Treatment of Victims
Who Condemn Themselves for Harm Done to Other Victims

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Abstract

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Background
This presentation will discuss the treatment of victims who have done harm to other victims driven by: a) abuser coercion and threats, b) psychological manipulation by dissociation-savvy abusers, and, c) enactments of sexual and physical abuse in dissociated states.

Method
The author, a PhD qualified Clinical Psychologist, has worked with abuse survivors since 1982 and with victims of extreme abuse with dissociative disorders since 1994. Through this work, she has come to understand that coerced perpetration in a mainstay of extreme abuse, threats of harm to loved ones can coerce victims to abuse others, victims can be psychologically manipulated by dissociation-savvy abusers to harm others against their will and without the conscious knowledge of normative self-states, and that re-enactment of abuse against others is a common response to both extreme and lesser abuse.

Results
The presentation will cover:
1. Abuser tactics to coerce perpetration
2. Dissociative "breaks" in agency and forms of dissociated self-states formed in victims in response
3. Dissociation-savvy manipulation of victims to induce new self-states to form and to manipulate and fear-condition self-states ("programming") for long-term control to serve abuser agendas, including harm to others
4. Re-enactment abuse enactments of dissociated abuse that can cause harm to others
5. Uncontrolled eruptions of rage
6. Treatment strategies to help victims develop self-compassion in the place of self-condemnation and to gain mastery over abuse enactments
7. Coerced and/or dissociated perpetration vs. conscious and willing perpetration

Conclusions
Victims of child abuse, particularly psychologically-sophisticated and extreme abuse, are often coerced into harming others with no other option. Abuse victims may also re-enact their abuse against others without conscious awareness and/or before they can exert their will to do otherwise.

End Ritual Abuse

I am a psychologist who has been profoundly touched by victims of ritual abuse and mind control whom I have treated in therapy or befriended as an advocate. I feel compelled to increase public support for these children and adult survivors. This is my mission.

Let the truth be known!

This site will provide articles by myself and others, references to other resources, and links to information and support on the world-wide web. Advocates for victims of ritual abuse are frequent targets of malicious attack. Therefore, I cannot and do not endorse opinions provided or referred to on this site other than my own.

Ellen P. Lacter, Ph.D.

http://endritualabuse.org/
My name is Ellen Lacter. I am a psychologist in private practice in California, published in the subjects of dissociation, ritual abuse, and mind control. I am grateful to the European Society for Trauma and Dissociation for accepting my proposal to speak on the complex issue of treating victims of extreme abuse who have done harm to others. I regret not being able to be in Rome to sit together as we tackle this tough material.

My presentation will discuss four mechanisms by which abuse victims unwillingly harm others. The first three are directly coerced or induced by abusers. The last is not abuser-initiated, but also occurs without intent.

These mechanisms are:

A. Coerced harm under torture. This is the use of torture to directly coerce victims to harm or kill other victims.

B. Old-school organized criminal terrorization. This involves threats to harm or kill victims’ loved ones to compel victims to obey directives to do harm to others in the present or future. Such abusers have usually already demonstrated to their victims that they commit acts of extreme violence, usually including murder.

C. Programming. This is the sophisticated psychological manipulation of victims’ dissociated identities to induce them to do later harm to others, all out of the conscious awareness of normative (apparently normal) front identities.

D. Re-enactment. This is the unconscious non-volitional enactment of trauma, often in dissociated states of mind.

Only when we deeply understand the psychological power of such mechanisms can our clients reveal to themselves, and then to us, the worst of their abuse and the devastating self-condemnation and moral injury that comes of having harmed others. Many other people condemn them as well. However, a willingness to understand the factors that propel abuse victims to harm others reveals a much more complex picture and allows us to make much more considered judgments.
The term, “moral injury” was introduced in 1994 by Jonathan Shay in his book, Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character. Paraphrasing, it connotes the psychological damage to one’s character or faith in humanity that follows ethical violations by oneself or by those in power (See: Shay, 2014). It prototypically involves unjust killing of others. It is usually applied to military contexts and combat veterans. However, it is increasingly being applied to other interpersonal trauma, including child abuse.

