

# The Keys to Recovery from a cultic experience: ESP

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The keys to recovery after leaving a high-demand group or cult are:

**E**ducation – or knowledge

**S**upport

**P**atience

## Education

The over-riding factor is education: educating oneself about what happened to you while in the group and why it still affects you after you leave. It's crucial to understand the techniques that were used to gain your compliance, to shut down your critical thought processes, to manipulate your experiences and your emotions, to isolate you psychologically and sometimes physically from gaining information and feedback from the world outside the group. These techniques have an effect for quite some time after you leave the group. And it is important to understand that these lasting effects are normal "under the circumstances," and that they will begin to dissipate once you do understand them and can begin to unravel them.

I would encourage you to explore the available material. One of the most helpful resources is the book *Take Back Your Life: Recovering from Cults and Abusive Relationships* by Janja Lalich and Madeleine Tobias. *Cults In Our Midst* by Dr. Margaret T. Singer and Janja Lalich is another helpful book, as well as Dr. Robert Jay Lifton's *Thought Reform: The Psychology of Totalism*, especially Chapter 23. Attending conferences and recovery workshops allows exposure to a wealth of information and support. There are articles on recovery on the reFOCUS web site at <http://www.refocus.org>. There is also much material on the ICSA ([International Cultic Studies Association](http://www.internationalculticstudies.org)) web site for ex-members.

## Support

It is so important to build a support team for yourself. Look for people who are willing to learn and to be there for you when you need to talk or to just spend some time together. The most powerful support can be found at conferences and recovery workshops where other former members of groups have had very similar experiences to your own and are going through the recovery process as well. It is so good to be around people who really "get it"! There are a few support groups for former members that continue to meet. You can call ICSA or find a list on the [reFOCUS](http://www.refocus.org) website to see if there is one in your area.

## Patience

Yes, I know it is hard to be patient with yourself in the recovery process. Remember, we had a lot of practice living on the edge and being expected to produce results yesterday. A residual effect of living that way is to expect recovery yesterday and to be very impatient with ourselves. Also, remember when you were in the group, the leaders or the ideology could never be wrong – if something was wrong, guess who it was! So, we tend to say "what's wrong with **me**" in the recovery process. Guess what. There's nothing wrong with you. Recovery takes time. It takes education. It takes support. And it takes giving yourself a break.

Please address any questions or problems you may encounter on this site to [refocuscarol@att.net](mailto:refocuscarol@att.net)  
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