



PROJECT
MIDDLE
GROUND

Building Bridges . . .

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Listed in the National Register of Psychologists

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The Next Step Helping FMS Families Move Forward

I. Introduction

A. Preview

B. Project Middle Ground

- Education, Mediation, and Restoration

II. The Three Pillars of the Recovered Memory Movement

A. Pillar #1 - The Client

- Paradigms
- "Effort After Meaning"
- Mental & Personality Disorders

B.. Pillar #2 - The Counselor

- Paradigms
- "Effort After Meaning"

C. Pillar #3 - The Context

- Paradigms
- Science vs. Magic

III. Practical Suggestions for Parents

A. Know the Stages of Grieving

I. Denial - *"It can't be true."*, *"It's some kind of temporary phase she's going through."*

II. Bargaining - *"Maybe if we take a polygraph test, give her money, etc., she'll `come around'."*

III. Anger - *"OK, it's true, but why did this happen to us?"*, *"How could she do this!"*

IV. Depression - *"This is hopeless. We've lost her forever."*

V. Acceptance - *"We're learning to move on in our lives, rather than lay down and die."*

These are based on the five stages of grieving outlined in *On Death and Dying* by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Note that the process of the stages is not linear, parents will move back and forth amongst the stages, gradually working towards final resolution.

B. Al-Anon Principles

C. Understanding thought-control and toxic-group dynamics

D. Get educated and educate

E. Support

F. The Accuser's Siblings

G. Mediation

H. Get Active

National Association for Consumer Protection in Mental Health Practices
3 Golf Center Plaza, Suite 249
Hoffman Estates, IL 60195

I. When possible, maintain contact with the accusing adult child

J. Getting Hang Up Calls:

K. Legal protection

L. Use of retractors

M. Dealing with Anger and Forgiveness

IV. Making a Difference

A. Stage One - "Opening the Door"

- Pillar #1 - The Client (your child) -
- Letter of Declaration (soft version)
 - Legacy Letter
 - Education
 - Mediation

- Pillar #2 - The Counselor
- Education
 - Mediation

- Pillar #3 - The Context
- Education

B. Stage Two - "An Assertive Response"

- Pillar #1 - The Client (your child) -
- Setting Boundaries
 - Letter of Declaration (stronger version)
 - Cautions related to hiring a private detective

- Pillar #2 - The Counselor
- Letter of Notice

- Pillar #3 - The Context
- Professional associations
 - Insurance companies
 - Various (sponsoring churches, landlords, hospitals, Better Business Bureau)
 - State Laws

V. Predictions for Recovery

- Issues related to “Pre-morbid State”**
- Various Disorders:** Thought disorders, Factitious disorders, Folie a deux, Malingering, Panic Disorder, Postpartum Psychosis, Somatization Disorder. Understanding the issues of the Placebo Effect and short term gains.
- Borderline personality:** A pattern of instability of mood, interpersonal relationships, and self-image.
- Histrionic Personality Disorder:** A pattern of excessive emotionality and attention-seeking.
- Narcissistic Personality Disorder:** A pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), lack of empathy, and hypersensitivity to the evaluation of others.
- Paranoid Personality Disorder:** An unwarranted tendency to interpret the actions of people as deliberately demeaning or threatening)
- Obsessive - Compulsive Disorder:** A pattern of perfectionism and inflexibility.
- Dependent Personality Disorder:** A pervasive and excessive need to be taken care of that leads to submissive and clinging behavior and fears of separation.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr. Paul Simpson is a psychologist, family mediator and former case manager with Child Protective Services. He has worked extensively with victims of physical and sexual abuse, as well as sexual perpetrators. At one time a promoter of recovered memory therapy (RMT), Dr. Simpson began researching false memories in 1992. In 1993 he founded *Project Middle Ground* as a means of promoting dialogue between regression clients and their estranged families. This eventually expanded to include recovery and restoration work for *retractors* -- those coming out of RMT.

