

The Post-Traumatic Gazette No. 33

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First Aid for Trauma Survivors

by Patience Mason

Assembling a First Aid Kit for those moments when PTSD symptoms are about to kick your butt is an empowering thing for any trauma survivor. What can you do to take care of yourself when you are having a hard time? How can you supplement the help you are getting in healthy compassionate ways?

Safe Objects: One of the easiest methods is to carry a safe object. These range from a bit of silk or velvet to smooth stones or even a vial of a safe scent (one that instantly makes you feel safe). The idea behind this is to engage the pre-verbal parts of the brain in self soothing. running your hands over a bit of fabric or a smooth stone grounds you, brings you back to the here and now. Using the earth as an object, simply by planting your feet and being rooted is also an option. Some people carry very small teddy bears or other stuffed animals or even Buzz Lightyear.

Melissa Wattenberg, Ph. D, has been working with severely traumatized veterans in Boston and has found that a person can pull him or herself out of a flashback or its emotional after effects by using a “safe” scent. This is based in brain anatomy. Smells don’t have to go through normal channels, up to the forebrain where they are turned into verbal thoughts. Smells go straight from nose to brain. A reassuring “safe” smell seems to dump you right out of the reexperiencing loop. Cookies? Vanilla? Roses? Since smells can also trigger flashbacks, it is nice to know you can reverse the process and use a safe smell to free yourself from one or even ward one off. Finding a safe smell is a matter of trial and error.

Carry it with you.

A written card with an affirmation on it can also serve as a safe object. (p. 263).

Awareness Techniques: The practice of meditation or any technique which slows breathing can be used to counter reexperiencing (because it brings you back to here and now), hypervigilance (because it calms you) and numbing and avoidance (because it increases awareness). The simplest meditation technique is following your breath in and out. When you find yourself triggered, you can go back to following your breath and see that this is now—not then. Or use battle breathing, a technique used by elite military groups and others to keep their heart beating below 175 beats per minute where they can still think clearly. To do this you simply count to four on the in breath, hold for four, exhale for four, and hold for four. This increases your ability to be aware of what is actually going on, since when your heartbeat is above 175 beats per minute (see #28), most people only focus on one sense.

Your brain is set up to narrow its focus to survival information when you are being traumatized. Broadening your awareness and slowing down your reactions are by-products of battle breathing and of most meditation/ breathing techniques. There are many books, CD’s, magazine articles and teachers available. Find one that speaks to you and practice! Basically this is a new form of the old “count to ten” idea we learned as kids. You can do that, too.

Keeping a list of what triggers you may also help. Be aware of situations you are going into which

might be triggers. It helps to know something triggers you instead of thinking you are crazy because you can’t go to a Chris-tmas party or sit through a violent movie.

The HEALS technique, developed by Dr Steven Stosny, is another

HEALS

1. H: See the letters flash in bright colors: HEALING (or hear the word).
2. Explain to yourself the worst of the core hurts you’re covering up:
 - disregarded/unimportant
 - accused: guilty, untrustworthy or mistrusted
 - devalued
 - rejected
 - powerless
 - unlovableSay it slowly, “I feel...unlovable. “ Feel it for a few seconds.
3. Apply self-compassion: Change the false meaning that hurts you. “The way s/he is acting comes out of her/his own problems. It does not mean I’m unlovable, and I can love myself!”
4. Love yourself by feeling compassion
5. Solve the problem

er useful form of first aid for anger that might accelerate into violence. It involves becoming aware of the emotion under your anger, and applying self-compassion. He says if you are having a problem with anger, do this many times a day till it is automatic.

Finally, learn and keep a list of the signs in your body that you are feeling threatened or are getting stressed. Since emotional numbing is a symptom of PTSD, checking on bodily signs can be an effective way to keep track. Then you can either beat feet or use any technique from affirmations to battle breathing to be in the present and tell yourself, “this is not the past and I don’t have to react as if I were still in the middle of the trauma.”

Removal Techniques: Beat feet. Removing yourself from situations is number one. Don't stay to be harassed or insulted or endangered. Sometimes you can't leave, however, so developing a safe space inside your imagination is a very helpful thing to do. Imagine a place where you feel safe, with as many details as you can, and go there when needed.

