

Spin Programming **A Newly Uncovered Technique of Systematic Mind Control**

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Abstract

Information obtained clinically from seven multiple personality patients with recalled histories of ritual abuse has revealed a coercive technique previously unknown to psychotherapists. This technique here labeled "spin programming," appears designed to spread effects such as pain, painful emotions, and other feelings or urges globally throughout a patient's personality system for purposes of either designing and building a young victim's personality system, or harassing older victims and disrupting psychotherapy. Spin programming appears to be based on a combination of physical spinning, cognitive and imagery training, and repetition and practice aimed at creating an internal multi-alter spin Jeannie it the pain or affective components of numerous traumatic memories simultaneously to large groups of targeted alters. This paper presents signs and symptoms commonly seen in patients subjected to spin programs, training methods apparently used to create spin programs, and an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of spin programming.

That old black magic has me in its spell, that old black magic that you weave so well. Those icy fingers up an down my spine, the same old witchcraft when your eyes meet mine, that same old tingle that I feel inside, and then that elevator starts its ride: Down and down I go, 'round and 'round I go, like a leaf that's caught in a tide (...) Darling, down and down I go, 'round and 'round I go, in a spin, loving the spin I'm in, under that old black magic called love. *Johnny Mercer, c 1942, 1969*

Discussion of ritual abuse as a cause of multiple personality disorder is a fairly recent phenomenon (Coons & Grier, 1990; Ganasway, 1989; Hassan, 1990; Kluff, 1989; Los Angeles County Commission for Women, 1989; Mayer, 1991; Neswald, Gould, & Graham-Costain, 1991; and Van Benschoten, 1990). Use of the term "ritual abuse" here relies on the definition developed by the Los Angeles County Commission for Women (1989):

Ritual abuse is a brutal form of abuse of children, adolescents, and adults, consisting of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, and involving the use of rituals. Ritual does not necessarily mean satanic. However, most survivors state that they were ritually abused as part of satanic worship for the purpose of indoctrinating them into satanic beliefs and practices. Ritual abuse rarely consists of a single episode. It usually involves repeated abuse over an extended period of time.

The physical abuse is severe, sometimes including torture and killing. The sexual abuse is usually painful, sadistic, and humiliating, intended as a means of gaining dominance over the victim. The psychological abuse is devastating and involves the use of ritual/indoctrination, which includes mind control techniques and mind altering drugs, and ritual/intimidation which conveys to the victim a profound terror of the cult members and of the evil spirits they believe cult members can command. Both during and after the abuse, most victims are in a state of terror, mind control, and dissociation in which disclosure is exceedingly difficult. (p. 1)

The topic of ritual abuse is controversial (Kluff, 1989), and several authors have either questioned the credibility of reports of ritual abuse or have advised caution in interpreting the usually unsubstantiated accounts

(Coons & Grier, 1990; Ganaway, 1989; Noll, 1989; and Van Benschoten, 1990). This paper avoids taking a position on the accuracy of clinically derived accounts of ritual abuse, and instead simply presents information that has come to light consistently and repeatedly during intensive psychotherapy with a number of different patients with recalled histories of ritual abuse.

The information presented here is offered in hopes of making available recently discovered and preliminary findings that may be of value to some members of the psychotherapeutic community and may stimulate additional investigation by some members of the scientific community. The information is admittedly too new, derived from too small a sample, and too unsubstantiated by other investigators to be presented as fact. Nevertheless, the description of spin programming, if valid, shines a valuable light on the techniques employed by ritual abuse perpetrators and provides important insight into how problems frequently seen in multiple personality patients with recalled ritual abuse histories might more successfully be approached.

Programming

Therapists working with victims of ritual abuse often discover (or encounter compelling evidence) that their patients have been subjected to sophisticated mind control techniques, often called "programming," designed to compel them to do various things, including engaging in self-destructive behaviors such as suicide or self-mutilation; allowing access to perpetrators so that abuse may continue; responding to various cues, such as sounds, hand signals, lights, names or numbers, etc., by carrying out specific behaviors or behavior chains; disrupting psychotherapy in a number of ways, including thought-stealing or scrambling, outbursts of various emotions (anger, depression, terror, jealousy, apathy, etc.) and distancing from the therapist (by fearing the therapist, attempting to protect the therapist from harm by others or by the patient herself or himself, etc.). Neswald, Gould, and Graham-Costain (1991) provide a listing and descriptions of a number of typical ritual abuse programs.

