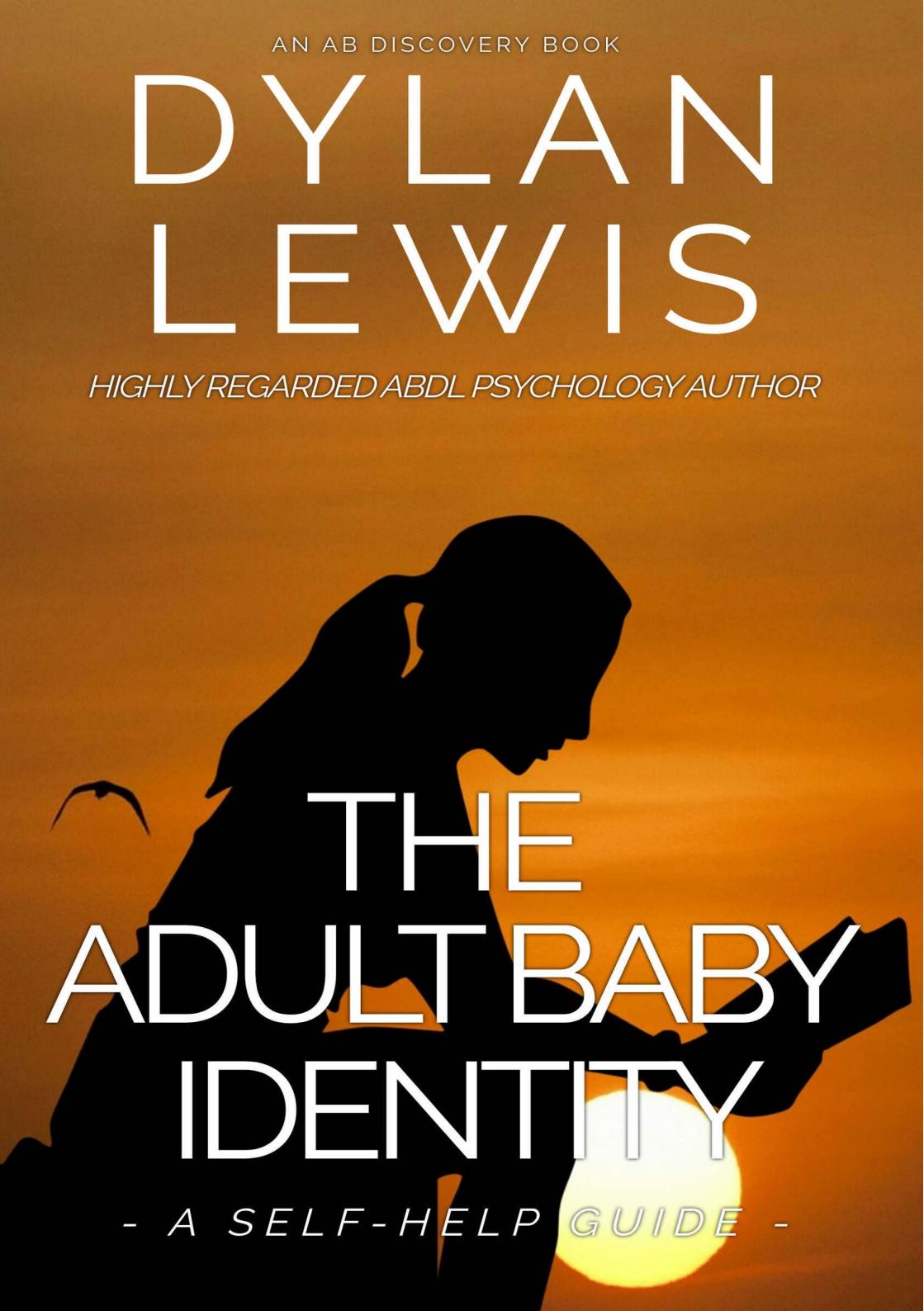


AN AB DISCOVERY BOOK

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THE ADULT BABY IDENTITY

- A SELF-HELP *GUIDE* -

The Adult Baby Identity

A self-help guide
by
Dylan Lewis

Title: Adult Baby Identity – A self-help guide

Author: Dylan Lewis

Editor: Michael Bent

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Other Books from Dylan Lewis

The Adult Baby Identity – coming out as ABDL

The Adult Baby Identity – Healing Childhood Wounds

Living with Chrissie – my life as an Adult Baby

The Adult Baby Identity – a self-help guide

The Adult Baby Identity – the dissociation spectrum

Six Misfits

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The Adult Baby Identity

A Self-help Guide

Australian Baby: a life of nappies, bottles and struggles

Fear and Joy: a life in and out of nappies

The Fulltime, Permanent Adult Infant

Dedication

To my wife, for her constant love and wisdom.

