

The Post-Traumatic Gazette No. 23

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Lifeskills: Give-and-Take I

I think of PTSD as a disease in the sense of dis-ease: not at ease with yourself or the world. It's not easy to have, not easy to live with. PTSD seems to be like alcoholism or diabetes, a condition that can be managed with the proper care. Sometimes under stress, it requires more help (more meetings, more insulin, more therapy). Analyzing your lifestyle helps, too. You can't manage diabetes on an all-sugar diet. You can't manage PTSD very well if you repeatedly expose yourself to pain and stress.

Relationships are one area where pain and stress are common for people with PTSD. Whether you want to learn how to have relationships, to improve a relationship, or to put the fun back into a dysfunctional one, give-and-take is a skill, an art, that will help.

“Okay! Okay! What am I gonna' have to give? And what am I gonna' have to take?” I can hear the grumbles now. Give-and-take is not about having to give or take anything. Having to do things is what happens in the military, what happens in desperate situations, what happens in abusive families.

What give-and-take is:

Giving for free and for fun, not for a payback.

Giving and taking when you can and being able to say no when you want to or need to.

Not *having* to give explanations for your actions, but *being willing to* if someone close to you is concerned.

Paying attention to each other without controlling.

Playing together, crying together, laughing together.

Kindness and consideration.

Creating a safe haven.

What give-and-take is not:

Keeping score.

“Shoulding” on each other.

Making other people feel guilty.

Doing something so someone will owe you.

Controlling others.

Dishing out “crap.”

Taking “crap.”

Payback.

You may have had plenty of practice in giving and taking advice, blame, guilt-trips, name calling, hurt feelings, recriminations, even blows. If you have, think about how you can use that experience to help you practice a more healing and pleasant kind of give-and-take.

Can you turn the sharpness of mind you’ve developed saying sarcastic things to finding good things to say to people?

Can you turn the pain of fighting into a motivation to try new actions?

If you are a determined fighter, can you become equally determined to change?

How else could such experiences help you change?

Top Dog: Even though most people want reciprocity, fun and love, a lot of us settle for less, especially if we have been struggling desperately with the problems caused by PTSD. Most of us have not seen mutually interdependent give-and-take relationships. What we’ve seen is one-up-man-ships, where someone is the boss and everyone else takes orders, i.e. hierarchies of power. Those on the bottom of the heap use their own kind of indirect power (manipulation) to get what they want. Hierarchies usually contain seemingly low-ranking members who have a lot of power. Hierarchy is never what it appears to be. It is intrinsically dishonest. Dad is called boss and Mom runs the family without acknowledgement, or General X is the boss and ex-Pfc. Wintergreen is running the war (Joseph Heller, *Catch 22*).

As far as relationships go, some of us feel safer in a hierarchy because we do not feel worthy of love or we feel no one would give us what we want if they didn’t have to, whether it is respect or kisses. Ask yourself how effective being the boss or the dutiful subordinate has been in getting you the relationship you want?

It never was for me. I was a resentful, manipulative little subordinate, Saint Patience. When I was on top, I was the very critical Perfect-Patience. Neither of those roles was effective in getting me good relationships.

Learning give-and-take has increased my happiness, hope, and healing. My experience has been that give-and-take is a lot more fun and works out quite well, but you can always go back to old behaviors. Remember, old behaviors may feel comfortable even when they are destructive, so changing will be difficult.

Why change? Well, I don't want my husband, Bob, to feel that he has to kiss me because it is his duty. I want him to want to kiss me and talk to me and do things for me because he wants to, just as I want to kiss him, talk to him, and do things for him because I want to.

Problems with give-and-take:

The idea of opening up to give- and-take can be disturbing or even frightening to people who have taken a lot of "crap" over the years. We're afraid that the slightest relaxation of our defensiveness (or aggressiveness, which is a form of defensiveness), the slightest change in status quo, will open the door to a bigger flood of it. This applies whether you are a survivor or live with one.

Trauma is crap. Society's expectation that it not "bother" you, that you "get over it," that maybe you caused it somehow are all crap. Sometimes being with a traumatized person means you take a lot of crap, too.

Taking beatings, bullets, sexual abuse, pain, fear, grief, or terror, all activate in each survivor our innately human capacity to rebel at injustice and to defend ourselves from further pain. Rebellious and defensive feelings and actions are natural, normal survivor skills. No one deserves trauma. No one. Everyone has a right to defend themselves and resist re-traumatization. Yet if you carry rebelliousness and defensiveness into every phase of life, they can cause problems.

