



Dealing with Stories of Abuse in Rock Work

It is not uncommon to encounter stories of physical or sexual abuse during Rock Work. There are a few key principles for how to facilitate a person with a history of abuse. *See Zoom Recording Month Six November 14, 2021 for more dialogue on this subject.*

Our Goal:

- To hold space for and witness a person who risks sharing their story.
- To approach the person and their story with sensitivity and respect.
- To be careful to not “re-wound” the person by creating a process which would have them relive their experience.
- We aim to focus on the internal consequences of the abuse such as core shaming messages, disempowerment, loss of innocence, disconnection from God/others, a need for cleansing, and a lack of trust. In light of this we are not looking to identify the part as a “false self.”
- Be sensitive to what is needed in the moment. It could be a release through grieving the loss or using their voice to “draw a boundary” and connect to inner strength. Or, it could be both depending on the situation and time available.

The Process:

- Do NOT pull out the abuser as “the part.” The person perpetrating the abuse will not be a part of the process as it could re-traumatize the attendee.
- Focus on the “part” of the person which is “blocked” regarding the abuse.
After giving time to hear their story ask:
“What has been the impact of _____ (the abuse) in your life?”
Listen for those things which are blocking the attendee and keeping them stuck as a result of the abuse.
- Pay attention to the energy of the attendee. Are you noticing anger, shame, sadness? This will help determine which type of process you will use – power or connection.
- We do not recommend using “Show Them” within a process with people dealing with abuse. This could re-traumatize them.
- Look for any shaming messages or grieving over the losses.

For example:

- The Shaming Messages the person internalized from the abuse becomes the “part.”

This could be a Power Process where the person draws a “boundary” within and rejects the negative messages. Choose a power process which matches a metaphor described by the attendee. Consider using the “Tunnel Process,” especially when they could use a “new beginning” to connect to God, or the part of them that is free, pure,

- When a person is more connected to the heaviness of shame it could be a Connection Process. In this case, the “part” is represented by that which they are carrying or holding onto. Consider “Exchanging Messages with Christ.” This is a significant process for someone to release the weight and shame of messages they have taken on and to give them to Christ and have Christ bring cleansing and new messages.

The “Conversation with God” process can also be effective for a person needing to grieve and let go of the pain, loss of innocence and shame that has blocked the person from freedom from the abuse.

Whether you do a power process, or a connection process make sure by the end of the process that you have helped them to connect to something new.