

Behavioural Harms: Enforced and Survival Tactics in Ritual Abuse-Torture Victimization

Best practice: Connecting the dots – A walk through a violent like-minded ‘co-culture’ © 2009

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Introduction

Ritual abuse-torture (RAT) is committed by pedophilic parents, intergenerational family members, guardians and like-minded adults who abuse, torture and traffic their children using organizing group ritualism (Sarson & MacDonald, 2008a). Ritual abuse-torture is an emerging form of non-state actor-torture (NSAT) meaning that it is torture that occurs in the private or so-called 'domestic' sphere such as in homes, cabins, cottages, private buildings, rented spaces, warehouses, barns, or outdoor spaces on farms, for example. From a human rights perspective, perpetrators of such acts are referred to as non-state actors. The term non-state actor is used to distinguish people and organizations that do not represent the state from state actors who are representatives of a state or government. For instance, federal police, prison, military and embassy personnel are considered to be representatives of the state and occupy the public sphere such as government institutions, federal prisons, police lock up cells, military bases or posting in embassies in or outside a state (Amnesty International, 2000).

Torture inflicted by state actors in the public sphere is considered to be an absolute violation of fundamental human rights, a specific offence distinct from other forms of violence such as an assault and its elimination unconditional (Committee against Torture, 2007). This is so in Canada as state torture is specifically criminalized as a distinct crime, however, torture by non-state actors is not (Sarson & MacDonald, 2009). Therefore the existence of this complex criminal human rights atrocity becomes statistically invisible; a statistically invisible population affects social knowledge and interventions. For example, if drug and alcohol councilors do not realize that NSAT victimization occurs they have 'blind spots' in their knowledge creating a risk that they will miss or not understand what a child's or adult's self-harming behaviors might be related to and lead unknowingly to a victimized person suffering secondary re-victimization harms. This can give rise to increased self-destructive responses.

Secondary re-victimization occurs as a consequence of a state's or civil society's position not to acknowledge or to deny the occurrence of and therefore the victimization impact of the distinct

crime of NSAT. This means the victimized person(s), individually or collectively, suffer further because of the substantial impairment of her/his fundamental human rights, a loss of protection under national laws and an increased feeling of a loss of trust and abuses of power (Fraser-Moleketi, 1998).

Being rejected by society is marginalizing and oppressive for victimized women “fear that if the community discovers ‘their’ secret the community’s disgust will leave them rejected and ostracized. Although hungry for social connections the risk of discovery and suffering social exclusion or rejection can be an enormous deterrent” (Sarson & MacDonald, 2008b). Being excluded or rejected by others causes social pain that is similar to physical pain (Eisenberger, 2003), hence compounding their suffering. Therefore the purpose of this paper (and the presentation) is to provide an introductory insight into NSAT, specifically ritual abuse-torture, and share what victimized women predominately have told us about survival self-harming versus conditioned self-harming responses.

