**Robbed of Self and Childhood;**

**A Case of Infant, Male Incest**

**by Mary Kullman, MS, LCPC**

*Incest, probably the most insidious act committed against the innocent child, leaves a lasting imprint. The younger the child when the incest occurs, the more likely it is to be deeply repressed and the more devastating is the damage to the child’s life.*

*Consequences of the incest are very consistent among victims/survivors. Regarding parental incest, the first thing that occurs is the loss of the parent inwardly and the beginning of a dynamic of lovers. The victim ceases to be a child, his/her identity is stripped away and a paradoxical marriage happens between the child and the perpetrator. It is a marriage bound by shame, but extremely strong. This victimized child becomes an object as well as a reflection of the parent’s power. The world of the child is seen through the abuser’s eyes. The child assumes the guilt of the abusing parent and usually believes that what happened is his/her fault. This is because children believe that the whole world centers around them (Egocentric behavior). They also believe that they will be punished if they are bad. Therefore, if this abuse is punishment, it must be because the child is bad. Most often, the child takes this a step further to believe that God also must think he/she is bad and therefore, God must be punishing him/her.*

*There sometimes is an even more insidious off-shoot of this. Occasionally, the very young child or infant is abused in a gentle way so the result is a confusing loving, good, close feeling. This inappropriate behavior then suddenly stops; and the victim feels abandoned, unloved and bad because he/she must have done something wrong in order to lose this specialness.*

*The following is a case report about a male who had been incested by his mother from early infancy until about three months of age, at which time it abruptly stopped.*

Steve B., age 42, was referred by a psychiatrist he had been seeing periodically over a four-year period. He had been diagnosed with depression. He had been working on here-and-now issues, mostly related to his marriage, which he (Steve) strongly suspected were a result of the possible incest. As a result of feelings and insights that were triggered from discussions with a friend (who had been incested also), Steve was about 90% sure his mother had abused him sexually. He shared that after three months of talking it just hit him that the kinds of people they were talking about were in his background. In addition, he said that much of what he read regarding symptoms of victims fit him. He was already aware of emotional incest caused by his mother. Following are some of the key questions and responses from the initial consultation:

“What’s the problem?” Steve replied: “Well, um in a nutshell some things have happened in the last few months that have given me a perspective on myself that is beyond the understanding in the past. I’ve come to the conclusion with probably about 90% certainty that I was probably sexually abused by my mother. I’ve – for quite some time – it’s been clear to me that there was quite a bit of emotional incest in the relationship; but in the last six months, I feel that there was a sexual component that I can’t remember.

“How long has this been a problem?” Answer: “Effects on my relationships with women have been life-long, it’s pervasive.”

“What makes the problem worse?” Steve said, “Intimacy, sexual, where a woman will have something to say about what my relationship will be or ought to be.”

“What makes it better?” Answer: “When other things are not present, absence of intimacy, absence of women having opinions.”

“What could you do if you didn’t have the problem that you can’t do now?” He said, “It’s too complicated. I could have the kind of relationship I’d like to have, but don’t ask me what that is because I don’t think I know.”

Additional history revealed a rather uneventful childhood. Steve described himself as an introvert. As a child, he attended Catholic school including four years of high school in a Catholic seminary. As a child, he had a repeated dream in which he said he was mortally afraid because his parents would not recognize the danger they were in because they would not acknowledge the Blessed Virgin Mary. Steve also shared, “I have had an overall aversion to seeing electric light early in the morning, always.” (This proves to be very significant in the upcoming regressive work.) Even though Steve is highly suspect of incest occurring, he nevertheless believes he grew up in “an atmosphere of unconditional love.” This is a good example of the confusion that often exists as a result of incest, especially if it had good feelings attached.

“What is the relationship with your father?” Answer” “Because my father was absent from her life and mine and I’m an only child, I was my mother’s whole world. We both carried this out with skill. We gave each other everything we wanted and needed in a relationship. Buried inside me, I had the formula to be the perfect child. My mother successfully emasculated my father on day one of their marriage and she turned her child into the male in her life.”

Steve’s sexual history revealed the following: He began masturbating in sixth grade and said, “I remember being angry at myself that I had no more self-control.” He reported that back in Chicago, he’d watch girls on the beach in bathing suits from puberty until he went away to college. He claimed that during intercourse, he had some impulses to keep a distance.

Steve has been married twenty years, had just moved out and was in the process of a divorce he did not want. (Back in 1985, marriage problems were what first precipitated therapy.) He said, “In 1969, the year we got married, pregnancy was symbolic of the whole relationship to me. (A miscarriage happened soon after.) My emotional reaction to the whole thing (miscarriage) was that when the baby died, the relationship died.” At that time, Steve overdosed. This event is a possible symptom producing event (SPE).

