



# Trauma & Dissociation Bridge of Hope

## Note About BoH:

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## The Process of Healing

The road of recovery from trauma is a challenging one. The process of healing takes a ton of energy and effort on the part of the survivor. Holding on tight at times seems to be all that can be done to get through the tough times. Other times coping is easier and the fight isn't so hard.

When I think about the consequences of trauma, I picture a piece of pottery that has cracks in it, but isn't broken. There is hope in this picture.

In the hands of a potter, that cracked pottery can be reworked and molded into a better piece of pottery. It may not be the same shape or look the same, maybe not even have the same function, but it is once again without cracks and without chips missing.

Healing from trauma is very similar. As we work through the trauma we experienced, we begin to heal the cracks we experienced. Being molded is painful. It requires the assistance of someone experienced in helping us mold into the person we want to be.

My therapist was very helpful in my healing and mold-

ing. She helped me learn new coping skills, and helped me to form new opinions of myself and face the truth of my trauma. The trauma wasn't my fault. I didn't ask for the trauma—it



Molding and Healing

was perpetrated on me. I didn't ask to be treated poorly—I asked to be loved.

I was so broken, I didn't even believe I was loveable. But through supportive others, through a couple families who loved on me even when I was "bad," I learned that I could be loveable and didn't have to do anything to earn that love.

By no means was it as simple or quick as writing this. It was a painful, scary, and difficult learning process. I had to break old messages of being worthless and unlovable and learn new ones of being loveable and loved.

No matter what your pe-

trator told you, it wasn't your fault. You are worthwhile and you are loveable. Maybe you don't feel like it, but the little child in you did nothing wrong. Whether your trauma was childhood abuse, domestic abuse/rape, the honorable responsibility of fighting for our country, or overcoming an accident, the trauma you experienced can be re-covered from.

There isn't a set process to go through for recovery. Each of us who has survived has our own unique needs, and have similar needs. What one survivor may need to work on the most may be different from what another survivor may need to work on to get through the roughest patches. For some of us, there are several rough patches.

The biggest thing is to not give up and to hold tight to the path of recovery. You can do it!

Set up your support system and dig in for the hard work. You are so worth the effort and energy that you will expend to recover from your trauma.

Kristen

Find a support group that fits your needs—they are available in person or online.

## Types of Support Groups

Support groups are a great asset for survivors to consider joining. They are available in person, through email and online through written or voice chat.

Traditionally, there are closed groups, semi-open, and open groups. Depending upon the type of group and the nature of the group, group leaders can decide which group is most appropriate for participants.

### Closed Groups:

Closed groups generally have a start and end date. New members are not accepted after the start date or the week following the start date. The group may or may not repeat after it has finished to allow for other group topics to be offered.

### Semi-Open Groups

A semi-open group typically is a cross between a closed group

and an open group. Generally these groups are ongoing support groups, but they only accept new members on certain days. Generally current group members are prepared for the new members, and new members are screened for appropriateness for the current group members.

### Open Groups:

Open groups are groups where anyone can attend any of the groups, generally without even signing up. Many of these support groups are offered through hospitals and other agencies that have ongoing groups. They tend to be open ended groups—meeting anywhere from daily to monthly.

Deciding what support group to attend can be like determining what therapist or physician to see. If a contact person is available, ask questions and see if it is what you are looking for. Try the

group a couple times to see if it's a good fit for you. If it's a closed group, ask if it will be offered again in the future.

Online groups tend to be different as you can't see facial expressions, and they require a quiet space with the ability to have a microphone and speaker. Other online groups require the ability to type well to keep up with the discussion. Type written support groups tend to be the most difficult as it's hard to tell when someone is going to post, so sometimes there is cross talk.

Hope Recovery utilizes a combination of groups. In addition to online voice support groups, there are groups that include reading materials in the support forum.



## One Survivors Support Group Experience

I had the opportunity to participate in a support group that was run by therapists. I had to fill out paperwork and be interviewed to get into it. Before joining the group I had to attend a 6 week introductory group for sexual abuse. Once that was completed, I was allowed to move into an ongoing group.

