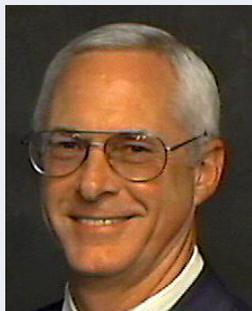


# Stonebriar Psychiatric Services News & Views

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FEBRUARY, 2013

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2



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#### Services We Offer

Individual Therapy  
Marital / Couple's  
Family Therapy  
Relationship Counseling  
Personal Life Coaching  
Medication Management  
Speaking  
Evaluations/Assessments

## Voiceless Victor: A Story about Losing Self to Please Others

The following is the second portion of the 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. As we learned about Victor in the last segment, Victor struggled with feeling inadequate, unimportant, and often invisible. We learned that in his childhood, Victor's father seemed more interested in the achievements of his older brother Oscar and his mother was enamored with his cute little sister Sally. This left Victor in the middle, in no man's land.

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 wound of invisibility. As you read, can you see yourself or anyone you love reflected in the story of Voiceless Victor? In grade school, Victor would give up his chips to make a new friend or keep a friendship. When he was a teenager, he would please his buddies by lending his own hard-earned money, driving when no one else had the cash for gas, or being an alibi when buddies needed a solid story to tell their folks. Victor became good at telling white lies. This was not in keeping with his upbringing, but he told himself that they were not really lies, just stretching the truth for a good cause. Victor kept friends by being a friend, he told himself. That was good in theory, but he always felt like he was a better friend to others than they were to him. Even as an adult, he is still the one that friends seek for help, yet they never seem to be as mindful of him.

Victor found that he could attract a girl in a similar fashion, by being helpful or complimentary. He ended up marrying a girl from a real nice, well-to do family. In their courtship, he would bring her bouquets of crimson and pale pink roses. He made a point to let her know how special she was to him. Jennae really was special, and very pretty. He felt like he was marrying up, to be honest, and his greatest fear was that someday she would wake up and realize that she had married down. Something that Victor learned growing up was that even if someone thinks you are special, this can evaporate if someone better comes along.

Victor learned that if he could not be special enough, he could be useful and stay connected by pleasing others. Victor never really knew what he wanted because what was *most important* to him was making sure he was giving other people what *they* wanted. All of his hobbies weren't really his hobbies at all, they were activities that his buddies, his wife, or his kids were into and enjoyed. Everyone called Victor easy-going and laid back, but in reality he was just pleasing people. Victor did not believe that people liked him for him, they liked him for what he could do *for* them. The few times Victor ever expressed an interest that deviated from his wife or kids, he always got such a push back. It wasn't worth the grief to him, honestly. He would give in to what they wanted, but inside he felt resentful.

Victor did not regard himself as particularly smart or handsome, but he was pretty

### 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



good at selling. He watched his father and learned how to pay attention to what people wanted and what made them tick. Like his father, he could sell siding off a dilapidated house and still make a living at it. He became one of the top car salesmen in South Florida and was able to provide well for his wife and family. As a car salesman, he could get his wife a new car every year. (Well, actually the “new” car was a buyer’s remorse that someone returned within a week of driving it off the lot, but she never knew.) Victor provided and they lived in a great house, in the best part of town. Victor kept his kids happy by buying them what they wanted, not just what they needed.

As the years passed, Victor became increasingly anxious and insecure in his marriage. When the car industry took a huge hit, his income plummeted. Victor took on debt to continue funding his wife’s wishes. Victor’s insecurities also fueled jealousy in his marriage. He became increasingly anxious and fearful that his wife would find someone more attractive, smarter, wealthier – you name it – than he. Jennae reacted to his jealousy by becoming more secretive, blogging on a website called The Wives of Tampa. Jennae kept this and her fictitious persona to herself. She felt that Victor seemed to keep tabs on her on everything else; she told herself that she needed something to call her own.

Victor despised feeling insecure, so he would compensate through pleasing and impressing others. This seemed to work best and be most effective in his more superficial relationships; but with his children and wife, it always seemed to backfire and he would once again feel inadequate. He would look to his family to affirm his self-worth, but it was never quite enough. He never felt satiated. Often, his family felt controlled. This was because Victor’s primary relationship style was to keep people connected to him by fostering a dependency on him. (Victor felt most vulnerable when he was dependent on someone else, because they could potentially withdraw that care or love at any time.)

Victor’s children connected to him through things, not to his heart. Deep down, Victor’s children wanted to connect to their dad. Sadly, Victor was afraid to show his children his true self and his children did not know the way to his heart on their own. Likewise, Victor related to his wife through material provision. Although his wife was accustomed to good living and would certainly let her desires for material things be known, what she really desired was intimacy with her husband. Victor did not know that what his wife really wanted was *him*. His fear of rejection blinded him from the truth.

One of the core problems with how Victor approached relationships was that he didn’t believe anyone would love or like him for himself. He had a deep wound of feeling invisible and unworthy. The wound originated in childhood, and was never resolved as he moved into adulthood. The wound touched every aspect of his life, and every relationship.

Victor could not change his childhood experience, but he could make different choices as an adult. So much of his energy was tied up trying to avoid painful feelings and patterns from his past.

It takes courage to face these wounds, *naming* them, *grieving* them, and *releasing* them. Yet as we do this sacred work, in the context of a safe relationship, we are freed up emotionally to be present to ourselves and to our loved ones. We begin to see ourselves and our loved ones more clearly, without the haze of fear. We begin to reclaim our true voice.



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