Sometimes things seem to be living in your head, thoughts or images you can't shake. Try to see them on a TV screen, and step back so they get smaller, or visualize yourself stepping out of the room or taking the tape out of your VCR and putting it in a safe container, an iron box, a locked closet or whatever. Repeat as often as necessary. Another one is to write out what is bothering you and put it in a box (sometimes called a God box). This may have to be done repeatedly, too, at first, but it can become very effective with practice.

Replacement techniques: Replace the thoughts or images with your safe place inside. Drown them out with the serenity prayer or any other healing words that help you including affirmations, slogans like "Stop, Breathe, Think, Decide" from the Transcend Program, or "One Day at a Time" or "This too shall Pass," and other 12 step program slogans. You might tape a message, "You are safe now," with detailed affirmations that are meaningful to you and have it ready to play when you need it.

An excellent replacement is Belleruth Naparstek's *Healing Trauma: Guided Imagery for PTSD*, Image Paths, Inc. 891 Moe Drive, Suite C, Akron, OH 44310, 1-800-800-8661, www.healthjourneys.com. Written for trauma survivors, this is a marvelous tape/CD with half an hour of guided imagery and half an hour of affirmations. I recommend it highly.

You can also re-place yourself in the most literal sense. Go outside and sit in the sun. Place your body

in the middle of natural beauty and focus on that. Or get in the bathtub and take a warm bath while listening to comforting music.

Stretching releases some of the tension in your muscles and therefore reduces the chemical load of stress hormones in your body. Walking, running, swimming, and other forms of exercise also can replace tension and stress with endorphins.

For emotional numbing sometimes recreating an aspect of the numbed emotion evokes the emotion. Scientific studies that show that if you smile it causes changes in mood and even body chemistry. When my son realized he was emotionally numb from living with PTSD, he decided to get his feelings back by going out on the lawn and twirling around hollering hurray like a little kid whenever anything good happened. He says it worked for him.

We have the trunk of a huge oak in our front yard. I sometimes walk it, which means holding out my arms and placing my feet carefully. Focusing on my body as I step along above the ground creates delight, a sense of wonder. I feel embodied (in my body, not my head) and powerful in the sense of competent, all emotions that seem to come out of doing the activity itself.

When I couldn't cry, I used to listen to country music howlers, particularly George Jones' *He Stopped Loving Her Today*, and found I could cry alone in the car with that playing. It is a good way to practice crying.

Writing is another quick way to get at feelings. Start with "I'm feeling numb and what just happened was..." Write the circumstances. then write "This reminds me of when..." and see if you get an incident or incidents and some probably very painful feelings. Remember, when you can tolerate bad feelings, good ones start to show up too.

Music is always a good replace-

ment for overwhelming thoughts or feelings. Reading can also serve this function, whether you read an affirmation book for survivors or escape into a novel that won't retraumatize you. Many people use TV or video tapes this way. In emergencies that is good, but keep in mind that watching a lot of TV is associated with depression and weight gain.

Asking for help: Calling someone from your group is one of the standard tools of 12 step groups. People who have been through what you are going through can be very helpful in validating you and suggesting things that might help. Take what you like and leave the rest.

Talking to your nearest and dearest or a minister/priest/rabbi may help too if that person is not thinking you should be over it and saying so. Or that if you had faith, it wouldn't bother you. (If they had faith, it wouldn't bother them that you have problems, since God made human beings so that trauma affects them). I think if the critic's relationship were right with God, they wouldn't be denying the normal effects of trauma or have to believe in a cruel simplistic solution to a complex painful problem.

Talking with someone safe and healthy it is important. I know I say this every issue, but I want to emphasize the safe and healthy part: someone who won't say get over it or pray about it as if that were the whole answer, and someone who can tolerate the fact that you are in pain without cheering you up or criticizing you. A trained therapist is a gift you can give yourself. Education and information can normalize what feel like some pretty crazy feelings (or lack of feelings), reactions, or symptoms. It helps to know what is going on.

First Aid prayers and affirmations (it can't hurt and it might help)

The Serenity Prayer for Trauma Survivors:

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change: the past, what happened to me, that what happened was traumatic no matter how effectively I have stuffed it.

Courage to change the things I can: my *attitude* towards my symptoms—help me to accept them as a normal response to trauma and evidence that I need to take care of myself by talking about this and getting help; my *actions*—I no longer have to drug or deny my symptoms. I can just accept them: my *reactions*—instead of freaking out I can focus on the symptom, feel what I feel, go through, and deal with, the pain and learn whatever it is that my Higher Power wants me to know and share about the effects of trauma on people. Finally I can change *how I see these symptoms*—as normal and helpful to me in my recovery even if they are painful. Eventually I will be able to help other people who share a history of trauma.