Dr. Simpson has been instrumental in helping professionals and the general public have a better understanding of the Recovered Memory controversy and has become a nationally recognized educator on this pressing topic. Through *Project Middle Ground*, he has offered hope, healing, clarity, and has been a driving force in assisting individuals and families to mediate their difference. In recognition of his professionalism, he is listed in the *National Registry of Health Care Providers in Psychology* and *Who's Who in Executives and Professionals*. Dr. Simpson's expertise includes:

- Conducting national FMS seminars with therapist and parent groups since 1993.
- Establishing "Project Middle Ground" which:
 - a) mediates between families and their accusing adult children across the nation,
 - b) provides "exit counseling" for retractors and helps reunite them with their families.
- Author of *Second Thoughts; Understanding the False Memory Crisis*. (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997)
- Co-authored the first national research study examining the experiences of "retractors" in the United States and in Canada, published in the Summer 1994 journal, *Issues In Child Abuse Accusations*.
- Consultant and columnist for *The Retractors' Voice*, the national newsletter for those coming out of the recovered memory movement
- Is on the FMS Foundation's speaker's bureau.
- Has been interviewed on Parent Talk Radio, CNN, Frontline (PBS), Dateline, Focus on the Family, The Leeza Gibbons Show, Fox News, Joan Rivers Show, and for various publications.
- Has provided consultation to The Oprah Winfrey Show, 60 Minutes, Frontline, Nightline, 20/20, numerous publications and local television and radio programs.

Through *Project Middle Ground*, Dr. Simpson and his staff have been instrumental in helping professionals and the general public have a better understanding of the FMS crisis. Offering hope, healing and clarity, he has been a driving force in helping individuals and families to heal. *Project Middle Ground* is headquartered in Tucson, Arizona. Staff provide services locally, through phone consultation, or are able to travel to where families are located. For further information on *Project Middle Ground*, arranging appointments and speaking engagements, call (520) 324-4646.

AL-ANON

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.
(800) 356-9996

Alcoholism is a family disease. Living with the effects of someone else's drinking is too devastating for most people to bear without help. In Al-Anon we learn individuals are not responsible for another person's disease or recovery from it. We let go of our obsession with another's behavior and begin to lead happier and more manageable lives, lives with dignity and rights; lives guided by a Power greater than ourselves.

IN AL-ANON WE LEARN:

- Not to suffer because of the actions or reactions of other people;
- Not to allow ourselves to be used or abused by others in the interest of another's recovery;
- Not to do for others what they could do for themselves;
- Not to manipulate situations so other will eat, go to bed, get up, pay bills, not drink;
- Not to cover up for anyone's mistakes or misdeeds;
- Not to create a crisis;
- Not to prevent a crisis if it is in the natural course of events.

Detachment is neither kind nor unkind. It does not imply judgement or condemnation of the person or situation from which we are detaching. It is simply a means that allows us to separate ourselves from the adverse effects that another person's alcoholism can have upon our lives. Detachment helps families look at their situations realistically and objectively, thereby making intelligent decisions possible.

FILING COMPLAINTS / PROFESSIONAL BOARDS

General resources that exist in-state:

- Victims of Crimes Programs / Consumer Fraud / Attorney General's Office
- Better Business Bureau
- Landlords
- Sponsoring hospitals and churches
- Medical Board (Psychiatrists)
- Psychology Board (Psychologist)
- Board of Behavioral Science Examiner (Masters and Social Workers)

National Organizations

(also look for the state chapters for each of these organizations)

American Psychological Association

750 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 408-8600

National Association of Social Workers

750 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 408-8600

American Psychiatric Association

1400 K. St. NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 682-6085

American Assoc. of Marriage and Family Therapists

1100 17th Street NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 452-0109

A Letter of Declaration Rough Draft for Parent's Use (STRONG VERSION).

Sending a *Letter of Declaration* is one of several options you can consider in responding to your accusing child. Give very careful consideration as to whether this is the right timing and step to take. The following are only suggestions for what might be included in your letter. Certain aspects and details will not apply and you will need to add other points/wording that are specific to your needs. Carefully think through each section and try to avoid writing the letter in an emotional state. After you have completed your letter, set it aside for at least a week and then re-read it and make final changes. Have your attorney examine the letter for any potential legal problems. Be prepared to follow through on everything you commit to in the letter. Consider sending the letter by registered mail.