“Is there anything you haven’t told me you don’t want me to know?” Answer: “No, I don’t have any physical memory. What I have is a lot of clues pointing at a central point – virtually certain that whatever was done, was done, in infancy in diapers. Incest occurred in my very first relationship with a human being and very positive things occurred in the incest. I got many positive things from my mother and I got reinforced for this and I try and take care of the world like I took care of my mother.”

**The Word Association Test:**

Most important items of the Word Association test related to Steve’s preliminary diagnosis: (Walking Zombie Syndrome and Identity Problem:

Mom always………………………………………………………….love

In order to survive…………………………………………………love

Women…………………………………………………………………love

Freedom……………………………………………………………….love

Warm……………………………………………………………..…….love

When I’m intimate I…………………………………………….worry

Fear…………………………………………………………………..….hate

All my life…………………………………………………………….worry

Real problem……………………………………………………...worry

Every single time I……………………………………………….worry

Success……………………………………………………………….worry

Guilt………………………………………………………………….…worry

My deepest thoughts tell me…………………I should worry

Vagina…………………………………………………….………………toy

Clitoris…………………………………………………….………………toy

Penis……………………………………………………….……………..toy

Masturbate……………………………………………….…………..toy

I died when……………………………………………………..I didn’t

I felt like dying when………………………………….I was alone

Basically……………………………………………………….I’m alone

I’m afraid when…………………………………………...I’m alone

If I ever really let go……………………………………..I’m alone

Rejection……………………………………………………………alone

Being the male in her life felt like………………………..pain

Sin..……………………………………………………………………..pain

My punishment is………………………………………………..pain

Punishment……………………..…….…worry, freedom, fear

Because I lived a claimed life…….………………….I’m blank

Trust…………………………………………………………….I’m blank

Mom always…………………………………………………loves me

The Catholic Church……………………………………..loves me

Why can’t I…………………………………………………………..feel

I’ll be a good boy if………………………..I take care of mom

Virgin…………………………………………….……………..…mother

If it wasn’t for me………………………………..she’d be alone

Bright lights…………………………………….……….…..scare me

**Dream Interpretation:**

A dream suggestion was given after the Word Association Test and Steve brought a dream in the next session: “I’m in the pilot’s seat. I see another jet land, painted army green, a DC10 with the #2 engine missing. Throughout the dream, I have this feeling I’m a military officer. This other plane lands and I find myself calling to some other general to let him know this plane is available. I ask him what kind of plane this is and he dodges my question, and I realize this is a classified aircraft.” Steve’s interpretation is that this symbolizes the classified secret between him and his mom, the early incest that she probably thought no one would ever know.

At this point in treatment, my diagnosis of Steve is both Walking Zombie Syndrome (WZS) as well as Identity Problem (IP). The Initial Sensitizing Event (ISE) for WZS is probably either birth or

pre-birth (in a nutshell when asked, “What is the problem?”) or the early incest. The ISE for Identity Problem would be the infant incest, if it occurred, where Steve’s personhood is invaded and overtaken by his perpetrator.

Steve was in a very depressed state when he came to me. This was intensified by leaving his job as training manager within the first month of therapy, because of company financial problems. During some of this time, he was also suicidal. It was taking all of his energy to do basic day-to-day functioning.

Steve saw me for one year and ten months, for fifty-one sessions and also was in group therapy for 1½ years of that time. Although this may seem long by typical hypnoanalytic standards, in my experience, it is quite normal when there has been very early incest. I think that the earlier the incest, the more damage and confusion there is. It, therefore, takes longer for the person to rebuild his or her life even after the problem is analyzed out.

In the six months previous to beginning analysis, Steve had done extensive reading, studying, discussing and analyzing with his friend (girlfriend) about incest and being a victim/survivor. He is bright and analytical and all of these factors, as well as his intuition about having been incested, impacted his regressive work with me. With most age regressions with incest victims, it often takes three or more times to complete a regression. This is especially true of very early incest and is due either to the memories being very repressed, or to the memories being too scary, or both. This phenomena was certainly true for Steve. We did a total of fifteen age regressions, most of them done in parts. Various regression techniques were used. Steve responded equally to the techniques used, i.e. he always focused on something related to the issue. Steve became very tuned into himself and would let me know when he was ready for additional regressive work. In between, I reframed, re-educated and reinforced with him. I learned very early in my work with Steve that regressions would be very long. He seemed to need time to reminisce, go down memory lane, meander around his life for a while and then suddenly, he would know where he needed to be and he was there. Also, during the regressions, Steve often did much of the reframing and connecting himself.

