



# Trauma & Dissociation Bridge of Hope

## April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

### Note About BoH:

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Experiencing sexual assault, whether attempted or completed turns your world upside down. Your initial response may be to freeze, dissociate, or fight back and flee. None of those responses are wrong. Each individual responds differently.

Many survivors of sexual assault blame themselves but sexual assault is not the fault of the individual victimized. It is in fact, the fault of the perpetrator(s). It may have been said that the one victimized should have not been somewhere, not done thing, should have done something, and so on. Blame doesn't belong with the one assaulted, but the one who did the assaulting. There is nothing that an individual can do to make someone assault another person, except their own selfish desires for control at any cost to anyone except themselves.

In some cases, a perpetrator does not complete a sexual assault. This is still sexual assault. In fact, examples of sexual assault that may have occurred without penetration are:

Unwanted touching  
Fondling  
Coerced sexual contact  
Attempted rape

Many commonly think of stranger rape as sexual assault, but acquaintance rape happens more frequently than stranger rape. Sexual assault may be perpetrated by a friend, neighbor, family member, a classmate, coworker, internet contact, teacher, or an individual with power (including emotional power) such as a pastor or doctor.

The impact of sexual assault or any sexual violence can have physical, emotional and spiritual impacts that may be temporary or long term effects. If you experienced sexual assault, you are not alone and there is help and support. There are programs that assist individuals (including men) who can were assaulted and can provide counseling, crisis support and/or may have a volunteer or case manager who will go with you to the emergency room or police station with you. Other programs provide information, support and sometimes support groups.

It's easy to blame yourself for an assault and it's easy for someone who believes the myths or sexual assault to blame you, but you didn't do anything to cause a sexual assault. Consider seeking help from a professional with experience working with survivors of trauma. You are worth it.

## I'm Okay

It's difficult to tell myself that I'm okay, but I am. I can't change what happened to me, but I can change what I tell myself. I used to blame myself for what happened to me. I shouldn't have been out late. I should have gone with a friend. It's my fault I was hurt.

Then telling myself that I'm disgusting and dirty and no one should be around me. If I let someone hurt me I deserved it.

The thing is, over time I've learned that what happened was done to me—I didn't ask for it, and it wasn't about being careless. I needed to get out of a while, and where I went, there usually were people around. I didn't ask to

have my life turned upside down. I didn't ask to be assaulted—I just wanted to relax in a calming place.

Finally, after years of feeling like and telling myself I'm damaged goods, I've finally learned to accept me where I am. I'm not dirty or damaged goods. They hurt my body and there were physical consequences. But I didn't choose for that to happen. In fact, I'm okay just like I am. I don't always feel like it all the time, but I am okay.

Submitted by:  
Anonymous

*The thing is, over  
time I've learned  
that what  
happened was  
done to me...*

## Fear

The dark is difficult  
It has all kinds of shadows  
Noises seem to breed  
I turn on the light

Holding the covers tight  
I peek out from them  
I don't see a thing  
Yet I'm still frightened

Looking around the room  
I get up and close the door  
No one's here  
Just me in the night

So I pull out my paper  
I write of my fear  
I feel a bit better  
Writing and breathing helps

Spending time focusing  
Writing out my thoughts  
Praying for help and protection  
I try to relax to sleep once more

Submitted by:  
Ryan



## What To Expect With Counseling

Beginning counseling can be frightening and bring up many questions. Whether you've never been in counseling or you are needing to start with a new counselor, the challenges of feelings and questions are okay.

Initial thoughts are that it's difficult to get to know a counselor the first session as that is the intake at which time the counselor will ask you a very broad range of questions that will take up most of the time. There should be time after all their questions to ask him or her your questions as well. It may take two or three appointments to get a feel for the flow of treatment.

Developing trust typically takes more time. It's pretty normal to be torn about how much to trust a new therapist with everything going on inside. If there is something that you're not yet comfortable to share, it's okay to say you're not ready to share that yet. It's also okay to not share everything up front early on. It's important to be honest in treatment, but it also takes a few sessions typically to feel like you can begin to share, sometimes just a little bit.