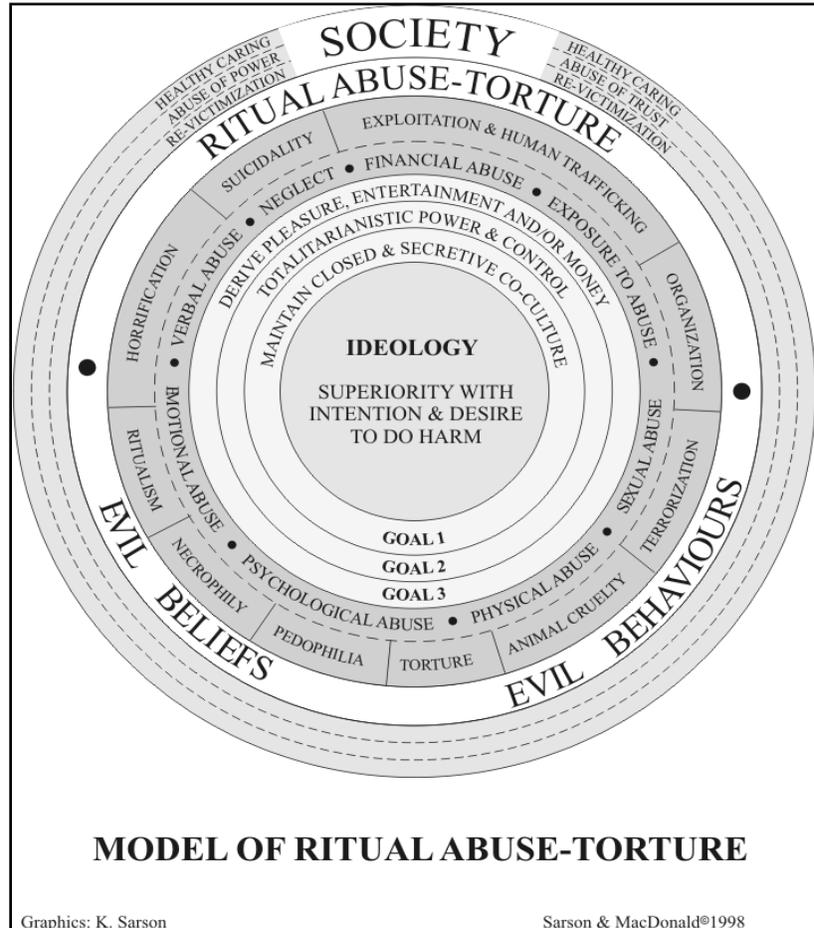
Model of Ritual Abuse-Torture

Forms of NSAT that present in testimonials are: physical, sexualized, cognitive, perceptual, emotional and mental tortures which are frequently compounded when RATers use ritualism tortures to intensify the victimization. Relational and acculturational tortures are particularly problematic because getting out of a family/group co-cultural system that normalized adult-child torture relationships and moving into the mainstream creates relational confusion and cultural shock. Gender-specific reproductive and cannibalistic tortures inflict horrification responses.

Ritual abuse-torture is a term we coined to reveal the complex degrees of relational violence embedded in testimonials entrusted to us beginning in 1993; ‘introduced’ and confronted by such a reality demanded taking the position that the degrees of violence we were hearing contained elements that are referred to when identifying acts of torture inflicted by state actors. In 1998 two years were spent listening to five women recall their RAT victimization; a violent repetitive relational pattern emerged. Adopting the model-making framework of Capra (1988), who suggested that broadening scientific knowledge meant involving systematic observation to understand reality by dealing with values, subjective experiences and patterns of shared experiences, led to the Model of Ritual Abuse-Torture shared below (Sarson & MacDonald, 2008a). Since developing our website women continue to be the dominant gender that contact us and self-identify as having survived ritual abuse-torture. They are predominately from industrialized countries, numbering approximately 1000 ranging in age from their late teens to their 60s. Contacts have varied from very detailed work, to one time contact, and include face-to-face, telephone, email or written communication.

Women’s subjective experiences consistently replicate the pattern of thematic issues identified on the Model. The societal issues have been previously discussed in the introduction; we turn now to the inner circle of the Model.

The ‘values’ – the ideology – was consistently spoken of as being one of the perpetrators’ senses of superiority with organized intentions to harm. Rampageous pedophilia was spoken of as being directed primarily, but not always, at the families/groups own children. The degree of intentionality to harm was clear in testimonials describing horrendous acts of torture. Torture has been previously defined as a specific offence therefore listed in a circle beyond the circle that names abuses.



Inflicting acts of torture causes or attempts to cause the destruction of the chosen victim(s)’ sense of being a human person; it causes the destruction of the victimized person’s unique personality; torture causes prolonged, severe physical and mental suffering. Such intentional destruction is justified by the perpetrators’ beliefs and behaviours. Behaviours or actions directed at the destruction of another human being or group has been defined as “actions” of human evil (Staub, 1993), thus the inclusion of human evil in the Model.