*To Rosalie Michael Bent for letting adult babies (and the world) know
we aren't mad, bad or alone.*

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Foreword



Knowing who we are as individuals is the most important journey in our lives and for many, it is the most difficult one. Even for people we call 'vanilla', with no apparent kinks and oddities, it is a herculean task. But when you are an Adult Baby, it is a vastly more complex mission. Add being sissy to the mix and we are already pushing uphill and failing miserably.

But if we don't know who we are, we act as if we are someone we are not. We try to create a personality not fully our own. We create masks and in doing so, we create problems for ourselves and others around us.

This is the true value of books like this and others along the same vein. ABDL is *not* like other identity problems. It is unique, different and requires a perspective all of its own. It is not about gender – although gender issues can be involved. It is not about sexual preference – although that can be involved as well. It is

primarily about age and being powerfully driven back to a time of life most have left behind and yet, we still literally inhabit.

And for most, it causes enormous conflicts, both within and without.

The struggle to understand who you are as an adult baby can be immensely difficult and there is no point pretending otherwise, but the benefits at the other end of that journey are indescribable.

Peace

Happiness

Well-being

Satisfaction

Who wouldn't choose all of that?

To the journey...

Michael Bent

1. Introduction



Self-help is all about self-acceptance. And self-acceptance is a huge issue for adult babies.

Being an adult baby can be a roller coaster ride. At its best, there is child-like innocent happiness and security. But at its worst, it is biting shame, tormenting doubt, and compulsive behaviours that can tyrannise your life.

The difference between these best and worst states is one of self-acceptance.

I am an adult baby. I was prompted to write this book after I read an account by another adult baby who said that the answer to the difficulties of being an AB was simply to accept yourself. If only it was that simple!

I realized self-acceptance has hidden depths. If we don't understand those depths, the route to self-acceptance is like a game of snakes and ladders – full of painful pitfalls and demoralizing

setbacks. By self-acceptance, I mean living comfortably with the baby side of our personality. It is not the pursuit of 'a cure' that would see our baby side disappear.

Self-acceptance is about resolving our internal conflicts about being AB.

One part of our psyche is fighting with another part. It is a battle within, and against, ourselves. Our wounded Inner Child is opposed by our punishing Inner Parent. It is this internal conflict which drives shame, fear and doubt. It drives compulsive behaviours like bingeing and purging baby clothes.

That internal conflict also causes us to sabotage ourselves and our key relationships. The internal conflict intensifies our craving for acceptance by others, while at the same time sabotaging our prospects of receiving it. Adult babies crave the acceptance of their child persona by others – usually their partner. But paradoxically, the best way to gain a partner's acceptance is to deepen our own self-acceptance.

This book is about finding self-acceptance by resolving the conflict in our psyche. It unpacks what we need to accept about ourselves to live with being ABs without shame and guilt. Its aim is to help adult babies navigate the journey to self-acceptance with fewer hassles. The book uses an approach similar to Internal Family Systems (IFS) Therapy.

There are challenges to finding self-acceptance. For many years I was 'stuck', living with my baby 'side' as a guilty, compulsive sexual fetish. Although the heightened sexual excitement was some compensation for all the turmoil, I wanted something more. But I didn't know what a healthy, stable personal identity as an adult

baby felt like, or how to get there. I hope this book helps those who want something more.

Self-acceptance is a journey worth taking. You will discover a wonderful personal identity which is a lot more than an obsession and fetish for nappies. I found that fully accepting my personal identity was profoundly healing. That identity is my saving grace. Self-acceptance holds many benefits beyond the freedom from negative states and conflicts. There are powerful gifts of contentment, security, resilience and creativity.

This is a self-help book.

The key audience is ABs and those who love them. The book is my best attempt to understand our shared identity. It reflects my personal experience as an AB. I have a layman's lifelong interest in psychology. I have no qualifications in psychology. Every adult baby is different, and some will disagree with my views. I do not intend to disparage those whose views are different from mine. Take what is helpful from the book and leave the rest behind.

