



# Solutions for Life

from **Solutions Counseling & EAP**  
by **Keri Forbess-McCorquodale, MS, LPC, LMFT, CEAP**

## Let It Out!

"I've never talked about this before . . ." Daunting words for me to hear, to say the least. I often wonder what makes clients share things with me they have never shared with anyone. I feel very honored when clients decide to disclose these long-held secrets to me. I also know this means we have started the road to healing. Sometimes it is a very long road, but now the first step has been taken. The secret is out.

What is the problem with keeping secrets? It depends on what the secret is about. If it is about something that happened to you that makes you feel bad in some way, then it can become a big problem. Sometimes secrets have to do with things a person does that he/she doesn't want anyone else to know about, believing that action makes them "weird." See, secrets like these have a tendency to get bigger, darker, and stand in the way of us being our best self.

Many people fool themselves into thinking they have the secret under control, and don't need to deal with it. "I just don't think about it," is something I commonly hear. And if something bad happened to you, you wouldn't want to think about it either. The problem is, we have to put the things that have happened to us in an appropriate place in our history. If we don't deal directly with the issue, it has a tendency to ooze out in ways we don't want - unhealthy relationships,

addiction, bad choices. People often do not connect their current mess of a life with things that happened in the past. Oh, but it is all connected - trust me.

So, what is the best way to begin to let these dark secrets out? There are a variety of helpful things you can do. And no one way is better than the others. It all depends on what works for you.

### **Talk it out.**

As mentioned above, therapy is a great tool for working through things you have been carrying around. Therapists are great for helping you find perspective and teaching you methods for coping with your past. But you need to know that talking to friends, a pastor, or a mentor can be really helpful too. It is all about letting others in on the secret so you are not carrying the burden alone.

### **Write it out.**

I often assign journaling for my clients who process better in a written format. Just start writing your thoughts out. Don't worry about spelling, or grammar, or even if it makes sense. Whatever you are thinking, put it down. It is amazing how our brains can process things when we get out of the way and just let them wander down whatever path they want. The purpose of this exercise is not to arrive at any fantastic conclusion, but just to get it out of you and onto paper.

You can also write a letter - to the person who hurt you, to the secret itself, to your younger self who experienced the pain. Write about the impact on you. Write about no longer allowing the secret to control you.

### **Act it out.**

No, I'm not suggesting you put on a play about your secret. I am suggesting you take some action related to the secret. If you chose to write it out, as suggested above, you might take action by tearing the writing up into little tiny pieces. Or burning the paper and thinking about all the dark secrets on the paper going up in smoke. Some people paint their secrets. Others throw pottery (and pounding clay is a great stress reliever). You could go into a private space and yell. As long as the action you take is not self-harming or harmful to others, sometimes doing something is exactly what is needed.

It is not uncommon for my new clients to come in for their second session and tell me how much better they are feeling. While I am an AWESOME therapist (wink, wink), I know I didn't work any magic at that last session. They are feeling better because they let the big, dark, shameful secret out. Now the secret is smaller and so much less powerful. Which means we can get to work!