

The multiple personalities of sybil

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SYBILS BATTLE WITH MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER

In the movie Sybil, Sybil has multiple personality disorder. This means that she has a rare disorder in which two or more distinct and different personalities live within one person. Multiple personality disorder is often caused by physical and sexual abuse in children (NAMI, 1996). Sybil created an escape and defense from the abuse she suffered. Different personalities were created to help her with everyday problems; this is called dissociation. Healing from this illness is a very long, hard process. A therapist has to earn a close relationship to the patient and as many of the alter personalities as possible. Eventually, after working with a therapist for a while, a patient can learn to start dealing with everyday problems without using alter personalities.

Sybil has many different personalities in the movie. Her main personality is a sweet, quiet, confused substitute teacher. At first she has no idea of her condition. Sybil just thinks she is losing time or blacking out. Another personality is Peggy, an enchanting little girl. She turns into Peggy when she is scared or hurt. Also there is Marsha, a mean, miserable person who has suicidal problems. When Sybil gets depressed or upset she turns to this alter personality. A personality that Sybil uses is Vicci. Vicci is a very conservative and lively. She is a headstrong thirteen-year old that is not scared to take risks and have fun with people. Sybil goes to Vicci when is in doubt or to timid to be in a social gathering. Another of Sybil's alter personalities is Vanessa. She is a young, beautiful girl who plays the piano. Vanessa comes

out when Sybil feels bad or is put down by the real world. Sybil's therapist contacted all of the alter persons!

personalities. All of these personalities came into effect at a time when Sybil couldn't, or thought she couldn't handle a situation. In doing this, she was using dissociation as an escape or defense for problems in the past or present (NAMI, 1996).

Multiple personality disorder is very much a result of physical or sexual abuse. This abuse usually comes from a family member or a close friend. The victim usually has a love-hate relationship with the abuser (Wilbur, 1984). In Sybil's case, the abuser was her mother and both physical and sexual abuse was inflicted on her. Later in life, Sybil ended up with symptoms like: depression, moodswings, suicidal tendencies, blackouts, headaches, panic attacks, and hallucinations (NAMI, 1994). These are all symptoms of multiple personality disorder. Sybil thought she was blacking out, fell and hurt herself, when actually she was having a multiple personality disorder episode, got angry and hit a window. After the accident, she was a little bit confused. The doctor brought in a therapist to see her and noticed amnesia and personality changes in Sybil. These are obvious signs of multiple personality disorder (Coon, 1984). At this time Sybil realizes the problem she has. These are examples of how people who have this disorder could become aware of the problem.

The healing process for this disease is a very long and drawn out process. This process sometimes takes so long and is so mind consuming and stressful that the patient ends up depressed or suicidal (Coon, 1984). A

therapist has to become very close to the patient and all the alter personalities. In Sybil's case, her therapist did a very good job of this, but the hard part was to get Sybil to confront the abuse from the past. If the therapist can get at least one of the personalities to remember the traumatic events that occurred, then it is progress. Eventually, Sybil's therapist worked with her enough and Sybil confronted her memories. After she went back in her brain to the trauma and faced it, she realized that it was all in the past and no one could hurt her anymore. After this kind of observation from a therapist, they can usually go on in life without having to turn to any alter personalities. Sybil was very lucky in her case. In some cases the patient can never recover. Some other patients can recover, but it can take many more years than it did in Sybil's case. At the end of the grieving process, creative energy is released. The survivor can reclaim self-worth and personal power and rebuild their life after so much focus and healing.

In conclusion, people with multiple personality disorder are very courageous, intelligent, creative, socially skilled, talented people whose dissociative abilities allowed them to survive traumatic abuse.