And the wisdom to know the difference: I can change my actions and reactions. Help me to be willing, teachable, and to learn about myself and what I have survived even if it is frightening.

Prayer for People with PTSD

Higher Power, I know that it's not within the harmony of the universe that I be healed from the trauma of remembering ____ (traumatic incidents) ____ without pain. Help me through the pain. Surround me with the golden light of healing, fill me with the white light of peace and love. Help me to bear the pain as I go through these memories. Help me to cry. Help me to remember. Help me to love myself no matter what happened to me or what I did to survive. Help me to release and to let go of my survival skills, the things such as anger and numbness that helped keep me alive, as I become aware of how ineffective they can be in getting me what I want today. Fill me with light and love until I am green and growing again in the harmony of the universe, if it be thy will. Amen.

Suggested Affirmation for People Recovering from PTSD

I'm _____ and I'm _____ years old.

I'm in a safe place in (town) _____, (state) _____.

I'm with _____, and he/she/they care for me.

There's no one in my life who wants to hurt me.

I can cry and be scared and everyone will still love and accept me.

I need to have these feelings so I can let them go.

I may feel them repeatedly, but each time I need to accept them so I can let them go.

If I am feeling guilt and shame, I don't have to *believe* that I am guilty or did something shameful. I can say to myself "isn't that sad. I am feeling an old pattern I grew up with, but I need to feel it, so it will pass."

Welcome to PTSDland...

On October 2nd, Dear Abby reprinted a wonderful essay, *Welcome to Holland*, written by Emily Perl Kingsley, the mother of a child with Downs Syndrome (mental retardation).

The essay compares the experience of having a disabled child to planning a vacation in Italy and winding up in Holland.

You've arrived, but it is a different place than what you expected.

I believe that is also true for trauma survivors. You're alive, but you are not where you expected to be. I, too, arrived, as the wife of a Vietnam veteran with PTSD, in a strange country which was not at all what I had expected or planned for my life. At that time (1966) there were no guidebooks and maps to this country and a lot of people were pretending it didn't exist, which made it harder for all of us. I didn't know how to cooperate with the tour group either, and I made it harder for everyone because of my anger that we weren't in Italy.

If this has happened to you, sticking together and getting a good guidebook really helps.

Welcome to Holland goes on to say "It's just a different place. So you must go out and buy new guidebooks. You must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met."

Luckily today there are lots of guidebooks: *Recovering From the War*, *I Can't Get Over It*, *Children Changed by Trauma*, *Amongst Ourselves: A Guide for Living with DID*, *Life After Trauma*, *Trust After Trauma*, among others. The new language involves words like emotional numbing, reexperiencing, and hypervigilance. You read about brain chemistry and the consequences to a person's physical health of trauma.

Don't be misled by guidebooks which claim to have all the answers,

either. It is a new country, still being explored.

Mrs. Kingsley goes on to say that Holland isn't as dramatic as Italy, but it has tulips, Rembrandts and windmills.

We've had some of our own windmills, and had to tilt at them too, in PTSDland. At one time, the professional community practiced spectacular denial about incest (kids made it up) physical and sexual abuse (people who stayed must like it) and the consequences of war and genocide. Between 1968 and 1980, PTSD didn't even exist as a diagnosis. Today, we struggle with the pill pushers and the "this is as good as it gets" prophets who forget that new therapies (which they haven't tried) are being developed every day.

We also have Rembrandts. Survivors of all kinds of trauma are writing, painting, drawing, dancing, singing and creating moving works of art from their pain and their healing. I think of Larry Heinemann, Bruce Weigl, Emily Strange, WD Ehrhart, and my husband, Robert Mason, just to name a few of the Vietnam writers I know and love.

Many of us feel like tulips. We are green and growing again, both recovering trauma survivors and their family members. We share the pain and we share what works. We are all in this together, whatever the trauma.

Mrs Kingsley's final paragraphs talk about how arriving in this strange country will affect the rest of your life. She says, "And the pain of that will never, ever, ever go away, because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss."