Other investigators have reported that children who have been sexually abused often learn how to dissociate (out of body) from their bodies to survive the abuse. In the first age regression, Steve refers to out of body experiences, but we later learn that this evolved into an attempt to get the highs back that the infant experienced with Mama. Steve also developed a very rich fantasy life very early as a result of being alone a lot and also in an attempt to recreate that high. This later leads to an intense sexual fantasy life which has a tremendous impact on the healing process.

**Age Regression:**

In the first Age Regression, Steve is six years old on the school playground, by himself, peering through the fence and things begin to happen he can’t explain. There are bright colors and he can’t tell if they are in or out of him. He hears a voice, decides it must be a vision, so it must be God. He relates the voice to say: “As I live, I must never allow myself to be attached or want or need anything or anyone that might interfere with acting immediately on this message.” He continues, “So my whole life is waiting for this (message). I can’t have any distractions or angers that might keep me from acting (on this message). The message will be very important – maybe even lives will depend on it. When I’m told this thing, I have to act on it. After this first grade thing, my life is different forever.”

I felt Steve needed reassurance here. He was quite fragile emotionally at this point in his therapy. I told him that he needed all this to survive and that he would probably gradually let it go, but to respect his process on his path to wholeness in mind/body/spirit.

The incident in this first age regression is a Symptom Producing Event (SPE) for the Identity Problem. The result was for Steve to believe he was to live his life as defined by someone else, God, and thus not have a normal spontaneous, carefree childhood.

The second age regression showed that by second grade, Steve had decided all teachers (the nuns) are mothers to be obeyed and pleased. He was taught to be angry with himself if he should be anything but what mom (teachers) wanted.

In the in-between sessions in this earlier part of therapy, Steve was given self-love, self-esteem and self-identity reinforcement. (Some of the scripts used were: GS 2 and SPS 7 – Having Your Feelings; GS 5 –Self Confidence/Self-Love; Act of Being – Responsible for Yourself – Not Others; WO2 – Wipeout Negative Impact on Child’s Mind; SC5 – Take Off Negative Labels; IM 4 - Being Fully Alive, Mixing a New Cocktail of Life; WZ 1, ID 2 – Becoming Alive; GS 61 – Love Yourself)

In the next age regression, Steve reports: “There’s some part of every day with Mama that’s always the same – when Mama is always close by – and that’s what made me sick. Now I know Mama stopped making love to me real young when I could get out of myself and get high. I’ll never have that back. I wonder what Mama did. It was ecstatic. I can’t get that back. I see a boy that can never be satisfied. I’m confused. I don’t know what to do.”

I told little Steve he needed to break the connections he made between feeling good, satisfied, o.k., only from Mama, that he could learn to do this for himself. He said he didn’t know how. I replied that the big Steve had to help little, baby Steve heal that “hole in his soul,” that Mama took that spiritual life right out of him. “Hole in the Soul” was then given for reinforcement in which the adult begins to reparent the inner child and love and heal that “hole in the soul”.

The week after this session, Steve shared that he felt an internal shift and that he’d been able to put some of the emotions to rest by understanding how the baby got hurt.

In a succeeding regression, Steve is 14. “I ride my bike to the beach every day to look at girls – just to look – you see, I have to care for these girls like I did for my mom: When she comes to me to get what she wants, I have to lose myself (he cried very hard here), so I have to treat girls the same way – lose myself.”

Here Steve was relating the feeling he had of losing himself to his mother’s wants and needs – an SPE for both the identity problem as well as WZS. Steve then shifted to a memory at the beach of sitting on the beach wall late in the evening: “I think it’s true – I have strong physical reactions. My arms are tingling, but my genitals are really dead. A girl slides down the wall to show me her pubic hair. I looked and I looked. She covered herself up and walked to her car and drove home. MY LEGS ARE FROZEN AGAIN!” At this point, I told him to move his legs to feel that he had life there. He did. Then (reframing this himself) he said, “I’m gonna walk right up to her. I’m gonna touch her. She’ll just stand there and she might not expect anything from me.” I told him to again break the connection he made between freezing sexually and mom (women expecting something from him). He was then given “Act of Being” – for reinforcement to celebrate his right to live in honor of himself and to break his script of being responsible for others, especially women.

In the following session, Steve reported continuing to feel good, that he is letting go of the sick baby that was looking for the wrong kind of love.

In the next regression, I used the calendar technique, going backwards in time. Steve responds, “I felt #9, 9 years old – coming down the escalator. I came from school to meet mom for lunch at Walgreen’s. It was wrong – broke a school rule because I was to go home and nowhere else, so I felt like I was doing something wrong. After lunch I felt tension. I couldn’t do what school and mom wanted at the same time.”