I developed defensiveness and rebelliousness just from having to take scoldings, nagging and spankings. I can imagine how much stronger it must be in those who had to take pain and death. Did basic training or On the Job Training in Vietnam have the same result for you? Did rape, battery, incest, an avoidable industrial accident, or some other trauma evoke defensiveness and rebellion in you? Human cruelty and human neglect seem to increase these two characteristics.

Defensiveness and rebelliousness made it difficult for me to relate to others. They wanted me to do something, I didn't wanna' do it, even if it was something I wanted to do. They wanted to give me something, I didn't wanna' take it, even if it was some- thing I wanted. Give or take were not in my repertory. The pause button I've developed in recovery helps here. I can take a moment before I react and decide on how I will act. This empowers me. It helps me to get more out of my life today.

People who have taken a lot of crap may also be dishing it out without even knowing it. Remarks like "Get over it!" or "It's been twenty years! Let it go!" "What's your problem? You were never in Vietnam (or raped or almost killed)!" or even "Honey, don't feel bad," are defensive behavior. The implication is that I cannot tolerate your pain, so it better stop. Defending yourself against other peoples' feelings by trying to erase or control them is the opposite of the kind of give-and-take that makes a marriage, friendship or group a safe haven. In the kind of give-and-take I mean, people get support for their feelings and give support to others for their feelings. They also have permission to say, "I'm sorry you are hurting, but I can't listen right now," when they need to. In other words, it is not an all-or-nothing, never-talk or always-have-to-talk kind of thing.

Changes are scary. By going to 12- step meetings for my own sanity, I had the opportunity to identify my own defensiveness and learn some tools before Bob started to change. I was still scared when he started meditation. My thoughts: "What a dumb idea!" One of my clues that I am scared and defensive is when I'm in put-down mode. If you are a tough trauma survivor or combat vet it may be hard for you to identify when you are afraid. Look for clues. Contempt, impatience, black-and-white thinking, tension in your body, the phrases, "Yes, but—" or "No. You're wrong," or a feeling of urgency are some I've identified. When you can identify whatever it is that signals defensiveness for you, you can decide if what's happening is really a threat. Maybe it is neutral. Maybe it will be good. You can try a wait-and-see approach instead of an instant reaction.

Bob's meditating was not a threat to me. Since I felt threatened, I sat with the feeling (which was uncomfortable), but I didn't believe it, and it passed. At one time I would have said, "Well, that's stupid. why don't you do this or this or this" and would have believed I was being helpful and supportive (as well as right), instead of critical and afraid.

Rebelliousness is also the result of being forced to give what I didn't want to give or didn't have to give. Mostly I had to give my attention to lectures from my parents. I still have trouble listening, especially when I am tired or stressed. Luckily, in a give-and-take relationship, I can say, "I'm so tired or distracted right now that I can't take in what you are saying." Bob says, "OK," and lets it go. When I can, we talk.

Think about what was demanded of you and whether it may be similarly affecting your life. If it is, it is good to be aware of it. Can't change what you can't see.

If what was demanded of you was your life or physical integrity or your friends' lives, I suspect your rebelliousness might be deeper and stronger than mine. Identifying it can help you change it, if it is causing you pain. It certainly caused me a lot of pain. The power I felt while being rebellious, while intense, was very short-lived. The regrets and the damage to others were long-term.

Some traumas, like combat, mean you get to give things to others in ways that may haunt you later, even when the action was the right thing to do. You may never want to do anything again for fear that it will turn out as badly. Respecting that is important if you want to change. Try small changes, just for today.

"You can't make me!" is not the best slogan for running one's life, but I lived by for it many years, without even knowing it, because I always had good reasons why I couldn't do what other people suggested. Rebellious defensiveness cut me off from sources of comfort and support. Is it cutting you off, too? The words, "Yes, but..." are a clue that this might apply. If I find myself thinking, "This time it is different," that's another clue for me.

What you didn't get also affects most trauma survivors. Not getting the parenting you needed from abusive parents, not getting the honor, respect and care that veterans were led to expect by the social contract which the nation makes with those who go to war, not getting the care and protection you were led to expect from society or from God when you were traumatized also lead to rebellion and defensiveness. Whatever it was that you didn't get may make it extremely hard for you to trust in the process of give-and-take. I think this mistrust is something you need to honor and accept, that your experiences will make it difficult and change will be slow.