At first I was really nervous and didn't talk at all. I was afraid to say anything. I was triggered a little bit with the introductory group as it brought up some memories for me.

When I finished the first group I did much better. I was more comfortable, and was able to relate to the other members. I couldn't hardly wait for the next week because that meant someone else knew some of what I was experiencing.

Having had MPD (DID), I had some difficulties with switching. My therapist would work with me on that as it was discouraged by the therapists.

I was so relieved to know I wasn't the only one. It was scary to tell others what happened to me because I wasn't supposed to tell what had hap-

pened, and that was where I had problems in group. It was a love-hate relationship I had. I finally had to quit because I couldn't stay in my host personality and lots of parts inside were triggered regularly, particularly the little ones. I didn't know how to protect them at that time. I didn't have my parts set up to protect the little ones inside and that created a lot of stress and chaos inside.

I did find the support group so beneficial other than my struggles with that. I finally stopped because of the chaos, but I missed it greatly.



## Ways to Make a Difference in the World

### Sharing

Seniors love your artwork! Brighten walls—and smiles—at the local senior center or nursing home.

Got a favorite game? Teach it to younger kids.

Win brownie points! Organize canned goods at home and take extras to a food pantry.

Got talent? Share it.

Your old backpack needs a new friend... donate it.

Gather up outgrown, gently worn shoes and clothes for your local Salvation Army, Goodwill, church or synagogue.

Party leftovers? Local soup kitchen guests are gonna love them!

Neglected stuffies in your room? Little kids at shelters are aching to cuddle them.

Like a challenge? Your game board skills are in demands at the senior center.

Friend forgot their snack? Share yours.

Read aloud to little kids at the library—they'll love you.

Dust off your old—but still good—books and give them to our school library.

### Giving

It's your birthday—give to someone in need.

Share your hobby \$\$\$ with your favorite worthy cause.

How about a toy drive for kids suck in the hospital.

Get a haircut and give your ponytail to Locks of Love.

Got old sports equipment? Bring it to your local Parks Y

rec!

Calling all chefs. Bake cakes and donate then donate them to the local shelter and donate the proceeds.

Feed your furry friends at the animal shelter... drop off a bag of food or some treats.

Time is precious... share a bit of yours to help others.

Kind words lift spirits... give a compliment an lift yours too.

### Conserving

Compost your fruit and veggie scraps... and watch your garden BLOOM!

Help save a gazillion disposable water bottles... reusable bottles rule!

Save a tree! Use both sides of your notebook paper.

Reuse, recycle. Reuse, recycle. Reuse, recycle.

Keep the earth cool... walk, bike or use public transportation.

Got energy? Pick up trash! Remember: wear gloves & work with an adult.

Your town doesn't recycle? Yikes! Create a program now!

Nourish your neighborhood green spaces... grow a community garden.

Like clean air? Grab your friends and plant trees.

Buzz your town selectmen for more neighborhood trashcans and recycling bins.

Want to save energy while leaping tall buildings in a single bound? Turn off the boob tube and play outside.

Love surprises? Plant fall bulbs and flower seeds... and keep a weather eye for spring blossoms!

"Turn off the lights!" Make switch plate reminders for your whole teeth!

Keep sturdy take out containers for future leftovers.

Save water and tons of \$\$\$ - turn off the water when you brush teeth!

Keep sturdy takeout containers for future leftovers.

Transform colorful magazine pages, comics and more into artful projects and gift wrappers!

Learn how to donate/recycle old computer stuff and post instructions with permission) at your local electronics store.

Breathe in nature—turn off the AC and open a window to the world.

### Doing

Whip up your favorite yummy snack and present it to a food kitchen!

Love history? Visit folks at a senior center and ask about the amazing things they've witnessed.

Want to change the world? Practice random acts of kindness.

Keep your rain sharp and body strong by eating healthy choices.

