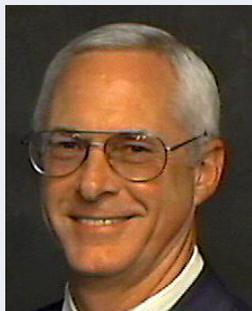


# Stonebriar Psychiatric Services News & Views

*By Wendy Copeland, MA, LPC, ITC*

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Relationship Counseling  
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Medication Management  
Speaking  
Evaluations/Assessments

## **Voicless Victor: A Story about Losing Self to Please Others** by Wendy Copeland, MA, LPC, ITC

The following is a vignette about Victor, the man who lost his voice and had a great deal of trouble finding it again. Victor represents many people in this world, who through life circumstances combined with their own coping, find themselves with a terrible case of relationship laryngitis.

In keeping with the confines of space and time, the following vignette will be segmented into two parts; the second portion of the story will arrive in next month's newsletter. As you read, consider how you can relate to Victor's story. Can you see yourself or someone you love reflected in the story?

Victor was born in 1965 in Des Moines, Iowa. He was the son of Harold and Sasha Sparks, two hard-working parents. Victor was the inconspicuous middle child, with a high-achieving brother just fifteen months older than him and a pretentious, animated sister a whole seven years younger. Victor's brother, Oscar, was very bright and articulate. At ten years old, Oscar had already decided that he was going to find a way to go to law school and be a lawyer. Victor never doubted that his brother would achieve his dreams; anything that Oscar did always seemed to turn out right. Oscar consistently won academic decathlons and debate contests at the local and county levels.

Victor's father was very proud of his eldest son. Oscar seemed to represent all the hopes and dreams that his father could never achieve for himself. Victor's mother and father married right after graduating from high school. Oscar was born just 10 months later. Although his father would not trade Oscar for anything, his dream of going on to college was never realized. He went straight into an entry-level sales job.

Victor's father was a smart salesman and could practically convince any adult in the Des Moines area that a truly good set of encyclopedias was exactly what a well-respected and educationally-minded household needed. Dad would refer to his eldest boy, Oscar, as a shining example of how the right set of books can produce a successful scholar. As for Victor, he would sometimes accompany his dad on the visits selling door to door. Victor's name was never mentioned because he was not a shining example of anything. Honestly, Victor could not comprehend why people would pay so much for a set of dumb, boring books anyway. The volumes were heavy and helpful if you wanted to press a flower or a butterfly, but who would actually want to crack a volume open and read it?

Victor's father would always say that he wanted his name and photograph printed in one of the volumes, under "S" for Sparks and or cross-referenced under "B" for Businessmen of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That would never happen,

### Treatment for

Depression  
Anxiety / Panic Attacks  
Eating Disorders  
Bi-polar Disorder  
Obsessive –  
Compulsive  
Disorder  
Compulsive Behaviors  
such as sexual  
addiction  
Post-traumatic Stress  
Disorder from past  
abuse  
Ryotional issues  
Adjustment to life  
changes

### Ages Served

Adult  
Adolescent  
Children ages 10 & up



but Dad was convinced that his Oscar would have the Sparks name printed in the Encyclopedia Britannica someday. Dad never dreamt that Oscar Sparks would later be in Forbes magazine, named as one of the premier corporate attorneys of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dad also never conceived that Wikipedia and the internet would someday replace the (now) obsolete encyclopedia!

Victor felt somewhat invisible to his father, but he definitely felt invisible to Mom ever since his younger sister Sally came along in 1972. Really, now that he thinks about it, Victor lost his mother's attentive eye when she found out that she was pregnant with a girl. The news hit the same day as the school assembly where he was supposed to be recognized as "Most Improved Student" in Mrs. Culver's first grade class. His teacher had been working with him after school to help him in reading; that Friday was supposed to be a brief moment of recognition in front of the whole first grade and his family. Mrs. Culver called that his "moment of glory," where all eyes would be on him; but the moment passed without either one of his parents' eyes witnessing him receive the award. His mother missed due to an OB/GYN appointment and his father never showed for the assembly. Victor hoped that later that day he would at least be able to share his excitement at dinner, but Mom couldn't stop talking about finally having a girl. This really confused Victor because before all the excitement over pink, his mother seemed to really favor him. His father was focused on the one and only Oscar, but he seemed to be Mom's favorite. He never knew that Mom was not content with just two boys. Victor felt like she must really been disappointed with him.

So Victor grew up feeling generally unseen. He wasn't great at anything, unlike awesome Oscar and cute little Sally. He found that with his parents, if he was super helpful, he would get some positive attention. Victor became observant of what needed to be done to help out the family. So, with Dad, he would help cut the lawn and run their dog Sammy down the neighborhood street and back. His mother seemed to appreciate it when he helped vacuum or checked the yard for dog poop. He noticed he might get an extra hug, pat on the head, or even sometimes a cookie brought home from the local bakery where she worked part-time.

Victor found a way of coping with being unseen and feeling unimportant. He thought that being special to someone was too much to hope for, but being helpful to others was something that he could achieve. So Victor would observe people, learning how to make them happy. Victor learned how to be a People Pleaser. People Pleasing brought some control and predictability to Victor's life, but it could never touch the gnawing, insatiable wound of feeling invisible.

Thank you for joining as a reader in this study about people pleasing and unresolved wounds. In next month's newsletter, we will conclude the story of Voiceless Victor and look at some valuable life lessons about meeting the needs of self, others, and relationship. We will also identify some curative first steps when dealing with a painful case of relationship laryngitis!



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