That's okay. I'm also not suggesting give-and-take with the whole world. Start small, at home, or in a safe group where there is no crosstalk, or one where the therapists can be relied upon.

Give-give-give syndrome: Are you constantly doing things for others that leave you exhausted or broke or both? Even though I hated to be asked to do things, I did them. I was afraid to say no. I felt terrible if everyone didn't like me. I also felt overly-responsible. If I didn't do it, who would? Over-responsibility leads to feelings of guilt when you don't do for others, but rescuing people keeps them stuck. Guess how I know?

Today I feel the guilt, but don't believe it. And I don't do for others the things they could very well do for themselves. Figuring out what is healthy altruism is a slow process. More about that later. Today, when people-pleasing rears its ugly head, I use the slogan, "What other people think of me is none of my business." I used to be obsessed with what other people thought of me.

Another indication to me that I am getting back into give-give mode is when I am saying I'll do things and then forgetting to do them (a sign that I didn't really want to do it or I have too much to do already). I think it is more honest to say "no" or, "Let me get back to you."

Controlling and manipulating others by giving is a kid's pattern—I'll let you copy my answers and then you'll be my friend. I learned it at home. Large children (my parents) passed on the pattern, but I wasn't an adult, so I couldn't see that. I am an adult in recovery now and it has been very important for me to identify family patterns. No matter how comfortable they feel, I have to let them go if they are damaging my relationships. If they prevent me from being kind to myself, which is different from self-indulgent, I also have to let them go.

Although I felt I was a very giving person, I also felt I could and should handle everything on my own without asking for help, so I didn't think I had the "take" part. Of course, I never looked at what I was getting, especially from Bob, because I was so focused on the things I wanted that I wasn't getting. Later on a gratitude list helped me see things that had been invisible to me before: like the guy stayed with me for twenty-five years during which I thought I was perfect, and he had problems, and I told him so a lot. Now that is love!

Another thing I got out of being in a give-give position was the feeling of being better-than. Inside of my sweet, helpful surface was a very resentful person who could not understand why others were not giving back. Of course, I didn't lower myself to ask for anything.

I did things I really didn't want to do because I thought I could *make* people like me (notice the significant verb, make), appreciate me, be nice to me in return. In other words, I was being controlling and manipulative. Unfortunately, the balance sheet was in my head, and no one else knew the score. Since a lot of what I was doing was stuff no one had asked me to do, no one noticed that I was doing it. I didn't want anyone to tell me what to do, so often I didn't ask before I decided to do something for someone else. I even did stuff I was asked not to do because I knew what other people wanted better than they did. It was a lot of work.

Recently, I realized that one of the difficulties I have in the "take" part is that if I am letting someone else give me something or do something for me, I have to let go of control! I had to laugh! I can't make them do it the way I would. They never seem to be able to read my mind, no matter how hot my thoughts, so they don't necessarily help me perfectly, particularly if the directions are still inside my head. Even if I give directions, they are not always followed. People do things their own way. Often their way turns out to be better than what I had thought of, so I have learned to wait and see how things turn out. The slogan, "How important is it?" helps me relax. Trauma survivors and their family members often struggle over how to do things. Letting go is a lot easier.

Taking anything good also involves feeling worthy, which can be a big issue for trauma survivors and their families. Trauma can induce feelings of being bad, unworthy, and guilty. People who live with trauma survivors may feel, since they haven't been through the fire so to speak, they are not worthy either. If you were raised by people who didn't understand that children are by nature self-centered, imperfect, dependent, vulnerable and valuable, unworthiness may be at the core of your being. I wasn't really aware of how unworthy I felt before I got into recovery. Now, I still have those feelings, but when they come up, I simply feel them without believing they are true. I deserve the same care and consideration that I want to give others. I deserve it from myself as well as others.

Part of my fear of taking was that if I took, I would no longer be one-up. I thought if you weren't one-up, you were one-down. People in my family didn't ask for help, so I never saw a healthy request between equals. They did give orders, and being the recipient of orders feels one-down, especially if they are impatiently or unkindly given without regard for your feelings or abilities. This kind of family pattern is another factor in problems with give- and-take.