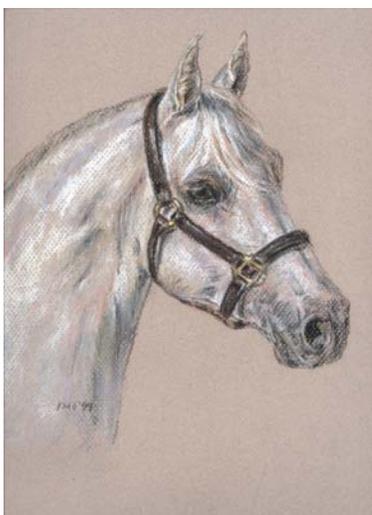
Lead by your good example.

Snuggle a dog or cat at your local animal shelter.

Brighten the world—smile often.

Adapted from  
Unknown Author

Snuggle a dog or  
cat at your local  
animal shelter.



Drawn by Kathy O.

## Sharing Paintings



Painting by Cathy Y.

If you have artwork that you would like to submit, please follow the submission guidelines on the website!

Share your talents—writing, photography, drawings.

## Treatment Options

Today there are a tremendous number of treatment options for those who are struggling with various mental health and trauma issues.

There are many treatment modalities for trauma recovery including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Somatic Experiencing, Internal Family Systems Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Expressive Art Therapy, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, Ego-State Therapy, Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Therapy (AEDP), and Survivor Therapy.

There are short term and long term residential programs, inpatient programs, intensive outpatient and outpatient counseling options. Residential programs generally have all day schedules where you

live there for 30-90 days (some are 6 months to a year).

Inpatient stays are generally a few days in general except in trauma units, where stays could be longer, then they offer you a move to their intensive outpatient program. Intensive outpatient generally meets 4-6 hours a day, for anywhere between two and five days a week.

Outpatient counseling is generally once a week or once every other week (or as you agree on).

Depending upon your situation, your ability to pay, the severity of your symptoms and more, one of these treatment programs can fit your needs. For some survivors of trauma, it's necessary to try a more or less intensive treatment program, or to explore a different program to find one that

matches your treatment needs.

Not every therapist who reports they treat trauma actually are trauma therapists. It is something they treat, but isn't their specialization. If you need someone with more experience, don't be afraid to ask for your needs to be met.

If your trauma has created some specific issues that are creating more problems (such as eating disorders, substance abuse/addiction, self-injury or similar issues) there are programs that may be necessary to check into to address those negative coping skills before addressing the primary trauma without increasing the intensity of the other related issues.

There are residential, inpatient, intensive outpatient and outpatient treatment options for trauma and trauma related issues.



One individuals photo in the early hours

## Finding a Therapist

Finding a trauma therapist who deals with the impact of trauma, which significantly deals with PTSD and dissociation.

Finding a therapist is much like finding a physician or choosing a car. It's important to ask questions, see if they have what you need and if the two of you can work together.

It's important to ask questions.

How many years experience do you have working with trauma survivors?

What modality or modalities do you use to work with trauma survivors?

If your client is in crisis, what is your process for coverage of crisis situations?

If you have someone else on call for crises, how much experience do they have with trauma issues and survivors.

Are you licensed in your state? If they say no, check the licensure requirements for counselors in your state.

Do you have any specialized certifications or training?

Do you have privileges at the local psychiatric inpatient facility? If so, do you see your clients while they are in there?

How long does it take to get an initial appointment?

How often do you see trauma clients? Is it possible to see you more than once a week if needed?

Do you accept my insurance? If not, what are your fees? Do you offer a sliding scale?

If you can't afford them, ask if they have any referrals that would take your insurance or offer sliding scale fees that specialize in trauma.

Write out any other questions you have. If you have any specific type of treatment that helps you significantly, see if they would be willing to accommodate that in your treatment plan.

Word of mouth from other trauma survivors can be a great asset. This can be finding out if they are willing to work with you in continuing that.

