



## Counseling and Human Resources Consulting, PC

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### **A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS APPROACH TO HANDLING THE FEAR WHICH ACCOMPANIES THE RECOVERY OF SEXUAL ABUSE MEMORIES**

Joyce is a 36 year old white Loan Originator for a Mortgage company working on issues related to physical and sexual abuse by her father from early childhood into her teenage years. She began doing four-hour individual counseling sessions about every three weeks in April, 1992, and participating in a weekly evening two-and-a-half-hour women's group. Joyce has pulsed in and out of sessions focused explicitly on abuse by her father because they resulted in severe panic attacks, and marital and career disruptions, which then required much focus and attention in counseling.

The theoretical framework of the counselor (M) is a Transpersonal approach to counseling called Psychosynthesis. This approach takes rich advantage of hypnotic techniques such as deep relaxation, visualization, mental imagery and symbolic (mandala) art to access, identify, work with and transform unconscious dynamics which underlie dysfunctional patterns of thinking and behaving. In this session, Joyce expresses her interest in returning to the challenge of remembering early childhood sexual abuse experiences. But, because of her fear of being overwhelmed again by this, she needs to feel a great sense of safety and support as she approaches the unconscious domain. The counselor instructs her to imagine a beneficent presence, a being of light, that can be with her as she explores imagery she relates to her first sexual abuse experience.

**March 21, 1994**

*J - Joyce; M - Michael*

M - What issue would you like to work on this evening, Joyce?

J - I'd like to work again on the physical and sexual abuse I experienced in childhood. Part of me wants to, part of me doesn't. I feel:

- It's impossible;
- It is possible;
- No way;
- My *siblings* say it's possible.

Our work so far has helped me deal with my abortions as a teenager, job problems, dynamics with some of the women in the women's group. So now it would be helpful to open the doors more deeply to the issue of sex abuse. But I'm afraid to be so vulnerable, so exposed--and then try to be functional at home and work. I had terrible panic attacks when I was close to this stuff a year ago. I'm afraid to feel weak. Why can't I do this alone? Why do I need to have you nursemaid me through this? I've had the lifelong mind set of zipping myself up and moving on, though mom herself said to work with it, believe it and resolve it. But I hold myself tightly so as not to let it leak out.

M - Joyce, let's do some relaxation to begin with, and then move into a psychological space from which we can approach this content area safely. (She lays on the floor under a blanket and on pillows) Relax. Drop

into yourself, away from your personality. There will be no damage to your operational self through the telling of your story today, only the relaxing and releasing of tensions which prevent you from being more capable and powerful. Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths.

In imagery, see yourself on the floor. See yourself lying here and me beside you. Look at yourself with a sense of joy and acceptance, with love for all you've been through and done in your life. Deep breath. See yourself, 36, mother, wife. Accept your defenses, resistances and the blockers that are a part of you. Your observing self is surrounded by a beam of light. You're rising up out of the room, out of the building on a warm beam of light. Warm light all around you. As deeply relaxed as you've ever been. A being of light comes to you to take you to a place where you can have a life review. Describe this being.

J - I'm having a little trouble seeing myself move away instead of me moving away. A lot of mumbo jumbo crowds into my mind and turns me around.

M - That's fine and natural. Focus on the being of light.

J - It's just a person. Looks like the beings in the movie, Cocoon, except this one is gold. It's hard to hold in imagery. I only see the upper part of this person, from the head, legs and arms.

M - What sense do you get about this being?

J - Warm, helpful, feels friendly.

M - Do you trust this being?

J - I think so, when I can keep it there. It keeps wanting to change into something else. As a gold energy person, yes.

M - Ask this being to take you to a place or state of consciousness from which you can see and remember your experiences with your father. How would you make this request or prayer?

J - Please take me to a place where I feel safe so I can look at my experiences with my father. I've been afraid to look for a long time. Will you carry me to this place so this can happen?

M - What does the being do?

J - I hear, "yes". It took me off into...swimming or flying...into a tunnel, into an open ended cave. We both sit down. (laughs) Silliness of...

M - Who do you understand this being of light to be?

J - I don't know. An energy person.

M - Ask.

J - It's hard to keep him visually there. He keeps turning black.

M - Ask, "Who are you and why have you come"?

J - Who are you and why have you come? Why, because Michael and I have asked him to.

M - Tell him precisely what you want.

J - I want you to help me feel safe--look at what my relationship was with my father, whatever it was. I'm afraid to do it myself.

M - He says what?

J - Pops in--image of the cave--we sit there waiting for the play to begin. So, everything's ok.

M - Let the play begin--scenes, vignettes, memories. Describe them. We're looking for a memory on the time line from early childhood to the last troubling contact. Tell me how it begins.

J - Well, the first thing wasn't at the beginning. It was just being thrown to the ground and hitting hard.

M - How old is the child being thrown?

J - Middle grade school. Older...

M - Know her age. Watch the play and report it.

J - 5th grade.

M - What does your father do?

J - I felt myself being picked up by two hands, pulling me up.

M - Watch it dispassionately, to know the story. Report it. Don't be afraid.

