



Trauma & Dissociation Bridge of Hope

Note About BoH:

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All Things—Fall

It's that time of year again, where we either enjoy it or struggle with it. Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and then New Year's all back to back. Some survivors love this time of the year because of all the activities with family and friends. Other survivors struggle because it's a reminder of the pain that abuse has taken out of the family relationship and/or painful memories of this time of the year.

I want to start by encouraging you. If these holidays are great for you overall, remember to hold on to these good times in your memory to help during the difficult times as you work through your trauma. If you are a survivor who finds these holidays difficult and even painful, we are here for you. We can't take what happened away, but we can support you emotionally. Some support that is available to you is joining one of our support groups, connecting by email, joining a Facebook group or joining us for our holiday chats. These support won't fix the hurts, but I can help to ease some of the loneliness you may generally experience during this time of the year.

While difficult and many times painful, it is possible to create new traditions and meaning for each holiday. There are so many different ways to start a new tradition. Some new traditions reach outside of ourselves. For example, rather than spending Thanksgiving alone, consider doing something outside of staying home. Perhaps you can spend a portion of your day with some residents living in a nursing home, or serving meals at a homeless or domestic violence shelter. If you're not able to leave home due to disability or transportation, plan ahead and spend part of your day volunteering online for a non-profit. You can find hundreds of opportunities at Volunteermatch.org. Select virtual opportunities and find something you can do from home.

Some new traditions might mean inviting friends who are single or without family or their family is too far away, to your home for a meal or a pitch-in meal. Love to bake or sew? Perhaps a new tradition is baking treats for the staff in your local ER, police or fire department. Sewing or quilting baby blankets for the hospital nursery for parents whose babies are in NICU and they won't have their baby home due to their medical issues.

I've found that giving of my time and my talents, I usually feel better

about me. Reaching outside of myself on difficult holidays, make the day more tolerable and sometimes even a day to look forward to in the future.

Try not to let previous holidays dictate the same thing for your future holidays. You are worth investing in yourself to make each day in your life the best it can be with the control that you have. I know it's touch to push through holidays, and days in general, that were marred by abuse. I also know how it can be difficult to create new traditions for those times. I can tell you from first hand experience that it's not always easy to choose to push forwards for a better tomorrow, but I've found it to be both rewarding, and it has made my life better a step at a time.

Take the changes with baby steps. One small step at a time.

Take gentle care of you.
Kristen

*Take the changes
with baby steps.
One small step at
a time.*



Family of Choice

Holidays are not always the easiest time of the year, especially in the fall. A lot of survivors struggle with estrangement from family, difficulty with hurtful memories, difficulty with holidays past, lack of finances, and list could go on. Some survivors come from wonderful families but due to trauma at this time of year, it may be difficult to enjoy these holidays, even with a supportive family.

Whether your family is supportive, or you are without a biological family, I would encourage you to surround yourself with people (biological or not) who care about you and you care about. Make these friends and/or family, your family of choice. These are the people you choose to have in your life. These are the people you want to celebrate for being in your life—people you care about and who care for you.

Take the time to let them know how important they are to you. Use these holidays to celebrate them in your life. Think about possible ways to celebrate them. Perhaps give them a “coupon” for Christmas, an offer to cook or clean, perhaps a note highlighting their value to you, or something else that conveys your care and appreciation of them.

Holidays and Inside Parts

For survivors who have Dissociative Identity Disorder, the holidays can come with a variety of ideas, expectations, avoidance, anticipation or other struggles. It is like having a house full of people with one chair in the living room. Whoever is in the living room first gets to sit in the chair and they get to be in control of the TV remote. Depending upon who's got the remote, depends on what TV show is liked.

The experience of each holiday can be very different for each part inside. While one part may love a holiday, another part may hate it. Yet another part may have no feelings about it in any way, or may be afraid of it, and so on. These can be different even from the host personality, and all together could cause a lot of confusion about the holidays, making the host feel confused or "crazy" (which is far from the truth) because the feelings may be all over the place.

To help with the holidays if you're finding it difficult, would be to consider working with your therapist to understand better the dynamics of your parts and their holiday experiences (not all may have experiences). For those parts who had poor or bad experiences, perhaps exploring how to help these parts during the holidays can help.

If you haven't done so already, sharing a communication notebook or a locked file on your computer could help your various parts share their likes, dislikes and concerns about the holidays. It's an opportunity for you to assure them you will protect them as the abuse is in the past and what they are experiencing is a memory. It's not happening now.