If they don't feel like a good match, then don't settle if you don't have to. Some areas have no trauma therapists that specialize, so you may need to choose the one who seems to be the most knowledgeable and have the most experience.

## Myths About Treatment

**Myth:** Therapists just nod their heads and listen.

**Fact:** CPT, PE, and EMDR are active treatments where the patient and therapist work together. Therapists are very engaged. Sessions are goal-oriented. Elements of treatment are skills-based.

**Myth:** Therapy goes on for years and years.

**Fact:** CPT, PE, and EMDR are all time-limited treatments

**Myth:** Therapists "get inside your head" to change who you are.

**Fact:** Therapists help you understand your thoughts and feelings so that you have more control over them.

**Myth:** I can get better on my own.

**Fact:** If you have had PTSD for a year or more, the chance of getting better without counseling or medication is quite small.

**Myth:** If I have to talk about trauma, I'll "lose it."

**Fact:** Therapy takes place in a safe, controlled environment, and you work with the therapist to go only as far as you feel safe. You learn coping skills to help you manage your anxiety.

**Myth:** Only a therapist who's been through what I've been through understands this well enough to help me.

**Fact:** Providers with and with-

out their own trauma histories can effectively deliver PTSD treatments. What's important is that the provider has good training and experience, and can help you develop the skills you need to get better.

**Myth:** All I need to get better is the support of other people who've been through what I've been through.

**Fact:** Support groups can provide social support and interpersonal connection, but there's little evidence that they help the PTSD symptoms themselves.

By the  
National Center for PTSD

It's Important to  
Ask Questions!

Be Aware of the  
Myths of  
Treatment

## He Hears Our Cries

It's a rocky road. There's no energy, and I'm struggling to push forward. One moment I am encouraged because I feel up to doing something productive and the next moment I feel like crying and crawling in bed. Sometimes it feels like the old movie "Ground Hog Day." Sometimes it just never seems to end.

Through these rough time though, I know God is there. He sustains me by placing people, pets, the changes of seasons, graphics and other encouraging things in my life. Earlier today my kitty came up

and loved on me. It's like she knew I needed her.

God's plan for me—through all the valleys and mountains and oceans that must be endured and crossed—He made a way for me to get through this trauma. While I don't like the chaos of the journey I'm thankful for His sustaining grace and strength to guide me through it; for those He has placed in my life to help me through it.

At times I've pictured God reaching down His hand and holding mine tight with his fingers wrapped around my

wrist, holding me up when I'm too weak. I know He holds me up, because I couldn't get through this life much more than this day without Him. He's the only reason that sometimes I can take the next breath. In fact, He provides the reasons to keep breathing in the darkness.

If you're struggling like I am, I believe we can make it through. Our God can sustain us through every trial and struggle of this stinking abuse that was done to us. Let's keep holding on and let him hold us.

He hears our cries!

If you're  
struggling like I  
am, I believe we  
can make it  
through.

## PTSD from a Hurricane

The wind from the hurricane was blowing hard—things were banging into the walls. Transformers were exploding and the smell of gas smelled throughout the house. It was at that moment, I thought my friends and I were going to die. So I just prayed for God to take me without any pain and laid down to sleep, thinking I would die that night.

Our home was blessed, in that there was only water damage due to a corner of the roof having come off. Across the street and next door looked like a war zone. After the storm passed, is when the real storm began.

The aftermath of the hurricane was devastating. No electricity or ability to get out for days. No running water and lines and lines of people waiting for food and water. The heat was

excessive and there was no way to cool off except to try to stay inside.

As soon as the roads opened up, I moved away. The trauma of the devastation was too much, and I found myself needing extra support. I ended up seeking therapy for what had happened, but I didn't realize the traumatic effects of it until years later.

At least 10 years later, a bad storm passing through while I was at work. It required taking a detour home, as trees had been uprooted. Just driving through that brought on flashbacks of the hurricane damage.

Once again, I had to seek counsel to process the resurrected trauma from my past.