I will briefly address the contexts within which extreme and sadistic abuse occurs, such as torture, threats of harm to loved ones, and psychological manipulations to coerce victims to harm other victims. These are:

1) Ritualistic abuse, that is ceremonial and/or systematic abuse or torture, usually beginning in childhood by multiple perpetrators, to gain long-term, often life-long, control of victims’ minds and behavior, for furtherance of the abusers’ spiritual, criminal, ethnic-hate, religious-hate, and/or political objectives.

2) State-sponsored torture, including government-sponsored mind control projects such as the CIA’s MKUltra program and its precursors, such as Projects Bluebird and Artichoke, torture of political prisoners, training of military special forces operatives and espionage agents, and training of child soldiers. The latter is eloquently described by Ishmael Beah in his book, A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier (2008).

3) Abuser networks that produce and distribute child rape and torture materials and snuff films on the dark web. This industry, also known as “hurtcore,” has grown exponentially for 20 years. The abuse is increasingly sadistic; coercing children to abuse other children is a mainstay; and victims are getting younger, including infants and toddlers. The New York Times covered this subject on September 28, 2019 in greater depth than ever before by a major newspaper, in a piece entitled, The Internet Is Overrun With Images of Child Sexual Abuse. What Went Wrong?

4) Other sadistic solo and networked abuse, such as clergy abuse, abuse by sports coaches, abuse in youth organizations, such as scouting, and abuse in daycare and schools, etc.

I now return to the four mechanisms that result in victims harming others, beginning with coercion under torture.
Coercion of Harm Under Torture

I have come to clearly understand that victims who are coerced to harm or kill other victims under direct torture carry no responsibility for these acts, whether as adults or children. Any resistance or hesitation, any plea to the abuser to stop, typically results in an escalation in torture, including intensifying or prolonging the current torture, adding an other form of torture—electroshock is easily remotely delivered to devices attached to victims, or intensifying the torture of the second victim. The abusers mock resisting victims for having brought the further torture on themselves and for having caused further harm to the intended secondary victims.

A natural response to first hearing of such horrors is to think: “I would die before I would torture or kill someone else.” Our minds reflexively “go there” because it is unacceptable to imagine ourselves completely helpless to stop ourselves from torturing or killing another human being.

Victims of torture-coerced perpetration reliably feel the same way. They desperately want to die. But such abusers do not permit death. Infliction of pain, terrorization, helplessness, heartbreak, and sexual sadism are their goals. They keep their victims at the brink of death, but alive, to maximize their suffering. If victims pass out, they drug them awake. If they approach death, they medically intervene. If they try to kill themselves while being tortured, the abusers punish them severely. The abusers have complete control of the events. All of this is quickly understood by victims.

In the production of “hurtcore,” the abusers laugh together and become sexually excited as they inflict pain, terror, and double-bind victims to harm each other. They do not feel like cowards for torturing and raping little kids. They also do not want passive victims. They want children to resist so they can mock and repeatedly defeat them.

It is very hard to understand that they feel powerful because they tortured a child into torturing another child. What is their motivation? Is it to entrap victims into believing themselves accomplices in order to silence them? That is what I used to think. Now, I believe it is less calculated and more primitive. I believe they despise their victims because they unconsciously represent their own victimized child selves whom they seek to extinguish.
Victims of torture submit very quickly, first in terrorized submission, then robotically, and finally in a “snap” into a violent state. This all happens automatically. It is the kill-or-be-killed response familiar to soldiers in combat.

Each of these psychological responses also involves the formation of dissociated self-states that spontaneously form at the moment that the self-state who had been sustaining the torture a moment before could not bear another moment of pain, horror, and heartbreak. This is the heartbreak that comes of being forced to inflict extreme harm on another human being and of being the target of unmitigated cruelty, a complete lack of mercy on the part of the person standing right before oneself.

Violent self-states also snap into existence because of built-up stores of survival-based, terror-driven, rage. Such self-states will likely not be conscious of their terror or the torture to which they were just subjected. Their conscious awareness is limited to rage and the function of committing violence. This is all they know and do. This is their “normal.” Psychoanalytic thinkers will correctly understand this response as an instantaneous form of defensive identification with the aggressor confined to particular dissociated self-states.