J - I'm seeing strange disjointed things. You know...I'm just going to tell you and not critique it or it escapes me. I got hit in the face, then I'm seeing something I don't know what it is--don't recognize it. It looks like a mouth of a seal or shaped like--moving in and out, opening and closing, with a center. Rear end of an animal...

M - Name it if you can, from your knowledge as an adult.

J - A rectum, but symbolic.

M - What is the intuition of its meaning about yourself or as a young girl?

J - Animal like. This doesn't look human.

M - What's being done by or to the animal?

J - I don't know.

M - What are we here to know?

J - Experiences with my father on a time line.

M - How might this relate symbolically or really to your father?

J - All I know it looks like a dog or horse's female vaginal area.

M - Don't be afraid. Let your intuition know and tell a story.

J - The movement on it is like a dog or horse--they open and close themselves when they're in heat. That's what comes to me.

M - Turn to the being of light if you can and ask him to interpret this in terms of your life and tell me what he tells you.

J - He's really dark now.

M - Ask him to interpret this and teach you.

J - Please interpret to me what this means and help me understand. Part of me feels I'm not talking to anything...

M - It works best if you can imagine the golden one.

J - I'm trying to...

M - What are you aware of?

J - My mind is playing lots of tricks on me. Turning the gold person into all tied up, dead, floppy, like filled with air but then popped. It's frustrating to me.

M - We strive to understand.

J - It's a distraction to keep me from looking. An aspect that doesn't want to know so its jumbling everything.

M - It's a test of your intention. Do you really want to know?

J - Yes. I don't want to beat around these things.

M - Ask the golden one to assume his power, then, so you can see these things.

J - Please assume your power so you can talk to me and I can talk to you, so we can do this together.

M - What happens?

J - That seems fine. He's more there, lighter, rather than a figure, more like a presence, not so dark.

M - Ask for the understanding of the past image and how it relates to your life.

J - How does this relate to my own life and what does or should it mean to me? Well, should I go with the image I see?

M - Right.

J - Not critique it?

M - Right.

J - Whether or not it's real?

M - Right.

J - First thoughts are sexual. Second was, looking like oral sex--male to female, then flipped around to female to male.

M - Let it be ok. We're here just to see and understand. What do you understand?

J -That--what flashed is oral sex--and that's what the other image means. The only piece that bothers me in this moment, was somehow that image--something wanting that--the female ready for that.

M - Let it be ok to remember. We're just here to know. Your sense is that there's pleasure in it?

J - I didn't sense pleasure. I just sensed the first image was asking for pleasure. A mare or dog is asking for that. It reminded me of that.

M - Try to view the being of light. Tell me if and when you can.

J - I can feel him but can't see him. I feel I'm--it's dark and there's a sense of betrayal or--it's just dark. He's there but he's dark. Don't feel like--because I don't have any energy or it's dark. He's out. He's cold.

M - Ask him what you want to know.

J - Ok. All right. I was seeing me or him being smothered by somebody else. Four rays of light under this body. What I want to know is, what did my father do to me when I was little. That's what I want to know.....hummm.

M - What do you know?

J - He was mean. I saw an unrecognizable face, mechanical, that felt like my dad. An eye was not right. Something not human about it. Not monstrous, just mechanical.

M - What do you want to know about oral sex with your father?

J - It's never once crossed my mind about oral sex with my father. Well, maybe once... Do I want to know? All right... When I think of that I see a man having oral sex with a little girl. That's what I see.

M - What does your intuition tell you, Joyce?

J - My intuition says that---it goes a few places.

- The girl, me, is very quiet. Doesn't feel violent to me;
- The girl feels there's something bad about this;
- Intuitively, I feel like it must be my dad but--but somehow it doesn't feel possible. A fox or wolf keeps entering the picture. I'll just keep going.

M - What do we know, Joyce? What have we learned?

J - We know:

- I have trouble keeping the golden man near me;
- I feel that, if this is true, I must have, some part of me must have wanted it due to the first image;
- I don't see any faces associated with the person performing oral sex--but when asked about my relationship with my dad, that flashed up. She's young, short hair, 3 or 4, reminds me of imagery we got once before but not specifically about oral sex. I don't feel I've blasted anything wide open. It reminds me that clearly I have this imagery. That I feel dizzy like this. I wish I could go beyond what happens for me in GIM (Guided Imagery with Music) and be there for awhile, in a different state of consciousness, removed from my body so I could look down at this and not be connected to it.

M - Could the dizziness be connected to the oral sex?

J - It's a good question. It's not what I know it to be but maybe for a little child. Makes me feel, more like...

M - Withdrawal to safety?

J - Yes. If I'm hovering or here in this place then I can watch whatever else is happening and not be affected by it. In this different state of consciousness, dizzy, then I can let all this fall out and I won't be connected to it.

M - Is it hard to imagine a 3 or 4 year old Joyce being so overwhelmed by sensation, these actions, with her

father, that the net result was dizziness, dissociation, being there but not being there?

J - Well, I feel like I was just getting a glimpse of how I was, two things;

- In this image I was quiet and still and, for some reason, I split apart in that way, or wanted to;
- A real critic is banging into this, causing me to question what I'm seeing, feeling, 'Golly, gee, no. Not this, not that!'

