatening to break through into consciousness. A dissociated person is preoccupied with dividing energy and attention into maintaining dissociation and attempting to live some kind of meaningful life in the present.

The Problem says we are “dependent personalities” who are “terrified of abandonment,” and will “do almost anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to be abandoned emotionally”. However we keep “choosing insecure relationships because they” match “our childhood relationship with alcoholic or dysfunctional parents.” The “almost anything” we will do is to hold on to the “package deal” of dissociative living we were given in childhood in the not unreasonable belief that that is the best we can do. The form of the package deal follows Eric Berne’s life game of “alcoholic”. However, for adult children, Berne’s variation of “dry drunk” is the best fit. As in all of Berne’s games there are a series of moves by the players (transactions) that result in a “payoff”.

In the “game” of dissociation there are two basic positions, victim and victimizer (persecutor). The victim may have a confederate, the earnest, “helpful”, ineffective rescuing friend or pal (Type I Rescuer). The Type I Rescuer is essentially a victim waiting to happen. The persecutor may be disguised as a highly conditional rescuer – “I’ll ‘accept’, ‘love’ you if and when” (Type II Rescuer). Of course the conditions can never be met and the Type II Rescuer can flip into the persecutor at the drop of a hat. The persecutor is the one who gives the insults and injuries that maintain dissociation (dissociative dosing transactions) while the victim is the one who does the receiving. A “successful” dosing transaction is one in which the insult and injury exchange leaves both (or all) the players in the game more absent than present (unconscious–stupefied) and more there then (regressed) than here now, in other words, dissociated (hypoxic, hypercarbic, hypoglycemic).

Both victim and persecutor are terrified of abandonment. The victim is more obviously desperate and needy while the persecutor is so terrified of falling into the abyss of abandonment that the terror has been completely walled off. The only form of love or connection that can be tolerated is to be the one who punishes and abandons, to not be the one who is punished, neglected and finally abandoned. Children don’t know they are targeted to become objects of addiction in the “game” of dissociation, that the adults will overtly and covertly force the children to accept (introject) their demands that they embrace the addict way of life. To put it bluntly the demand from adults to children in a conflict-addicted family is “we need you to be a player (addict) to cope with and endure our hyper-dependency syndrome”. The forced introjection is the means-whereby the “game” of dissociation is transmitted intergenerationally along with the twisted, superstitious justification / rationale for continuing the family’s insanity.

The solution is to use the 12 Steps to eject the introjects and stop the “game”, to regain personal integrity, to become sober and sane. The essential point is the traumatic etiology of addiction – stop the trauma / re-trauma; stop the dissociation / addiction. The word addiction comes from the Latin “to say to”, to say yes to a strong habit (denial). Essentially recovery is a matter of turning that around and just saying “No!”

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