Steve then switched to a different nine-year-old time. He said, “I’m in trouble with Mom again – just little things; but I have to get everything right or she won’t be my mother. I feel so sorry for that little boy. He had to be so perfect. One time, I had to stay after school for something and I forgot it was Halloween and when I get home, my mother’s upset.” She says, ‘Why are you late? All the other kids are out trick-or-treating. All the other kids are ahead of you.’ I intervened here and told Steve to tell her, stand up for himself. He replied, “I shut down – can’t say anything to mother. I can see all the times I should have been angry – a period of time when she loses her temper real easily and I cry suddenly, and she starts slapping and follows me and keeps it up. She knows it’s over (the sexual relationship), that she’ll never have me again. I’ll leave her and she attacks me. Anger is her pain and my tears are my frustration that I can’t fix her pain.”

As can be seen here, Steve goes back and forth between the hurting, guilty child and the adult, analytical, nurturing parent. I encouraged him again to love that little 9 year old boy, that he was/is good, nothing wrong with him. Mom had the problem. This was followed by a reinforcement session of wiping out the childhood bruises, learning how to deal with repressed anger and finding his own power. This was followed by an identity script, “Life The Purpose is You.

At this point Steve has been in therapy with me for about four months. He is pleased with his progress, but he knows there is more to work through. He is feeling much better about his relationship with Sue, his girlfriend. Since she, too, is in therapy and has been incested, they have been learning how to better understand each other and not “push each other’s buttons” so easily.

A week later, Steve came in saying he had crashed to the bottom. He stated, “I’m frustrated and sad because I lost my whole fantasy life. Now everything is boring. I always wanted my mother to tell me that my desires to touch someone were o.k., not sick. Now my girlfriend is helping me with tactile play and touching, really non-sexual and it touches a place I don’t understand. Also, now as I peel away the layers, I feel there won’t be anything left and I’d die.”

Suddenly, Steve is realizing that to survive he’s built a huge fantasy life that he needs to give up. This letting go and living in the real world and feeling his pain is so scary, it feels to him like he might die. Steve is given strong affirmations and suggestions related to taking care of the baby, being o.k., being alive and learning that living life without his fantasies can be very fulfilling.

Some things Steve shared at his next session: He feels aggravated, loss of goals and direction, since giving up his fantasies. He added that he found out something that made it difficult to get angry with his mother and makes him want to forgive her, i.e. she’s the youngest of eight kids, was 20 months old when her mother died. She was still nursing. She was robbed of that. Then, Steve said, “She had a baby, me, and no one was going to take me away from her.” He added, “I put my baby picture up between my two daughters’ pictures to make myself a genuine baby. I’m just starting to rock myself. I’m not very good at it yet.

I saw this as a real breakthrough. Steve is learning to nurture his hurt baby appropriately. Maybe he’s getting more ready to actually re-experience the infant abuse. He is given more reinforcement about the power within himself.

Steve reports feeling better about himself and the hurt baby. He knows now it will take a while to heal, but he feels impatient about needing so much reinforcement. At this time, he also was having some relationship problems; he withdraws and sees everything in black and white. At times he gets very intense about his feelings and sexual thoughts. If his girlfriend gets upset with him, he takes off. (She becomes mom rejecting him.) At these times, he sounds like a little boy and Sue tells him he looks like he’s in real pain and anxiety.

Steve now has been seeing me for almost six months. At this time and in the ninth age regression, he first re-experiences the actual incest. “I do see the light – end of the tunnel – it becomes ceiling light in my childhood bedroom. At every age, I would put time aside to lay under the light and stare at it. Now I realize that I’d hypnotize myself and think I’d do that when she’d do it to me. Later I’d look into the brightest spot and I’d fantasize very well. I could be very far away. It is so frightening to look at light – oh (he yelled) her face! She’s ugly! Something’s happening to her. I see – I know she’s looking down at me and her head is next to the light.” “You need to see it,” I said. He said, “I’m seeing it – her ugly – I just heard – ‘why did mama change – what’s made her change?’ Wait, wait, now I’m in the Virgin dream again. (This is a recurring dream Steve had as a child.) She covers herself with make-up. The first dream of the virgin is different – a bright light comes down on me and the vision occurs in a coal bin. She appears and I feel very warm and accepted, but in all the other dreams, she’s ugly. The first dream is the first abuse and the baby is good and bad. He does not know how to interpret the first abuse – the coal and the light – good and bad. After those dreams, I’m all sweaty, my eyes are closed, I want light and I want her (Mama) to stay with me. The adult says this is where she should rub my back – I almost said, ‘Don’t touch me!’”

Next, on his own, Steve becomes the nurturing parent. “Poor baby, I see myself hugging him. I’m standing where my mother stood, doing what she should have done.” Then he said, “Once, my parents were fighting. My mother turned to me and said, ‘Make him tell you sometime what happened on our wedding night.’ Then she shad that she tried to suck him and he called her a whore.” Then Steve added, “Since her mom died, this was the only chance she had since a baby to suck – she could suck on a baby.”