Dear Susan;

Over the last 3 years we have tried on a number of occasions to have a healthy dialogue regarding your accusations of abuse by us. Each time, however, we have been rebuffed or ignored. It is time for us to make changes in how we have been dealing with this problem.

There is a story of a son who makes harmful choices, which separates him from his family and eventually endangers his life. Because of his love for the boy, the father releases his son to the consequences of his poor choices. The prodigal's life becomes increasingly painful and eventually he makes the decision to come back to his father's house. At that point the father receives him with joy and celebration, proclaiming that the son *"was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."*

The parable of this prodigal son is a parable of thousands of families today, including our own. Several years ago you made the choice to enter into a therapy that promotes a belief in recovered memories. Today you continue to ignore science's clear findings about the dangers of these therapies. You have made the choice to believe the dark fantasies that were created in your mind and subsequent to this you falsely accused us of hideous crimes. You have chosen to separate yourself from us and anyone else who does not submit to your beliefs. It is with great sorrow that we have watched your choices turn you increasingly bitter, dysfunctional, alone and despairing. Despite volumes of research and publications that can help you find your way out of this dark deception, each day you are choosing to continue to nurture and embrace these beliefs and the victim identity created within you.

Al-Anon is a program that helps family members deal with the disease of alcoholism. They teach family members the "Three C's" which apply in our situation as well. We did not cause your false memories, we cannot cure your false memories and we cannot control your false memories. These are all decisions that you have made and continue to make. We cannot make your choices for you, but we can choose to take steps to protect ourselves and other loved ones. We love you deeply, and because of our love are committed to living out the principles of Al-Anon. False Memory Syndrome is a family disease. Living with the effects of someone's false memories is too devastating for most families to bear without help. In Al-Anon we learned that individuals are not responsible for another person's choices or recovery. We're learning to let go of our obsessions and beginning to lead happier and more manageable lives, lives with dignity and rights; lives guided by a Power greater than ourselves. We are choosing to live free of:

- your harmful actions or reactions
- being used or abused by you in the hopes you might recover
- doing for you what you can do for yourself
- manipulating situations so you will become well
- covering up or excusing your choices or behaviors
- creating an artificial crisis

Our decision to live free of your choices and behaviors grows out of our deep love for you. It does not imply condemnation or rejection of you. It is simply a means that allows us to separate ourselves from the adverse effects that your false memories have upon our lives and other loved ones. Our decision allows us to look at our situation realistically and objectively, thereby making intelligent decisions possible.

We recognize that we have not been perfect in our efforts at parenting and are willing to discuss actual issues of hurt that each of us has experienced. We would welcome sitting down with you in a neutral setting with a professional mediator and talk through our differences. However, to date your actions have been inappropriate and harmful. Accordingly, we have made the following decisions and are setting forth boundaries for our safety.

a. Like the father with the prodigal son, we are releasing you to the consequences of your choices. With deep sorrow, we realize that your choices may lead to your own destruction, but we recognize that you are free to choose any of a number of life-affirming or life-destroying directions.

b. We are choosing to live in reality and hold to the Truth. Submitting to your demands to believe in your false accusations would be inappropriate and detrimental to you, ourselves and other family members. While the father allowed the prodigal to make choices, the father did not accompany the son in those destructive choices. You are free to embrace your beliefs, however we will not accompany you in your attempts to alter reality and Truth.

c. We are choosing to continue to grieve your loss and are working to invest ourselves in other loved ones. No doubt the father grieved the loss of his prodigal son, but he continued to live life and have a relationship with his remaining son. The loss of a child is not what any caring parent wants to experience. But tragedies happen. We mourn the loss of our grandchildren and know that our lives and theirs will be much poorer because of your choices. However, we are committed to living our lives to the fullest and treasuring the family members that remain.