Experience suggested that letting someone do something for me once meant they would bring it up every time we had a disagreement (which happens in a lot of families). I also thought I was going to owe them forever, that I was in a one-down position if I took anything. I heard that people only did things in expectation of a payback, so if someone was nice to me, I thought, "What do they want?" It was hard to see these expectations and family patterns because they felt so normal: the sky is blue, people always want something. Today I can accept help or take compliments or gifts without having to pay for them, even if people expect me to pay. I've learned a simple "thank you" will suffice. I can say yes to the gift and no to the expectation. I can also look at whether I do the same thing, and if I do, work on changing.

Trust is another facet of give-and-take. I have a family pattern of catastrophizing from which to recover (we don't have headaches, we have brain tumors!). If something good happened to me, I used to wait for the other shoe to drop. Sometimes I helped it along with some chaos-creating behavior like a spending spree. Some people feel that bad follows good like a shadow. Today I prefer to think that bad and good things happen, but they are not cause and effect. I also used to compare my insides to other people's outsides, so I thought that I was the only one having problems. Trust in the future is harder for trauma survivors who have experienced how quickly and thoroughly violence can change your life.

Today my answer to the other shoe dropping is "Well, if it does, I have more resources and tools today than I used to, so I will be able to deal with it better." Adults know life has its ups and downs. We who live with the results of trauma, know life contains trauma. We can deal with and heal from it. My fears and beliefs about life were based in childhood, but I can't base my current behaviors on the fears and experiences of a child. Your fears and beliefs may be based in the trauma you suffered. Some of your

behavior may be wise and some of it may be fear-based stuff you can let go over the course of time if it is causing you pain. I find I do have to acknowledge and feel my fears if I want them to stop running my life on an unconscious level.

Take-take-take syndrome: Sometimes when things have been ripped away from you by traumatic events, you feel that you have to take everything you can to make up for it. You may feel like life, the universe, or whatever, owes you. I think this is true. You did not deserve what you suffered. You do deserve to recover.

The trouble is that trying to make other people give you what you lost is ineffective. No one can make up for a childhood lost to brutality or sexual abuse. No one can make up for the friends you may have lost in war, nor for your innocence and hopes. No one can make up for the loss of part of your body, for people using your body, for the loss of happiness and hope.

Some trauma survivors and veterans become very focused on other people in a vain attempt to get back what they lost. They want the other person to be there for them always and in all ways. No one can do this. No one. And it is not right to expect it. When the person fails them, the survivor may become abusive (yelling, hitting, calling names are all abusive, even if you think you are right and they deserve it) or self-abusive (I'll kill myself, get drunk, whatever). They feel they have to have the other person's attention, respect, love, time, care—or even their car. It never works. Identifying this pattern, having compassion for yourself, and working to find a wider support system is more effective.

Write down what you feel you are owed and by whom. Be honest. Do you feel your wife should be perfect to make up for the girl who dumped you in Vietnam? Do you feel your partner should put up with anything and support you because you are an incest survivor? Are you trying to get it all from one person? If you identify, look for other sources of help. Other sources of help won't be perfect, either. That's why having a lot of them is good. Start small. If you are enraged by this, it probably applies to you. Changing a little bit at a time will eventually make your life better. Shared burdens are lighter.

No one person can replace everything that was stolen from you by the trauma. No one. And no one deserves that burden of being everything to someone who has been traumatized. It is too much. No matter how much

the person loves you and wants to help you, they will wind up demoralized and resentful. I know. I have been there.

Part of the reason for this is the same thing that makes you resent and resist their advice. Only you can heal yourself and part of that healing is regaining a feeling of control of yourself. Controlling others feels like the answer, but it is never effective. Keeping others “in line” is a lot of work and in the end, at least in America, they can leave you. People are individuals and deserve freedom, no matter how much you need them. And in the long run, learning to meet your own needs through a variety of people, places, and things is far more effective in getting you true love, true friends, and a truly satisfying life.

When you take-take-take, you develop a dependence on outside sources of comfort which can be taken from you. Altruism, giving to others for free and for fun is empowering and health producing. When it tips over into give-give-give, it becomes unhealthy martyrdom. When you give-and-take you are aiming for a balance.

Sometimes survivors take from their families and give to other survivors whether it is time, attention or money. This is another place where balance can be sought. Are you pulling you own weight?

It’s amusing to me how many give-give-give people think they are hooked up with take-take-take people. Given our cultural myths about what makes a good woman and how men are supposed to be, neither side can see what the other is giving because they think they are supposed to be like that without effort. This leads to a lot of misunderstandings and hurt feelings. Compassion for each other can take a lot of the pain out of such situations.