If you are an adult baby who has no conflict about being AB, then this book is not for you. You have already moved on. But if you have any unease with being an adult baby, then this book might have something of value for you.

This book is based on the pioneering work of Rosalie Bent and Michael Bent in identifying and understanding adult babies as a personal identity. I recommend their books and website www.abdiscovery.com.au . I refer to their insights and understanding throughout the book.

By adult baby, I exclude role players and diaper lovers for whom diapers, baby clothes or baby activities are an optional extra

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they can freely live without, and fetishists for whom these things are confined exclusively to sexual expression.

This book is the fourth of a non-fiction quadrilogy (After *Becoming Me*). The second book, *'The Adult Baby Identity – Coming Out as an Adult Baby'*, makes the case that being AB is a minority personal identity and deals with the stages by which that identity is formed. The third book, *'The Adult Baby Identity – Healing Childhood Wounds'*, locates the origin of the identity in an insecure attachment between mother and child, and in childhood trauma.

This book builds on that earlier title, *'Becoming Me – The Journey of Self-Acceptance'*. It is based on the same 'big idea' that self-acceptance comes from resolving our internal conflict, but it is a new book with a more in-depth treatment.

The journey of self-acceptance is not an easy one to undertake alone. You need a confidant who you can trust, and who will be an ally in your healing. If there is no one in your life with whom you can safely share your feelings about your life as an adult baby, seek professional support – preferably from an LGBTQ-friendly therapist who understands issues of personal identity. If you are in crisis or deep distress about being an adult baby, seek professional therapy.

If there is one precept that best guides us through the journey of self-acceptance, it is the words of the poem *Desiderata* –

"Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself."

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2. The Conflicted AB



Being an AB often means living with the push-pull of wanting the freedom to be a young child, and then paying a high emotional price for seeking that freedom. We seek self-acceptance because we want to stop the pain and the turmoil that comes hand-in-hand with being AB. Sure, there are nice moments of comfort: the freedom to set aside the tyranny of potty training by putting on a nappy; cuddling a beloved soft toy that is more friend and protector than a toy; fantasizing about being held, cuddled and soothed. But those moments of comfort are all-too-often preceded by tension and anxiety and followed by guilt and shame. It can be awful.

We have tried giving it all up. Many times. But it always comes back, usually eventually stronger than before. We seem to alternate, sometimes wildly, between wanting to be AB, and wishing we weren't. I call that being a conflicted AB.

We need to begin by acknowledging what life as a conflicted AB is really like.

That covers -

- The Push-Pull of Compulsion and Fetish
- Triggering
- The Binge and Purge Cycle
- Masochistic Fantasies
- Confusion and Turmoil About Ourselves
- Over Compensation
- Problems with Partners
- Isolation and Loneliness

Each of these is discussed below.

Every AB is unique. Not everyone will have all of these problems, and they will have them in differing degrees of strength. I had all of them, bad. But at least I can speak from firsthand experience.

Push-Pull of Compulsion and Fetish

I wanted nappies because they met a deep need within me. I wanted to enjoy the wonderful feeling of freedom, of coming home to myself, that wearing a nappy represented. I was often stressed, tense and anxious. The prospect of wearing a nappy promised at least a brief respite by being able to lose my adult worries and feel comforted and safe. But that goal always got hijacked with me becoming sexually aroused and masturbating while wearing the nappy. A powerful climax was pretty much always guaranteed. But immediately after, I would be filled with feelings of shame and remorse. I would hurriedly fling the nappy aside, put on my adult clothes and quickly tidy everything out of sight. The goal of being

comforted in a really deep and satisfying way, always seemed to be just out of reach.

From when I was a teenager until late into middle age, the heightened sexual arousal never failed. When I had the house to myself for a few hours, I would sometimes go through three rounds of putting on a nappy, masturbating, taking the nappy off, putting on my adult clothes and tidying up, and then doing it all again. Each climax was more powerful than the one before. Why didn't I just leave the nappy on? Because the shame after each climax was so strong, I had go through the whole routine of reverting to my proper adult self. But after the shame had subsided, the lure of my nappy powered up again.