Patients with histories of ritual abuse often reveal that programming techniques have been applied to them for at least two distinct purposes: (a) current or recent programming designed to harass or disrupt psychotherapy, and (b) programming begun early in life (often at birth), as the means by which programmers designed and built their victims' entire personality systems in order to achieve and maintain control over them. One technique has recently come to light that appears to have had utility both for harassment/disruption and for system-building. The technique is based on spinning.

Sources of Information for This Paper

This paper is based on information that came to light during psychotherapy sessions in which the author was the therapist or, in some cases, co-therapist. The patients, of whom there were seven, all carried diagnoses of complex multiple personality disorder and had clearly defined and consistently expressed histories of ritual abuse by satanic or similar cults. They had been in therapy intensively for at least a year before disclosing any information about spin programming. They were all female and ranged in age from their mid-twenties to their mid-forties. Their education levels ranged from two years of college to masters degrees. They were all white, the majority were married, and just over half were employed full-time. They disclosed some of the information about spin programming during conversations in which they and therapist were "brainstorming" about their programming histories, and they revealed the rest either spontaneously (generally making their discoveries between sessions) or in response to direct questioning carried out with due regard to the dangers of leading them by directly or indirectly suggesting desired responses. Before an item of information about spin programming and related phenomena could appear in this paper, it had to be verified by comparable experiences and reports from at least two patients. In most cases, information was verified by all patients, with only minor variations. Informal conversations with other therapists about their experiences with similar patients have consistently verified the information presented here.

Description of Spin Programming

Specific versus Global Targeting of Programs

Programmers appear to rely on certain criteria in deciding which mind control strategies they will select. One meaningful criterion is specific versus global, that is, whether they intend to target a single alter (or a small, defined group of alters) in a specific way, or the entire system (or a large portion of it) in a global way. Spin-based programming is a globally targeted programming technique. Programmers apparently use it when they intend to disseminate an effect throughout either a large portion of a victim's personality system, or the entire system.

Examples of the types of effects that may be spread in this way are physical pain, confusion, depression, self-destructive or suicidal urges, alienation, apathy, hopelessness, fear of abandonment or rejection, panic, terror, urges to run away, jealousy, doubt, suspicion, rage, violent urges, sexual arousal or urges, lethargy, immobility, sleepiness, sleeplessness, hunger, loss of appetite, and urges to use drugs or alcohol. Programmers may spread these effects throughout a personality system as a method of disrupting the total functioning of the person, or they may use the possibility of spreading them as a threat to enforce compliance with directives or prohibitions they have issued.

Spin programs are also useful in system-building, both because of their ability to quickly transmit information within or throughout a personality system, and because of their ability to establish power relationships between alters and groups of alters. How these links and power relationships are established will be explained in the section on training methods.

Signs and Symptoms of Spin Programs

Patients who are suffering the immediate effects of a currently activated spin program tend to present with a number of typical features. These features include: global effects, symptoms occurring like a "storm," pressure, dizziness, a sense of spinning inside, physical movements related to the internal experience of spinning, and spinning-related imagery and vocabulary.

Global Effects. When a patient is affected by a specifically targeted program, she or he typically experiences one or a small number of alters having emotions or urges or manifesting behaviors, while most or all other alters remain unaffected. The patient might say, for example, "Somebody inside wants to cut," or "Joey is feeling suicidal." When a spin-based program is active, every alter with whom the therapist talks is likely to be suffering from the same or similar symptoms. At such times, the patient might say, "Everybody in the system is depressed;~ "None of us has any hope or any energy or any interest in anything;" or "We are all terrified that you are going to abandon us.

Storm-like Symptoms. The experience of dealing with a spin-programmed patient is, for patient and therapist alike, somewhat like riding out a storm. The flurries of pain, affect, or impulse tend to grow in intensity, build to a crescendo, maintain that peak for a time, and then gradually diminish before finally subsiding. Nearly every alter in the system is lashed by the "wind and rain" of the storm, often without understanding why these effects are occurring, and doing their best to minimize damages until the storm passes.