Today, I still do not like storms, but I'm not so stressed

by them. I try to pray and relax the best I can when they happen. Thankfully the flashbacks are gone and the terrors previous experienced are no longer here.

If you're dealing with the after effects of a natural disaster, it's not uncommon to need some help to get through it. Don't be afraid to reach out for assistance. Find a counselor who has experience with trauma recovery. Your local Red Cross agency may have leads to crisis counselors in your area.

In my experience, it's important to be patient with the process of healing and let yourself have the time you need to deal with what you've been through.

Submitted by  
Hurricane Survivor

When Truth Rocks My Boat or Life Lived in Lie-la or Finding The Safe Harbor

When Truth rocks my  
boat -  
UNNHH! I've hit that  
rock *again*...  
I grab ol' Lie-la's sides -  
Oh Please!  
Don't dump me in the  
drink.  
I need to stay afloat, you  
know,  
She's all I have, so  
Please!  
Quit sending me to-  
wards points of Truth,  
Quit snagging me so  
roughly!  
My fellow travelers, how  
do *they* fare?  
Those Generations Past;  
They lead me on, they  
hold me fast,  
God's *good?* Epitome of  
foolishness.

And *yet*... Could it be?  
Do I see - *another* craft?  
She has less bumps and  
bruises,  
Those folks a *smooth*  
course sail.  
Please break the strong-  
hold Father,  
of Lies about You told -  
of your deceit, your cru-  
elty -  
He's a Betrayer for sure.  
Oh, I see the Others ap-  
proaching,  
They come up right 'long  
-side;  
With kindly understand-  
ing,  
They offer me a ride  
In *their* sweet vessel,  
So pretty, it's name The  
Comforter;  
But I am just not ready -

Trust them? *Their*  
Truth? *Mmmm*  
Mmmm!  
Please bring me to the  
Harbor  
of Rest from this, My  
Struggle  
to stay afloat - the leaks,  
the breaks -  
I am so tired of bailing!  
You *say* there is this  
Harbor,  
I want it to be so!!  
You *say* there is a Rest  
for me,  
I Look to You Alone  
To bring me here, to  
help me see  
Your Truth - no need to  
flee it?  
I've fought You, fled You  
for so long,  
My Shepherd, yes, my  
Jesus,  
The One who *searches*,  
and dies for me,  
The Captain of My Sal-  
vation.

They offer me a  
ride  
In their sweet  
vessel,  
So pretty, it's  
name The  
Comforter;  
But I just not  
ready.

Time

It's only time. Hold me fast.  
Let me find a way to stay close  
without letting go.  
Hoping for a way to reach the  
path of healing. Finding a  
route that allows for hope.  
Feeling alone and fearful at  
times, the road seems so hard  
and weary.  
Yet I travel on.... Time will be  
the healer of pain... scars re-  
main but they will no longer  
hurt.

Those who taught me that they  
love me in spite of me, are  
those I choose to call my fami-  
ly. They have been here time  
after time.  
I'm holding fast—praying for  
strength to get through.  
Knowing others have said  
there is an end in sight, I hold  
to their words. I strive to find  
the hope they offer and cling to  
their sharing of their paths.  
Time—it's passing slowly.

Submitted by  
Alison

Submitted by  
Ann Barrentine



## MISSION

The mission of Hope Recovery is to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals by assisting them in their trauma recovery providing support, resources, committed volunteers, national leadership and standards of excellence.

## VISION

Hope Recovery aspires to provide excellence in service and support while assisting individuals in achieving their recovery goals.

## Hope Recovery Inc.

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\*Includes Guam, Puerto Rico and Canada.

Join us online to find our supportive forums and chat. Go to our home page and select the tab for FORUM. You'll find a variety of forums for discussion, and a chat room where various discussions will take place.

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)

## Subscribing to Bridge of Hope

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Online—\$2.50 per issue (\$10 per year)

### You Are Not Alone!

Bridge of Hope is available to order by mail by sending payment to our PO Box, or online via PayPal through our website.



When all seems like a struggle, there is hope.