

## The stockholm syndrome

Contributed by  
Wednesday, 21 March 2007

Hey R its addison again - i wrote "it was not yours to take", "for kim" and a few of the poems...

Today i have finally accepted that i have a problem. I dont think i actually realised that there was something very wrong until my friends decided to show me just how bad it is.

Whenever my friends and i would speak about the man who raped me, they tell me that i defend him and try to make excuses for what he did to me - blaming his insecurities, saying that its not entirely his fault because he had a troubled childhood. Im also conctantly jealous of his wife because she has the part of him that everybody knows and loves, and they really do live a charmed live.

My friends have pointed out to me how often i actually do this, and yesterday one of my angels came to me with a diagnosis that she had found out about on the internet.

Its an emotional disorder called the Stockholm Syndrome, where kidnap and rape victims fall in love with their abusers. It sounds insane right? (and i probably AM insane by now.) I know all you girls out there are probably wondering how the hell a girl can fall in love with someone who has done THAT to her, and the truth is, im wondering that too. But the thing is, i knew Brendan for a while before he did that to me, and i think im still sort of holding onto my picture of who he was then, as opposed to who he is to me now. My friends say that its my way of trying to block out what happened.

so i never really understood the concept of love-hate relationships until now. because i do love him (God only knows why) but i hate him so much at the same time. I cant stand even to look into his eyes, i start shaking every time i see him, he makes me PHYSICALLY sick. Maybe im insane, but i dont know how NOT to feel like this. I hate him so much that sometimes i actually feel capable of killing him... but sometimes i just like to keep an eye on him(from afar)...just to watch. I hate the way im so jealous of his wife and her perfect freaking life - they say that ignorance is bliss, and she certainly IS happy.

I guess that makes me one screwed up chick huh?  
\*addi

From R - Hi Addison. Your friends are right. Those do seem to be classic Stockholm symptoms. I guess we always seem to associate it with kidnap victims - but strangely enough why shouldn't it relate to victims who know their perpetrators? I decided to look up some more info on it which I've posted below...and nope I don't think it makes you screwed up - I think it makes you human under the circumstances...xo

Stockholm Syndrome Bonding to one's captor (abuser) is a survival strategy for victims that has been observed in a variety of hostage-taking situations. This strategy was labeled Stockholm Syndrome after a hostage situation in a bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden in 1973. Three (3) women and one (1) man were held hostage for six days by two (2) men. During this period, the four hostages and their captors bonded bi-directionally. The hostages even came to see their captors as protecting them from the police! Following the release of the hostages, one of the women became engaged to one of the captors, another of the hostage started a 'defense fund'. All this was done in the face of the fact that the hostages were bound with dynamite and generally mistreated! Such bonding to one's captor / abuser no longer considered unusual by professionals who negotiate with hostage-takers. In fact, it is encourage its development, for it improves the chances for survival of the hostages, despite the fact that it means the officials can no longer count on the cooperation of the hostages in working for their own release or in later prosecuting captors.

Bonding with an abuser maybe the universal survival strategy for victims of interpersonal abuse. Studies of other hostage-like groups seem to bare this out. -- These groups are:

- Hostages
  - Concentration Camp prisoners
  - cult members
  - prisoners of war
  - civilians in Chinese Communist prisons
  - procured prostitutes
  - incest victims
  - physically and/or emotionally abused children
  - battered women
- Four Situation Factors that are Precursor to Stockholm Syndrome:
- Perceived threat to one's physical or psychological survival and the belief that the captor would carry out the threat.
  - Perceived small kindness from the captor to the captive.

(Note: letting the captive live is enough.)

- Isolation from perspectives other than those of the captor.
- Perceived inability to escape. Psychodynamics' Underlying Stockholm Syndrome An abuser traumatizes a victim (who does not believe they can escape, or truly can not) with a threat to the victim's survival. The traumatized victim, who

perceives isolation from outsiders; who could provide nurturance and protection, must look to the abuser to meet those needs. If the abuser shows the victim some small kindness, the victim then must bond to the perceived positive side of the abuser, denying (or dissociating) the side of the abuser that produced the terror. The victim begins to work to see the world from the abuser's perspective so that they may know what keeps the abuser happy, thus helping to insure the victim's survival. As a result the victim becomes hypervigilant to the abuser's needs and unaware of their own. The victim comes to see the world from the perspective of the abuser, losing touch with their own perspective, which is unimportant or even counter-productive to their survival. With the denial of the violent side of the abuser, comes denial of the danger. It becomes progressively harder to separate from the abuser due to the fear of losing the only positive relationship identity that remains -- her/ himself as seen through the abuser's eyes (which in the case of the adult victim has replaced any previous sense of self, for a child this may be, and often is, the only sense of self known).

Treatment for Stockholm Syndrome:

Lessen the conditions that produce Stockholm Syndrome

- Isolation - Help the client identify sources of supportive intervention; Self-help groups or group therapy (group needs to be homogeneous to needs), also hot lines, crisis centers, shelters and friends.

- Violence - As victims in abusive relationships minimize the abuse, or are in so much denial it may be necessary to ask directly about the different types of violent behavior. Many woman (and children) are confused about what is acceptable male (parental / authority) behavior. Journal keeping, autobiographical writing, reading of first hand accounts or seeing films that deal with abuse may be helpful to clients.

- Perceived Kindness - Encourage the client to develop alternative sources of nurturance and caring (see #1).

- Validating both Love and Terror - Helping the client integrate both disassociated 'sides' of the abuser, will assist her in giving up her dream that the relationship will become what she had hoped it would be. Eric synthesized the above from these references:

Grahm, D. Ph.D. & Rawlings, E. Ph.D. "Bonding with Absuive Dating Partners: Dynamics of Stockholm Syndrome." Dating Violence, Women in Danger ed. Barrie Levy. Seal Press. Seattle, Wa. 1991.

- - - "Stockholm Syndrome and PTSD" Address, Western Clinical Confrence MP&D April 12, 1992. Costa Masa, CA.