d. We are choosing to live free from your inappropriate demands and rage. Any letters from you which further propagate your false accusations will be promptly returned. If you call us and become demanding, irrational, or accusatory, we will hang up on you. We are willing to participate in dialogue which is respectful of all parties and works towards civil disagreement and positive problem resolution. After years of faithful labor in raising you to become a healthy human being, we recognize that our job is done. What you choose to do with your life beyond adolescence is your choice.

e. We are choosing to empower and educate ourselves in regards to the false memory crisis. This includes appropriate readings, associating with other families in this crisis, and becoming politically active in stopping the spread of recovered memory “therapy.”

f. We are choosing to educate others, specifically we are contacting all family and friends to let them know about our family crisis and will be educating them about False Memory Syndrome. This is not being done to embarrass you. We are taking this educational step to protect loved ones from your influence, help prevent them from being falsely accused, and alert them about accidentally promoting or supporting your false beliefs.

g. We are choosing to work to bring recovered memory therapists to justice. We will pursue legal means that include complaints to professional review boards and/or church officials, and, if possible, will seek

to have them held accountable in a court of law. This has a two fold purpose, first for the protection of our family from any further false accusations and harassment. Secondly to prevent this tragedy from happening to any other families and vulnerable patients. As well, we are lending our efforts to national legislation to bring about national reform for recovered memory therapy and other forms of mental health fraud.

h. We are choosing to live free of bitterness. We will not hold hatred or animosity towards you. However we will take the steps necessary to protect us from your choices. Your recent letter "forgiving" us is inappropriate since the crimes in your mind are based on fantasies you have accepted as reality. Your "forgiveness" of us in no way absolves you of responsibility for your hurtful acts. If we pass away before you come out of your deception, please know that we loved you deeply and have truly forgiven you. Each of us makes our own choices and must live with the consequences. You were always our daughter and always will be, regardless of your self-imposed deception.

Unlike the prodigal son, we don't know if you will ever choose to come back to reality and Truth. Please know that we love you deeply and will always cherish our real memories of you before you embraced your dark deception. Should you ever choose to work on undoing the pain that you have inflicted on our family, know that we would be open to meeting with you, given that you meet several provisions for everyone's safety. These include:

- We will only meet with you in the company of a professional mediator and in a neutral setting.
- We are willing to consider actual offenses that each of us has done to the other and are willing to take ownership where it is appropriate and make amends and forgive.
- We are committed to respecting you and will not allow you to control us in any way or tolerate disrespectful words or actions.

We know that it is only reality and Truth that can set you free, not the teachings of the recovered memory movement. We hope and pray that you will someday find this freedom. We love you more deeply than you could possibly know and are saddened to see the pain your choices have caused in the lives of so many, including your own. But we recognize that this is a problem of your own creation and only you can choose to come back into reality and Truth.

We release you.

We are choosing to allow you to stay in communication with us. However, as we explained, communication with us is a privilege that must be respected. We reserve the right, based on future actions on your part, to continue or discontinue interactions with you. If we choose to have no further communication from you, and there is something important you need to say, you may do so through Aunt Helen or Uncle Bob. If there are any further aggressive acts against us, we will take legal measures to protect ourselves.

Committed to Truth,

Dad and Mom

LAW OFFICES OF SKIP SIMPSON

A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS

2828 WOODSIDE STREET
DALLAS, TEXAS 75204-8652

SKIP SIMPSON
Jerry Meek
GERALD G. FALL, JR.

(214) 922-7078
FAX (214) 922-0299

Dear Therapist:

I have been retained by Mr. and Mrs. Citizen. I am told your patient and their daughter, Alice Citizen, has accused Mr. Citizen of various forms of sexual abuse. I am further informed that none of these allegations have ever been made by Alice prior to her going into therapy. My clients flatly deny any abuse of their daughter. One would expect a denial of such horrific events, so I pressed my clients further. Mr. and Mrs. Citizen have been polygraphed by a nationally prominent polygraph expert and Mr. Citizen's denial of abuse has been determined to be truthful by this polygraph examiner. Likewise, his wife has been examined and her denials of abuse or knowledge of abuse by Mr. Citizen have found to be truthful.

