



Ritual Abuse

a publication by the Alternative Council Foundation

www.alternatiefberaad.nl

Introduction

This brochure: why? For which purpose?

With this brochure the Alternative Council Foundation wants to create more awareness of a certain issue which social workers and other professionals may encounter within their line of work.

It concerns individuals who are survivors of abuse that took place or still takes place within satanic cults. As a result the victims usually develop a dissociative identity disorder (DID, a multiple personality).

The stories of the people involved are often shocking and can evoke resistance.

Survivors are not always taken seriously (1) and are regularly diagnosed incorrectly.

In 1994 a working group of the Ministry of Justice recommended further research into this matter. Unfortunately this was not followed up by the government.

The Alternative Council, founded in 2005, does conduct research because there is still great ignorance, incomprehension and unbelief in regards to these forms of abuse (also amongst social workers, doctors and police agents).

The aim is to promote recognition for survivors (both within the social support system and within society) by offering the results of research and thereby breaking the taboo surrounding ritual abuse. One tool is this brochure.

The Alternative Council Foundation

The Alternative Council is a foundation that conducts research into the existence of (satanic) ritual abuse in the Netherlands.

The Council consists of a committee and a group of external advisors, who have experience in aiding survivors of ritual abuse.

Until now the Alternative Council has been able to document the experiences of 28 social workers.

These have worked with, or are still working with, a total of about 100 clients, who declare themselves victims of ritual abuse. There seems to be a remarkable consistency and conformity among their findings.



What is (satanic) ritual abuse (SRA)?

The reality of cults

Throughout time and from all over the world come reports of cults. Some operate publicly others run mainly underground. Of the latter satanic cults are an example: they demand complete secrecy from both their members and their victims.

One characteristic of many satanic cults is the inversion of the Christian doctrines, Christian values, scriptures and symbols.

1) A few years ago there was a controversy in the media regarding the existence of ritual abuse. With the silencing of the discussion however, the victims themselves did not recede. They consult our practices, which is why we are trying to develop good treatment and make it available. This brochure is one tool for this end.

Programming

Many cults subject their members to a type of 'brainwashing' to indoctrinate them and to keep them subordinate. Within satanic cults, a systematic form of 'brainwashing' is administered, which we therefore prefer to call programming. In a well thought through and calculated manner, strong pain and other sensory stimuli are connected to certain assignments or dogmas.

In this manner the conscience of the victim is manipulated to an extreme. The awareness of one's own will is weakened considerably and the ability to seek help is herewith heavily impaired.

Short description of SRA

SRA is a very systematic and sadistic form of physical, sexual and psychological abuse of children and adults, mainly during so called satanic rituals.

Often ritual abuse is accompanied by other forms of abuse, incest or negligence within the home environment.

Some experiences as described by survivors:

- frightening sacrificial rites
- the use of symbols such as an upside-down cross or pentagram
- the use of songs and proverbs
- child prostitution and misuse of children for pornographic recordings by both men and women
- being constrained, imprisoned and/or twirled at a fast pace
- witnessing, forced participation in and undergoing physical abuse and torture
- witnessing and being forced to participate in the abuse and killing of animals
- repeated threats (verbal and/or literal) of being put to death (-eg- by burying the victim for a short period of time and thereby almost letting them die)
- forced drug abuse
- witnessing and being forced to participate in the sacrifice of (sometimes very small) children and adults
- forced pregnancies, forced to hand over the baby (whether or not fully grown) to be sacrificed
- the deprivation of sleep and food
- being forced to drink blood
- being followed or kept under surveillance
- psychological abuse, humiliation, brainwashing, subjection, programming, manipulation



While some may find such descriptions too gruesome to be believed, they are none the less the (perceived) reality of people, who - like everybody else - deserve respect and acknowledgement.

Some indicators of (satanic) ritual abuse

Besides the recounts of experiences as mentioned above, other indicators can be: all symptoms that point to a serious trauma in general, summarized as PTSS (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome) such as nightmares, flashbacks (re-experiencing the traumatic experience as though it were happening again in the here and now), self-mutilation, suicidal behaviour, social isolation or apathy.

Symptoms that could point specifically to ritual abuse are (among others): extreme, often unusual fears, deep mistrust of, for example, police agents, doctors, therapists and clergymen, as well as extreme fear of or obsession with blood, fear of certain instruments used by, for example, doctors or gynaecologists, reactions of fear in relation to certain colours like red or black.

Often a dissociative identity disorder is involved (DID).

What is DID?

Short description of DID

Most survivors of ritual abuse have developed a dissociative identity disorder.

Everybody has the capacity to dissociate (step out of a situation mentally and emotionally) in

order to protect oneself from an overwhelming experience. During an extreme and prolonged traumatic experience, in combination with the absence of safety and support, this capacity to dissociate is activated. Alter personalities can develop which, in worst case scenarios, can split off completely, if the trauma took place at a very early age. This state can become permanent.