One question many survivors have is what if I'm not comfortable with counseling? Counseling isn't really comfortable—it's hard work. It's like a full time job. Therapy is exhausting and challenging as you face difficult issues that you've experienced. Doing trauma work is something most never want to do even though deep inside there is knowledge that it needs to be done. Without it the struggles to keep memories, flashbacks and/or nightmares at bay can be overwhelming. With trauma, unfortunately, the road around trauma is really not a straight road.

The best way to go through is to take one step at a time, get your balance then take another step. The path through trauma healing is more like climbing a mountain that lies before us. To climb it we up this hill, down that

valley, around the lake, through the swamp and up the steep walls of the mountain. Not taking the steps to climb really leaves us in the valley and hills, but the way out is over the top of the mountain. It's difficult but possible.

Starting counseling, starting to decide where to begin with all that has happened to you, starting to face things inside, it can bring up a lot of fear and anxiety. The fear of telling, the shame of self-blaming, feeling like it's your fault—and the difficulty these things bring with them is tough to face. It takes a very strong person to move forward through all of this. The pain, the fear, shame, exhaustion and everything else you experience is worth the work you'll need to do.

Let me tell you this—you are already strong—you survived your trauma! Is recovery hard work? Yes. Is it scary sometimes? Yes. Is it worth all the work? Definitely! Recovery is absolutely worth all the challenges faced. Working through the trauma there are a lot of dark places. Just remember though take a step, get your balance then take another step. This journey of recovery is something I would take again and again to get to the other side of the mountain. It won't feel like it for a while—but feelings trick us. They aren't based in fact or wisdom. They blow like the wind in every direction from a moment in time to hours at a time.

Please know that you are worth every minute you spend working on recovery. Even if you don't believe you are worth it, it's true. If you're not ready to believe that yet, then let me believe it for you until you are strong enough to believe it for yourself.

Kristen

*It is pretty normal to be torn about how much to trust a new therapist with everything going on inside.*

## Combating Loneliness

Combating loneliness is a difficult task when you're looking at it from your own perspective. It's especially hard when you're too shy to talk to others or just prefer to be alone. Either way we all want love whether we know it or not.

It's easy to forget that you have someone who loves you always and unconditionally. God is always going to love you. We often talk about how there's nothing that He can't do. Well, He can't abandon you. Often the most lonely people feel that everyone they care about leaves them. God never will. He is a constant love and joy that can never leave you. Sometimes it feels like He's not there, but...

Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

Isaiah 46:4

Now that we have this out of the way, I'm going to break things down a bit for you starting with how to deal with being too shy. This is a growing problem, especially in America. People are becoming too attached to technology and forgetting the social skills we're meant to have. When God made us, He was planning to create family and love and relationships. If you look at Genesis 3:18, God says "It's not good for the Man to be alone." Of course He knows what He's talking about when he says this. Being a shy person myself, I understand how it feels to want friends and company and be too afraid to try and make that happen. It can be really hard, but sometimes you just need to take things a step at a time.

Mars Frana

*I am good  
enough.*

## Affirmations

Affirmations are used to help us to focus on things which bring us to a better place in ourselves, encouraging ourselves and supporting ourselves. Many of us tend to be good at affirming others but struggle with affirming ourselves. Here are some affirmations—maybe pick one to focus on for the next few weeks.

I am good enough.

If I fall down, I can get back up.

It is always darkest before dawn and dawn will come.

I am strong enough.

I am worth fighting for even when it doesn't feel like it.

God loves me.

I am free to say "no."

I am free to say "not now."

I am okay.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

## Topic Based Support Groups

Al-Anon/Alateen—<https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/>

Alcoholics Anonymous—[http://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US](http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US)

Anxiety & Depression—<https://adaa.org/supportgroups>

Compassionate Friends Grief Support—<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/chapters/chapter-locator/>

Emotions Anonymous—<https://emotionsanonymous.org/what-we-offer/find-a-meeting/>

Gamblers Anonymous—<http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations>

Men Sexually Abused or Assaulted—<https://supportgroup.lin6.org/>

Narcotics Anonymous—<https://www.na.org/meetingsearch/>

Partners of Adults Sexually Abused as Children (not a group, but information)—<http://www.pasac.net/>

Survivors of Incest Anonymous—<https://siawso.org/fellowship/groups-meetings/>

## Trust and Recovery

I'm tired. I've been working on the abuse from my father for what feels like forever. I'm getting better, but I'm so ready to be done. My psychologist says I'm doing well. It just doesn't feel good all the time.