Things that are hard to take:

For many of us, taking a compliment, praise, or a gift is extremely difficult. Being kind to ourselves (as opposed to self-indulgent): taking time and taking care of ourselves is hard to do. The regular everyday pains of life can be hard to take when you know how bad things can get during a traumatic incident. It can be hard to take other people’s needs into account when you have had to be very tough to survive.

Things that are hard to give: trust, attention, kindness, courtesy, gratitude.

More in the next issue

The Value of Validation

Caterina James, PhD, from **Oasis Insights: A Christian Newsletter for Trauma Survivors**

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Jesus admonished us to treat others as we would like them to treat us. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matthew 7:12). This article is about a specific application of the Golden Rule. It is about the art and the science of validation.

Who among us does not relish being treated with respect when we share our thoughts? And who among us does not wish to have our expressed feelings be regarded as legitimate? Yet, from all my years of counseling and from personal experience, I know how difficult it often is for people to validate each other, and how relationships suffer accordingly when validation is not forthcoming. In this article I wish to present what healthy validation looks like in everyday life. In the next two issues I will discuss the topics of self-validation and validation as a core strategy in psychotherapy.

The essence of validation

The term “validation” comes from the word “valid”, which means sound, well-founded, logical, convincing. The heart of validation is communicating to another person that their assumptions, attitudes, thoughts, emotions and actions are understandable, given their past history, their temperament and their present circumstances. Basically, validation amounts to letting a person know that their responses make sense to us.

Ways to validate others:

There are many ways we can validate others, The most basic validating response is listening attentively and respectfully when someone shares with us. Unobtrusive listening lets people know that we believe they deserve our focused attention, and that what they have to say matters. Giving someone a piece of our time without dragging up our own agendas amounts to a profound affirmation that they are “visible” to us and that their feelings and thoughts are worth attending to. Sometimes we may validate what the person is saying by responding with a direct empathic comment, such as “I can see why you feel this way,” or, “That makes sense to me,” or, “That

must have been so hard for you.” At other times, just minimal verbal responses such as “aha” or “hmmm” communicate that we view the other person’s responses as legitimate [A very healing response for trauma survivors—P.M., Editor].

At times we may have the opportunity to validate someone who is not even talking, but who is communicating through body language and facial expression. We may tell a sullen teenager, “I can see that you are upset about this.” Or we can tell a grief-stricken sobbing parent, “No words can express what you’re feeling right now.”

Validation can happen through our “mirroring” back to a person the part of themselves that they are showing us. We may say, “You look so happy right now, you’re beaming!” Or, “you’re sad because Joey did not want to share his toys with you.” Or, we may simply smile back to them when they smile at us. This reflecting is particularly vital in children’s development of self. Children begin to form a sense of who they are and to identify their feeling states through our offering them concrete or verbal cues about what seems to be going on with them.

We might also validate another person when we allow them to choose what they want to share with us and accept their decision about what they do not wish to share with us. We may let a friend tell us about their recent trip, even though we may not be particularly interested in that part of their lives. Or we may allow a child to take us by the hand and show us some of their “treasures” in the back yard.

One more way we can validate others is by communicating to them through our words, attitudes and actions that we believe God instilled His goodness in them, that we believe that they have what it takes to continue growing and developing spiritually, emotionally and intellectually, and that they are worth loving unconditionally.

What validation is and what it is not:

It appears to me that most people’s resistance to validating others stems from the misconception that validating someone amounts to agreeing with them, to endorsing their behavior, or to stating that the person was “right” in whatever they were doing. Validation does not have to be any of the above, although it can be those things in certain situations. The core of validation is letting someone know that their responses make sense, given

who they are, where they have come from, and what their present circumstances are, even when we do not condone these responses...

From the Winter 1999 issue.

PTSD quotes from literature

(in case you thought it was a new phenomenon)

War changes men's natures. The barbarities of war are seldom committed by abnormal men. The tragedy of war is that these horrors are committed by normal men in situations in which the ebb and flow of everyday life have departed and been replaced by a constant round of fear and anger and blood and death. Soldiers at war are not to be judged by civilian rules.

—quote from the movie *Breaker Morant*, about an incident in the Boer War.

On their way back, as David was returning after killing the Philistine, the women came out to meet King Saul from all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing... "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

Saul was very angry...

