



### Note About BoH:

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## Support on the Journey

The journey of recovery takes much work and going through healing is an incredible amount of work. It's like having a full-time job, especially at first. Many survivors report when they start treatment things get more difficult for them to manage, and many struggle with increased symptoms, flashbacks, nightmares, and difficulty managing their emotions. The good news is that trauma work doesn't stay that way as the healing journey goes on. Because it is now in the forefront of your mind, it is of course something that may seem like treatment is making things worse.

I can say don't give up. You're not alone on your journey of healing from your trauma. Finding the right therapist, the right treatment, and the right support can make an incredible difference. In fact, it's not even necessary to divulge everything that you went through to heal. There are evidence based treatments to help with that, and we've seen great progress in treatment with many survivors with treatments such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Cognitive Processing Therapy, Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Somatic Experiencing and EMDR. There are some other treatments available as well.

What does this have to do with support? Taking back your life after trauma is difficult to do, and more difficult to do alone. I believe it is incredibly important to develop a support system to have while working on recovery. Some relationships that could be considered are family, friends, your spouse, professionals who can provide help, and even organizational support from agencies that specialize in trauma recovery. Agencies like RAINN, the Domestic Violence hotline and others are available. Organizations like ours that provide support groups and resources to survivors can help to reduce the isolation that many times is experienced with recovery work. Even spiritual places can be supportive for some survivors. Explore the options in your area.

I now that trust is a big issue in relationships after being hurt by another. There isn't a specific way to determine how to establish supportive relationships, but I can encourage you to start in a place that is the most comfortable for you. Maybe you're not ready to let anyone close to you know about your trauma, but would be more comfortable gathering information from programs. Maybe taking a step to actually engage with someone from that program. Trying out a support group, reaching out to a friend to share

only that you've experienced a trauma, but you're not ready to talk about it, but you just want someone to know.

Give yourself time to find those supportive people in your life, but please consider looking for support. It definitely can help the journey of recovery from trauma easier—not easy, but easier.

Don't give up. You are worth it—you deserve to heal, you deserve support, even when it doesn't feel like it. If you don't believe it yet for you, let me believe it for you.

Take gentle care of you.  
Kristen

## Tips on Boundaries

It's okay to set boundaries.

It's okay to let your no mean no.

It's okay to decide someone doesn't need to be in your life.

It's okay to allow someone into your life and then change your mind.

Someone trustworthy respects and keeps the boundaries you set with them.

Someone trustworthy is sensitive to your needs and limitations.

If you feel pressured, it's a sign that your boundaries are being crossed (even if you didn't say what they are, you may have boundaries you didn't even know you had).

Seeking an outside opinion on whether or not your boundaries are being violated by another one in your life.

There are some great websites with information on boundaries and setting them. Educate yourself on what are healthy boundaries and what are signs of someone who isn't a healthy person to have in your life.

Trust is developed over time. If someone presses you for information that you're not yet comfortable sharing, it's okay to say no or you're not ready to

share that part of your life yet.

It's okay to take time for you and not meet all the needs of the other person. People in our lives who have healthy boundaries know they are responsible for their own happiness.

It's okay to set physical boundaries and to decide how much space between you and another is comfortable.

It's okay to refuse touch that is unwanted.

Don't beat yourself up for not setting boundaries before. Maybe you never had anyone to teach you about healthy boundaries and how to set them.

Being violated creates a lot of chaos in our thinking and feelings and it's easy to confuse someone else's past violations of messages and touch, but it's okay to start to set them now.

Try to be kind to you as you learn and practice setting boundaries.

It's okay to eliminate those relationships from your life who are abusive, toxic, manipulative or otherwise disrespectful to you.

Set them because you want to.

*Someone  
trustworthy  
respects and  
keeps the  
boundaries you  
set with them.*

## Boundaries in an Intimate Relationship

When it came to setting boundaries, I had no tools in my toolbox. In fact, I didn't even realize I was allowed to set boundaries - or that I even needed a toolbox. This is how my discovery for the need of boundaries in an intimate relationship unfolded...