Pressure. As will be seen in a subsequent section, spin training relies in part on conditioning the patient to connect, through cognition and imagery, the experience of spinning with internal buildups of centrifugal force. When spin programs are active, the affected alters subjectively experience high levels of force or pressure, as if they were sitting at the outside edge of a rapidly rotating disc. They feel overwhelmed by this pressure, finding it impossible to resist, and they often complain of symptoms that would be caused by mounting internal pressure, such as headaches that feel like they are going to cause the head to explode from the inside, disruption of speech, vision problems, and similar phenomena.

Dizziness. As the internal spinning associated with spin programming increases in speed and force, patients frequently complain of dizziness. At these times, they may be literally feeling the sensations caused by the

original spinning, because they are experiencing a planned (i.e., produced by intervention of the abusers) revivification or flashback of that event.

Sense of Spinning Internally. Along with the dizziness, patients experiencing active spin programs often notice a sense of spinning internally, or comment that "everything seems to be spinning." If they do not mention this feeling spontaneously, they will often admit it when questioned, for example, by answering in the affirmative when asked, "Do you feel as if someone inside is spinning a mile a minute?"

Physical Movements. When the internal spinning is at its most intense, patients often move in ways that a person might move while being physically spun. These movements tend to be rhythmic and repetitive, they may involve any part of the body, and they are subtle and may escape the therapist's attention unless the therapist is looking for them. For example, a patient may stare blankly or appear to be wincing from pain or closing her eyes tightly, then move her head or upper body very slightly and rhythmically from side to side, forward and back, or in a circular motion. Feet or hands and arms are also often involved in these movement. The movements tend to be slower, smoother, more fluid, more subtle, and more regular and rhythmic than typical "nervous" movements.

Spinning-Related Imagery and Vocabulary. When describing their subjective sensations during an active spin program, patients often utilize imagery or words that are related to the experience of spinning, possibly because these images and words are literal descriptions of their experiences, and possibly because they were taught these images during the original spin training. Patients may use this kind of imagery spontaneously during sessions or in writings or drawings produced outside of sessions, or they may only describe them in response to questioning. Typical words used include: vortex, whirlpool, whirlwind, tornado, cyclone, abyss, falling, drowning, sinking, being pulled or sucked down, being blown or shot or exploded out, tumbling, hurling, whirling, swirling, and twirling. Typical visual images include drawings depicting the ideas listed above and various doodles that will be described later in the section on training. Some alters have programmer-assigned names related to spinning (e.g., Spinner,) which is a name that was independently assigned to alters in the personality systems of several different patients).

Training Methods

Pain Contests. Pain as Power. and Multiples within Multiples. A patient disclosed during a psychotherapy session some time ago that the most powerful alters in her system were those who had endured the most pain. Subsequent exploration of this notion, combined with abreactions of memories of "pain contests" eventually led to the discovery of spin programming.

Many patients with cult abuse histories have had to endure contests in which they and another person received steadily mounting pain until one of them (the loser) could not stand it anymore. Generally, only one alter was allowed to remain out during the contest, or else worse abuse would follow. The requirement that only one alter remain out had some profound ramifications, leading to the conjecture that this condition (only one alter staying out), not the outcome of the contest, was the primary purpose of the competitions.

In order to stay out continuously instead of leaving the body to a rapidly switching succession of alters (the more typical pattern of dissociation during trauma), the single alter had to create a group of internal alters to whom she or he could send the pain. The typical result of this type of experience appears to be the creation of an internal analogue of multiple personality disorder, or a "multiple within a multiple."

In other words, just as traumatic experiences in general can lead to the creation of a number of alters in one "outside" body to produce multiple personality disorder, this specific type of experience can create a similar phenomenon one level in, consisting of a number of alters "within" the alter undergoing the contest. However, since the alter has no physical body, the newly created alters do not necessarily exist "inside" that alter, but more likely coexist with or near the original alter in internal space--the "inside world").