On the following day an evil spirit from God seized on Saul and he fell into fit of frenzy while he was in his house. David was playing the harp as on other days and Saul had his spear in his hand. Saul brandished the spear; "I am going to pin David to the wall," he said. But David twice evaded him.

—*The Jerusalem Bible*, I Samuel 18, verses 6-11.

Michael Trimble points out in "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: History of a Concept" that Shakespeare wrote about it in *Henry the Fourth, Part I*.

Lady Percy's speech:

Oh, my good lord, why are you thus alone?	emotional isolation
For what offense have I this fortnight been	emotional numbing &
A banished woman from my Harry's bed?	sexual dysfunction
Tell me, sweet lord, what is't that takes from thee	
Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?	sleep disturbance
Why does thou bend thine eyes upon the earth	& depression
And start so often when thou sitt'st alone...	intrusive thoughts
...thick-ey'd musing and curs'd melancholy?	inability to concentrate, depression

In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watch'd,
 And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars... nightmares
 Cry Courage—to the field—
 And thou hast talk'd intrusive memories
 Of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents...
 Of prisoners' ransom and of soldiers slain.. survivor guilt.
 Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war,
 And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep
 That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow... night sweats
 And in thy face strange motions have appeared... anxiety and startle reaction
 —from *Recovering From The War*, Patience H. C. Mason.

I can remember the time when I used to sleep quietly, without workings in my thoughts, whole nights together, but now it is otherwise with me. When all are fast asleep about me, and no eye open but His who ever waketh, my thoughts are upon things past... I remember, in the night season, how the other day I was in the midst of thousands of enemies and nothing but death before me... One hour I have been in health and wealth, wanting nothing, but the next hour in sickness and wounds and death.

—*The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, 1682.

I heard a shout. Starting and looking half round, I saw the lion just in the act of springing upon me... He caught my shoulder as he sprang, and we both came to the ground below together. Growling horribly close to my ear, he shook me as a terrier does a rat. The shock produced a stupor similar to that which seems to be felt by a mouse after the first shake of the cat. It caused a sort of dreaminess in which there was no sense of pain nor feeling of terror, though quite conscious of all that was happening.

—David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 1857.

The boys were hard at it, 'snow balling.' While I was standing looking on, a file of soldiers marched by me with a poor fellow on his way to be shot... the volley discharged and the prisoner fell off the stump. He had not been killed... the sergeant ran up and placed the muzzle of his gun at the head of the poor, pleading and entreating wretch, his gun was discharged, and the wretched man only powder-burned... The whole affair had to be gone over again... He had no sooner been taken up and carried off to be buried, than the soldiers were throwing snow balls as hard as ever, as if nothing had happened...

—Sam Watkins, *Company 'Aytch*, published in 1881.

And while my imagination is like the weaver's shuttle, playing backward and forward through these two decades of time, I ask myself, Are these things real? did they happen? are they being enacted today? or are they the fancies of the imagination in forgetful reverie?... Surely these are just the vagaries of my own imagination. Surely my fancies are running wild tonight. But, hush! I now hear the approach of battle. That low, rumbling sound in the west is the roar of cannon in the distance. That rushing sound is the tread of soldiers. That quick, lurid glare is the flash that precedes the cannon's roar. And, listen! that loud report that makes the earth tremble and jar and sway, is but the bursting of a shell, as it screams through the dark, tempestuous night. That black, ebon cloud, where the lurid lightning flickers and flares, that is rolling through the heavens, is the smoke of battle; beneath is being enacted a carnage of blood and death. Listen! the soldiers are charging now. The flashes and roaring now are blended with the shouts of soldiers and the confusion of battle...

—Sam Watkins, *Company 'Aytch*, published in 1881.

I can and shall never forget that terrible war until my eyes close in death. The scenes are just as fresh in my mind to-day as in '61. I see now each scene—the roll-call, the drum tap, “lights out,” the call at night when there was danger from the enemy...

They were a gruesome sight, those fleshless heads and grinning jaws [lying on the ground outside Fort Wagner near Charleston], but by this time I had become accustomed to worse things and did not feel as I might have earlier in my camp life. It seems strange how our aversion to seeing suffering is overcome in war—how we are able to see the most sickening sights, such as men with their limbs blown off and mangled by the deadly shells, without a shudder: and instead of turning away, how we hurry to assist in alleviating their pain, bind up their wounds, and press the cool water to their parched lips, with feelings only of sympathy and pity.