While volunteering with my husband and an acquaintance, that person shared about struggles with a narcissistic mother, who sounded an awful lot like my mother. A comment was made: "The Boundaries book saved my life." The following week, while preparing for our volunteer duties, I quizzed more about "that book" mentioned the previous week. I immediately purchased *Boundaries (and the accompanying workbook)* by Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend, which has sold over 2M copies and is a NY Times bestseller.

The concepts in this book were foreign to me, starting on the front cover: ***Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No To Take Control of Your Life.*** *I wasted no time learning what boundaries are (and are not), what healthy boundaries look like, how to advocate for myself by setting boundaries, etc. The information was plentiful - but with my mother no longer in my life, I didn't have pressing issues to deal with - or so I thought.*

As I continued to digest the book, I soon realized that the folded page corners and majority of scribbles in the margins were NOT about my mother, the first narcissist in my life. They were about my current husband. I had landed right back where I started as an infant, in total compliance at the hands of a narcissist. I had gone from a confident, active single mom to a wife supporting

an unemployed tyrant who systematically cut me off from my family, my friends and my children. Through intimidation, convincing me I was wrong/he was right, and moving me to a remote location, I was isolated, lonely, and yet convinced that he knew what he was doing. He said he was speaking daily with God, who he said was sharing that my children were satanic and my friends were evil. I didn't question my husband and very dutifully complied. I had no idea I could stand up to any of this.

As I devoured the book and workbook, internal change started to reveal itself in odd ways. I sometimes was argumentative and childish. I sometimes asked coy questions that I knew would violate my boundaries, just to see how he would respond. I eventually set him up to lie to my face and was able to gain just a bit of freedom from my prison to meet with my children who were young adults out of the home at this point. I wanted to meet with them, because he had convinced me to sever all communication with them for the 18 months prior.

The reunion with my children was awkward at first, but an afternoon of shopping paved the way to a life-changing dinner conversation. My youngest looked around the table, took a deep breath, looked at me and said, "Mom, you are in an abusive marriage, and we are not letting you go back home."

I shudder and sweat writing those words and remembering

*The reunion with my children was awkward at first, but an afternoon...*

*Boundaries in an intimate relationship is something I definitely knew nothing about until I read this book.*

that moment. I was immediately sick to my stomach yet calm, because in my heart I knew it was true. My children very respectfully shared concrete evidence that my boundaries were non-existent with my husband and that no one was safe at that point. They had set boundaries with him and saw that I was unwilling or unable to see the boundary violations all around me.

Boundaries in an intimate relationship were something I definitely knew nothing about until I read this book. Relational intimacy with my mother and in a primary love relationship with my husband was incredibly hurtful and demanding. When someone told me what to do, I did it. My feelings didn't matter. My discomfort was never considered. And my lack of boundaries and how I complied under controllers affected every aspect of my life.

## I'm Okay

Sometimes I feel guilty  
 Sometimes I feel afraid  
 Sometimes I feel unlovable  
 Sometimes I feel unwanted

I hope to push away the guilt  
 I hope to stop feeling afraid  
 I hope to feel loved  
 I hope to feel wanted

How I get there I'm not sure  
 How I learn to be is a question

The book mentions a very concrete example of why a person puts a fence around their yard: to keep the good in and to keep the bad out. I was fenced in with the bad most of my life.

I have since divorced the narcissistic abuser and have begun to put up appropriate fencing in my life. God continuously reminds me that HE is all I need. He is neither controlling nor critical. He is a proud parent always available for consult and nurturing. I am slowly taking control of my life for the first time, discerning when to say yes, how to say no, and praising God for the blessings that boundaries are having on my life and the lives of those around me.

Submitted by:  
 Anonymous

How I reach out to be loved is frightening  
 Being brave isn't in my nature

But I will try  
 I'm determined  
 I'm not damaged, I've been hurt  
 It's doesn't feel like it, but I am okay.  
 Wow, I'm okay.