Three goals of RAT families/groups, as is common in other criminal gangs, is the maintenance of secrecy about their crimes. They do this by inflicting threats and force to maintain totalitarian power and control over their victimized girl children or later when they are ‘captive’ women. Creating a state of terrorized captivity the RATers are able to satisfy their sadistic torture desires whenever and however they choose, as well as, gain financially when involved in the trafficking of drugs and/or the manufacture and sale of pedophilic/adult crime scene ‘pornography’. Working, playing, volunteering, and church-going amidst regular citizens they are skilled manipulators, creating a social face whereby no one would suspect that knowing their “insider” face would reveal a most disturbing reality. It is for this reason that we have chosen the term co-

culture. They do not stand apart from mainstream society – they are in business, are professionals, farmers, fishers, storekeepers; they are clerics, mothers, fathers, grandparents, like-minded friends and neighbours – they constitute what victimized women often refer to as “the family”.

There is always fear or terror, violence or the threat thereof within RAT families/groups. Some days women state there is abuse and other days there is torture, trafficking and horror. Moving beyond the circle of abuse into the subjective RAT ordeals described by victimized women (and a few men), the following pattern of thematic issues are (Sarson & MacDonald, 2007):

1. Organization
2. Terrorization
3. Human-animal cruelty
4. Tortures
5. Rampageous pedophilia
6. Necrophily
7. Ritualism
8. Horrification
9. Suicidality
10. Exploitation & Trafficking

Ritual Abuse-Torture Victimization

Victimization was stated to begin at birth, shortly thereafter, or by ages three or four. Information that women recall as *feeling memories* and/or memories related to being a child witness to the victimization of infant siblings for example. Because the home was the perpetrator’s ‘hunting’ ground, the victimized and captive girl child (and boy child) or captive woman ‘lived’ in terror, never knowing when she would be attacked by acts of rampageous pedophilia, torture and forced into human-animal cruelty including witnessing the killing and/or torture of pets or forced into bestiality. At other times there was the intentional organization and trafficking to multi-perpetrators, known and unknown, as described in the following testimony which also illustrates the torturer and rescuer tactic perpetrators inflict to create the torturer-victim bond.

At age 13, they hung me up on a wall ... hanging there it hurt so bad. My feet couldn't touch the ground and it hurt if I tried to move but I just swung uselessly ... my wrists really hurt, and my chest and arms and stuff it was hurting to breath after a bit ... them walking past laughing ... I was scared that they would come hurt me worse with electricity and hurt my legs and stuff, but I was scared too that they would leave me alone forever. So I wanted them there but didn't want to be hurt ... I was pack raped.

(D, aged 20s, New Zealand, consent January 27, 2009)

Horrification

Horrification is a response beyond terror. It overwhelms one's senses and involves life-altering ordeals that are most often beyond verbal language and description. Horrification can give rise to speechlessness, stuttering, voicelessness or muteness. Position Emission Tomography (PET) scans of adults with post traumatic stress responses has revealed when stimulated by trauma triggers that there is decreased oxygen utilization in Broca's area (van de Kolk, 1997); this is an area commonly located in the left hemisphere of the brain concerned with the motor processes of word formation and if stressed or damaged can cause a person to have difficulty articulating words (Spence & Mason, 1987). Women have reported experiencing this response, as well, we have witnessed this response numerous times when one woman's horrification memories surfaced. Likewise, some Vietnam veterans (Schmemmann, 2000), and others with traumatic stress responses (Scaer, 2005) report similar responses. Physical coldness, shivering, tremors and seizure-like responses also occur. War veterans have reported similar responses (Mines, 2007).