Being a trauma survivor, or family member, or a therapist who works with either, removes many of the certainties we grew up with. Trauma is devastating, even if you

are so numb you think it didn't affect you. Trauma is a significant loss, and it doesn't go away. We can never go back to innocence or blind faith that nothing bad can happen. Yet if we find good help, our losses, as they heal, open us up to opportunities for spiritual and emotional growth. Because of our perspective and experience, we can do something meaningful in the world by working toward ending trauma and helping other trauma survivors and their families.

Mrs Kingsley goes on to say that if you spend all your life mourning that you wound up in another country, you may never notice what is good about where you are.

When I first started studying PTSD in 1986, I remember interviewing the late Sarah Haley, then a social worker at the Boston VA Outpatient Clinic, one of the first people to listen to and write about Vietnam veterans. She was a blessed woman and a blessing to me and to her clients. Over the years I've met countless survivors, of the holocaust, of incest and child abuse and neglect, crime victims, those who have seen tornadoes touch down, those who have been wounded, and those who have killed. All of them have been affected. All are gallantly struggling to recover.

We are part of a chain of people who have been affected by trauma who can help and support one another in a way that wasn't possible in the past when trauma's effects were denied and ignored. It is a different place, but it is full of people I love.

Look around. You may grow to love us, too, and see a value in your visit here.

Welcome to PTSDland.

Controlling (needing to feel powerful)

from the New York Adult Children of Alcoholics

When we control others, we want them to act in a certain way—we do not give them choices. We use various means to control others: quiet anger, disapproval, being nice, apologizing, silence, guilt, reminders, suggestions, lectures, pouting, wishing, complaining, being hurt, and waiting for attention.

We send two messages to others without knowing it: “You have all the power” (because I’m powerless), and “It’s your fault I’m unhappy” (because you’re not okay the way you are).

The message, “You have all the power,” is what we really believe. We habitually let other people determine how we act, what we value, who we are. Somewhere we learned to believe that others shape our lives, and we can’t do anything about it. This attitude is a habit—a hard one to break.

The other side of this message, “I’m powerless,” lets me off the hook. Actually I have all kinds of power—but I use it indirectly. Using power indirectly lets me

remain blameless. This is infuriating to everyone around me. I don’t understand why they’re upset.

Signs of Controlling:

1) *Tension*—Controlling behavior makes everyone nervous. The person doing the controlling gets tense. The person being controlled tends to get resistant.

2) *Blaming*—“You” If I want control, I will blame someone else. I want others to change first.

3) *Urgency*—Whenever I feel the overwhelming need to make something happen, or to prevent something from happening, I know that I’m feeling the urge to control. Fear and anger are usually parts of the urgency.

4) *Refusing to feel*—Controlling behavior requires discounting, denying or ignoring our own or other’s feelings.

Message from Patience

Sorry the last issue of the Gazette was so late. I have used things I have already written in this issue so it won’t be late.

The prayers on page 3 are from my pamphlet, *An Explanation of PTSD for 12 Steppers: When I Get Sober I Feel Crazy*.

Feel free to adapt them in any way that helps you. I use prayer without defining a higher power. I just know I’m not it.

Controlling and Hidden Anger came from xerox copies one of my friends brought us from New York ACOA meetings. I have no idea who wrote them, and would gladly give credit if I knew.

Dr. Charles Whitfield’s *Personal Bill of Rights* was borrowed by our ACOA group from his book *Healing the Child Within*, p 115-7. I have adapted and modified it, adding some ideas that have been important in my recovery.

I spent the summer in Maine living in a cabin my Grandfather built 70 years ago. It had shutters but no windows or screens, no electricity or running water or phone till we ran extension cords. It was great except when it rained, but a new blue tarp, plastic sheeting and duct-tape carpentry fixed the leaks.

My husband, Bob, has been working on a documentary, *Flightline: The Army Helicopter Pilots of Vietnam*. I did part of each interview which was an honor.

ACOA saying
It is never too late to
have a happy childhood!

Checklist for Hidden Anger

—from the New York Adult Children of Alcoholics.

If we have a national fault, it is hiding our anger from ourselves. Here is a checklist to help you determine if you are hiding your anger from yourself. Any of these is usually a sign of hidden, unexpressed anger.

