PSYCHOTHERAPY OF A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WITH DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER

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Abstract - In this paper psychotherapy of a high school student with dissociative identity disorder was discussed. It is said that main cause of dissociative identity disorder is various kinds of abuse. The client was also suffered from abuses and in this paper it was examined how she overcame these trauma through psychotherapy with the therapist.

Keywords - Dissociation, Dissociative Identity Disorder, Adolescent Student, Psychotherapy

I. PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Highlight a section that you want to designate with a certain style, and then select the appropriate name on the style menu. The style will adjust your fonts and line spacing. **Do not change the font sizes or line spacing to squeeze more text into a limited number of pages.** Use italics for emphasis; do not underline.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE CLIENT

A. *Anna A Senior High School Student*

B. Growth history

When she was a child, her real father had been assaulting her mother. That's what we call domestic violence. ***Anna*** was not directly received violence from her father, but witnessing her father's violence to her mother is now considered abuse. Then, one night, her mother took a drive to the seaside with her. ***Anna*** was only three or four years old then. Her mother couldn't bear domestic violence anymore and decided to commit suicide together with her daughter, ***Anna***, and tried to go into the sea. They got off the car, hold hand together, and began to move toward the sea. Holding hands with her mother, ***Anna*** was afraid of approaching the sea, and told her mother, "Now let's go home." Her words brought her mother back to reality. After all, she came home safely with her mother. But this experience caused a permanent trauma for her.

Then her parents divorced and when she came to me, several years had passed since her mother's boyfriend began to live together.

III. INTERVIEW PROCESS

At first, she came to talk about friendship issues. But about half an hour later, during the first interview, suddenly she asked me, "Do you believe in multiple personalities?"

The author was surprised to hear her question, but I replied, "Do I believe in multiple personalities? I am sure multiple personalities really exist." Then she began to talk, "I have multiple personalities." When she was an elementary school child she began to be aware that there were two other people in herself. One was a calm and quiet woman about ten years older than her, and the other was a young man of the same age as herself. I'll call the woman ***Andrea*** and the young man ***Andrew***. Curiously, not only could ***Anna*** talk with the two personalities, but also the two personalities can talk to each other. Sometimes the three personalities including ***Anna*** herself talked together. At the beginning of the interview, the two personalities were negative and even threatened ***Anna*** , but since the interview began, these negative aspects were improved.

A few sessions later I first directly met another personality inside her. In that session, ***Anna*** looked different from her whom I met a week ago. I asked, "Are you ***Anna***?". She said, "I am ***Andrew***, a boy." And I talked with ***Andrew*** sincerely. Next time, ***Andrea***, a women personality came. While meeting these three personalities, ***Anna*** said that a new personality appeared. This was a 5-year-old girl, ***Annie***. When I said that I wanted to meet and talk to ***Annie***, ***Anna***, herself, said it was difficult for me to talk with ***Annie*** because ***Annie*** was shy. While doing so, twin brothers of about 20 years old appeared. Their names were Black, and White. Their characters were contrasting. Black was melancholy and negative. White was active and sometimes brings all personalities in her together. In this way, the counseling proceeded while the number of personalities increased, or sometimes decreased. There were so many other personalities that ***Anna***, her original personality, could only come once every two months

By the way, when I was experiencing fluctuation in the number of her personalities, I had a chance to attend a case study lecture about dissociative identity disorder presented by a famous Jungian professor. He told me that a dissociative person wants to dissociate unconsciously and that It is better to respect her original personality and meet herself as much as possible. However, as I had met each individual personality until then, I could not say that I would

only see ***Anna*** herself from now on. After thinking variously, though it might be a small technique, I tried to take up ***Anna*** herself as a topic whenever possible. For example, when I talked with ***Andrew***, I said “I wonder how ***Anna*** herself would have felt at that time”, “I wonder what ***Anna*** herself would have thought in that situation”, or "I wonder what ***Anna*** herself would have done in such a case", and so on. I kept using the words “***Anna*** herself” when I mentioned ***Anna***. By doing so, I tried to respect ***Anna***’s independence.

Then something very interesting occurred in that context. While a boy personality ***Andrew*** was coming, he said, "***Anna*** seems to want to talk herself today." I was surprised. “How can ***Anna*** herself speak now?” Suddenly, the student being ***Andrew*** personality fell on the desk and began to sleep. After three minutes or so, the student got up, looked around, and said surprisingly, "How come? Am I in…the counseling room?” The voice tone was changed to ***Anna***’s. So I explained what happened. Then, she understood the situation and started talking. This was the first time ***Anna*** herself appeared while other personality came to counseling. Since then, gradually, ***Anna*** herself more often came to counseling, whereas other personalities appeared less. Eight months after I first met her, only ***Anna*** came to appear weekly without any other personality. I heard about other personalities only from ***Anna*** indirectly .