While not all parts are ready to process the memories, hopefully some will be ready with you.

It's Time

It's time again
 The time I dread
 Feeling alone
 Even in the midst of friends
 Nothing good happened
 Many bad things
 I just want to go
 Let me just skip this year
 All the pretend joy
 They have no clue
 How much my heart hurts
 How alone in my grief
 I don't see reprieve
 Just pain
 Maybe next year
 Maybe it'll be easier

*For those parts
 who had poor or
 bad experiences,
 perhaps exploring
 how to help these
 parts during the
 holidays can
 help.*

Submitted by:
 Anonymous

Signs of Feelings

Sometimes sorting feelings can be difficult. Here are some common feelings and signs you may experience with them. Not everyone will experience all of these signs and as each individual is unique, you'll need to explore what your specific signs of your feelings are. Not all signs last the same amount of time as others experiencing similar feelings.

Anxious:

- Apprehensive
- Nervous
- Difficult to breathe
- Tight chest not due to medical reasons
- Difficulty thinking or concentrating
- Feeling like you're shaking internally or externally (not due to illness or withdrawal from a substance)
- Muscle tension
- Restlessness
- Sweating

Some other terms used in addition to anxious:

Agitated	Nervous
Apprehensive	Uneasy
Concerned	Unsettled
Distressed	Worried

Depressed:

- Feeling down, sad, empty or anxious
- Thoughts or feelings that there is no hope
- Feeling helpless, worthless, guilty or lost
- Irritable, restless or agitated
- Persistent chronic pain
- Isolating from others
- Some have thoughts of suicide

Some other terms used in addition to depressed:

Blue	Dull
Dejected	Dysphoric
Desolate	Gloomy
Dispirited	Low
Down	Melancholic
Downcast	Spiritless
Downhearted	Unhappy

Sad (**Note-usually doesn't last over 1-2 weeks and typically is not constant):

- Feeling bored
- Feeling frustrated
- Avoiding others
- Stomach or head aches

Sadness usually does last over 1-2 weeks and typically is not constant, unlike depression.

Sleep disturbance
 Feeling brokenhearted or homesick

Some other terms used in addition to sad:

Agony	Homesickness
Alienation	Hopelessness
Anguish	Hurt
Crushed	Insecurity
Defeat	Isolation
Dejection	Loneliness
Depression	Melancholy
Despair	Misery
Disappointment	Neglect
Discontentment	Pity
Dismay	Rejection
Displeasure	Sorrow
Distraught	Suffering
Gloom	Unhappiness
Glumness	Woe
Grief	

Angry:

Tense muscles, clenched jaws or fists
 Short “fuse”
 Explosive thoughts toward someone or something
 Thoughts of hurting someone or breaking something
 Feeling “intense”
 Having a red face or heat in your face
 Holding your breath
 Feeling cranky, agitated or irritable that seem bigger
 Feeling like crying

*Angry: Tense
 muscles,
 clenched jaws or
 fists*

Some other terms used in addition to anger:

Aggression	Hate
Agitation	Hostility
Annoyance	Irritation
Bitterness	Jealousy
Contempt	Loathing
Cruelty	Mean-spirited
Destructiveness	Outrage
Disgust	Rage
Dislike	Resentment
Envy	Revulsion
Exasperation	Scorn
Ferocity	Spite
Frustration	Torment
Fury	Vengefulness
Grouchiness	Wrath
Grumpiness	

Fear:

- Being hypervigilant or on the lookout for possible harm
- Feeling nervous or jumpy
- Staying in places you feel secure while avoiding places/people that make you feel uncomfortable
- Unsure of safety or the feeling of being unsafe
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Butterflies in your stomach
- Difficulty thinking

Some other terms used in addition to fear:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Apprehension | Nervousness |
| Anxiety | Overwhelmed |
| Distress | Panic |
| Dread | Shock |
| Edginess | Tension |
| Fright | Terror |
| Horror | Uneasiness |
| Hysteria | Worry |
| Jumpiness | |

These are just a few intense emotions that might be experienced.

These are just a few intense emotions that might be experienced. It's just a few ways that it's possible to put a name to what is being felt. As mentioned already, each individual may experience different signs and symptoms, or only a few of what is listed.