With each subsequent session of torture-coerced perpetration, the dissociated identities who initially formed to serve this function become reactivated and once again perform as coerced. As each existing identity reaches its limit, victims’ minds spontaneously form more dissociated self-states, until their identity systems now include hundreds of parts. If properly evaluated, they will be diagnosed as having complex Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID).

When victims discover that they have self-states who have harmed or killed others, they condemn themselves and these parts of self as morally evil, as willing abusers. However, there is no free will involved. They have done violence in response to torture. It is more accurate to understand their responses as uncontrolled acts of self-defense.

I will now move on to the more complex issue of coerced harm while not being directly tortured.
Mafia-style terrorization tactics, that is threats to harm or kill victims’ loved ones, are clearly adequate, in themselves, to compel victims to submit to abuser directives to harm others. This is an alarmingly common tactic of both solo abusers and organized abuser networks to terrorize victims into silence and compliance.

Such threats are often not empty. They may be delivered during violent assault to reinforce survival-driven submission. The work of Joseph LeDoux demonstrates how such fear-conditioned learning exerts a powerful, enduring, and largely unconscious effect on the individual. Abusers also demonstrate to victims that they have tortured or killed other victims and other victims’ loved ones as punishment for non-compliance. To further terrorize victims, they show them photographs and video-recordings of their loved ones.

Some abuser networks have secure hidden facilities where they permanently imprison many of their victims. They threaten victims who have lives outside of the facility with the same fate for their loved ones. They tell them: “If you tell, if you do not do everything we say, we will capture your parents, siblings, pets, imprison them here, and torture them forever.”

What options does a child have if the abusers tell him or her that they will kill the child’s family unless he or she lures another child in a park to the periphery where the abusers wait in a van?

Add to these considerations that such networks often include abusers wearing police uniforms or even actual police officers participating in the abuse and other officers who guard abuse sites. Victims of large organized criminal networks with far-reaching tentacles understand that the likelihood of any form of law enforcement protection is negligible.

It is important to note that children can be accessed by abusers even if they have protective parents. Children may be accessed while with an extended family member connected to the abusers, on a visit to a friend’s home, while with a babysitter, through a corrupt daycare facility or school, through a religious institution, through athletic events, etc. Children are easily terrorized into withholding disclosure from protective adults, as well as concealing their injuries, and being deceptive about where they were and what they were doing.
As with perpetration coerced under direct torture, it is almost always dissociated self-states, not the person as a whole, who follow abuser directives to harm others under threat of harm to loved ones. For example, producers of “hurtcore” may designate particular personalities to lure children to their vehicles. The memory of serving such functions will be confined to the most deeply submerged self-states within the victim, sequestered away from the conscious awareness of normative identities. This allows the mind to preserve its sanity and functionality. To be forced to harm others, to lure victims into the hands of one’s abusers, is soul-crushing. In many ways, it is more psychologically overwhelming than being directly tortured.

Once all of this is established, it is highly effective in gaining a victim’s silence and compliance, often for life.

The road out of this quagmire is arduous and requires great courage. Any consideration of disclosing one’s abuse to a loved one, therapist, etc., provokes intense fear of retaliation. In some cases, this fear is realistic. In cases in which the abusers are no longer an actual threat, fear still looms large. Extreme abusers are perceived as omniscient and omnipresent. Logic does little to settle this fear. Even if victims are able to begin to disclose their abuse to loved ones or in therapy, extricating themselves from their abusers’ psychological controls takes a long time. There may be many hundreds of dissociated identities who reside in the mind’s internal landscape who perceive themselves as stuck in the clutches of their abusers in the sites where they were tortured. All of these self-states must be discovered and helped to begin to act of their own free will.

What about victims who are first subjected to this level of abuse and terrorization as adolescents or adults? Does the mind similarly form dissociated self-states whom the abusers can manipulate to do their bidding?

Many clinicians with expertise in dissociative disorders agree that teens and adults with a prior-developed capacity to form dissociated self-states will likely form new ones in response to torture-level abuse. It is more challenging to know if dissociated self-states would form in adults or teens with no prior capacity to dissociate in this way.