She could come to me because she became strong enough to take on the pains she would encounter in counseling. She gradually started talking about her boyfriend. With tears in her eyes, she talked about her boyfriend‘s hardships, such as being so cold to her, flirting with other girls in front of her, and she was skeptical if he really liked her. Originally, she had been living, suppressing her true feelings and emotions, but when she herself began to talk with me, shedding tears in the presence of me, maybe it was the first time for her to talk truly from her heart. And I thought it was very important.

But while listening to her story, I began to feel guilty, for I could not do anything to her except listening to her. I felt guilty and helpless because I could not change her difficult situation. The words "I'm sorry I can only listen." almost came out from my mouth, but I managed to stop. I wanted to apologize, but, if I had apologized to her, as she was easy to feel guilty in nature, she would have also felt guilty for me conversely. She would have thought she forced her counselor to apologize to her. Then I realized that I only wanted to be released from my guilty sense myself, not for the sake of her. So I decided I should never apologize to her. Rather, I thought I should face her, holding my guilty sense. And I wondered what else I could do but listen. At that time, I had more than 20 clients a week, so I could not keep detailed records. So, I took a brief note while listening to the client during the interview. But in the case of Anna, I decided not to take notes during the interview. Instead, I listened to her with all my heart and soul. I decided to write notes only after each interview was over. All I could do at that time was to listen to her story with my whole soul. Now I think the helplessness I felt was actually the helplessness she felt in her life. When I think I was made to experience the helplessness she was feeling, I can better understand her feelings.

I did not know whether such an attitude had moved her, but she gradually arranged and organized her own mind while talking. The occasions she shed tears became less. When her graduation was approaching, I asked to her, "What are other personalities doing these days?" And she said, "I haven't heard any more recently. Maybe they are gone now". I asked, "What's your feeling after they are gone?" She replied, "Some empty feeling." The desirable healing image of dissociative identity disorder is that the dissociative personalities are integrated into one person. That creates a sense of integrity within herself. But in her case what she felt was "emptiness." Even though other personalities disappeared, I thought they were not really integrated yet. When her graduation came, I still felt some anxiety and worry.

However, six months later she happened to come to school with her friends. She noticed I was in the counseling room and came to see me. Her face was suntanned, and she looked stronger and more stable than she was in high school. I heard that she left her house and began to live with her boyfriend in a rental apartment. Although he had made her cry so much during my sessions, she seemed to be doing well with him then. I could not ask about other personalities, but I could feel that she developed a sense of fulfillment inside her, and that other personalities had been integrated into herself. Only then did her case reach a real end to me.

IV. CONSIDERATION

Many researchers of dissociative identity disorder stated that therapists should not ignore other personalities, and said that if one personality appeared, therapist should respect the personality and had to talk with the personality sincerely[1][2].People with dissociating personality are not strong enough to confront the pains of heart. So they let other personalities take on the hardship to avoid it themselves. In Anna’s case, when she had difficulty in going to part-time job, she consciously used to summon another personality such as Andrew or Andrea who could do the job instead of herself. So, the fact that she herself became able to come to counseling without summoning or calling other personalities indicated that she had developed enough strength to confront the pains and difficulties on her own. Eventually, Anna began to talk about the difficulties and pains of the heart in counseling.

By the way, it is generally considered that a common cause of dissociative identity disorder is many forms of abuse including physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, that is, traumas that cannot be held in heart. Such traumas could be dissociated. In her case, she had not been directly abused, but she had witnessed abusive scenes, that was really psychological abuse. And the experience that she was nearly pulled to the world of death by her mother was also a great trauma. People who have suffered a great trauma are too painful to hold the trauma at a conscious level, and thus separate their experience, memories and emotions associated with it. The emotions, memories and experiences that are separated from a person's self would appear as different personalities. That is dissociation.

She separated her painful experiences, memories, and emotions from her, that is, she dissociated them. By dissociating other personalities appeared. However, as she talked during psychotherapy, she became able to talk about the experiences, memories, and emotions she had been dissociated, and gradually she could begin to bring back what had been dissociated into herself. I think that was the reason why other personalities disappeared. However, when she graduated from school, although dissociation no longer occurred, what had been dissociated from her was not completely integrated into herself. The interview with her ended on the way of integrating what had been dissociated into herself.

She had always lived in unstable situations. First, when she was a child, she lived with her violent father. After that, she had to live with a stranger, her mother's boyfriend. Perhaps her mother was more into him than her own daughter. And after that, she had to live an unstable life alone with her brother. But after graduation, she got a job, which enabled her to live on her own. Her boyfriend also got a job and started living a stable life. By living together with her boyfriend she came to be able to live more stable life than before. I think she came to be able to experience a stable life for the first time that she had never experienced. I think that such a stable life with her boyfriend filled her empty heart, and what had been dissociated was truly integrated.

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