Women's responses can be complicated by the release of torture body memories replaying electric shock seizures and/or water torture shivering when submerged in a tub of ice water or when forced into a freezer for prolonged periods of time. Healing requires that victimized persons are assured that their responses have been recorded by veterans for example as this can help normalize their reactions, decrease their worry that they are responding abnormally and help them be or find a sense of 'new normal'. So many verbalize feeling "like a freak" that finding a new normal becomes a goal of reclaiming their relationship with/to self. Undoing the enforced and conditioned 'old normal' of the normalization of violent adult-child relationships of torture, exploitation and trafficking, although very painful, is essential.

Ritualism Tortures

Ritualism is used globally to construct oppressive, harmful, social conditioning of girls and women. Frequently referred to as traditional, cultural or religious customs, such ritualisms are utilized as tactics for the infliction of pedophilic violence against children. Some global examples:

1. An American pedophilic priest manipulated a child into victimization by equating oral rape to the ritualism of "receiving Holy Communion" (McGary, 2002).
2. Nigerian shaman used voodoo ritualism to instill a state of captivity in Nigerian women being trafficked into France (Hourel, 2006).
3. The centuries-old socio-cultural ritual of the Devadasi system of India, although made illegal, persists in 'secret', with girls under 10 years of age chosen to become Devadasis, meaning handmaidens of the goddess Yelamma, the girls on reaching puberty will become victims for human trafficking (Reuters, 1997).

- 4. Marsha Allen, was a five year old Russian girl when she was adopted – bought for \$15,000.00 – by an American pedophile who held her in a state of captivity, starved her to keep her body underdeveloped, subjected her to a “marriage” ritual, tortured her, and exploited her in crime scene internet ‘pornography’ (Appleby, 2006).

Likewise, women report that RAT perpetrators organize violent family/group gatherings coded in the language of “rituals and ceremonies”. “Strategy sessions” were used to plan these violent family/group gathering. Although descriptions of these violent gatherings vary, they did consistently retain the thematic issues as previously identified in the Model of Ritual Abuse-Torture. Common clothing and/or costumes, masks, music, moaning and groaning added to the drama effects. One American woman’s description of her childhood “marriage” and her young life is as follows:

My debut as a prostitute and porn star was a ritual marriage ceremony in May when I was nine ... any woman or girl was used for sexual pleasure by any man ... However, only the “husband” had the rights as a pimp relative to his “wife”. I was married to my cousin ... the wedding took place in a barn ... I do recall being bound, naked, on top of an altar, surrounded by members of the family ... Before long, I left my body—a coping mechanism I often used

Ritualism tortures foster:

- ↑ Group organization, cohesiveness and groupthink
- ↑ Illusion of formality and normalization for the girl child victim
- ↑ Perception of omnipotent power of the perpetrators thus ↑the captivity holds on the victimized girl or woman
- ↑ Adrenaline rush, thrill and sadistic pleasures
- ↑ Group voyeurism
- ↑ Like-minded bonding
- ↑ Mind control /conditioning of victims
- ↑ Ability for perpetrators to hide their identities behind costumes & masks

For years, he sold me to his friends for a night and, later, to his associates for a weekend. My prostitution was a source of income for him while he pursued his law degree ... and afterwards it served as a source of blackmail money for him.
(K, American, April, 2009)

Employing ritualism as a tactic to shape family/group pedophilic torture enforces a sense of formality and legitimacy to the gathering which enables the family/group to impose group pressure/conditioning, like peer pressure, onto the girl child (see box). Such conditioning has the ability not only to distort cognitive, perceptual, emotional, mental, relational, cultural and world views but also creates great harm to the girls’ developing relationship with/to self. Overwhelmed she ‘takes herself away’ or dissociates from her pain and suffering; self-harming becomes a survival response.

Reproductive Tortures

I got pregnant by one of the men when I was 12 years old. They did an abortion on me... The pain was excruciating. After they finished they cut up the baby they aborted and made me eat some of it.