1. Procrastination in the completion of imposed tasks.
2. Perpetual or habitual lateness.
3. A liking for sadistic or ironic humor.
4. Sarcasm, cynicism, or flippancy in conversation.
5. Over-politeness, constant cheerfulness, attitude of “grin and bear it.”
6. Frequent sighing.
7. Smiling while hurting.
8. Frequent disturbing or frightening dreams.
9. Over-controlled, monotone speaking voice.
10. Difficulty in getting to sleep or in sleeping through the night.
11. Boredom, apathy, loss of interest in things you are usually enthusiastic about.
12. Slowing down of movements.
13. Getting tired more easily than usual.
14. Excessive irritability over trifles.
15. Getting drowsy at inappropriate times.
16. Sleeping more than usual.
17. Waking up tired rather than rested or refreshed.
18. Clenched jaws—especially while sleeping.
19. Facial tics, spasmodic foot movements, habitual fist clenching and similar repeated physical acts done

unintentionally or unaware.

20. Grinding of the teeth—especially while sleeping.
21. Chronically stiff or sore neck.
22. Chronic depression—extended periods of feeling down for no reason.
23. Stomach ulcers.

This is not about rage. Rage is anger out of control and taking over your whole being. This is about the feelings we call irritation, annoyance, getting mad, etc. All of these negative feelings share one thing in common: they are considered undesirable at best, sinful or destructive at worst. We are taught to avoid them—to avoid having them if possible (it isn't) but certainly to avoid expressing them. Unfortunately, many people go overboard in controlling negative feelings; they control not only their expression, but their awareness of them too.

Because you are unaware of being angry does not mean that you are not angry. It is the anger you are unaware of which can do the most damage to you and to your relationships with other people, since it does get expressed, but in inappropriate ways. Freud once likened anger to the smoke in an old-fashioned wood-burning stove. The normal avenue for discharge of the smoke is up the chimney; if the normal avenue is blocked, the smoke will leak out of the stove in unintended ways—around the door, through the grates, etc—choking everyone in

the room. If all avenues of escape are blocked, the fire goes out and the stove ceases to function. Likewise the normal (human) expression of anger is gross physical movement and/or loud vocalization; watch a red-faced hungry infant sometime. By age five or so we are taught that such expressions are unacceptable to others and lead to undesirable consequences such as being beaten or having affection withheld.

We learn to be *nice* which means (among other things) hiding bad feelings. By adulthood even verbal expression is curtailed, since a civilized person is expected to be “civil.” Thus, expression is stifled, and to protect ourselves from the unbearable burden of continually unexpressed “bad” feelings, we go to the next step and convince ourselves that we are not angry, even when we are. Such self-deception is seldom completely successful, however, and the blocked anger leaks out in inappropriate ways, some of which are previously listed.

The items in the list are all danger signals that negative feelings are being bottled up inside. It is true that each of them can have causes other than anger (procrastination, for example, can be due to an unreasonable fear of failure), but the presence of any of them is reason enough for you to look within yourself for buried resentments. If you are human, you will find some. If you are fortunate,

you will find few, since you have learned effective ways of discharging them. If you are like most of us, you will need to unlearn old habits before you can learn new ways of handling bad feelings—ways which are constructive rather than destructive.

Getting rid of a lifetime accumulation of buried resentments is a major task which is one of the goals of psychotherapy. Whether such a process is necessary for you should be decided in consultation with a qualified professional person. Our immediate concern in this paper is to provide you with some techniques which will help you stop adding to the pile, whatever its existing depth.

The process of dealing with negative feelings can be divided into three parts for purposes of discussion, although the living of it is all of a piece. The parts are:

1. Recognition of the feelings.
2. Owning it—acknowledging that it is yours.
3. Discharging it—acting on it in some way.

RECOGNITION: Everybody has her own body signals indicating current, on-the-spot anger. Look for yours: friends and relatives might be helpful, since they may be aware of your irritation before you are, and may be able to tell you how they can tell when you are upset. Some common signals are: clamming up; blushing; shortening of breath; drumming with fingers; foot tapping; shaking or twisting; laughing when nothing amusing is happening; patting

or stroking the back of the head; clenching jaws or fist; tucking a thumb inside a fist; yawning or getting drowsy; suddenly refusing eye contact with another person; fidgeting; apologizing when none is asked for; a pain in the neck, gut, or back; headaches; a rise in voice pitch. The list is interminable; try to find out what your signals are.