I am told the allegations which have been made against Mr. Citizen stem from a memory or memories of abuse which have been uncovered in therapy. I have been retained to assess whether or not you have used that skill and care which is ordinarily exercised by members of your profession in diagnosing and treating Alice. You may have facts that would help me in my decision process, and which are contrary to the information I have. If so, with your patient's consent, I would like to hear both sides of the story before I act.

I have advised my clients as to the skills that you should have reasonably and diligently employed in diagnosing and treating Alice. I have told them the steps that should have been taken by you to prevent Alice from believing in potentially devastating falsehoods. I have also given them advise as to what your responsibilities are if Alice already believed in damaging delusions and had already recovered potentially damaging false memories of being sexually abused by close relatives before she entered therapy with you.

I have informed the Citizen family that therapists know false memories may foreseeably harm patients and that false memories of being sexually abuse, especially by a loved one, would foreseeably be very damaging, not only to the patient, but to the wrongfully accused too. My clients are now aware that you would know and understand that false memories lead to false allegations. My clients now understand that because false allegations based on false memories are foreseeably damaging to both patients and their parents, the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have all issued statements on the subject. The American Medical Association, for instance, recently stated:

“Few cases in which adults make accusations of childhood sexual abuse based on recovered memories can be proved or disproved and it is not yet known how to distinguish true memories from imagined events in these cases. . . The AMA considers recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse to be of uncertain authenticity, which should be subject to external verification. The use of recovered memories is fraught with problems of potential misapplication.”

Therapist
Anytown, USA
Date
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Regarding external verification, I have informed my clients that it would be reasonable for you to have obtained the consent of Alice to gather the following information to attempt to validate or invalidate her memories if that is important to Alice:

- 1) all medical, psychiatric, and school records of Alice from childhood to the present.
- 2) any information concerning her relationships with peers, siblings and parents, or any childhood behavior problems of Alice.
- 3) an information concerning her sexual history, including rapes, other childhood sexual abuse, abortions, etc.
- 4) the nature and origin of the disclosure of abuse, in as much detail and specificity as possible.
- 5) the nature of any previous therapy, whether techniques, such as hypnosis and survivor's groups were used, the training and background of the therapist, and whether he or she specialized in treating DID or "recovered" abuse.
- 6) any books, television shows, or workshops about sexual abuse or rape to which Alice may have been exposed.
- 7) the work history of Alice, including any problems with supervisors or co-workers, especially any allegations of sexual harassment.
- 8) the psychological characteristics and social and family history of my clients, including any drug or alcohol use, sexual history, family relationships, and job history.
- 9) any criminal records or prior behaviors of the accused parents which would support or undermine the credibility of the allegations.
- 10) a detailed description of the behaviors alleged to have occurred.
- 11) possible ways by which Alice might benefit from or receive reinforcement from making the accusation (examination of whether a civil lawsuit, an explanation for why life has not gone well, the expression of anger for perceived childhood injustices, attention, acceptance, new friends in survivor groups has occurred).

We have already started our investigation to shed light on these false allegations. I would like to work together with you to help Alice, if we can.

I have included as an attachment, the article Questions and Answers About Memories of Childhood Abuse which is a document released at the direction of the American Psychological Association Board of Directors in August, 1995. I have explained to my clients that this type of information should have already been explained to Alice by you.

At this point, without interviewing you or having access to your patient's records, I cannot conclude whether or not your therapy has caused the allegations that have so severely impacted on my clients. I anticipate that these matter might be closely examined in the future. In light of my client's denials, and their

Therapist
Anytown, USA
Date
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denials being supported by polygraph results from a nationally recognized polygraph examiner, there is a likely explanation for these false allegations. I would ask that you assist the parents and Alice in resolving this matter. After you have obtained the proper consent from Alice, I ask that we have a meeting tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

Sincerely

Attorney

*Note: this is a generic letter that should be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case after consultation with an attorney informed in the area of medical negligence and the nature of memory.