Submitted by:  
 Rachel



Fierce: Showing a heartfelt & powerful intensity.

“her Soul is Fierce, her heart is brave, her mind is strong.”- R.H Sin.



Submitted by:

JoOffduty

## Dissociation

It is common for survivors of trauma to experience dissociation from time to time. On the milder side of dissociation, pretty much everyone dissociates to some degree. We see this when people are driving a route that they know well and they “space out” missing some key landmarks on the drive. On the flip side of the spectrum, we find survivors who’ve experienced trauma, generally as a child and many times repeated trauma. This we find can precipitate parts that will host the body for one period of time or another. This is commonly known as Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) which was formerly called Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD). There are various degrees of dissociation in between these two ends.

*Some survivors  
who dissociate  
remember  
everything while  
dissociating...*

Some survivors who dissociate remember everything while dissociating, reporting feeling like they were above their bodies or watching themselves. Other survivors who dissociate do not remember what happened during those times of dissociation. Dissociation looks different for different people.

So why do some survivors dissociate so easily or frequently? During the time of the trauma experienced, for some survivors, dissociation was a protection from the full impact of the trauma. After the trauma passed, it is highly likely that memories, thoughts and/or feelings about what happened, continued to allow for avoidance from those unpleasant experiences. Over time, it became easier to dissociate in times of avoidance, fear and/or overwhelm.

When dissociation is taking place, grounding skills may help to reduce the dissociation. This helps to face the situation or emotion that is upsetting or distressing. Grounding as soon as you may become aware of the dissociation taking place can help to stop the progression of the dissociation and bring you back to the here and now.

## My Experience With Dissociation

When I was invited to write a piece on my experience with dissociation for this newsletter, my first thought was that I wasn’t the right person to ask. After all, I reasoned, I never dissociate to the point that I’m completely unaware of my surroundings. Some other people suffer more than I do. But then, I remembered something someone else in recovery once said to me: “If you’re drowning in six feet of water and someone else is drowning in ten, you’re still drown-

ing.” This reminded me that my struggle is worth taking note of even if another person out there has it worse.

All my life, I’ve been very absent-minded and daydreamy, but when my anxiety increased and I started showing more obvious symptoms of PTSD about a year and a half ago, I began to dissociate at times in a way that felt different from just daydreaming. Often I felt like I couldn’t

face reality, because either there was too much noise or too many people around me, and my PTSD combined with my Sensory Processing Disorder couldn't handle it all, or because I was caught up in traumatic memories that either something triggered or I thought of on my own. And so, I'd kind of pull back from what was real and feel like any objects surrounding me weren't actually there. I'd pretend I wasn't in the current situation. Sometimes, I would do this while staring off into space, and no one would really notice. Other times, I would breathe hard from anxiety and close my eyes or hide my face, so it would be more apparent. I would even find myself unable to respond to people who tried to talk to me at times. I could hear them, but I was frozen. Having detached myself from reality, I couldn't interact with what was actually real in that moment. I don't really remember every person's response to me while I was in this state, because I don't think my brain was always storing memories normally while I was dissociated. I know sometimes they would give up on talking to me when I couldn't respond and walk away.

I do remember, however, certain moments where people were extra kind to me. Earlier this year, when I was in a treatment program in another state, I had a woman as my individual therapist that I knew from previous stays who had just gotten promoted to having clients of her own. Darci could be very stern at times, so when, at the end of an overwhelming day, she approached me when I wasn't fully present as I sat on the carpet, I thought I was going to get a lecture about letting myself dissociate rather than using the skills I had learned. Instead, she asked jokingly, "Are you going to make me get on the floor?" and plopped down next to me. Understanding that I was still kind of new at using some of the stuff I'd learned and that I was

worn out from trying to stay present all day, she told me I had handled the extra sensory stimulation we had that day well and offered to let me decompress in an empty room, suggesting I take the time to pray due to my faith being very important to me. I followed her advice and soon felt a lot better.