(A, Canadian, shared March 2009)

This testimonial is repetitively common and constitutes a specific female gender-based reproductive atrocity. In 2007, utilizing a 10-question survey on female gender-based reproductive harms, accessible via the internet (our website), the specific issues of forced impregnation and abortion as well as forced reproductive cannibalistic torture were addressed (Sarson & MacDonald, 2008b). Information relevant to this Canadian woman’s ordeals revealed the following responses to these questions:

Figure 1: Women were asked if they had been raped during a forced abortion/delivery (n = 233). The responses are shown on figure 1 which indicates that 56% had.

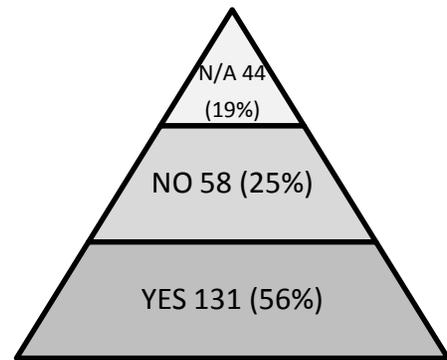


Figure 1: Raped during forced abortion/delivery

Figure 2: Another question asked women about forced reproductive cannibalistic tortures (n = 232); their responses are shown in figure 2 indicating that 43% reported having endured this horrific ordeal.

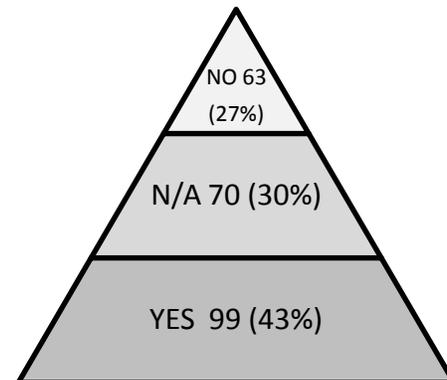


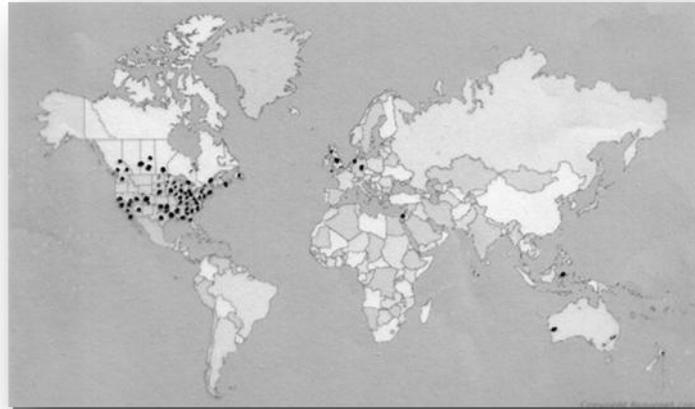
Figure 2: Reproductive cannibalistic tortures

Women speak of the horrendous emotional guilt, shame, and horror that confronts them when these memories start rising to the surface of their awareness. Alcohol, drugs, smoking, self-cutting, self-exploitation and other high risks responses sometimes provide short term ‘forgetting’ or numbs the physical feelings that they are “full-up and will explode if they don’t get it out”. Getting at the “it” is most painful as flashbacks intrude on all aspects of their life. As one Canadian woman stated, reclaiming herself was like “*double torture, like being tortured all over again.*”

Ritual Abuse-Torture and Human Trafficking

Human trafficking and exploitation are constant violations that must be placed in context. Trafficking, for example, can occur in the home when there is the gathering of family and friends and the to-be victimized girl/woman is forced into the basement “torture chamber” for gang raping and torture. At other times there were/are linkages with like-minded families/groups such as being “rented out” to “outsiders”. When her body matures and pedophilic interest fades she may be forced into ‘prostitution’.

