

For supporters / professionals who do not have special relationships with my different personalities : Things you can do to help me if I have been triggered and/or have switched into a distressed personality

- ◆ **Stop what you are doing**
- ◆ **Keep your voice calm and gentle** (firm admonishment – no matter how calmly toned is not usually helpful, it is particularly not helpful when addressed to a terrified child who will always experience it as a threat)
- ◆ **Do not touch** – not even a gentle hand of reassurance or guidance – unless in my distress I am in immediate danger which I have not noticed e.g. walking into traffic
- ◆ **Tell me where I am, why I am there, who you are, tell me the date (year included)** Where? may need detail e.g. not just name of town but precise location and further explanation if necessary. It can also be helpful to point out objects in the environment which emphasise it being now, not then e.g. a computer
- ◆ **Reassure me that I am in a safe place now**
- ◆ **Encourage me to take slow, deep breaths**
- ◆ **Encourage me to sit up or stand with my feet on the floor**
- ◆ **If I am pacing or walking** – don't ask me to stop but walk alongside me or (if I am pacing) stay nearby and in sight. (Pacing usually means I am trying to ground myself).
- ◆ **Ask me to look at you and keep you in focus**
- ◆ **Ask me how I am feeling but do not bombard me with questions about what's happening**
- ◆ **Continue to talk to me and reassure me** (don't stay completely silent or try to continue with what we were doing as if nothing untoward has occurred)
- ◆ **If I suddenly become strongly emotional** reassure me that it is okay to be angry, sad or afraid (or whatever I appear to be feeling)
- ◆ **When an angry personality presents** – acknowledge their anger but suggest that they try to calm down so you can talk about why they are angry. If they appear to be trying to calm down but are still agitated, suggest they stand and/or place their feet on the ground and/or encourage them to breathe slowly and deeply. If they don't seem to be relating their anger to the here and now situation – you should still acknowledge their anger but also reassure them they are safe, tell them the date (year included), tell them where they are and explain who you are; suggest they might feel safer inside and ask them to let you speak with [use the name by which you know me]
- ◆ **If an angry personality storms out the room**, allow only a short time waiting for them to return before following them (they might be extremely confused about where they are once out of the room); continue to reassure them about safety and encourage them to return with you to the room

- ◆ **Be persistent and consistent** You may need to repeat several times reassurances of safety etc.
- ◆ **If I become motionless and/or seem to be in a trance** ask me to keep my eyes open and to look at you and around the room; pose questions calmly and slowly e.g. Are you here? Are you with me? Are you following me? Repeat reassurances of being in a safe place now and tell me where I am, why I am there, who you are, what date it is.
- ◆ **If a child personality presents** – adjust your language to a child's level of understanding but the messages are still the same – assurances of safety, where I am, who you are, why I am there, what the date is. Ask if there is a safe object for the child in our bag (we usually carry one or two soft toys or other safe objects). Ask if there is a safe place inside to go to and encourage the child to go there. Ask if there is anyone inside who can be with them. Ask to let you speak with [use the name by which you know me]
- ◆ **Once I appear less upset or more capably present** acknowledge what has happened; show your acceptance and understanding; tell me you understood I switched, was triggered, had a flashback or whatever you understood happened; reassure me that my reaction was understandable and okay; ask me whether I want you to tell me what happened; ask me if I want to speak about what has occurred; ask whether I feel able to continue with the original purpose of our meeting, journey etc; ask how I intend to get home, whether I need any help to make special arrangements e.g. arranging a lift, phoning a taxi; if I still seem somewhat disorientated ask if I need any further support; ask when I will next see my therapist and encourage me to speak to her about what has happened as soon as possible; ask if I would like you to contact my therapist to explain to her what seemed to be happening.
- ◆ **Ask if I need time and space to recover from being triggered** and arrange this if possible
- ◆ **Acknowledge that I may have an increased vulnerability to further dissociative episodes in the days following. If I leave still feeling some disorientation or distress** ask permission to contact me the following day to offer further support if necessary.
- ◆ **The next time you see me** offer reassurances that you don't think less of me or judge me for any unusual behaviour which occurred.
- ◆ **Always accept that it is ultimately my responsibility to keep all of 'me' safe.** If I (and that means any one of my personalities) choose an action which you think is an unwarranted risk, express your views and your reasons for feeling that way. BUT if I continue to disagree with you DO NOT insist that I accept more support than I wish in the particular moment. YOU MUST allow me my independence including my right to take risks.
- ◆ **Accept** that there will be times when you feel uncomfortable or concerned about leaving me. Take reassurance that I have survived to now without as much support being available.