Of course, violence combined with threats of harm to one’s loved ones are often sufficient to coerce fully conscious, non-dissociative, people to cooperate with abusers’ agendas. Even law enforcement officers are vulnerable when the safety of their family is threatened. Such threats alone can compel police officers to sabotage investigations into abuser networks.

I will now address the calculated and sophisticated psychological manipulation of victims’ dissociated identities to induce them to later harm others, all out of the conscious awareness of normative identities.
Psychological Manipulation of Victims’ Dissociated Identities to Induce Them to Do Harm

Victims of extreme abuse often make the frightening discovery that they have dissociated self-states whom their abusers have covertly manipulated to do their bidding, including obtaining new victims, stalking and harassing resistant victims, sexual honey-trapping of people whom the abusers seek to control, and even killing people. The psychological manipulations used to achieve these ends include intentionally inducing new dissociated self-states to form, use of torture to condition them, hypnosis, coerced perpetration, tricks, illusions, double-binds, and manipulation of victims’ survival-driven attachment and aggressive responses. Victims report that their abusers refer to these tactics as “programming” and “mind control.”

This is a more complete list of forms of the psychological manipulations involved in programming

A. Torture to induce new dissociated self-states to form to serve particular functions for the abusers,
B. Torture to shape the internal responses and external behavior of dissociated self-states,
C. Hypnosis to induce beliefs, perceptions, and give directives,
D. Double-binds, including torture-coerced perpetration, to set self-states up to believe themselves accomplices,
E. Deception, including illusions, staged events, tricks, film, virtual reality, often facilitated by administration of hallucinogens, to induce false beliefs and perceptions, including that of spiritual entities in the mind and body,
F. Manipulation of attachment/survival needs of victims’ self-states to bond them to the abusers,
G. Eliciting helplessness and rage to manipulate self-states to defensively identify with their abusers and to release rage as directed, including killing disobedient self-states, that is, suicide by internal homicide, and killing others,
H. Indoctrination and immersion of self-states in the spiritual or ideological beliefs and practices of the abusers.
As self-states are induced to form in torture, they are terrorized, survival-driven, highly suggestible, and primed to submit and do as directed. Normative identities are programmed to be amnestic for the existence of these torture-bound identities and the functions that they serve. Normative self-states are also programmed to account for the missing time while programmed identities were in executive control with the belief that they were engaged in benign activities.

Here is a simple example. Tammy is enrolled in a school controlled by an abuser network, unbeknownst to her family. During reading circle, she is transported to a facility operated by the abusers where she is tortured for the first time. During or immediately following the torture, the abusers say: “When you are here, you are Janie, when you go back to school and home, you are Tammy. Tammy will only remember that you were in reading circle.” Pairing the command with torture, and Tammy’s own defensive response to overwhelming trauma, accomplish the abusers’ objectives of inducing Janie to form and making Tammy amnestic for Janie’s existence and experiences.

In contrast to normative parts like Tammy, terrorized programmed identities like Janie have little awareness of anything but the torture to which they have just been subjected and the behavior expected of them. They typically perceive themselves to be confined to the torture facility, bound to torture devices, and punished in response to any resistance.

The abusers who populate this hallucinatory inner world can appear as real to these identities as external people are to individuals without DID. I have witnessed programmed identities become activated, take executive control of victims’ faculties, walk in robotic fashion to perform their function, stare ahead vacantly, and be relatively non-responsive to efforts to gain their attention. If they fail to perform their functions as directed, they re-experience the punishment that occurred in the torture site—pain, terror, electroshock, etc.

Are the normative identities responsible for these programmed acts? Are the programmed identities responsible for the acts they perform under programming? Can either realistically exercise any free will?

I do not believe they can.
My knowledge of the effectiveness of these Machiavellian methods is based in my work with victim-survivors as well as in-depth interviews with survivor-activists and survivor-therapists who are my colleagues.

Further evidence for the feasibility of such methods is found in the declassified documents of the CIA’s cold-war MKUltra and related projects.

A 1951 MKUltra document entitled SI [Special Interrogation] and H [Hypnosis] Experimentation, details an experiment that placed two girls in “very deep trance,” used post-hypnotic coded words to induce them to carry and activate a bomb, and instructed them to have absolute amnesia for these events. Clearly, this is manipulation of dissociative responses for the purpose of doing harm.