Since 2003, a global map on our website has given people who self-identify with ritual abuse-torture victimization, an opportunity to place an iconic marker on the map indicating the geographical place where the first victimization ordeal



occurred. Numbering in the mid-300 range, the pattern of victimization as shown on the above map (n=123) has been in industrialized countries (Sarson & MacDonald, 2008a). Could it be that language and available technology prevents others from accessing the map or is RAT a form of relational violence characteristically located in industrialized countries?

Self-Harming Responses: Survival, Conditioned and Best Practices for Reclaiming-of-Self.

Suicidality. Because the first goal of the perpetrators, as indicated on the Model, is to keep the family/group crimes a secret some women state that they were “taught” – conditioned – to commit suicide should they ever tell. Therefore, when they began to disclose their feelings and thoughts about RAT, committing suicide rose as a result of this cognitive conditioning/programming to always be loyal to the family/group. The perpetrators may attempt to contact the exiting woman to trigger or counsel her into committing suicide. Another layer that requires recognition is that suicidal memories invade the present, consequently compounding the risks. And when ‘simply’ overwhelmed with her suffering there is the risk of or attempts at self-directed suicide in order to cope with her agony. Best practice requires dismantling these layers.

Self-cutting. Similar to the conditioned teaching for suicide, self-cutting may also be taught or encouraged. Therefore, triggering/normalizing a cutting response occurs when she is overwhelmed by flashbacks, intrusive remembering, when stressed at a job or when contacted and triggered by the perpetrators. Best practices begin with safety and harm reduction plans.

Forced drugging. As shown in the accompanying box forced drugging benefits the perpetrators by incapacitating the girl/woman chosen for victimization. Drugging is generally a constant activity with women stating they remember being drugged as tiny infants. Thematic issues revealed in women’s testimonies include believing drugs were given in their baby bottles, given in Kool Aide or other drinks, told that they were eating candy, forced to do coke and LSD or other unknown drugs. Some women indicate that drugging also included forced injectables given intramuscularly or intravenously and/or given inhalants by mask. Drugging facilitated family/group pseudo-necrophilic raping of the girl’s or woman’s lifeless body and it silenced her. By focussing on drug induced hallucinations one woman used these to take herself away or dissociate from the torture. Natural drugging plants were stated as being products used to induce psychoactive effects especially before the violent family/group torture gatherings. Two plants mentioned were Peyote cacti and the Deadly Nightshade plant.

When drugging memories intrude on her life she can/will have responses similar to the drugging effects she was forced to endure. She can experience the sensation of something crawling under her skin, excitability, panic and sleeplessness which relate to forced cocaine use for example. She may suddenly begin to stagger, be incoherent of speech and fall asleep. Such drugging body memories compound the complexity of her suffering. Best practice begins with understanding these complexities and providing knowledge to assist her to understand her reactions.

Alcohol. Women often speak of being forced as children to drink wine or other liquids that made them feel drowsy or sleepy. When intoxicated and staggering they report remembering the perpetrators’ laughing at them and when remembering their feelings of humiliation return.

When used to cope, women report that alcohol helped to keep memories and vulnerabilities at bay as explained in the following woman’s testimony.

Alcohol made it possible for me not to feel and not to remember, and that felt like "my ticket to normal." ... as a career woman, about midway through my 20 years of drinking... driving sober down a familiar street ... my car would want to jump into a tree, to kill me. My first thought was, "When you get home you can have a drink, and you'll be fine." I had no other way to cope. Once I got clean and sober, I had no defence against the first memory and insufficient tools for dealing with them sober.