—Susie King Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, Markus Wiener Publishing, NY, 1988.

“When they brought you to me, you were cold and discolored and nearly dead, and so also was I, you from asphyxiation and I from painful lacerations and loss of blood, but I held you to me, close in my arms and so we were both warmed and comforted—and so we both lived, but the memory of it all could not be

clearer in my consciousness if it had been seared into my brain with a red-hot branding iron, for I was given no anesthetic while those huge instruments were clamped onto your head.” —Emily Wilson, *Pass It On: The story of Bill Wilson and how the AA message reached the world*, Alcoholics Anonymous, 1984.

Happy are men who yet before they are killed
Can let their veins run cold. Whom no compassion fleers
Or makes their feet
Sore on the alleys cobbled with their brothers... Dullness best solves
The tease and doubt of shelling...
Having seen all things red,
Their eyes are rid
Of the hurt of the color of blood forever.
And terror's first constriction over,
Their hearts remain small-drawn.
Their senses in some scorching cautery of battle
Now long since ironed,
Can laugh among the dying unconcerned...
—Wilfred Owen, *Insensibility*, 1918

Paper Dolls

We stand together after church, the minister and his family. No one would guess the wild night, his drunken ammunition scarring the walls with buckshot. Such smiling daughters who wear white gloves, sweet in polka dots and stripes. Tip them over and they fall, face first without a sound.
—Joan Fiset, *Now The Day Is Over*, Blue Begonia Press, Yakima, WA, 1997.

Each time I sat at the typewriter, I found myself writing about Vietnam, almost against my will. It's over, I kept saying to myself, Vietnam is over! I threw the pages away... Yet Vietnam always ended up on the paper and in my conscious thoughts. When I walked the streets, I thought about Gene and thousands of other casualties. Sometimes a room would remind me of the surgical T. Or I'd be in a crowded elevator and the people would make me remember slabs of bloody human meat.

—Lynda Van Devanter, *Home Before Morning*, Beaufort Books, 1983.

I wondered if this boy had planned to get ahold of me way in advance, if he'd picked the time when everybody would be at the game. Which was worse—if he'd

only grabbed me at the opportune moment, or if he'd plotted and stalked me? I couldn't decide. I didn't want to be taken too easily, but I had been, of course. Even at seven I knew that. On the other hand the idea that he'd consciously chosen to do this, then tracked me down like a rabbit, made me feel sick. He walked me home not saying anything, like he was doing a baby-sitting chore.
—Mary Karr, *The Liar's Club*, Penguin, 1996.

Resources you may be looking for:

Survivors of Incest Anonymous,

www.siawso.org.

They define incest very broadly so that all survivors of child sexual abuse can benefit from their literature. There is a paragraph in the Welcome, which is read at most meetings, which all child sexual abuse survivors need to hear over and over.

From the Survivors of Incest Anonymous WELCOME

“We learn in SIA not to deny, that we did not imagine the incest, nor was it our fault in any way. The abuser will go to any length to shift the responsibility to the defenseless child, often accusing the child of being seductive. We had healthy natural needs for love, attention and acceptance, and we often paid high prices to get those needs met, but we did not seduce our abuser. Physical coercion is rarely necessary with a child, since the child is already intimidated. The more gentle the attack, the more guilt the victim inappropriately carries. We also learn not to accept any responsibility for the attacks even if they occurred over a pro- longed period of time. “

Lights in the Darkness: For Survivors and Healers of Sexual Abuse, Sister Ave Clark, O. P.,

This is a beautiful book by a survivor and healer of sexual trauma. It has a very healing message for all sexual abuse survivors; incest, child sexual

abuse, rape: male, or female. It provides guidance for priests, ministers, family members and friends interested in the spiritual healing of the painful wounds caused by sexual abuse of any sort. No easy answers, but practical guidelines based in experience.

Many Voices

From the website:

Since 1989 *Many Voices* has offered a forum where thousands of recovering persons share ways they use to heal from tragic physical, sexual, and emotional assaults. Together, we learn to cooperate inside, and to deal more effectively with professional helpers and loved ones. We are determined to work past our pain and reshape our lives. Though our pasts may be troubled, our present lives can be improved, and our futures can be transformed!

Although the founder and publisher has passed on, all the newsletters, written by and for people with DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder) are available online.

<http://manyvoicespress.org/newsletter.html>