A Surprise

My brother and the little ones have never had a Christmas before. Well, not a good one because of the bad things that happened growing up. Each one has held their pain that the bad people caused. I was supposed to protect them but even when I tried my best, I wasn't able to stop them from being hurt. I wasn't strong enough because they were too big. Sometimes I got hurt trying to protect them too.

This year though, I'm not being hurt and I'm in a safe place and so are they. I'm going to surprise them with a Christmas Party. I'm going to do something special for everyone in the family. I'm going to do something for my mom too, because she adopted my brother and me when she didn't have to. I think she adopted us because she wanted to be adopted when she was little too. I'm really glad she did, because I love her a lot.

So this Christmas is going to be good because we are going to have a party. It will be hard to keep it a secret because I want to tell them and I want to have it now. I will not tell though.

If you have an inside family, maybe they've never had a Christmas party either. I know I'm having fun planning it.

Submitted by:
Erin

*If you have an
inside family,
maybe they've
never had a
Christmas party
either.*

Feelings

Have you ever been confused about what you were feeling? I sure have been at times. I think that can happen, especially when we've had more than one feeling going on at a time. For some of this can happen because feelings were discouraged by those who abused us, such as during childhood abuse or abused by a partner. It can be confusing and frightening when the emotions are starting to be experienced. Particularly the new ones we don't recognize and especially those we aren't comfortable with.

There are a couple ways we can begin to sort out what our emotions are. One way is to write down how you are experiencing them. For example, notice your thoughts and the physical sensations you are experiencing. You might feel your shoulders are tense, or you feel like your body is heavy—almost hard to even move it's so heavy. Maybe your chest hurts, or you notice your jaws and hands are clench. These signs can give notice that you are experiencing some emotions that are specific, or that you might be able to narrow down the emotions to a couple of them.

Another way to tease out emotions is to journal everything that you notice in your thoughts. Sharing these with your therapist can help to start sorting out related emotions. With help and encouragement it's possible to figure it out most of the time.

Something to remember in all of this is that while you may not be able to identify the specific emotion, you can sort out how to manage the accompanying

Just for Fun



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symptoms with practice. I hope you'll find some clarity of your feelings.

Grief & Loss

It seems like grief can be bigger or more pronounced during the holidays, and particularly Thanksgiving and Christmas. Some of us feel the void of the loss of our loved one(s) when there have been traditions that our loved ones were a part of. Sometimes that one we loved was the one who facilitated the tradition. With them being gone, perhaps that tradition has not been carried on, which is another loss.

Sometimes the loss of our loved one can take a big toll, and we find that at this time of the year we experience great sadness and perhaps even depression. Grieving is different for everyone though there are commonalities. There isn't a right or wrong way to grieve. Neither is there a set time for grieving.

What we do know is that creating a new tradition during the holidays or creating a memorial or remembrance of our loved one can help with getting through the holidays, and perhaps even a little easier for some of us.

One family took time to put letters they had written to their loved one on the Christmas tree, and then shared a few minutes of their favorite memories. It became a new tradition for them within the one they had been having already.



*Holiday support
is available on
these dates/
times.*

Extra Holiday Support

If you struggle with the holidays, please know that we are offering extra support for survivors in the form of an online platform to just touch base with someone for a little bit. All online support is by Zoom (a free download). Holiday support is available on these dates/times.

Wednesday, November 27th, 8:30—10:30 pm Eastern
Thursday (Thanksgiving), November 28th, 7:00—9:00 pm Eastern
Tuesday, December 24th, 8:00—10:00 pm Eastern
Wednesday (Christmas), December 25th, 7:00—9:00 pm Eastern

To receive extra support, please email recovery@hope4-recovery.org and share the date and time you would like to join. This is small group support. Other times may be available by request if needed.

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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Phone: (765) 505-8908

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

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

We're on the Web

www.hope4-recovery.org

Find our newsletters at <http://www.hope4-recovery.org/publications.html>

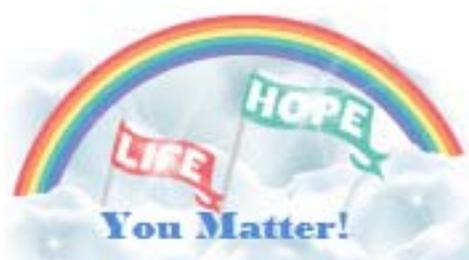
Fees:

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.