(K, American, shared 15 April, 2009)

Forced Drugging:

- ↑captivity
- ↑disorientation
- ↑immobility
- ↑dissociative responses
- ↑RATers domination, power & control, safety & pleasures, i.e., pseudo-necrophilic raping

Her statement of “*my car would* in ritual abuse-torture victimization. Women struggle against these ‘compelling’ and terrifying intrusive thoughts. If no specific linkage can be made to

specific suicidal conditioning our experience suggests that this response is related to a life-long undercurrent of “wishing I were dead”. Being free to talk about such responses, learning to pull one’s car off the road if necessary and self-talking out loud in the car to challenge such a response might/can be helpful. Women have found effective support in self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

Smoking. Women report that cigarette smoking helped keep their memories and feelings at bay. Young women today tell us that marijuana is often their drug of choice and without this they would collapse. For example, a young woman attempting to exit the family/group states she is “*all alone, without support or protection services from the police*”, attempting to work, to go to school, to try and be safe, everything rests on her ability “*to keep going*” until she can manage her education or become sufficiently independent as to have the financial resources to pay for effective help. Others live on the street; go into hiding – they run. Although self-medication has risks often she – women – have insufficient trust to believe in other forms of support. Best practice requires broadening knowledge that ritual abuse-torture exists to give her an opportunity to speak her truth and become open to healthier ways of coping.

Forced prostitution. Because she has been trafficked and exploited since childhood often women will engage in ‘prostitution’ when in need of finances because prostitution is familiar – “*It is something I know*”. Alternatively she might experience compelling conditioned responses to seek out such behaviours – not because she wants to or financially needs to but because the drive to re-enact her victimization is so strong that in the early stages of reclaiming her relationship with/to self she will take these risks. Also there is the emotionally triggered need to “*beat my-self up*” because she feels undeserving of healthy caring. Best practice is again the freedom to talk, to attempt to unravel the conditioning and to find creative ways that she can use to keep herself safe. Creativity depends on the person, for some posting a stop sign on her door or practicing other grounding self-help techniques help to remind her to stay indoors versus troll the streets when such triggering occurs.

Shopping. Perpetual shopping sometimes serves to sooth the emotional feelings of deprivation, of never being allowed to have toys, pets or friends, or any article to call one’s own. Sitting idle in the bags, purchases may never be used. The disadvantages are that such purchases cause financial difficulties which then compound poverty, threatening security if bills cannot be paid. Also excessive purchasing adds to the environmental chaos which can contribute to her emotional chaos, adding to her personal crisis. Healing deprivation emotions takes time; however, support for financial management can sometimes be found through banks and government sponsored money management services. If trustworthy friends are available they may hold the woman’s money to help her limit her access and therefore help her control her spending.

want to jump into a tree, to kill me” is one we have heard numerous times. Killing/necrophilic themes are one of the thematic issues identified as common

Other self-harming. Head banging, hair pulling, self-bruising, self-scrubbing and eating difficulties are frequent responses – triggered/conditioned and learned survival strategies. Head banging, hair pulling and self-bruising women report were forced conditioned behaviours imposed on them as children to redirect their attention away from their severe torture pain and suffering. One woman reported that she was repeatedly told by her father to hit herself because “*the colors made her pretty*”. When intrusive memories and flashbacks return so too do the emotional feelings of how overwhelmed she was back when she was being tortured and how overwhelmed she feels in the present. These strong feelings can/do trigger the conditioned self-harming coping survival strategies she learned.

Self-scrubbing. Because women report a loss of their sensory feelings they do not realize they are scrubbing themselves hard until they see they are bleeding. To encourage harm reduction replacing the scrubbing brush with a facecloth will protect her skin. She may not know that she ‘is allowed’ to use a facecloth if she had only ever been permitted to use a stiff brush. Another reason for scrubbing is that a woman may experience smell memories that include all the degradation of body fluids she was smeared with and that were a result of sexualized torture. She may not realize she is having sensory memories therefore asking questions provides an opportunity to make these connections, to challenge her response of scrubbing to get rid of the smell – a historical smell located in the past but remembered in the present.

