



PODS

Partners of Dissociative Survivors

PODS
PO Box 633
HUNTINGDON
PE29 9GJ

t: 01480 878409
m: 07746 799221
e: info@pods-online.org.uk
w: www.pods-online.org.uk

>>> PODS: Support for people whose partners, friends or family members suffer from a dissociative disorder

NEWSLETTER — AUG 2010

PODS — moving forwards

PODS will be celebrating its first anniversary in September! A year ago I wrote an article called “For Better, For Worse – Life as the Partner of a Dissociative Survivor” which was published in the September edition of *Interact*, the journal of TAG (Trauma and Abuse Group). I was taken aback at the positive response I received from people who read it – not just therapists, but survivors, partners, family members and pastoral carers. It seemed that very little had been written from a partner’s perspective in the UK, and certainly nothing that described life with DID and how it affects relationships. There was certainly very little available that looked at the support needs of partners and family members, and it was out of this revelation that PODS was born.

Within a few weeks of setting up PODS, I began to receive emails and phone calls from people throughout the UK and even as far afield as New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Many people were relieved to hear that there was someone else who understood the reality of their lives and their struggles, in a way that people in their daily life networks could not even begin to relate to. For some, their current life experience had been precipitated by a sudden and profound change in terms of a partner’s dissociative ‘breakdown’; for others, it was a growing realisation that their partner’s experience had a name, the mixed-blessing label of ‘dissociation’, and things were beginning at last to make sense to them. Through many phone calls and email contacts I have had, I have been moved by people’s resilience and the love and commitment that partners have for each other. But I am also struck by how hard life with dissociation can be, and how little support is available, especially from statutory agencies.

The Open Meetings that PODS has run so far have attracted people from all over the UK, and people have shared their experiences and learned a little more about the dynamics of trauma and dissociation and what leads to conditions such as Dissociative Identity Disorder. But increasingly the message that I have received is that it is either too difficult for people to attend and leave their dissociative partner alone for the day, or they are either reluctant or unable to open up and talk about their experiences in a group setting.

For this reason, we are trialling a different kind of meeting on 9 October, incorporating an information and awareness workshop for three quarters of the day and then an optional ‘open meeting’ event at the end, which people can stay for if they wish, and which will be of a ‘support group’ nature. There is also the option to just come for the support group element without attending the main teaching day. We are having to charge for this day in order to cover our increasing costs, but I think you will find that it is well worth the investment. And for the first time we are making the day open to anyone – partners, family members and supporters, as well as survivors themselves. I do firmly believe in the benefit of psycho-education, of learning about how dissociation and trauma affect the body and mind, so that we can better manage its effects. The day will also operate partly in terms of awareness-raising to anyone who just wants to come along and find out more, as this is one of PODS’ primary aims. Too few people in the general public, let alone the NHS and psychiatric services, are informed and knowledgeable about dissociative disorders, and this means that treatment availability is often patchy and inadequate. So please pass the details on to anyone who might be willing to learn more—friends and family, GPs and Community Psychiatric Nurses, counsellors, etc.

PODS is also looking to provide more information resources in the coming months, including more articles on the website and a much improved Information Booklet. Watch this space!

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on 9 October.

Many thanks

Rob, Director of PODS

rob@pods-online.org.uk

If you would no longer wish to receive emails from us, please either [click here](#) or send a blank email to info@pods-online.org.uk with the subject heading ‘Unsubscribe’. If this email has been forwarded to you from someone else and you would like to join our mailing list, please go to www.pods-online.org.uk/newsletter to sign up.

Information / Awareness Workshop – “Living with Dissociation”

9 October 2010, 9.30 am—5.30 pm

PODS is running an information / awareness workshop entitled “Living with Dissociation” on Saturday 9 October 2010 from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm, followed by an optional and free Open Meeting in the style of a support group from 3.30 pm to 5.30 pm. People are welcome to come to either or both parts of the day.

BACKGROUND

Dissociation is a natural coping mechanism for dealing with trauma and is very common in survivors of childhood abuse, especially sexual abuse. Dissociative disorders develop when this mechanism is employed repeatedly in order to deal with overwhelming and chronic abusive situations. The most extreme of these disorders is ‘Dissociative Identity Disorder’, formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder.