In a 1954 Project Artichoke/Bluebird document, entitled the, Military Application of Hypntism [sp.], George Estabrooks, psychologist and consultant to the USA military and CIA MKUltra Program, wrote:

I will take a number of men and will establish in them through the use of hypnotism the condition of split personality.... These men again will have no knowledge of anything that occurs in the hypnotic state– will have no knowledge of ever having been hypnotized... (Kinzer, 2019, p. 87)

It is terrifying to consider that calculated cruelty can infiltrate the human mind, no less coerce a person to act in violation of one’s free will and conscience. But this is exactly what dissociation-savvy abusers work very hard to accomplish, often with much success.
What about victims who have discovered that they have been programmed? Can they finally exercise free will?

Overcoming programming’s controls is not a simple choice or act. It is a long and painstaking process. Obtaining conscious access to the memories is a great challenge because perhaps half of all programming is done to prevent normative identities from discovering the programmed self-states, of which there can be hundreds, even more than a thousand. Most programming also includes the manipulation of particular identities to monitor other identities and report all non-compliance back to the abuser network. Needless to say, any rebellion discovered by abusers is severely punished.

Programming is also inherently complex. A series of identities are usually programmed to serve as back-ups for each desired function. For example, five, even ten, self-states may be programmed to transport the victim to the abusers at designated times. When victims discover one such identity and help it realize that it can now make a different choice, they are often devastated to discover that another more deeply dissociated self-state followed through on the behavior desired by the abusers.

Programmers also manipulate dissociated identities to be loyal to the abuser network. They double-bind some self-states to force them to harm or kill others, then proclaim them as evil or as willing members of the abuser network. They may then that by killing another person, they have earned special status with the gods that they worship or that these entities now reside within. They promise some identities power, wealth, and to be spared further abuse if they take on particular functions for the abusers. They may intentionally provoke rage in some self-states, use films of war combined with hallucinogens to convince them that they are soldiers, and then enlist them to harm the abusers’ enemies.

Victims of programming fear and hate themselves for having self-states who have harmed others and who sabotage their efforts to do what most of us take for granted—exercising free will to be able to act in our own interest. They judge themselves as they imagine others would judge them— as evil, delusional, etc.

We have to work to help them to be more fair.

I now turn to the problem of re-enactment of abuse apart from direct abuser manipulation.
Re-enactment: Unconscious Non-volitional Enactment of Trauma, Often in Dissociated States of Mind

Based on 35 years of clinical work with abused children and adults, I believe that it is likely that more than half of all abuse victims, as children, re-enact their abuse against other children or pets at some time. This applies to victims of both physical and sexual abuse. It happens at all levels of abuse severity with greater frequency in extreme abuse.

Adult survivors experience heartbreaking grief as they recall that they re-enacted their abuse on others. However, in most of these cases, they had no control over these re-enactments. There was no decision, no choice. They were compelled by psychological forces much stronger than the capacity for self-control and concern for others.

Re-enactments have an array of origins, but one common factor: These children had no other means to deal with their painful, terrifying, confusing, often non-verbal and dissociated, traumatic memories, emotions, and sensations. Perhaps there was no one to whom they could safely disclose their abuse. Perhaps their abuse was ongoing.

Re-enactments occur during flashbacks of reliving abuse, in dissociated trance states, and when trauma-bound dissociated identities are activated internally, by external reminders of the abuse, by perceived threats, or by intentional cues by abusers. This occurs spontaneously and with no conscious control.

Sexually abused young children may re-enact their abuse because they do not understand the sexual norms of their culture. Victims who have been prematurely sexualized within certain patterns of sexual abuse often have no ability to understand or control their sexual impulses.

Brutalized children besieged by intense fear, helplessness, rage, and threats to survival, are likely to erupt in explosive violence with no conscious awareness, before they can stop themselves, and, in some cases, with no memory.
In play therapy, children who have been bitten by a dog usually play the role of an aggressive dog to master their helplessness. Similarly, abused children enact aggression against other children in efforts to master the trauma of having been abused. Both of these are forms of defensive identification with the aggressor, the unconscious effort to cope with overwhelming fear, pain, unbearable helplessness, shame, and anger, by turning passive into active.