One source of internal power arising from this arrangement stems from the ability of the original alter to send pain to her or his next level of alters inside the multiple within a multiple subsystem, allowing her or him to

intimidate them by threatening to activate a flashback of the original training, thus forcing them to re-experience the pain. The multiple within a multiple subsystem taken as a unit is more powerful than other, simple alters, because, as a system, it possesses or is capable of possessing greater and more varied capabilities than a lone alter might be able to produce.

Graphic Depiction. Another patient, after looking at a drawing of a tree structure that was my rough attempt to depict the connection between pain transmission and power (Figure 1a), suggested that the drawing ought to be circular instead of tree shaped (Figure 1b). The original alter, according to this new view, was located at the center of a circle of alters, and the ring or rings) of alters surrounding this alter comprised the multiple within a multiple" system. Secondary alters could dissociate further by creating alters of their own, resulting in branches of tertiary and beyond) alters. She indicated further that her entire personality system, not just individual multiple within multiple systems, was arranged in this kind of circular array consisting of concentric rings, with the most powerful alters located at the center.

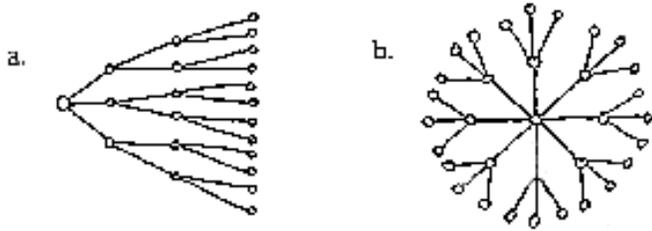


Figure 1

Tree and Circular Diagrams Depicting Pain Distribution Among Alters During Pain Contests

This patient then became visibly frightened, stating that some internal alters felt that I may not be a safe person because I knew too much. Subsequent discussions with other patients about this topic and other topics related to spin programming have elicited similar reactions from them; it appears that information about spin programming is highly secret and not for "outsiders" to know.

However, in spite of her fears, this patient disclosed more information at the next session, revealing that her system contained a number of alters who have been trained to create internal multiple personality systems, and that alters of these systems often received additional training that made them into a coordinated, self-monitoring and self-correcting mechanism designed to employ internal spinning to send pain (and other experiences) to large groups of alters outside their system. Discussions with all of the patients (the two mentioned above, plus the five others) provided the rest of the details comprising this paper.

Overall Training Strategy. According to patients' disclosures, spin training begins at an early age, perhaps age three or four, or even younger. Training appears to utilize a combination of three basic elements: (a) the creation of internal multiple personality systems (by pain contests and similar experiences) whose alters are separated and given specialized training to make the internal systems into self-regulating mechanisms; (b) actual spinning both to teach senders the sensations of spinning so that they can re-create it internally and to force them to spin internally in order to avoid the extremely painful sensations of "real" external spinning; and (c) cognitive and imagery training to build and reinforce connections between internal re-creations of the experience of spinning and the sending out of pain as a means of escaping it. Along with this, connections are also established and reinforced between velocity, centrifugal force, and the intensity of the pain and other feelings that are spun. In addition, some programming is necessary to convince the spinning alters that they are not connected to the other alters in the system, so that they do not feel guilty about hurting someone about whom they care. Material must be available to "feed" into the spin mechanism, and this material consists of large numbers of dissociated memories that contain pain and other feelings capable of acting as punishments or sources of disruption. Finally, there may be additional programming to create controls over such things as which material is to be spun, when or under what conditions it is to be spun, to which alters or groups it is to be targeted, which groups of alters will be exempt from the spin, etc.

Actual Spinning. All patients reported having had many experiences of being physically spun by ritual abusers throughout their lives. While being spun, they were invariably drugged, usually with sedative or hypnotic drugs as well as anti-nausea agents, often shown or forced to look at white or colored lights or to listen to music or rhythms, often given verbal instructions, and sometimes given other kinds of pain (in addition to the extreme pain of spinning). The spinning was of various types, including horizontal spinning on a table, similar to a record player; horizontal spinning about an axis, similar to being turned on a spit; vertical, "wheel-of-fortune" type spinning; and vertical spinning about an axis, on a pole, hanging upside down by the feet, or inside of a cylinder.

