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## **"It Hurts" (Leaving a Cult)**

By Jan Groenveld (reprinted by permission)

IT HURTS to discover you were deceived - that what you thought was the "one true religion," the "path to total freedom," or "truth" was in reality a cult.

IT HURTS when you learn that people you trusted implicitly - whom you were taught not to question - were "pulling the wool over your eyes" albeit unwittingly.

IT HURTS when you learn that those you were taught were your "enemies" were telling the truth after all -- but you had been told they were liars, deceivers, repressive, satanic etc and not to listen to them.

IT HURTS when you know your faith in God hasn't changed - only your trust in an organization - yet you are accused of apostasy, being a trouble maker. It hurts even more when it is your family and friends making these accusations.

IT HURTS to realize their love and acceptance was conditional on you remaining a member of good standing. This cuts so deeply you try and suppress it. All you want to do is forget - but how can you forget your family and friends?

IT HURTS to see the looks of hatred coming from the faces of those you love - to hear the deafening silence when you try and talk to them. It cuts deeply when you try and give your child a hug and they stand like a statue, pretending you aren't there. It stabs like a knife when you know your spouse looks upon you as demonised and teaches your children to hate you.

IT HURTS to know you must start all over again. You feel you have wasted so much time. You feel betrayed, disillusioned, suspicious of everyone including family, friends and other former members.

IT HURTS when you find yourself feeling guilty or ashamed of what you were - even about leaving them. You feel depressed, confused, lonely. You find it difficult to make decisions. You don't know what to do with yourself because you have so much time on your hands now - yet you still feel guilty for spending time on recreation.

IT HURTS when you feel as though you have lost touch with reality. You feel as though you are "floating" and wonder if you really are better off and long for the security you had in the organization and yet you know you cannot go back.

IT HURTS when you feel you are all alone - that no one seems to understand what you are feeling. It hurts when you realize your self confidence and self worth are almost non-existent.

IT HURTS when you have to front up to friends and family to hear their "I told you so" whether that statement is verbal or not. It makes you feel even more stupid than you already do - your confidence and self worth plummet even further.

IT HURTS when you realize you gave up everything for the cult - your education, career, finances, time and energy - and now have to seek employment or restart your education. How do you explain all those missing years?

IT HURTS because you know that even though you were deceived, you are responsible for being taken in. All that wasted time..... at least that is what it seems to you - wasted time.

#### THE PAIN OF GRIEF

Leaving a cult is like experiencing the death of a close relative or a broken relationship. The feeling is often described as like having been betrayed by someone with whom you were in love. You feel you were simply used.

There is a grieving process to pass through. Whereas most people understand that a person must grieve after a death etc, they find it difficult to understand the same applies in this situation. There is no instant cure for the grief, confusion and pain. Like all grieving periods, time is the healer. Some feel guilty, or wrong about this grief. They shouldn't -- It IS normal. It is NOT wrong to feel confused, uncertain, disillusioned, guilty, angry, untrusting - these are all part of the process. In time the negative feelings will be replaced with clear thinking, joy, peace, and trust.

YES - IT HURTS BUT THE HURTS WILL HEAL WITH TIME, PATIENCE & UNDERSTANDING

There is life after the cult