I continued to remind Steve of his power now, of his adult now protecting that baby, of how sick his mother was, that none of this was his fault. I gave him reinforcement about self-love, power and protection. (Some of the scripts used were GS32 – Control of Own Life, IM10 – Leaving the Past in the Past; Old Door and New Door; Light Prayer – Spiritual Protection; GS 15 and GS 30 – Power Over Own Life; GS 19A – Past is Past; Inner Child Healing; GS 27 - Be Yourself; GS 36 – You Are Special; SC 42 – Centered and Grounded; GS 63 – Dealing with Anger)

At the next session, Steve reported a monumental breakthrough as a result of the last regression. This was his insight: “I was tricked into not seeing the difference between pleasure and pain because she (mother) was smoothly transitioned from appropriate behavior to abuse. Therefore, I believe I can’t get intimacy without abuse or rejection now, because when I was stimulated, she left.” I reminded Steve, that because of this, he needed to continue his ongoing assignment of getting as much non-sexual nurturing as possible.

Seven months into treatment, Steve reported feeling the best in the last two months than he has in a long time. (It was about two months previous to this that he regressed back to the actual abuse.)

In the next regression, Steve got in touch with how he often felt tricked by mother, thus reinforcing the initial “trick” (breach of trust) caused by the abuse. Steve begins: “I’m 4 or 5. She did a mean thing. She told me she had ordered a mannequin. I didn’t know what that was. I see a UPS truck in front of the house. I ask her what to do with it. She says that it’s to help her make a dress. Somewhere she gets the message to me that when the mannequin comes it will be my mother eventually and take her place. It’s frightening. I felt inside all the things that would be missing. She played other tricks. I’m seven. We had some kind of fight and she went out on the back porch and wouldn’t let me see her and she didn’t make a sound for what seemed like a long time. When she opened the door, there were suitcases there and I asked her what she’s doing and she says that she’s leaving, since I don’t need her anymore.”

I reassured him and said how scary that must have been for that little boy; that it’s not o.k. for big people to trick little people; that it’s o.k. to get angry; that this is just like the beginning, i.e. he didn’t know what was predictable, what to expect and, of course, whether or not he can trust women.

Steve then flashed back to the abuse: “The most frightening thing in knowing the abuse was real, was that cut glass chandelier thing and seeing her face in all its distortions and I remember she picks me way up (the baby) to her height and that light is so close I can almost touch it and I know what she does. I just heard a voice that says she could have just kissed your belly – he’s the liar in me and I never lie.”

Steve needs to rehearse this to help convince himself the abuse really happened. Steve then quickly switched. He said, “I have morbid, morbid fears of wakes. Now I know how I was sensitized. The little girl across the street, her grandfather died and I went to the wake and someone held me real close to the body – held me under the armpits and I can’t do anything with my arms or legs.” Then I said to Steve, “and that’s the same feeling of helplessness and lack of control felt when mama held you up to the light.” “Yeah”, he replied. I reminded him that he was no longer that helpless little boy. He could get away and move and run. I then gave him reinforcement about self-love and being responsible for his own feelings but not those of others.

The session after this, Steve reported he was having no more surprise emotional attacks from his abuser.

In the next age regression session, Steve admitted feeling discouraged, no purpose, bored and having trouble accepting himself and how sick he is and always will be. He obviously was still feeling quite wounded. This time, as Steve regressed back, I asked him if “Little Steve” was in charge these days. He responded, “Yes, I owe everybody so much, it would be silly to take life seriously, so I just go away. I see little Steve in his backyard. He’s four years old – outside in the summer, alone with the sprinkler. It makes a big fountain and water splashes in the sun in just the right way. I make a rainbow and I sit and watch, and the water spraying on me just flits me away. I need to start doing that again. I miss that. I’m missing not having to feel, not having to think, not having to figure things out. I want all the pretty women to take care of me.”