Years ago, I treated a 12-year-old boy who had raped his younger cousin. When he could finally tell me that he had been violently raped, he blurted out in a flood of tears, “I didn’t mean for it to come out on my cousin, but it did.” He was trapped in an internal hell and knew no way out. His self-hatred and rage exploded in abuse re-enactments against the younger child.

Clearly, if we respond to such children as if they had done a willful immoral act, we only increase the fear and shame they already unfairly carry.

At what age and in what situations is a person morally responsible for abuse-driven harm done to others?

Complex factors inform such determinations. Re-enactments are probably inevitable when abuse is ongoing in adulthood and when cognitive awareness of one’s abuse history remains dissociated. The emotions and sensations connected to the abuse are likely to cross dissociative barriers even when there is no narrative memory, so victims often feel like pressure cookers of anxiety, fear, self-hatred, and rage, all pressing for release. The associated muscle tension is often excruciating and constant (Hohfeler, 2018).

Victims may self-harm to reduce this pressure. However, self-harm often co-exists with re-enactments of violence.
Many adult victims re-enact violence before they can stop themselves, as do abused children, then feel deep shame and remorse. They make every effort to prevent this, even harming themselves in self-punishment. Yet, the re-enactments persist.

When adult survivors feel threatened or cornered, they often drop into flashbacks of terror or into trauma-bearing dissociated self-states. Medical treatments often evoke this response. In such instances, they can lose their orientation to their surroundings and attack people in their proximity in self-defense, such as medical personnel, all too quickly to be able to exert any conscious control.

It is natural to want to condemn anyone who does violence to another person as morally inferior and as different than us. We fear significant social consequences if we temper such judgements. We worry that if we accept the premises in this presentation, everyone who commits violence will deceptively claim that they were terribly abused and had abuse-driven responses or dissociated identities that they could not control. We worry that our world could become even more unsafe.

These are valid points. It is not acceptable to consciously or willfully discharge rage and sexual impulses onto innocent others. But, this does not make it any less true that many victims of extreme abuse have no conscious control over some or all of their violent and sexually aggressive acts.
What kind of change in social consciousness would come about, what social change would follow, if we understood that our jails are not filled with monsters, but mostly with victims of child abuse and people who were raised in impoverished neighborhoods where the streets are war zones?

Some people excuse themselves for things that they could have stopped themselves from doing.

However, others unfairly judge and punish themselves endlessly for things they could not have prevented.

I believe that our work with victim-survivors of extreme abuse is to deeply understand the complex issues that I have presented here and to carry that wisdom within us as we help our clients honestly evaluate themselves with no agenda to undo deserved guilt or to impose unfair guilt.

A lengthier discussion of this subject is available on my website: https://endritualabuse.org/are-victims-responsible/

An eloquent article on re-enactment entitled, *Reenactment*, is available on line by Sandra Bloom (2010).

An advanced treatise on dissociative responses to extreme abuse, including internalized and externalized perpetration, is Harvey Schwartz’s 2013 book, *The alchemy of wolves and sheep: A relational approach to internalized perpetration for complex trauma survivors*.

Rainer Kurz has asked me to conclude my talk with a message to reduce the vicarious traumatization of the brave souls who have listened to these presentations. I will do that with a message of gratitude.

This is frightening material. Therapy with these victims is heart-breaking. Once we really know about this stuff, we are never again the same. We carry the hurt, as I think we must. But we stand together. Every one of us who makes space for survivors to reveal these things makes a difference in this aching world. And in so doing, we are all less alone, victims and supporters alike. So, thank you for opening your hearts and for your courage.
References (I)


The Legacy of Complex Trauma –
Disturbing Memories, Invisible Wounds and Coerced Perpetration

1. The Legacy of Satanist Ritual Abuse (SRA), Trauma & Mind Control: A C-PTSD Assessment Case Study
   (Dr Rainer Hermann Kurz, UK)

2. Seeing Invisible Wounds – A Bio-energetic Understanding of Systematic Trauma
   (Mr Declan Howard, UK)

3. Treatment of Victims Who Condemn Themselves for Harm Done to Other Victims
   (Dr Ellen Lacter, USA)