Patients who have experienced a great deal of spinning have a number of sensitivities that they usually do not understand until they are consciously aware of having been spun. For example, many patients become very disturbed by flashing lights, because they are similar to the lights they had to watch while being spun. For similar reasons, they are also often disturbed by watching rapidly changing colors or circular, swirling motions of any kind, as well as by certain types of music.

Programmers apparently take advantage of these sensitivities by simulating spinning when it would be impractical (due to unavailability of equipment, etc.) to actually spin a victim, or when they want to intimidate a reluctant alter by threatening her or him with spinning as a punishment. Rapidly changing lights moving across the victim's visual field, for example, can very effectively bring back the full experience of a past actual spin. Exposure to other stimuli that accompanied spinning, such as spoken words or music, can also trigger experiences of spinning.

Abusers trigger the re-experiencing of traumatic events by taking advantage of their victims' means of coping with trauma. When a victim experiences a painfully traumatic or terrifying event, including administration of drugs to enhance state-dependent learning, the victim dissociates the experience, breaking it into component parts (as in the BASK Model: Braun, 1988a, 1988b). Abusers apparently record the contents of these dissociated experiences and know which aspects of them to remind victims of in order to bring about a vivid replay of a component or portion of them. By simply introducing such a cue to the victim, the abusers can initiate the experience of spinning.

Dissociated components of any traumatic memory appear capable of being moved from one alter to another, making it possible to "collect" the pain or affective component of dozens of experiences that contain similar elements (e.g., physical pain, terror, abandonment, grief, etc.), feed these into the spinner, and thereby spread massive amounts of these feelings throughout the personality system or to targeted groups of alters.

Visual Aids, Demonstrations, and Practice. All patients reported having observed as children (or when spin training was done, if later than childhood) a wide range of demonstrations apparently intended to teach them to think about and perform spinning in ways that are advantageous to the programmers. For example, several patients report having watched mechanical devices, such as centrifuges or devices similar to those sometimes seen at fairs that make pictures by spreading paint with centrifugal force; people, such as "whirling dervish" dancers who are made (presumably by drugs and special effects) to seem as if they are able to spin so fast that they become a blur; and object lessons, such as people who are tortured or killed for failing to spin properly.

Patients also report having spent a great deal of time as children (again, only those programmed as children) practicing spinning at a conscious level. For example, they may have spun around furiously at play time, but the spinning was done in grim earnestness, not for fun. They may also have been involved in organized activities that involved spinning, such as ballet or figure skating lessons.

Drawings and Doodles. All patients reported having filled or decorated many pages over periods of years from early childhood (again, only those whose training commenced in childhood) through adulthood with doodles that are strikingly similar across individuals. They describe themselves as having produced the doodles in an almost obsessive manner, drawing them over and over for no apparent reason. Certain themes connect these doodles. Many of them obviously depict spinning, such as the drawings of spinning tornadoes (Figure 2a). Others only suggest spinning, such as spirals that may be round (Figure 2b), rectangular (Figure 2c), or triangular (Figure 2d), but they also depict movement or transmission outward from the center. Finally, other

doodles depict movement or transmission from one linked unit to another, without spinning, as in the interconnected boxes or interconnected loops (Figure- 2e and f).

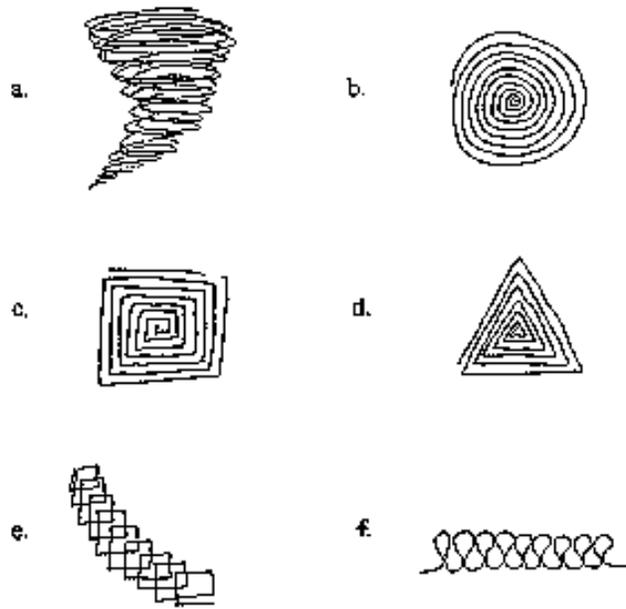


Figure 2
Doodles Frequently Drawn by Patients With Histories of Spin Programming

The doodling appears to be intended to reinforce by repetition and visualization the lessons learned through cognitive and imagery training. Doodles may be produced by alters trained as spinners, or they may be produced by others to be seen by the spinners, as reminders to the spinner to maintain their skills and alertness.