When I was a teenager and young adult, I would sometimes masturbate without a nappy, although it was almost always to fantasies of being nappied and babied. But as the years went by, the never-fail, fabulous climax while wearing a nappy eventually meant that I could only reliably climax that way. Sometimes I would promise myself that I would forego or delay masturbating so that I could just enjoy the comfort of wearing a nappy. I would look forward to wearing my baby clothes or exploring baby activities or play for its own sake. Not a chance. It always becomes just a slightly longer prelude to masturbation and was quickly set aside with the nappy after climaxing.

From when I was a teenager, wearing and masturbating in a nappy became my go-to for relieving tension, stress, anxiety, or feeling crap about myself or anything else. It was my drug of choice. Guaranteed relief. It was a compulsion. I couldn't go more than a few days without it. When I was hiding my baby side from my wife, I would twist my mind into knots trying to steal a moment in the day when I could hurriedly masturbate and then stash everything

back into its' hiding place. I have some idea of what being a drug addict feels like. I felt furtive and shameful. Even when my wife knew about my baby side and I would take myself off to a closed bedroom to put on a nappy and masturbate, it still felt shameful and guilty. It was the equivalent of a heroin addict being on methadone. Nappies had become a compulsive, guilty, sexual fetish and I was stuck with it.

Triggering

There were times when my need to put on a nappy would be set off by an involuntary 'trigger'. My experience with triggers is described in my book, *'Living With Chrissie – My Life as an Adult Baby'* -

A compelling desire for a nappy could be set off at a moment's notice from any number of visual 'triggers'. It could be seeing a magazine advertisement with a baby in a nappy; anything to do with breastfeeding – especially pictures of women wearing maternity bras; a line of cloth nappies drying on a clothesline would do it every time. For years I couldn't walk down the babies' aisle in a supermarket without 'triggering' the insistent need to get home and put on a nappy. This behaviour was in strong contrast to who I was otherwise – a person of strong emotional control, able to defer gratification.

When this happened, I would feel a compelling need to wear a nappy and masturbate. At its strongest, that need was insistent and could not be delayed beyond a few hours.

Rosalie Bent describes these triggers -

“... some attribute about an object that can trigger a regressive episode. It is almost never a generic object, but rather something very specific that triggers a memory or emotion which in turn, triggers the regression. For example, it may be a soft toy, but not just any soft toy. It may be a Care Bear toy, but not just anyone, but rather a pink one, of a specific size and style that clearly has a deep-rooted memory attached to it.” [There’s Still A Baby in My Bed: Learning to Live with the Adult Baby in Your Relationship].

This powerful compulsion felt mystifying and shameful.

Binge and Purge Cycle

The most confronting and disturbing aspect of being a conflicted AB is the cycle of binge and purge. That phrase comes from the disease bulimia where the sufferer gorges on food and then, in deep self-disgust and loathing, makes themselves sick until they purge their stomachs until empty. For adult babies, it means something different. The cycle starts with a ‘binge’ – I would buy a stash of nappies and baby clothes. I was like a drug addict going on a ‘bender’. My nappy fetish became stronger and was accompanied by frequent masturbation. The internal conflict also grew stronger. Pleasure was now fighting shame and remorse. The emotional ‘let down’ after each successive orgasm became more painful and demoralizing. But I was on a runaway train I couldn’t stop, even if I wanted to – and I didn’t want to. Eventually, the growing internal conflict drove masturbation to a peak. The emotional ‘let down’ after the final peak orgasm was intensely painful. The disgust, remorse and self-loathing was gut-wrenching.

The only thing that would assuage the intense emotional pain was to 'purge'. I convinced myself that I could completely banish my need for baby things. I would collect every last item of my baby collection and throw it into neighbourhood clothing recycling bins, as a way of making the purge irrevocable. Only then would the painful remorse be soothed. It would be replaced by a new transient kind of 'high'. I had a sense of being cleansed of my weakness and perversity and being free to live a normal healthy life of which I could be proud. I would declare to my wife that I was giving up my 'nappy thing' forever. I meant it when I said it. I would pray for God to give me the strength to maintain my abstinence.

The aftermath of the purge would last a while. My abstinence, at least in terms of physically wearing nappies, would last months, sometimes nearly a year. I would masturbate without nappies for a time, but the comforting fantasies of being babied were always present. Eventually, the unmet needs of my baby side would grow more and more insistent and I would 'binge' again. I was always in some part of the binge and purge cycle. I would have a major/complete purge at least every couple of years, with minor/partial purges in between. With each new binge I would fool myself that, this time, I could keep my baby side under sufficient control so that things wouldn't get out of hand and I wouldn't be driven to purge again. Of course, that was a 'fool's hope'. The internal conflict hadn't gone away or been healed. It was just rebooted. There is that definition of insanity – doing the same thing over again and hoping for a different result the next time. That was me.