At this point I said, “Mama has made a thing out of you and mixed you all up. Have the big you hold the baby and help him tell Mama what he’s mad about.” He began, “You made me think I needed something I don’t have. You made me think you were the only thing. I’m mad at you because I’m lonely, confused. You used me. You didn’t treat me like your little boy. You made me just as sick as you.” Next I suggested he give mama back her feelings and anything else he took on of hers. “Go ahead and be lonely. I’m not going to take care of you anymore. I hope you die before Dad, so that I can tell him you did the same thing to him you did to me. I don’t need you. I’ll do it without you. I’d rather be alone than with you. You destroyed me. I could have been happy, but not now. The only thing good about me is that I’m not selfish.” “Now”, I continued, “take that baby and reassure him: “We’ll get out of this somehow. Try not to be so afraid. I don’t know how to tell you that you might have to give up everything that ever made you happy. I’m not the one who hurt you. I’m trying to help you. I don’t know what you need. I feel so alone with you. It’s just you and me. I’m afraid we’ll always be alone. I’d like to tell you someone will care for us, but I doubt it. If only I had something to give to him.” I asked, “What does he need from you?” “Caring”, Steve answered, “but he doesn’t trust me. I hate having this baby to care for.” I said, “That’s how mama treated you.” Steve said, “I see him with his lips tight – mad. I don’t care for you very much. I want to be grown up.” “Now”, I said, “let the other side of you look at him.” He stated, “I can’t find you. I can’t believe you’re real. There’s just me, I grew up.” Then I instructed the baby to talk back: “The baby says we never do anything that I like. I never feel happy. You give me things that seem nice, but they just scare me too. You don’t know how to care for me. I want a different parent. I don’t like you. You care for everyone, but me. I’m a baby and I can cry for as long as I want to. You’re going to have to listen.” Then I told the adult Steve to respond to that baby. He said, “You were just born today. No past to worry about. All the care you’re going to get is good care.” Steve was told by me to do the following as an assignment: 1) Care for the baby; 2) At all other times, keep the adult as the one in charge.

This regression displayed the struggle Steve is going through, trying to let go of the old and take on the new, healthy behaviors.

At the next session, Steve reported that he’s struggling as he gives up his desire for extra sexual activity. He goes through withdrawal. He’s truly facing the pain. He says the baby won’t believe that life won’t be dead if sexual fantasies and the idea of many relationships are given up. He is given reinforcement on being alive, leaving things in the past and expressing anger. Next he does some physical release, anger work, from which he feels a relief, a sense of change going on inside. He claims to be going with the flow more and not fighting it.

It is now about ten months since Steve began therapy. It was very evident to both Steve and myself that genuine healing was taking place. It seemed his internal processes were working twenty-four hours a day. He was bringing in both poems and dreams related to both insights to the problem as well as healing messages about nurturing the child and being alive. There are dreams and poems about the sexual conflict and confusion – the struggle to find a balance between normal sexual desires and feelings and being obsessed with inappropriate fantasies. This is very scary for Steve, and part of the healing process for him is to vacillate between extreme thoughts of being non-sexual to being constantly sexual so as to find a balance.

I would like to present a 1948 memory Steve brought in which offers both insight and safety to the infant (he was born in 1948). Steve relates, “This is not a dream. It actually happened during my infancy and I remember it in perfect detail: It’s very early in the morning. Actually the middle of the night. I’m lying in my crib in a dark place. The kitchen door is behind my head and off to one side. The light is on in the kitchen. I hear my mom and dad talking. Dad is having breakfast, getting ready to go to work. I feel my mother’s arms pick me up and carry me into the kitchen. She rocks me while they continue to talk. First, she rocks me on my back and all I see is the ceiling light moving back and forth, back and forth. Then she rocks me on my tummy and all I see is the worn spot in the linoleum in front of the sink moving back and forth, back and forth. I listen to both their voices very carefully, but I’m an infant and can’t understand what they are saying. I hear the toaster pop up.

In about 1980, I tell my mother I have this memory. She is very shocked and says, ‘but we only kept your crib there until you were a few months old.’

I have no firm idea why I chose to remember this event but two things stick in my mind: 1) I suspect my mother ended the abuse very early in my infancy, probably believing that I could never remember it and therefore, it would never affect me. Hearing the depth of my memory was a real shock to her. 2) Baby Steve may have elevated the importance of this event to a permanent memory because he associated the variable of my father’s voice with NOT being abused in the early morning.” This memory helped to clarify that the actual abuse not only happened very young, but stopped very early.

Around the same time he brought in this memory, Steve wrote a poem related to the abuse. It follows here:

**A POEM CALLED TOO MUCH**

**FROM MAMA’S OWN HAND**

She puts her lips on me and it’s all so sweet.

A soaking rainstorm ends and I visit the forest,

alone and safe, to watch the clouds shrink and unveil blue sky.

Droplets sparkle in the sun and leap from the leaves to my nose.

In the mud I smell old life becoming new life.

Thank you, God, for thinking of me.

She puts her hand on me and it’s all so clear.

A small boy puts his nose against the shop window,

excited by the toys he wishes were his.

But he looks over his shoulder and winces in pain. He’s alone and lost.

Crowds rush by, many heads, many eyes – too bad they’re up so high.

Too high to notice, but I notice and stoop down, holding out my hand.

But not too close, he’s already afraid.

“Would you like me to help you find mom? “

He nods his head, tries not to cry and touches my hand.

Thank you, God, for picking me.

She lifts me up and hugs me close and it’s all so familiar.

