

# Complex Trauma resulting in Dissociative Identity and similar Dissociative Post-Traumatic Conditions

## Practitioners New to Working with Dissociation

### 1. Who is this information sheet for?

- Clinical practitioners who are new to working with clients/patients who experience distressing levels of dissociation.

For example....

- Counsellors
- Psychotherapists,
- Psychologists
- Psychiatrists

### 2. Introduction

While awareness of complex trauma-related dissociative disorders is increasing, supported by a large and growing body of clinical and research evidence, for most clinicians this is not yet matched by training at foundation and post-qualifying levels. It is common for the client/patient themselves to reveal that they suffer from dissociation, often after being referred for other problems. This is usually the product of a trusting therapeutic relationship but can leave clinicians feeling deskilled and needing to climb a steep learning curve.

### 3. Where to from here?

It is an ethical requirement for practitioners to be trained to practice their particular modality and to refer on issues outside their area of expertise. However, in a developing field there are few experts. Often, seeking to refer elsewhere is fruitless. It is also potentially damaging to the relationship in which the client/patient has trusted enough to let it be known that their problems are the result of dissociation. To minimise damage from well-intentioned but not necessarily appropriate interventions the practitioner has a responsibility to explore further learning and skills development to meet the needs of their dissociative client/patient.

### 3a Some key steps to take

- Allow for your feelings of being deskilled etc. They are normal no matter what your level of experience and expertise in other work.
- Obtain specialist consultation or supervision from someone with more experience in this field. This can work well in combination with existing supervision for other areas of work.
- Address your need for continuing professional development via further training and reading. There are several courses now available. See below for courses co-produced and delivered by the European Society for Trauma and Dissociation UK Network (ESTD-UK) in partnership with experts from experience from First Person Plural and suggested reading.
- Familiarise yourself with the international treatment guidelines drawn up by the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD) and available on their website.
- Be open to learning from your client/patient without this replacing professional responsibility to undertake further training.
- Find peer support. This is challenging work being taken forward by a community of like-minded peers in the UK and internationally. Think about joining one of the professional bodies below and attend their conferences, webinars and other trainings.

Informed supervision, peer support and peer consultation is especially important if your client/patient is a survivor of organised abuse and mind control. Ritual Abuse Information Networking Support (R.A.I.N.S.) is a professional peer network set up to provide support and information.

See overleaf for further information and resources, including websites & essential reading.

## **4. Further information and resources**

- **Background information**

ESTD-UK has a range of other information sheets which outline symptoms, assessment, treatment and relevant guidelines re dissociation in adults and in children and adolescents. Several of these have been co-produced with experts-by-experience from First Person Plural. All are available via the UK's page on the ESTD website

<https://www.estd.org/countries/united-kingdom#undefined3>

- **Professional bodies**

- European Society for Trauma and Dissociation ([www.estd.org](http://www.estd.org))
- International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation ([www.isst-d.org](http://www.isst-d.org))

- **Introductory audio visual resources**

Two introductory educational DVDs produced by Serious Media on behalf of First Person Plural in partnership with ESTD-UK and others. They feature both experts-by-experience and experienced professionals. The first DVD was awarded ISSTD's Audio Visual Media Award.

- *A Logical Way of Being: The reality of Dissociative Identity Disorder and other complex dissociative conditions.*
- *No Two Paths the Same: Living and working therapeutically with Dissociative Identity Disorder.*

Available on DVD or as downloadable MP4 files from First Person Plural

<http://www.firstpersonplural.org.uk/resources/training-films/>

- **Online training courses from ESTD-UK**

ESTD-UK has developed a series of online courses on various aspects of understanding, recognition and treatment of dissociation and complex dissociative disorders. Completing the first four online courses provides a foundation level introduction to working with clients/patients who experience distressing complex dissociation. The courses are delivered by professionals and experts-by-experience who have worked and/or lived with dissociation for many years.

Further details and enrolment at <https://estduk.org/online-courses/>

## Practitioners New to Working with Dissociation

- **Foundation / post-foundation training, conferences, webinars**

- ESTD-UK can be commissioned to run in-house training for your organisation or group at Foundation and Post-foundation levels. Details at <https://estduk.org/live-training/>
- First Person Plural can be commissioned to run in-house one or two day courses and short awareness-raising sessions at basic to foundation level. These are delivered by experienced professional trainers who are also experts-by-experience. Details at <http://www.firstpersonplural.org.uk/training/commission-our-training/>
- Conferences and other educational events in the UK and other parts of Europe. <https://www.estd.org/>  
<https://estduk-conference.org/>
- Webinars, international conferences and other courses  
<http://www.isst-d.org/default.asp?contentID=15>

- **Essential reading**

There is a vast amount of clinical and research literature to explore. There is no manualised approach to treatment and the texts below provide a theoretical and practical approach within the framework of stage orientated treatment.

- Boon, S., Steele, K. & van der Hart, O. (2011) *Coping with Trauma-Related Dissociation: Skills Training for Patients and Therapists*. Norton.  
Developed from group work programmes but suitable for use on a one to one basis.
- Boon, S., Steele, K. & van der Hart, O. (2017) *Treating Trauma-Related Dissociation: A Practical, Integrative Approach*. Norton.  
A companion volume to the above and an essential primer for every stage of treatment.
- Brietenbach, G. (2015) *Inside Views From the Dissociated Worlds of Extreme Violence: Human Beings as Merchandise*. London: Karnac.  
Unlike Alison Miller (see below), this author enables the reader to understand what it is necessary for the practitioner to know without including graphic details.
- Herman, J. L. (1992) *Trauma and Recovery*. USA: Basic Books.  
The foundation text for understanding complex trauma and the basis of the 3-stage treatment model.

## Practitioners New to Working with Dissociation

- Miller, A. (2012) *Healing the Unimaginable: Treating Ritual Abuse and Mind Control*. London: Karnac.  
The only comprehensive text for practitioners on this subject. Note that the author includes graphic details of sadistic, organised abuse and mind control for the nature of these crimes to be known and understood.
  - Miller, A. (2014) *Becoming Yourself: Overcoming Mind Control and Ritual Abuse*. London: Karnac.  
A companion volume to the above directed at survivors.
  - van der Hart, O., Nijenhuis, E. & Steele, K. (2006). *The Haunted self: structural dissociation and chronic traumatization*. London: Norton.  
Details the model of structural dissociation and how to work with it.
- **Websites & Email**
- [www.estd.org](http://www.estd.org)
  - <https://estduk.org/>
  - [www.isst-d.org](http://www.isst-d.org)
  - [www.firstpersonplural.org.uk](http://www.firstpersonplural.org.uk) or <https://firstpersonplural.org.uk>
  - <https://endritualabuse.org/>
  - **R.A.I.N.S** email - [rains\\_home@icloud.com](mailto:rains_home@icloud.com)





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