I would trigger episodes of purging when I experimented, trying out new types of baby clothes or baby activities. I would develop a guilty fascination with a new facet of being an AB – it

could be my first pacifier, feeding bottle or baby dress. I would take weeks to work up the courage to buy it. But then shortly after getting it, my guilt and shame would kick in hard and I would get rid of it. In my thirties, I ordered my first custom made baby dress. After weeks of saving and waiting, the dress arrived. It was lovely. I threw it away within a day because my guilt was so strong. I could not let myself enjoy the dress without paying an unbearable price of shame. It was like holding onto a red-hot fire poker. So, the dress had to go, and with it the rest of my stash of baby clothes. For many years afterwards, I had a guilty fascination with pink, girly style AB clothing, but I would not myself buy any because of the fear of setting off that cycle of guilt and purging.

The binge and purge cycle had a powerful negative effect on my personality and moods. I was tense, anxious, irritable, and had difficulty concentrating on anything other than nappies. At the crescendo of the cycle, just before the final crash and purge, it was like a complete personality change - for the worse. I really hated and despised myself at those times.

I know I am not alone in experiencing the binge and purge cycle. Its prevalence is attested in posts on on-line ABDL forums and in Michael Bent's article '*Binge and Purge: the ABDL Frustration*' (in the book '*Being An Adult Baby*', or free online at abdiscovery.com.au under the ABDL Articles tab).

Masochistic Fantasies

The fantasy life of adult babies is important and powerful. Whatever baby clothes or behaviours we adopt in real life, these are only a pointer to a much richer repertoire in our fantasies. I suspect

most adult babies declare little of this rich fantasy life to anyone else, even their partners.

I had a rich fantasy life which revolved around submitting to attractive, self-assured, capable women who would treat me, though an adult, as a baby. I would be forced to wear nappies and baby clothes and treated like a baby, being fed, changed and disciplined. I was helpless to do anything but comply, although some show of ineffectual resistance or defiance was an essential part of the fantasy. As a day-dream or non-erotic fantasy just before drifting off to sleep, this was a source of comfort. There was as much soothing maternal love and care, as there was coercion or humiliation.

But it was a different matter when it came to the fantasies linked to masturbation. The fantasies were an essential accompaniment to climax. These fantasies quickly came to have a more masochistic character. The coercion was more pronounced, with elements such as physical or chemical restraints. The women would take pleasure in intentionally shaming and humiliating me, including in public. Being forced to wet or mess in my nappy or being made to wear clothes and act like a sissy girl were standard fixtures. These are all tropes of a vast body of erotic AB fiction available on-line, so I know that I was not alone in this fantasy life.

I was like a drug addict who becomes accustomed to a certain dose and no longer gets the same 'rush'. I needed to seek ever stronger masochistic fantasies to guarantee climax. These fantasies were completely at odds with my adult personality which was very much reserved and in control. My guilt and shame at being AB were as much about these masochistic fantasies as it was about actually wearing nappies. At least the fantasies were hidden and private inside my head.

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At times I was tormented by these fantasises. The intensity of the imagined submission to a parent substitute figure came from my deep yearning for a secure attachment with my mother which didn't happen in my childhood. In his book '*Arousal: The Secret Logic of Sexual Fantasies*' Michael Bader explains how these fantasises work –

"People prefer to be the subject of negative attention rather than be invisible. In the master/slave relationship, in whatever form it is constructed, an intense bond between the two parties counteracts feelings of insignificance and loneliness."

But the fantasises only made my yearning worse. You can't create, or substitute for, a secure childhood attachment through sexual expression. The fantasises produced an intense sexual climax. That gave me a momentary sense of the impossible, longed-for attachment. But then that moment was quickly gone, leaving me with a deeper sense of loss and pain than before.

So, for me, masochistic fantasises are psychologically unsafe. Wherever the line is drawn between what is psychologically safe and unsafe, adopting psychologically unsafe fantasises is self-sabotaging. They push genuine emotional comfort and safety further away. They make me feel even more ashamed. By identifying with being psychologically harmed I am punishing myself for having genuine emotional needs for nurturing. Fantasies that involve permanently renouncing adulthood are an obstacle to finding a healthy balance between the adult and child in my psyche. Unsafe fantasises intensify our internal conflict.