Cognitive and Imagery Training. Programmers apparently combine pain transmission training, actual spinning, visual demonstrations, and doodles with detailed verbal instructions that contain a great deal of vivid visual imagery. This training takes place over a period of many years, with countless repetitions and variations, so that the overall effect is very potent. The thrust of all this training appears to be to convey several key ideas to the spinners and other alters, so that they accept these ideas without question as their actual reality.

First, the spinners must learn to spin inside, just as they did while out in the body during actual spinning. Often, they learn to become a spinning object, such as a tornado or a spinning top. That is, their internal representation of self (or internal body), as viewed by both themselves and other alters, is a spinning object (at least while spinning or during rapidly accelerated spinning). Then, they must link the experience of internal spinning with the sending out of pain, emotions, and other feelings to other alters, so that that two experiences are inseparable and indistinguishable. Finally, they must link the velocity of their spins with centrifugal force, so that the more rapidly they spin, the stronger and more irresistible is the force with which they send out the pain or other feelings.

An additional set of ideas is important to impart to the spinners for spin programs to be effective. The first of these has to do with spinners feeling good (or not feeling bad) about spinning. In order to feel good about spinning, spinners must think themselves separate from other alters, and view the other alters as deserving the painful feelings that they receive as the result of the spinning. It is clear from patients' reports that programmers teach and reinforce these ideas. It is also useful for the spinners to derive feelings of competence and pride about their spinning. Therefore programmers apparently reward proper spinning with praise and other reinforcements. Next, spinners need to be convinced that they have only two choices once a

spin program is activate: Either they must spin, or they will experience all the pain themselves; but, if they do spin, they will experience no pain at all. Programmers apparently teach these lessons too. Finally, it is advantageous to protect spinners from contact with other alters or outsiders, who might impart information to them that could potentially allow them to think for themselves. Therefore, programmers apparently often set up a ring of guardians around the spinners or impose other security measures.

Transmission Routes. When patients first began to describe pain contests, it was thought that the purpose of these ordeals was to establish transmission routes for the spinning of pain. Soon it became clear that, instead, they were designed to create multiple within multiple systems which would be trained to become spinning mechanisms. This conclusion left open the question of how transmission routes are established. Additional inquiry of patients about this question has not provided conclusive answers, but the one hypothesis that "feels right" to most of them is that pain is sent along the lines of lineage, that is, the connections between alters who split off of earlier alters, who split off of yet earlier alters, etc., going all the way back to the core or near-core personalities. If this is true, then either spinners learn how locate and to send pain to near-core alters, or they themselves are near-core alters who were selected for spin training because of their position in the internal genealogy. The second alternative appears to be the more likely one.

Self-Regulating Spin Systems. One would think that it would be very difficult for a programmer to control a multiple within a multiple system. More than the desired number of alters may be created during the initial abuse, leaving the programmer with a problem of disposition. Alters may be created who are never discovered by the programmer, and are in positions potentially to resist or disrupt the programmer's plans. The number of alters and complexity of their interrelationships would make it difficult for a programmer to keep track of the behavior of both individual alters and interactions among them. Programmers apparently respond to all of these problems by imposing rigid structure and strict discipline. They control alters' personality traits and other attributes, where and with whom they live in the internal world, who may communicate with whom, who watches whom, and who punishes whom.

The outcome of programmers' control efforts appears to be a complex, self-regulating systems of alters, each of whom is assigned specific roles and duties, which is governed by a carefully designed scheme of checks and balances. Certain functions are essential for spinning to take place, and there seems to be some uniformity across patients in terms of which functions are carried out by which alters, and how the alters are allowed or forced to interact.