As we walk to the store, her perfume says “mom”,

the tickle of her hair on my nose says “mom”.

Everything says “mom.”

I say “mom.”

My friends look up at me, mom looks straight into my eyes.

I’m a very, very big boy – for five.

Can you hear me, God?

Can you hear me?

I’m thinking of you!

She puts her hand on me, and won’t take it away,

And I’m afraid to cry,

And I start to die,

And God is lost to me forever.

Steve’s spiritual death is clearly addressed here. This helps explain why the reinforcement of the “Hole in the Soul” was so critical in Steve’s healing. He wanted to hear that over and over again.

At one of the next sessions, I made Steve a personal affirmation tape which he could have to use repeatedly on his own. It stressed freedom to be himself; being alive in body, mind and spirit, that he can be loved without being controlled, that he can be free to enjoy all parts of a relationship, (i.e. not be limited by the past).

Steve’s therapy has finally reached a point now where anger is beginning to surface. In the next regression: “I can see my anger. I was very controlled. There are two things in my head. When I was little (and this still applies now), I never liked to have sticky hands/fingers. I suspect that my mother put my hand on her genitals when I was an infant. Now I’m seeing this light again and she’s holding me up again, half way to the ceiling. Did she lick me there? Put her tongue in my mouth?” (Steve had previously mentioned an intuitive sense about a spot in the middle of his forehead and wondered if it had anything to do with the abuse.) I said, “Focus on your forehead – feel pressure.” “No!” he replied. I said, “She may be holding her hand under your head and putting her thumb on your forehead so you can’t get away while she puts her tongue in your mouth.” He responded, “Uhhh, I think that’s right. I can’t believe she did this in my mouth. I don’t belong to you! I don’t want a mother anymore! Go away! I don’t like the way we play. I don’t need you anymore. I hate you! You cost me so much! You took so much!” (Here, Steve cried and yelled, having a very intense abreaction.) I then instructed Big Steve to take that baby from Mama. He came back with, “I see grown up Steve. I see mom and I’m angry, and I give her a hook to the face and the baby flies out of her arms, and I’m frozen – Oh God – He’s in my arms! He’s in shock. I wanna think of a place to take him. I leave the bedroom. Maybe we’ll go to the beach. Oh, if it wasn’t group tonight, I’d go to the beach now.” This is a very profound moment. Steve was totally present and connected to his wounded child. He was doing some completion work with the ISE. As reinforcement to this session, I gave him the Beach Scene.

At the next session, Steve reported feeling impending anger in his body physically. He referred to how long he had been trying subconsciously to re-establish that inappropriate relationship with his mother. He said, “I’d like to be the baby when he first found out the abuse wasn’t coming back. I think it occurred almost from birth to three or four months. There’s a regular March – February depression when I have a feeling of loss.” (Steve was born in October.)

I instructed him to breathe back to 3 or 4 months. He shared, “I just remember again her (Mama) rocking me in the kitchen. I see the light and then she turns me over and I hear the toaster go off. Dad leaves early. It’s 4 A.M. I don’t have a concept of conversation. If Dad’s voice is there, I’ll be safe. I didn’t know mom would hurt me. I thought I could trust her. I’m angry that an innocent baby was made to be so confused. There’s nothing left but the anger.”

At this point Steve has been in therapy for thirteen months. He is coming for individual sessions about once a month unless he feels a need for more. He is in group therapy weekly. This connection and support is a very important part of his healing. He is working through the anger both in and out of therapy. He writes about it. He tells Mama off (Gestalt fashion) whenever he feels the need. He reports now that when he has relapses either with himself or in his relationship, they are short and he gets out of them on his own.

It has been eight months since Steve’s last age regression. He really feels he’s close to the end of his therapy, although he believes his personal healing and growth is an ongoing process. Steve asked to be regressed so he could work on a pain he felt in his chest when attracted to another woman and feels evil for it.

He went back to age 5 or 6 when he liked two little girls with whom he would walk back and forth to school. He wanted to tell them he liked them and at that point (in the regression), he got a total cramping in his chest, feeling almost paralyzed. He was afraid to tell them, thinking there will be some reason to be embarrassed and that there’s a danger because he’s not supposed to have feelings. (This is a SPE for the WZS.) I had him take the boy aside and tell him what he needs to know about telling these girls his feelings and that it’s o.k., and if it doesn’t work out o.k., it’s not his fault. I then told him to get back any power Mom still had over him.

He went to being a toddler, all bundled up in winter clothes, with his mom, on the escalator at Marshall Field’s, unable to move. She holds on to his hand and walks very fast and he feels no control. His chest is tight. Once again, Big Steve takes little Steve away from Mom – loosens his clothing and takes him outside, we he felt safe and alive and can move.