She says that what I'm experiencing now is more like what those who haven't been abused experience—normal responses to emotions, to ups and downs. I'm really glad to hear that. I've worked really hard.

I have to say though, it frightens me. Does that mean I'm always expected to be able to handle everything on my own now? We've slowed down therapy a lot—does that mean I can't call her for help any if I'm experiencing normal responses that feel overwhelming? Does this mean that the nightmares, flashbacks, and constant fear is gone for good?

Yeah, we've talked about it. I know those answers really. The bigger issue is I've trusted her with info I've never told another soul. She has been there for me and now I'm getting to the place where I

might not need to see her for therapy. But we've bonded over everything—I trust her with my life, like no other person.

I guess the next step in treatment is to learn how to better trust me to trust others. I'm sure I can do this, I just find it a bit frightening and intimidating. It's necessary though. I need people in my life that I can trust. I can't shut myself off in a hole and never come out. I started there when I started therapy! That was a very scary and lonely place! I don't ever want to be hurt again, but I don't want to be alone either. I prefer a happy medium.

I hope by this time next year, I find myself more confident, less insecure about these transitions, and have a small group of friends I can trust and depend on, and they on me. Here's to next year!

Submitted by:

TS

*She says that  
what I'm  
experiencing now  
is more like what  
those who  
haven't been  
abused  
experience...*

## Secrets

Hold them close  
Don't tell  
If you tell  
They'll come

But it's hard  
I want to tell  
It's bad in my head  
Why can't I say

My mom says I can tell  
But the other threatens me  
If I tell  
They'll come

I'm not sure I care  
I don't want to be hurt

But it hurts anyway  
Just let me say

I'm not alone  
The kids are scared  
The one who is angry  
Says not to tell

What if I do?  
What happens then?  
My mom says I'm safe  
So no more secrets

Submitted by:  
Erin

*What kind of  
counselor do I  
see?*

## What About Treatment Professionals?

Trying to decide what type of therapist and what type of therapy can be pretty overwhelming at times. Some questions that may come up immediately, is how will I know if they are the right therapist for me? Will I be able to afford counseling? What kind of counselor do I see?

Let's break down some of these questions. There are several types of mental health professionals that offer treatment.

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who has specialized training in the body and how psychiatric medication impacts it. A psychiatrist assesses the need for medication and is licensed to prescribe psychiatric medication.

A psychiatric nurse practitioner is a nurse with a specialized degree with at least a master's degree. They have specialized training in how psychiatric medication impacts the body and is licensed to prescribe psychiatric medication.

A psychologist is the highest level of

trained mental health professionals that offer therapy. They have a doctoral degree and are trained in clinical counseling and testing. Some psychologists specialize in testing or research. It's important to find a licensed psychologist who provides therapy not just testing services.

A clinical social worker is another type of counselor. Typically they are licensed as a clinical social worker. They may have an outpatient practice, work inpatient in a psychiatric unit or work in any number of places. Clinical social workers have at least a master's degree and specialized training in counseling as well as social service resources.

Mental health counselors have a master's degree and is trained in a variety of mental health issues. Many work in mental health centers, inpatient programs or private practice.

