

# The Cracked Vessel

by Sandra Brown

Over the years, I have talked about the frequent 'aftermath' of pathological love relationships, which is often Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many women emerge from these relationships either diagnosed, or not yet diagnosed, with PTSD--an anxiety disorder so extreme that the core concept of self is often fragmented.

To demonstrate PTSD, I use the analogy of a cracked vessel. PTSD causes a fracture to the core concept of self which produces a crack in the soul. However, the soul, mind and body must continue to try to function as it did prior to the damage. The vase can be glued again to function, but push on the crack, and the vessel will break again.

PTSD is a mood disorder, specifically an anxiety disorder. The common symptoms of PTSD (whether in you or someone you care about who has been in a pathological relationship) includes:

- Intrusive thoughts about him/relationship/events of the relationship
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks or sensing effects reoccurring in the present moment
- Extreme reactions upon exposure to things that symbolize or resemble parts of the relationship
- Trying to avoid thinking about him or the relationship
- Trying to avoid situations that remind you of him or the relationship
- Blocked recall of all the events that occurred
- Decreased interest in daily activities
- Feeling numb, detached, unable to feel loving feelings
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hyper-vigilance (startle reflex)
- Hyper-arousal (feeling keyed up or too alert)
- Insomnia
- Anger/Irritability



**'THE CRACKED VESSEL'**  
**BY ASHTORETH VALECOURT**  
(EDITORS NOTE: WE WANT TO THANK ASHTORETH VALECOURT  
FOR HER BEAUTIFUL DEPICTION OF THE CRACKED VESSEL--  
YOU ARE AN AMAZING WOMAN AND ARTIST!)

Some of the biggest concerns for women are the symptoms associated with PTSD because it is interfering with the quality of their lives, their level of functioning, and often their ability to parent effectively. Many don't realize they have PTSD so they don't seek treatment. They just feel like 'they're going crazy' or 'I should be over it by now--why am I still having these experiences?' People are often relieved to find out a name and a reason for their experiences.

Unfortunately, others around them may also not realize what is wrong and may tell them to 'move on', 'get over it', 'just meet someone else', and yet months, and even years later, women can still be having PTSD symptoms. That's because PTSD does not just 'go away' without treatment. In fact, it worsens over time when neglected.

PTSD is considered a 'trauma disorder' because you have lived through an abnormal and traumatic life event. Trauma disorders require specific types of treatment in order to recover. Untreated PTSD can lead to chronic anxiety and depression, substance abuse to help cope with the anxiety, other compulsive behaviors like eating, smoking, and sexual acting out, addiction to sleep aids, and chronic stress related medical conditions. It's not a disorder to be taken 'lightly.'

Those who have already been diagnosed with PTSD may not realize that PTSD is often a life-long condition. You won't always feel as anxiety-ridden as you do now, but depending on the severity of the PTSD, it can leave the vessel cracked. Future damage can cause the stress crack to re-fracture.

Survivors either highly identify with the analogy of the cracked vessel, or hate the analogy. Some have written me and said, "I don't like what you said about being a cracked vessel--anyone can change." I didn't create the symptoms and effects of PTSD. I have only learned to live with them....

People with PTSD need to live quiet, gentle lives. Their households, jobs, environments, and relationships need to reflect the tranquility that an overtaxed body needs. These are not people who need to have fast-paced, dramatic, traumatic and chaotic jobs, lifestyles or relationships. These are people whose bodies, minds, and spirits need to exist in a healing environment.

### Copyright Notice

All articles, newsletters, hand outs, websites, books, e-books, power points, or other written information as well as digital information on our radio shows, MP3s, CDs, and DVDs are copyrighted by **The Institute**. We take plagiarism very seriously and utilize computer scanning software to prosecute for the theft of intellectual property. If you have questions about the use of our information, please read our copyright page on the magazine or contact our Intellectual Property Management team.