I did just feel it a second time. Wanting it to totally consume me. If I'm totally consumed by this dizzy state I can see all this. I'll be able to let it all flood out. I wonder if that's what she did, ie., to escape what she was feeling, she went into this dizzy space.

M - It surely makes sense, doesn't it?

J - Yes, it does.

M - Is there a kind of ring of understanding or truth?

J - The ring of truth was this light bulb, 'Oh, so *that's* how she did it'.

M - Let's respect it and marvel at that. Can you shift to the little girl?

J - Uh huh.

M - Ask her if that's what happened to her.

J - Is that what happened to you when... I get a "yes" anyway. I'm sorry I can't say the words--it bugs me and makes me sick. It's disgusting, the thought of oral sex in that way. Here I am as a little girl and I can't come back to her and ask if that's what she use to do. But I'm sensing anyway, 'yes--that's what I use to do'. It worked for me. Such an innocent way...

M - To be present and not present?

J - I'm feeling this little girl feeling so innocent. Not totally pissed, 'yes, this is what I had to do'.

M - It just happened and this is what she use to do? What is your relationship to the little girl?

J - It makes me feel sad.

M - Tell her.

J - I think she already knows. I hate saying these things out loud.

M - You're doing

J - Just fine... I think I want Mexican food.

M - Let her know you love her and you're here to understand.

J - I think she knows. I feel sad seeing you there looking so innocent and not knowing anything different. So innocently coping by creating this space you feel safe in. It's ok. I'm glad you had that place to go. It bothers me. It brings it so close to home to feel how young you must have been in your heart. Kind of like--a wholeness, a purity about you that--it's difficult. It's going to sound really stupid. I feel like somehow what feels sad to me is there you are being violated and you're so innocent and pure that it's amazing to me you could still feel and look--you're not spoiled by it. It's a weird thing. A lot of feelings went through. I'm really confused by this.

M - This sense of innocence and purity is extremely important. It is so close to the core of you. It is so close

to the core of you now, Joyce--a marker to something fundamental about your nature. To have been touched in these ways and not to have been corrupted.

J - That's what's striking me when I let it. That's exactly right.

M - And still in your life there is something so pure about you which must be treasured and protected and

J - Without having to go into an altered state, huh?

M - Treasured, protected, and allowed to mature, in contact with the real world. You must find a way to symbolize that innocence and purity in a way that honors it most visually.

J - So it doesn't slip away. I already feel that happening.

M - One more thing to do as we back out--to see where the golden being is, the guide, and how he is informed or affected by this.

J - My first boom is that he jumped into her body.

M - To what effect?

J - That was making her full of light and kind of holy. In a way, weightless. I also felt him next to me and then he did that, then a part of him came back on my left side where he was during this remembering.

M - To what effect?

J - That she wasn't just a body; that she was filled with energy and was lighter.

M - Lighter, released, de-stressed...what?

J - Physically lighter. Floating in her body. No stress.

M - No guilt?

J - Clearly no guilt.

M - Or shame?

J - None of those things would ever have been thought or felt by her in that state and weren't thought when I connected there, either.

M - One last question: What now do you sense is the value of this journey, this session?

J - I sense that I needed to take it. Somehow there's value there by itself. And it makes me think, so this is the beginning of why I've always felt conflict about oral sex. That's helpful. To see me or the little girl in the light I saw her, in the presence I saw her in, in her own pureness, wholeness, something like that--probably valuable if I let it be. Certainly interesting. I still feel a lot of struggle that I bring this up because I want to see what impact my dad had in my life and this pops up. I want this to be true because I want it to be done and settled. Why else would I want this to be true? He didn't just beat me up physically when I was a kid and a teenager, he sexually...

I asked about dad and this popped up. I remember drawing his face once and one eye looked back at me. There was tons of emotion, humanness, sadness--the other eye was totally mechanical, non-human. If there's a connection there this will seem more real to me, possible, plausible.

M - What's your homework?

J - To draw, to capture the element of pureness, wholeness, holiness of this little girl. Not in her spin or out

of her body. Actually, though, that's a part of it. How she remained pure.

M - We sought the beginning of time and it seems we found it; found the beginning of the sexual abuse...

J - That's exactly how it seems to me.

***March 26, 1994***

This picture represents myself as a little girl from my last session. She is like an angel. That's how I've pictured her in my mind. When I connected with her in the session and I realized how pure she was it was just angelic. She looked like a beautiful little angel. Pure, whole, holy, full of innocence. There was no distress in her. This was amazing to me and quite puzzling as the invasion of the perpetration seemed like it would have taken this all away from her but it didn't. The picture shows the girl in her pure angel state (she would be yellow) radiating outward with rays of energy and spirit--glowing. There is a lot for me to learn from this. How wonderful it is for me to know that even in this violation of body my soul is untouched, that there is wonderful pureness within me deep, beyond all the hurt and abuse. That I haven't been ruined. That I'm not forever bad and spoiled now. But indeed have an unspoiled beauty within my core.

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