

Letter written by Henry to a friend 4 months after Val's death: April 2024

I spoke with a PhD psychologist--one of the most prominent psychologists in the region--about Valerie. I sent him some of her writings about her thoughts and feelings prior. He's one of the few experts on attachment disorder in the world. He bemoans the general ignorance about it among psychologists and psychiatrists.

He confirmed that Valerie had a severe attachment disorder. He has seen many patients like her. He said that so much about her was typical: Her hatred of herself, not feeling attached to humanity or even being human, constant negative emotions, her need for fantasy to address her attachment needs, her temporary improvements with finding men to whom she was attracted, her anger at others and desire to kill humans in the abstract, improvement with opioids, her chronic suicidality, etc. etc.

It was very helpful to finally find a professional who agreed with Valerie's and my diagnosis of at least this one aspect of her complex illness. I feel a bit better now that I am absolutely certain that she struggled with this terrible disorder all her life. I do believe that the cause of her attachment disorder was the disturbance of her emotions by an intrauterine Bartonella infection.

He said that top experts in this field have realized that most persons with attachment disorder were not neglected or abused. They are realizing that the cause in most cases must be some medical/neurological disorder. These patients also often have PET scans that show hypermetabolism in the emotional centers, as Valerie's did. Who knows how many of these victims got Bartonella infection in the womb? Like so much with Valerie--what at first seemed to be rare is actually extremely common but mostly unrecognized.

He said that these people often don't live beyond the age of 20--as they get into crime, drug addiction, prostitution, etc. and often commit suicide. He was amazed that she lived until age 30, but understood it as, unlike most of these patients, she had 100% parental love and support at all times.

Having tried to help many victims of this disorder, he was amazed that I was able and willing to share Valerie's terrible suffering by listening to her and empathizing with her for many hours every week. He said that most persons cannot take it--it makes them too ill themselves. I remember telling Valerie that she was a black hole of anger and despair. It was clear to me that some part of her personality never formed as it should--she was severely handicapped in this game of life. The sicker she was, the more I loved her and did my best to keep her going.

It was hard for Valerie and me to understand all this because she was in denial of her emotional problems until her David Sylvian revelation at the start of her senior year at Penn State. She then felt normal love for herself and others for the first time through that attachment fantasy and became aware of how abnormal she had been. She changed from an avoidant attachment disorder to an anxious one. It was also hard to understand her attachment disorder because she was clearly ill from babesiosis throughout her adolescence, with such poor mental stamina. Later we learned about the Bartonella and Babesia infections and thought that all her emotional problems were due to these infections and would clear up with killing the parasites. She did get babesiosis at age 10, so became ill from it at the same time that attachment disorder usually starts to manifest or worsen in all persons--in puberty and adolescence.

He also confirmed Valerie's suspicion that her disorder could not be fixed--even if she did find an androgynous young man who would stay with her. This was her only remaining hope in life. He said that the relationship would not have lasted. She would never have felt secure and would not even have been able to tolerate physical intimacy. Val had so long viewed intercourse as violence against women that she was afraid she would be triggered and try to kill any man who penetrated her. So her death prevented her from getting to the very end of her rope--from losing the last bit of hope that she still had. After losing that hope she would surely have insisted ever more strongly that I help her to die. She was already certain that if she returned to Penn State she would just want to kill herself and everyone else. In the last years of her life, she needed to always have either me or a young man she could love in her life on a daily basis.

When I asked him if any form of therapy could have helped her, he said that I was already providing the best therapy possible—unconditional love and respect, listening to her whenever she needed to talk about her problems, commiserating with her, giving her my perspective on her problems, and giving her hope in any way that I could.

What a horrible tragedy that my baby developed this terrible psychological disorder in her infancy--that she had to cope with it her entire life. Then to suffer a second tragedy--when babesiosis after age 10 took away her coping mechanisms--fantasy, diversion by activity and accomplishments, drawing, etc. With antibabesial treatment her brain became more inflamed much of the time, further reducing her ability to fantasize and draw.

She fought against all of this as hard as she could and I was there with her 100%. I did everything possible to keep her going. I let her drag me into her horrible dark world whenever she needed to—even though it made me suffer terribly and usually caused me to cry uncontrollably. Without me she never would have survived as long as she did. She was so disturbed, and yet so brilliant and loveable. I miss her terribly, but I know that she finally got the peace that she so badly wanted.

Henry