My recommendation for dealing with someone struggling with dissociation is to act similarly to how Darci did above. Be very gentle, calling their name softly and reassuring them that they are in a safe place. Don't touch them without permission, but continue talking to them. It might take awhile of them to come out of it and be able to interact with you if they're experiencing worse than mild dissociation, but keep trying unless they make it clear they want to be left alone.

Submitted by:  
Dana S.

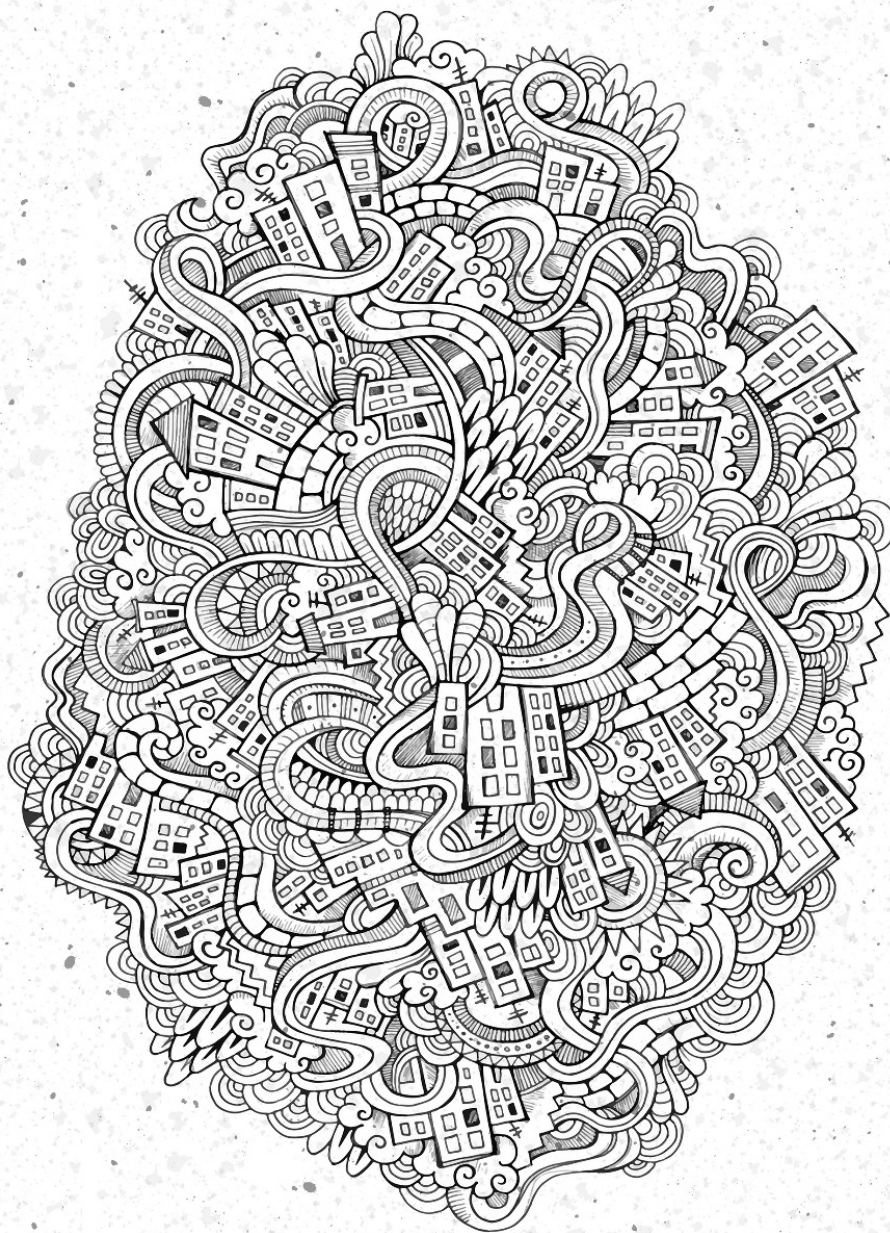


Need support? Check out our online support groups. Currently taking registrations for our 6 week Coping with PTSD Group (a combination of education and support).