If you find yourself depressed or blue and don't know why, think back over the past twenty-four hours and try to figure out who did something to anger you. (Depression is usually the result of repressed anger). Forget that you are a nice person and imagine yourself to be the touchiest, most unreasonable, childish person on the earth. review your day and look for an incident where this imaginary person might have gotten angry. When you find the incident, ask yourself why you didn't get angry. Chances are you did and didn't know it. Remember what you actually did and said in that situation; try to relive it; you may learn some of your own internal anger signals.

OWNING IT: The anger is yours. The other person may have said or done something that punched your anger button, but the anger is yours, and so are the feelings it triggers. You cannot make someone else responsible for your own feelings. Blaming does not help. Nothing the other person does will help, unless it is in response to something you do.

Accepting anger as your

own is easier if you discard the idea that feelings need to be justified. They don't—and frequently cannot be. "Should" and "feel" are two words which do not belong together in the same sentence. It is senseless to say that someone "should feel" some way. Feelings are just there in the same way your skin, muscles and vital organs are just there. In fact it is downright harmful to worry about what your feelings "should be". Knowing what your feelings *are* is the best start to deciding the best thing to do.

DISCHARGING IT: First, foremost, and always, don't hide it. You'll probably not be successful anyway. Anger demands expression. If you have recognized it and owned it, then you will have a choice of when, where and how you may express it. Society and your own safety forbid violence. Friendships and other interpersonal relationships (husband/wife, employer/employee) make explosive verbal expression ultimately self-defeating. Just saying, "That makes me angry," or "I do not like it when—" may not be as satisfying as bashing someone, but it is far more satisfying than saying and doing nothing. There are in reality a few situations in which it is in your best interest to delay expression, but none in which you can afford to delay recognition or owning.

Note: Volume 2, No. 2., of the PTG (Issue #10), **Dealing with Anger in Effective Ways** might help, too.

Personal Bill of Rights

—adapted and expanded by Patience Mason from *Healing the Child Within*, Charles Whitfield, MD, p.115-7.

1. I have a lot of rights in my life beyond survival.
2. I have a right to discover and know my inner child.
3. I have a right to grieve over what I didn't get that I needed or what I got that I didn't need or want.
4. I have a right to follow my own values and standards.
5. I have a right to recognize and accept my own value system.
6. I have a right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, violates my values, or I don't feel like doing it.
 - 6a. I also have the right to try new things which may not be comfortable (and probably won't be).
7. I have a right to dignity and respect.
8. I have a right to make decisions.
9. I have a right to determine and honor my own priorities.
10. I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others.
11. I have the right to terminate conversations with people with whom I feel put down or humiliated, manipulated or controlled, or simply uncomfortable.
12. I have the right not to be responsible for others' behavior, actions, feelings or problems.
13. I have a right to make mistakes and not have to be perfect.
14. I have a right to expect honesty from others.
15. I have a right to all of my feelings.
16. I have a right to be angry at someone I love, and love someone I'm angry at.
 - 16a. I have a right to learn how to express anger effectively instead of abusively.
17. I have a right to be uniquely me and to feel I'm good enough.
18. I have a right to feel scared and to say "I'm afraid."
19. I have the right to feel and learn to tolerate feelings of fear, guilt, and shame without necessarily believing them.
20. I have a right to make decisions based on my feelings, my judgment or any reason that I choose.
21. I have a right to change my mind at any time.
22. I have a right to be happy.
23. I have a right to stability—i.e. "roots" and stable healthy relationships of my choice.
24. I have the right to my own personal space and time.
25. I have the right to smile or cry without having to cover one with the other to protect someone's feelings or look good.
26. I have the right to be relaxed, playful, and frivolous.
 - 26a. I have the right to be sad or serious.
27. I have a right to be flexible and be comfortable with being so.
28. I have a right to change and grow, to grow up as well as old.
 - 28a. I have a right to reparent myself with kindness, love and compassion.
29. I have a right to learn better communication skills so that I may be understood.
30. I have a right to make friends and be comfortable around people.
31. I have a right to be in a non-abusive environment.
32. I have a right to be healthier than those around me.
33. I have a right to take care of myself, no matter what.
 - 33a. I have a right to learn how to do this no matter how old I am.
34. I have a right to grieve over actual or threatened losses.
35. I have the right to trust others who earn my trust.
 - 35a. I have a right to be suspicious of those who say "trust me" without earning it.
36. I have the right to forgive others and to forgive myself.
 - 36a. I have the right not to forgive, and also to know that forgiving is not condoning or forgetting.
37. I have the right to learn how to give and receive unconditional love.