The first step in creating a spin system appears to be to split up the group of alters comprising the system, keeping them only dimly aware, if aware at all, of the existence of the others. They appear to be placed in specific locations in the internal world, determined by the roles they occupy. Those who occupy the same or corresponding role are often similar to one another in other ways, such as all being children of a given age, all being of the same gender, or all being animal alters. They may also have similar skills or other attributes such as having been taught a performing art, having been trained in psychic abilities, or belonging to a specific cult figure who "loves" them. As additional spin systems are created, alters from other spin systems who occupy the same roles are placed in the same locations. These role-based groups may then be taught to be suspicious of or hate the other role-based groups, thereby keeping them from "comparing notes," cooperating together, or organizing any kind of resistance.

The key functions that need to be accomplished for spinning to work effectively are as follows: Of course, there should be an alter who spins. There should also be an alter who locates, obtains, and moves the dissociated memory components so that they can be spun by the spinner. There should be a controller or coordinator of the overall process. There should be informers who report to programmers about whether other alters are performing their duties, including other informers. There should be punishers who discipline misbehaving alters, including other punishers, and one who can punish even the spinner (who is otherwise impervious to pain). There should be a "key" or access alter who makes it possible for programmers to enter the system, obtain information, and make adjustments. And all these functions should be designed to interact in such a way that the system can regulate itself and operate independently.

The roles and lines of communication and influence within such a system can be depicted graphically in some cases, with lines representing the communication pathways and points of intersection representing the alters who occupy the essential roles. The result is a three dimensional geometric figure resembling a crystal.

Utility of Spin programming

Spin programming has some obvious uses to programmers for designing and building personality systems. The power of the spinners or alters who control them, and the threat of pain that they convey, establish them internally as authorities who must be obeyed. The networks (apparently of descent) along which spinners send pain and other experiences represent natural divisions within the overall system that programmers may program separately and use for specific purposes, such as spying/informing, enforcing internal discipline, sexual behaviors, ceremonial behaviors, etc. Spin programming can contribute both to unifying a system and to separating groups from one another. There are doubtless many other ways in which spin programming can facilitate system building.

Harassment and disruption of therapy are easy to achieve with spin programming. For example, only one brief programming session is capable of setting up a spinner to react each time she or he notices the therapist engaging in a predictable behavior by setting in motion a furious spin of the emotions contained in dozens of dissociated traumatic experiences of childhood rejection and abandonment. The patient is then likely to perceive the therapist as behaving in an abandoning and rejecting manner, and as a result the therapy may be dominated by endless sidetracking from other issues in order to deal with the more subjectively pressing issue (to the patient) of the fear and hurt that the patient feels the therapist is causing. And the spinning may continue for days, weeks, or months. Numerous variations of this kind of approach are possible, providing many opportunities for keeping therapy ineffective for years.

Importance of Spin Programming

Spin programming must be of immense importance, judging from the sheer amount of time and energy that programmers appear to have devoted to creating and maintaining these programs throughout their victims' lives. Another indication of the central importance of this kind of programming is the wariness shown by many patients when the subject is initially broached. It is obviously "classified material." These factors, plus the obvious power of spin programming as both a system-building and harassment/disruption technique, indicate that this kind of programming is a fundamental mind control method used on victims of ritual abuse. Therefore, it must be addressed in psychotherapy with victims of ritualistic abuse. In fact, spin programming is apparently so fundamental a technique that our patients may not be able to heal unless it is addressed in therapy.

Strengths of Spin Programming

Spin-based programs present a number of strengths from the point of view of programmers. They have been difficult to detect, because therapists have been unaware of globally targeted spin programs as a separate type of programming strategy. The reactions created by spin programs, if not identified as such, are likely to be mislabeled as borderline traits or "transference issues," providing little or no benefit to the patient. Containment strategies (utilizing hypnosis or visualization) that may work well at stopping or preventing flashbacks of specifically targeted programs are often useless with spin programs, because of both the sheer volume of memories that are activated by a spin program and the force of the spin. Working with the affected alters is difficult because of the lengthy, intensive attitude training against communicating with outsiders that they have received; due to the fact that they are guarded to prevent contact; because they fear that they will experience pain if they do not spin it out, combined with the immediacy of pain relief if they do; and due to the power, or perceived power, of the spin.