The official criteria for DID, according to the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) are:

1. the presence of two or more distinct identities or alters, which each have their own way of perceiving and responding to their environment and to themselves.
2. at least two of these alters regularly assume control over behaviour.
3. there is an inability to remember important personal information, which cannot be explained by forgetfulness.
4. the disorder is not the result of the physiological effects of drugs or alcohol, or of a medical condition. In the case of children: the symptoms cannot be explained by phantasy games.

Some indicators of DID

Usually individuals do not mention that they suffer from DID.

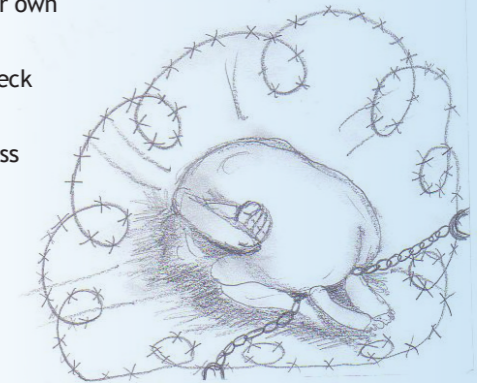
It can become apparent in that they are able to present themselves in very diverse ways. For example with a different voice, facial expression, dress sense or handwriting. There can seem to be gaps in their memory. Sometimes it seems the person in question is unable to follow a conversation well. Their sense of time can seem distorted. They can come across chaotic or

can experience inner chaos. Social dialogue can be very difficult. They can exhibit: intense and greatly varying emotions, extreme fears, childlike behaviour, losing touch during an interaction, apathy, an inability to feel their own body, an inability to feel or indicate pain.

Sometimes the person is so apt at keeping themselves in check that it can take a long time before one of these symptoms becomes apparent. In which case the person can come across highly adapted and self controlled.

Naturally the more symptoms one person exhibits, the more likely it is that they suffer from DID.

Not every DID patient has experienced ritual abuse. DID can also occur as a result of another serious trauma that started at a very early age.



How to proceed

How to proceed when there are suspicions of SRA

Recognition builds trust and puts the client at ease and offers (often for the first time) the opportunity for real interaction with a fellow human being. The inner chaos can gradually subside as the experiences are shared and examined together. Take into account that the client can withdraw and switch between recounting the experiences and trivializing or denying them. An open and at the same time supportive attitude is essential. Mainly listen and ask open questions. Do not assert pressure in any way (by suggesting to file a police report for example).

Maintain clarity that the responsibility of choice remains with the client only.

If necessary and possible it is good to offer specific support in handling daily life.

Respect that sometimes it seems safer to the person to stay with the cult than to leave it.

Remember that the person in question and/or their loved ones can be under serious pressure.

Take good care of yourself and seek advice and support (within the boundaries and possibilities of confidentiality).

Where needed and possible refer the client to an experienced specialist.

Some realistic situations you as a professional may encounter

It is possible that contact with the cult is a thing of the past. However, it is probable that they are still in touch with them, keep that in mind. It is possible that at some stage the client may warn you that harm could come to you. In this case seek support within your occupational group. The personal experiences that are being shared by the client can become increasingly gruesome and perhaps less believable in the perception of the social worker.

Truth Content

In the past survivors of serious abuse were not always believed, even though it would later become apparent that they were substantially telling the truth. Similarly, only since a few decades, has it even been acknowledged that incest is a common occurrence. Likewise,

regularly extreme incidents come to the light that no one thought possible. Such as the story of a daughter who was held captive for years in the basement of a regular house, in a regular street, all the while giving birth to several children, conceived by her own father. We humans have always known, and denied, that we are capable of horrendous deeds. It is therefore important to suspend judgement when considering the truth content of what is being shared. Only when we admit that humans are capable of such atrocities, can we do justice to the victims and offer them suitable help. Due to the underground nature of satanic cults and due to programming it becomes nigh impossible for survivors to prove that their experiences actually took place. Besides this, often not all alters of a survivor are able to discern between the past and the present, between flashbacks and current reality. Additionally survivors can experience incidents that did not actually occur, but that could have happened or may still happen, seeing the scope of previous experiences. For a survivor the flashback, as well as the experience of something that could happen, is experienced in the here and now. Because of this the caregiver can get a distorted impression of what is going on. Often the interaction stagnates if the conversation turns to truth content or proof. The basic assumption needs to be that what the client shares is his or her truth, and can include actual truth at key points. This does not mean that one should take everything literal. The important thing is to take the client serious with an open attitude, to validate them and to build rapport. Only then can help, in its varying forms, be effective. And this is essential, because after all, we are dealing with people who are seriously suffering.

More information

At www.alternatiefberaad.nl you can find an account of the method of research done by the Alternative Council and a report of the findings. Here you can also find extra information concerning the Foundation, such as its objectives, its members and bibliographies.

The illustrations in this brochure were produced by survivors of ritual abuse and are of great personal value. If one distributes this brochure, we expect them to handle it with the utmost care and respect.

The efforts of the Alternative Council are entirely funded by contributions of a small working group. If you consider the objectives and the endeavours of the Alternative Council as important and would like to support them, then your donation is more than welcome and can be transferred to bank account number IBAN: NL18INGB 0005422093 / BIC: INGBNL2A, in the name of Stichting Alternatief Beraad, in Groningen.