

STARTLE RESPONSE / DISSOCIATIVE RESPONSE

The **startle response** and **dissociation** are two psychological phenomena that effect all humans as a way of helping us escape danger and discomfort. But these two innate human brain functions can cause serious, lifelong problems if the danger is perpetual and prolonged.

The startle response is an unconscious defensive reaction to sudden or threatening stimuli and is associated with negative feelings. It is a brain stem reflex that causes flinching, blinking, ducking, drawing back, recoiling and wincing, etc.

Many veterans suffer adverse effects by being subjected to constant loud noises (bombs and gunfire) then witnessing the death, destruction and mutilation of war. Thereafter, loud noises trigger the startle response and flashbacks of their previous battle experiences causing bouts of anxiety and depression, even though they are no longer on the battlefield. For children being sexually abused and survivors of child sex abuse the startle response is typically triggered by touch.

Humans have an inborn need for physical affection. Children need affection for healthy development. Past scientific experiments, one called the forbidden experiment, have proven that infants provided sustenance, but no physical affection...die. But for children repeatedly forced into sex acts, that essential need gets broken and they develop defensive responses to being touched, especially if others initiate the affection.

If one can't fight and end a real danger or escape by running away, dissociation is our brain's ability to disconnect our physical reality from our emotional reality. Daydreaming and traffic trance are common mild examples of dissociation. The 1000 yard stare is an extreme example and is now considered a symptom of a dissociative disorder. The term was coined in 1945 after Life Magazine published a painting of a Marine with "shell shock". Dissociative disorders arise as a reaction to repetitive shocking or painful events and help push away unbearable experiences. This form of dissociation is an altered state of consciousness and physically manifests as an expressionless hollow stare.

The affliction causes problems in everyday life such as; distorted perception of reality, others and self, memory loss, serious issues with relationships, out of body experiences, an inability to cope with emotional or work related stress, depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Every national and private organization studying mental health has concluded that the majority of dissociative disorders begin in children who suffer adverse, chronic, long term sexual, physical and emotional abuse and it's carried over into adulthood.

While listening to the musical link, [Make Me A Channel of Your Peace](#), why don't we ask God for a cloak of protection for the approximately 223 million children presently in danger of developing these psychological disorders. Let's use our prayers and voices to end their suffering. Praise God for empowering us with knowledge and a deeper understanding of child sex abuse so we can grow this prayer collective to become channels of His peace.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

 [Make Me a Channel of Your Peace](#)