To the outside observer, dissociation can at first seem frightening and bizarre. But it is in fact an entirely logical process which seeks to protect the person’s mind from overwhelming trauma.

Suffering from a dissociative disorder is exhausting and can be very distressing. There can be frequent episodes of self-harm and suicidal thoughts or attempts as a result of extreme emotions and the sense of loss of control and instability. But learning about dissociation and how to manage it can make a huge difference, especially when this is combined with support from a partner, family member or friend. This workshop will seek to explain dissociation and in particular Dissociative Identity Disorder in a way that can be easily understood by anyone, and will help to demystify and destigmatise the disorder.

The day also seeks to be relevant at an introductory level to counsellors, therapists, pastoral workers and anyone who might come across dissociation in a helping capacity. It will provide an informative and fascinating insight into what living with dissociation and DID is really like. Dissociation is much more common than psychiatry has admitted, and anyone who works with or comes alongside someone who has suffered trauma or experienced sexual abuse would benefit from understanding the dynamics of dissociation.

PODS believes that therapy is a very important tool in the recovery from dissociative disorders, but it is not the only tool and is too frequently unavailable to large numbers of people for either economic or practical reasons. That is why it is fundamentally important that a dissociative survivor’s partner, family, friends and other supporters receive information and support about dissociation so that they can help rather than hinder in the healing process. The prognosis for recovery from a dissociative disorder is extremely positive, far more so than many serious mental health conditions. But without proper understanding, the bewildering nature of dissociation can lead to isolation and rejection. This workshop will help to explain it to survivors, partners, professionals and all other supporters, and show that recovery — with the right support — is possible.

This Information / Awareness workshop will consist of three formal teaching sessions on dissociation and DID, and the final session will be an optional open meeting for anyone who just wants to chat about relevant issues and be supportive to one another.

WHO IS IT FOR?

- Anyone suffering from a dissociative disorder or experiencing dissociation
- Survivors of sexual abuse or trauma
- Partners, friends, family members of dissociative survivors
- Counsellors, therapists, Rape Crisis staff, helpline volunteers
- Community Psychiatric Nurses, GPs, other health professionals
- Social Workers, Family Workers, other social care staff

COST

£40.00 per person, or £60.00 for a couple (survivor plus partner, survivor plus supporter, or partner plus supporter) for the teaching element of the day (9.30 am—3.00 pm). The Open Meeting element of the day (3.30 pm—5.30 pm) is free to attend.

Drinks and biscuits will be provided but please bring your own lunch (sandwich shops also located nearby).

Information / Awareness Workshop – “Living with Dissociation”

9 October 2010, 9.30 am–5.30 pm

PROVISIONAL OUTLINE OF DAY

- 9.30 am Arrival, registration and coffee, for a prompt 10.00 am start
- 10.00 am Session 1 — *Understanding Dissociation and DID*
What is dissociation and why does it happen?
What are dissociative disorders and why and how do they develop?
The link between trauma and dissociation
Mental illness or mental health—dissociation as sanity in an insane world?
- 11.30 am Coffee break
- 11.45 am Session 2 — *What is it like being DID?*
A DID Survivor’s story
The view from the other side—the partner’s story
Losing time, regaining memory ...
Emotional and physical impacts of DID
- 1.00 pm Lunch (please bring your own)
- 1.45 pm Session 3—*Coping and recovering from dissociative disorders*
What’s so great about therapy?
What about the other 166 hours of the week?
The importance of attachment and the role of partners
Parenting and work
Where else to find help and support
- 3.00 pm Coffee
- 3.30 pm Session 4 — *Optional informal open meeting*
Mutual support and discussion

THE SPEAKERS

Rob and Carolyn Spring will be leading the day.

Carolyn is a Trustee of TAG (Trauma and Abuse Group, www.tag-uk.net) and Editor of their journal *Interact*. She is a freelance writer and trainer and has been published in a range of publications. She was diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder several years ago, but prior to this she worked for many years within Children’s Social Care with abused children.

Rob has been married to Carolyn for nearly 10 years. He runs PODS (www.pods-online.org.uk) and is a trained counsellor. His background is in secondary education, adult training and Children’s Social Care.