Steve then wanted to give a name to the tight chest feeling – he decided to call it “squeeze”. I then gave him the suggestion to put his thumb and forefinger together and get a picture of being in control and his chest loosening. I said, “Now every time you get “squeeze” you immediately squeeze the thumb and forefinger together and replace “squeeze” with feelings of pride, peace, power and life.”

One month later, Steve came in for a session, reporting he had crashed. Many changes were in process. He was finishing therapy; he was moving to Indiana; he was getting married in a month (to Sue); he was grieving some losses from all these changes. He said that due to all this, he was not feeling centered and wanted to get back on track.

We did a Box test. In Box #1, the problem, it was black. Steve felt this meant he was thinking of crawling back into that box, like the womb to feel safe; this meant withdrawal. In Box #2, maintaining the problem. Steve said he saw himself using that as a safety valve. He runs back and forth to it. He runs to it for 1safety, leaves and then runs back if he feels danger. He says he’s not letting himself feel safety and danger at the same time. In a way, he runs from both. Box #3, the solution. Steve says, “That the danger I’m talking about isn’t really there anymore and the safety that I want is only for a child. I can’t get that anymore. I don’t like that solution because it sounds like a lot more hard work.

I asked him how this is now being manifested in his life. He replied: “It’s possible for people to like having me around too much – so much that they tell me how bad it hurts when I go away. Then I feel bad for hurting them by taking care of myself and going away, because going away is what my mother did. I don’t want to be like her. I’m doing what you said about taking care of that baby when he comes up, and taking him to a safe place.” I reassured Steve he was not his mother or like his mother, that it was o.k. to have close relationships and have people miss you (that does not mean you are hurting them); and most importantly, that it’s o.k. for him to take space to take care of himself and that inner child. It is very evident here that Steve is discovering his own identity.

Four months ago, Steve felt fairly complete with his therapy. He had graduated from group, was feeling good about his relationship with Sue, was looking forward to their marriage and felt he was handling problems as they came up. He said that most of the time he felt good, no more depression, real life no longer seemed boring, and he was really getting to know the real Steve. I wasn’t totally convinced that Steve had resolved the spiritual area. I know he felt the hole in his soul was filled, but I wasn’t sure if the spiritual connection was complete. However, I also knew that Steve is very self-aware and works thoroughly through each area when he’s ready. My doubt was confirmed even as I write this article. Steve came in after four months saying, “There’s a piece out there missing, something I need from the first day of my life. It’s like a chamber I need to open and get out of it what’s missing. At times I feel obsessed with finding this.” I shared that what he had just told me indicated the need to complete the spiritual connection. He said that sounded right. “Most of the time things are fine,” he said, “but once in a while I know something is missing.”

Steve will come in now to complete this. My plan is to regress him back to the womb, before the abuse, before mom knew he was there, to the time early after conception when only God and he knows he’s there. I will help him feel that connection and have him bring it back with him.

Some may wonder why this womb regression was not done first or earlier. I don’t think Steve was ready for it. Remember: “Listen to your patient; he/she will tell you what he/she needs.”

**Summary:**

In reviewing this case, I believe the ISE for the Identity Problem was the infant incest where Steve’s personhood was invaded immediately. The ISE for the WZS was the stopping of the abuse, at which time Steve felt as if like was taken from him because he was no longer being given those good feelings, and the special attention of Mama was gone. The confusion brought about by this to the infant probably had a bigger impact on Steve’s life that the actual abuse. For the IP, the SPE’s (symptom producing events) were the “vision” on the playground at age 6 and the decision Steve made at age 14 that he had to lose himself to care for the girls at the beach.

The SPE’s for the WZS were the times Steve felt tricked by Mom (ages 4-7), the incident around age 5 or 6 with the little school girls about the “danger” of feeling his feelings, and the time around age 9 when Steve was in trouble with Mom and felt a need to be perfect or lose her if he wasn’t.

The SIE’s (symptom intensifying events), i.e. those thing which caused Steve to seek further treatment, were the discussions he had with his friend who was incested, and the resulting impact these talks had on him.

This case was extremely complicated because of such confusing and contradictory messages given to the infant and the child. Steve’s growth was thwarted. He was deeply wounded.

**Conclusion:**

The more I work with victims of incest and sexual abuse, the more I realize how patient and understanding, we, as clinicians must be. The healing process cannot be rushed. Hypnoanalysis, I believe, is truly the treatment of choice; but we must be very respectful of the patient’s pace and time table. Often things move very slowly, because only small pieces of the memory can be dealt with at a time. It will eventually come together as the patient is ready and as his/her trust builds. We must remember that an incest victim’s trusting ability has been wiped out. He/she comes to us stripped down. We must carefully, patiently and lovingly help these innocent victims come back to wholeness in body, mind and spirit.

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