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*Submitted by:*  
*JoOffduty*

Just for Fun

A P L O A M E D I C A T I O N Y P M U J  
 R O S A E P L M A H C H O W F A C E C T  
 T S C T A R E T N E M T A E R T Z W O F  
 P T A T H T E R N L S A K T R O P P U S  
 P T J A N E P P M P U A I X E H O E N X  
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 N C I N T D G S E A N O R Y R A R T L I  
 I S N V K M A N S P T O L L Y I O H I H  
 B T G C A V U E O E L I I O I O U G N C  
 A R C Q A T E S R S R S O T H W P I Q Y  
 M E M B E R S W I P I P C N C C O N Y S  
 U S P A R T N E R C U S E Z X I Y T Y P  
 A S P S Y C H O D R A M A D A P D S L I  
 R E M E M B E R Q G N I L A E H S D P W  
 T R Q S T D E P R E S S I O N H A Z A Y

**Treatment Related Terms**

Addictions  
 Anxiety  
 Art  
 Counseling  
 Counselor  
 Depression  
 Diagnosis  
 Dissociation  
 Group  
 Healing  
 Help  
 Hope  
 Insurance

Journey  
 Jumpy  
 Medication  
 Music  
 Nightmares  
 Posttraumatic Stress  
 Psychiatrist  
 Psychodrama  
 Psychiatrist  
 Psychodrama  
 Psychologist  
 Recovery  
 Remember  
 Support  
 Therapy  
 Thinking

**Trauma Treatment**

## What About Treatment Professionals Continued

Marriage and family therapists are trained in counseling families as well as individuals looking at issues from a family aspect, both internal and in family structures.

Pastoral Counselors are clergy who have had at least one counseling course. Some are licensed as counselors in their state as a counselor, but in general most have an interest in counseling but are not licensed in their state. They generally have a master's degree, but this may not be true for all. Many clergy who provide counseling do so at their churches or parishes and it may be free. Trauma issues are not typically trained for in pastoral counseling, but there are always exceptions where a pastoral counselor is more than qualified to provide this. Be sure to really look at this before considering if this is a counseling that you wish to pursue based on their expertise and training. They may have taken additional training in trauma work if this is an area of special interest for them.

Addiction counselors may or may not be licensed and may or may not have a degree. They specialize generally in substance abuse and addiction counseling, while some may specialize in addiction to sex, pornography or other addictive behaviors. Addiction counse-

lors may or may not be certified in their state, depending upon the requirements of their state. For states requiring licensure or certification, there should be a list of addiction professional in their government site.

There may be other types of mental health counselors depending upon the state you are from, but these above types of mental health professionals cover the majority of them trained.

Trauma survivors are encouraged to inquire into the type of counseling and the types of trauma a counselor specializes in and how much experience they have in the field. One other thing to look at, is financially many counselors take some types of insurance, but not all do. If they do not take your insurance or you do not have insurance, you may inquire as to a possible sliding scale or scholarship option. Some church also provide a subsidy for their members when seeing a Christian counselor. Some employment counselors offer 6 to 10 free sessions through employers. Check with your employer to see if that is an option.

*I found with that  
tiny kitten, my  
loneliness had  
subsided some.*

## Unlikely Friends

I was renting a small apartment in the back of a house. It was quite tiny but met my basic needs. I heard the tiniest mew I think I've ever heard. Outside near the porch was a tiny kitten all alone. So I reach for it and immediately went into mother mode. This tiny creature began to grow like a weed and was so playful.

I found with that tiny kitten, my loneliness had subsided some. Something else that happened with that small kit-

ten, is two neighbor kids saw me playing with the kitten one day and came over to pet the kitten. They lived in the house in front of my apartment. We started talking and day after day as they came to play, we started to develop a friendship. Yes, they were quite young—elementary school, and I was just out of high school, but they too helped reduce my loneliness. They kept me and the kitten company and I helped them with their homework.

## MISSION

The mission of Hope Recovery is to provide Christian-based supportive compassion in the lives of trauma survivors by assisting them in recovery, providing support, resources, committed volunteers, and standards of excellence.

## VISION

To offer compassionate support to survivors of trauma making their way on the journey of recovery and healing.

## Hope Recovery Inc.

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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>

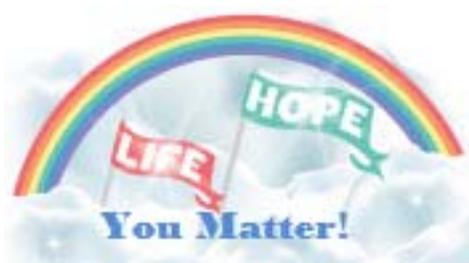
### Fees:

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.