VENUE

- Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire (further details of venue upon booking).
- Huntingdon Station is a short walk away and is 50 minutes from King’s Cross.
- Huntingdon is conveniently located near the interchange of the A1 and A14, within easy reach of the Midlands and North and just 45 minutes from the M25.

BOOKING

- Please fill in a booking form (available at www.pods-online.org.uk/PODS-October2010Workshop.pdf) and send together with a cheque made payable to ‘TASC’ to PO Box 633, HUNTINGDON, Cambridgeshire, PE29 9GJ
- Alternatively you may book online at www.pods-online.org.uk and pay via credit/debit card or Paypal.

DID emergency information cards

In March of this year PODS produced some 'DID Emergency Information Cards' and made them available free of charge to anyone who wanted them. This was in response to a request from a therapist whose client was ill-treated by healthcare staff following a recent emergency admission to A&E. None of the staff had heard of DID and even the duty psychiatrist was sceptical. It was therefore felt that it would be useful to have a card which carried some information about DID and which would be presented to health staff to inform them and to help to 'authenticate' the diagnosis.

PODS consulted with a number of people on the matter including FPP and some people within TAG. The cards are double-sided business-card size so they fit easily into a purse or wallet. One side contains information on a "How to Help" basis, explaining the existence of alters and the realities of amnesia and disorientation, while the reverse side carries more technical information about DID from a medical perspective.

Over 800 cards have now been distributed. This has been an incredible response and very heartening to see that so many people and organisations are aware of DID at least as a concept. We will continue to distribute these cards to anyone who requests them. You can do so by emailing info@pods-online.org.uk and leaving details of where we should post them to.

If you represent an organisation and would like a stack of cards to hand out to clients, please just let us know how many you would like. We continue to welcome feedback on how and whether they have proved useful—we have heard of several cases so far where they have helped, so we are glad that we have made them available.

The cards are FREE but donations are welcome to help us cover costs! If you would like to donate you can either use the Paypal button on our website or send a cheque made payable to 'TASC' to the PODS address.

DID Emergency Information Card — How to Help

I have a condition known as Dissociative Identity Disorder. I am not 'mad' and nor am I attention-seeking or time-wasting. I have a history of severe childhood trauma and DID is a coping mechanism for this. DID is treatable via long-term individual psychotherapy.

I have different 'parts', 'alters' or 'personalities'. These may present as being of a different gender, age and developmental stage. We may be very frightened and traumatised and have difficulty distinguishing between the past and the present, so we may find it really hard to calm down. Please be careful about touching us and be gentle and patient. 'Alter personalities' may not be aware of what we have done (eg self-harm or attempted suicide) or where we are. We may be very disorientated and amnesic for what has just happened. Please try to understand our behaviours in the light of our past experiences.

This card is produced by PODS. For more information about DID and organisations that can help please go to our website at:
www.pods-online.org.uk.



Information on DID — For Health Professionals

DID (formerly MPD): see DSM-IV TR section 300.14 and ICD10 section F44.

- complex form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder caused by severe childhood trauma and abuse
- as in PTSD, may be severe dysregulation with intrusions such as flashbacks and avoidances eg phobia of touch; also episodes of overwhelming psychological distress, with amnesia, disorientation, marked somatisation
- patient/client may benefit from contacting therapist or supporter to stabilise
- "characterised by the presence of two or more distinct identities or personality states that recurrently take control of the individual's behaviour, accompanied by an inability to recall important personal information that is too extensive to be explained by ordinary forgetfulness" (DSM-IV TR)
- for further information go to <http://tinyurl.com/DIDinfo>

TAG's journal Interact containing PODS article



The Spring 2010 edition of 'Interact', the journal of TAG (Trauma and Abuse Group) is still available for sale for £3.50 inc P&P.

It contains a number of really helpful articles for survivors and partners, including Rob's article "The Road Less Travelled: How to Support Your DID Partner (Part I)".

There are also articles by DID survivors including:

- Carolyn Spring: "Some Memories of Mummy: Reflections on Attachment, Abuse, Dissociation"
- Melanie Goodwin from First Person Plural: "Attachment, Trauma and New Tights — Life with DID"
- Carol B: "Reflections on an Ongoing Therapeutic 'Relationship'"

For a flyer with more information, or an order form, go to: www.tag-uk.net/interact.html

Membership of TAG is £15.00 per year and details can be found on their website.