In general, when therapists attempt to deal with a spin program, they are likely to feel as if they are grappling with a complicated, powerful machine. In fact, that is essentially what they are doing. Spin programs "feel" quite different from specifically targeted programs. Many more alters are involved in spin programs, they are much more highly trained and more automatic and smoothly coordinated in their functioning, and the operations of the programs are much better safeguarded against attempts to tamper with or undermine them. As such, they present a formidable challenge to therapists and patients.

Weaknesses of Spin Programming

In spite of the power and complexity of spin programs, they are nevertheless amenable to therapeutic intervention. With patience, commitment, and compassion, an astute therapist working closely with a creative, motivated patient can gradually make a dent in this kind of programming and eventually overcome it by exploiting its inherent weaknesses.

The first weakness is the fact that all programmed alters, including spinners, guards, controllers, and all those who are part of the spin mechanism, are personalities who were "cut from the same cloth" as the rest of the system and are therefore capable of both reason and emotion. Alters comprising the spin mechanism can actively observe incoming information and react to it by commencing the spin, making decisions about when to block outside contact or punish those who fail to cooperate with the program; therefore, they can reason. Spinners often take pride in being good at spinning, and they are proficient at spinning painful emotions in order to avoid them; therefore, they are capable of feeling emotion. If a therapist or an internal helper can establish communication with these alters, the way is open for them to correct their present, limited cognitive grasp of their situations and options by learning new facts, and to want to change what they do by becoming aware of their feelings about it. They are also capable of positive emotions, and they are likely to be deprived of and hungry for them. Therefore, they are likely, once contacted, to respond favorably to care and concern.

The second weakness is the fact that much of the training that makes up spin programming is conditioned as opposed to unconditioned, that is, based on paired associate or cognitive learning. Therefore, cognitive changes such as consciousness of how the conditioning was done can facilitate breaking the connections rapidly. The connections and beliefs that can be broken in this way include the link between external spinning and internal spinning; the link between internal spinning and the sending out of pain and other feelings; the link between velocity of internal spinning, centrifugal force, and the irresistibility of the pain and other feelings being spun out; the illusion that the spinners are separate from the rest of the system; the pride of being good at spinning; and the belief that they have only a limited number of options. The third weakness is the fact that spin programming is built on an accumulation of individual dissociated experiences that can be abreacted, one after the other, until the foundation of the spin mechanism has been completely undermined. Three groups of dissociated memories may be addressed: the original training experiences of the spinners and others involved in spinning; the traumatic experiences from which pain or affective components are collected and fed into the spin mechanism; and the programs instructing the spinners what to spin and under what conditions to begin spinning.

The fourth, and greatest, weakness of spin programming is also its greatest strength: the complexity of the system of alters and the checks and balances that control them. An astute therapist can eventually gain access to individuals who occupy the different roles, either directly or indirectly, and then educate them about their betrayal by their programmers, about the compassion they could be feeling toward the suffering of other alters in their system (instead of the hate or mistrust they have been taught to feel), about their ultimate unity with the others (instead of the separation that has been forced on them), and about how to join forces to resist.

Summary

This paper has described spin programming, a type of abuse that until recently was unknown to psychotherapists, but has obviously been in use by ritual abusers for many years -- at least four decades, and probably much longer. It is possible that most or perhaps all patients with histories of ritual abuse have been subjected to spin programming. Patients who were born into cults that practice ritual abuse (as opposed to having been recruited later in life) are probably more likely to have experienced spin programming, and their spin programming is likely to be both more intensive and more sophisticated.

Spin programming presents some formidable obstacles for psychotherapy. It is apparent that, in the past, lack of awareness and understanding of spin programming by the therapeutic community has contributed to many problems in therapy, and that complete healing has probably been impossible without facing and dealing effectively with this type of mind control technique.

It is hoped that this paper will provide a valuable service by making information available to therapists that may contribute to significant breakthroughs for their patients and ultimately allow for their complete healing, while also providing testable hypotheses to researchers interested in ritual abuse.

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