[https://  
www.hope4christianrecovery.org/  
group.html](https://www.hope4christianrecovery.org/group.html)

*Be very gentle,  
calling their  
name softly and  
reassuring them  
that they are in a  
safe place.*





*Just Color*



## Drawn to Narcissism

When I was three, my Mom married my stepdad. This is where the cycle began. Looking back I can now see all the signs but as a child I had no idea. I grew up around a man who was classic Narcissistic. As I got older I craved attention and approval. I thought love was attention in no matter what form it came in.

As a young adult I started to cling to the Narcissistic personality type. It was not until I was 45, 13 years into my fourth marriage did I start to realize there was something really wrong. Yes I chose them, but what was it I kept choosing?

At 45 I was diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer. I went through a hysterectomy and 6 cycles of chemo therapy. My husband became very distant and made himself scarce. It was as if he pretended there was nothing wrong with me. After Chemo I started to become very sick. Two years after the chemo they discovered I had acquired several autoimmune diseases from the chemo treatments. When he realized that I was not getting better and not going back to the way I looked before cancer he left me. It was not until 2 weeks after he left me, that I stumbled upon an article that was titled 6 signs of Narcissistic Abuse Syndrome.

I started to read and then I started to weep. I had been married to four Narcissists. I had never known what that was until that moment. I started doing research and I started into the realization chapter. All the abuse, all of the horrible moments started to flood through my memory. The next chapter was healing. I suffered from Narcissistic Abuse Stress Disorder and it would take 2 years to begin to walk out of the anger and grief.

I am a Woman of Faith in Jesus Christ. If it had not been for the Lord I can say I probably would not have made it to the other side with forgiveness and strength.

If you are involved with a Narcissist, there is hope and you can get away and heal. You do not have to live in that. Please do your research. Please reach out and or get yourself to a safe place with no contact with the abuser. Healing takes time. Please do not involve yourself in another relationship, get help, heal and learn to do “you “first. Learn why you pick that kind of person.

You deserve better!

These are articles on signs of Narcissistic Abuse and what Narcissistic Abuse is.

<https://ideapod.com/narcissistic-abuse/>

<https://blogs.psychcentral.com/relationships/2017/03/narcissistic-abuse-and-the-symptoms-of-narcissist-victim-syndrome/>

<https://blogs.psychcentral.com/recovering-narcissist/2017/08/11-signs-youre-the-victim-of-narcissistic-abuse/>

Submitted by:  
Kristi Wittig

*It was not until 2 weeks after he left me, that I stumbled upon...*

#### STATEMENT OF FAITH

Psalm 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

#### MISSION

The mission of Hope Recovery is to provide Christian-based support in the lives of adult survivors of abuse and sexual trauma.

#### VISION

To offer support and compassion as survivors make their way on the journey of recovery and healing.

#### Hope Recovery Inc.

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Office Hours:  
Monday, Wednesday & Friday—3p—7p  
Eastern

Other hours by appointment.

If you're feeling **suicidal**, please contact 800-SUICIDE or if outside the US, go to [www.befrienders.org](http://www.befrienders.org)

If you are being **abused**, experiencing incest or rape, please contact RAINN at 800-656-HOPE. RAINN provides links to international agencies.

If you are in a **violent relationship**, call 800-799-SAFE. For international contacts, go to [www.hotpeachpages.net/a/index.html](http://www.hotpeachpages.net/a/index.html)

We're on the Web

[www.hope4christianrecovery.org](http://www.hope4christianrecovery.org)

Find our newsletters at <http://www.hope4christianrecovery.org/publications.html>

#### Fees:

Free to Survivors.

\$4 donations from supporters and professionals is requested to cover the costs of the website..

Donations may be sent to our PO Box, or online via PayPal.

**You Are  
Not Alone!**



When all seems like a struggle, there is hope.