Eating difficulties. There are many reasons why food causes difficulties, such as being repulsed by the look and texture of some foods because these remind her of the body fluids she was forced to swallow, therefore she avoids such foods. Another reason is because food was withheld or she was taunted with food. Or as described by the young woman below:

Constantly called fat ... sometimes they'd go for a few days without really feeding me. I had to cook for them and if I got caught eat[ing] more than my daily allowance (which was sometimes nothing), I'd get beat and/or raped. I guess this caused me to fear food ... I get flashbacks when I eat and, in general, I just hate eating ... recovering from anorexia.

(S, American aged 18, shared February 2006)

Because of the disconnection with herself and her body she – women – may have difficulty judging whether she is hungry therefore may over or under eat. Interventions that establish a set time for eating and a scale to measure and weigh her food can be helpful.

Other Best Practices

Recognizing the existence of NSAT including ritual abuse-torture. There is a dire need to recognize the existence of NSAT including RAT victimization that can occur at any age of childhood and extend into womanhood and that acts of NSAT are beyond abuse. The girl child or woman’s responses will, for example, be related to her degree of victimization and the length

of time she endured such victimization. The care, support and protection she requires needs to reflect this reality.

Awareness of enforced gendered-roles. Although the knowledge shared is predominately of female gendered ordeals, both young and older women spoke/speak of their sibling's victimization including of male siblings. Below is a listing of some of the gendered perceptions inflicted onto girls and boys in what appears to be a predominately patriarchal relational construct within RAT families/groups.

- Girls were victims
- Girls were used
- Girls were 'prostitutes'
- Those weren't the words ... they were the roles. The words were more along the lines of "You can use Sue for that"(K, American, shared April 2009).
- Girls were breeders
- Boys were entrepreneurs
- Boys were violent
- Boys were the pimps
- Boys were rapists
- Boys were to become men controllers & torturers

From a feminist perspective the ownership, objectification and sexualisation of captive girl children and women is repetitively clear.

The use of self-help programs, alternative therapies and prescribed medications. As mentioned, women have found support in various self-help support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), also Narcotics Anonymous (NA), groups dealing with grief and losses, eating difficulties or sexual assault groups. These can be positive in helping to break social isolation, a common response to feeling emotional shame and undeserving of being around others, for example.

If women can cope with being touched, being without her clothes and being on a massage table, massage can help reduce muscle tension and stress. Chiropractic, acupuncture, naturopathic, Native healing cultural practices and other alternative healing methods have also been helpful. Daily exercise if possible – walking and swimming help stimulate her senses, putting her in touch with her own senses and with sensations within the environment such as being able to feel the wind, to feel rain, to hear rain fall on a road or to see colors when she says that she previously has seen mainly in "*black and white*". Being out-of-doors may help bring to a woman's awareness a sense of connection with nature, for example noticing birds bathing in a puddle or squirrels running up a tree. Learning visualization and meditation techniques for safety and stress reduction can be effective coping strategies.

An alternative to self-medication can be prescribed drugs monitored by a trusted health care provider. Violence victimization can change the brain chemistry (Banks, 2000); women report having very pronounced responses to drugs. Careful monitoring and recording of symptoms with medication adjustments are necessary.

Hearing, listening and understanding. Most women who contact us regardless of whether they are in the present day process of escaping or exiting or whether they have been out for some time or for years tell us that being listened to, being believed and having the freedom to speak their truths is the support that is most difficult to access. They fear being labeled “crazy” and told they are mentally ill and pathologized versus being understood as attempting to cope with traumatic responses related to NSAT survival. There is healing and freedom when given the respect to speak and attempt to especially sort out the mind-altering forced conditioning they speak of having endured. Therefore healing involves honoring that *"It is so cool to find someone asking about exactly what I am wishing to tell"* (Email communication, C.M., American, 16 April 2007).

Saying one is sorry for the atrocities a teen or woman describes she was forced to endure is best practice because:

***“It is not that kindness is so unusual,
but kindness when I talk or write of these things,
that is unusual.”***

(C, Australian, January 10, 2009)

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