Even after I stopped the cycle of bingeing and purging baby clothes, my guilt and shame at the masochistic fantasies provoked 'virtual' binge and purge cycles – this time obtaining digital copies

of erotic adult baby stories on-line. I would binge by downloading or purchasing a bundle of stories. It was the same cycle, still linked to fetish fantasies and compulsive masturbation. It had the same end result, with me deleting all the digital material I had recently brought.

Confusion and Turmoil

Being a conflicted AB brings a lot of doubt and confusion over our identity – who we are. There were times my baby 'side' felt like a cuckoo in the nest. I was not who I was supposed to be. I was not who I wanted to be. And I was certainly not who everyone thought I was. How do you handle wanting to be a baby – a dependent, vulnerable, wetting baby? It runs counter to everything you are supposed to want, and what everyone else seems to want for themselves. It is like hearing the starting gun in a race, turning around and running in the other direction from everyone else. There are times it feels so **WRONG!**

I handled it by compartmentalization and denial. I thought of my baby side as quarantined off from the rest of me so that I could 'pass' as normal. It was a separate, hidden, secret 'life'. When I closed the door on it, I maintained to myself that my secret life had no bearing on my 'real', normal life.

But the fear that lurked at the back of my mind was that my baby side was contaminating everything – like the one bad apple that sends the rest mouldy. Even when I succeeded in my education and my career, a part of me felt like a fraud – what if people knew about my secret? What if they knew who I really was? But who was I, really? The man in control of himself and his circumstances or the

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scared baby who just wanted to have their fears cuddled away? I don't think I really knew, and I was certainly too scared to find out.

And it got worse when I gradually let myself discover my guilty fascination with being a sissy, girly baby. The pictures of pink frilly girly clothes, perhaps even dolls, were forbidden fruit. OMG! Did I really want that? How do you handle being a man on the outside and a baby girl on the inside? I didn't handle it. I just locked the baby girl away in a closet somewhere inside. But I knew she was there, and it doubled up my fears about myself. Was I a sissy? Was I a cross-dresser? Did I want to be a woman? Was I trans-gender?

So, for me, being AB meant I couldn't wholly trust who I was. My deepest fear was that I was a sexual pervert. If I was ever 'outed', people would think I was a paedophile! I never had any sexual attraction towards children. But how do you make sense of a bizarre, confusing fascination for nappies and wanting to be babied? It took me a long while to genuinely trust that I wasn't a paedophile. And I knew that if I was 'outed', I would not be able to convince anybody else I wasn't. I didn't understand myself, so how could I explain it to anyone else? So, for many years the prospect of being 'outed' carried the ultimate fear of disgrace and degradation. I would dishonour myself and those I loved.

Even after I learned to trust that I wasn't a paedophile. I still feared that being AB made me 'damaged goods'. I still had a compulsive sexual fetish that at times made me feel dirty and degraded. At my core, was I broken – irrevocably broken - beyond healing? In retrospect, I think there was a lot of suicidal ideation disguised in my daydreams and thoughts. (*Suicidal ideation is 'psych speak' for thoughts or fantasies of suicide. Suicide is preceded by such thoughts, although these thoughts are common and most of the*

people who have them do not commit suicide. It is a warning signal, and if you get such thoughts, talk to a friend or a counsellor, or ring a hotline.)

Over Compensation

Another, insidious effect of my conflict about being AB was 'over-compensation'. That is where I tried 'too hard' in other parts of my life to prove that I was good, psychologically healthy and worthy, because I felt bad about my baby 'side'. At the time, I did not see it. I realized it *after* I had fully accepted myself as an AB.

In my case, the strongest overcompensation was in my career. This is described in my account of my life as an adult baby, '*Living With Chrissie*' –

In hindsight, I can see that every few years I would become a workaholic and eventually pick a quarrel with my superiors. The grounds were always where I was confident, I was standing up for the proper way of doing things. It's likely I caused a succession of superiors some embarrassment at being 'called' on issues they were rather left alone. Things would take their inevitable course and I would end up having to move sideways. At the time, I convinced myself that I was championing 'the right'. In many cases, I was. But that wasn't the whole story. I now realise I was unconsciously setting up conflicts to prove my courage to do the 'right thing'. I needed to prove my courage to offset my shameful weakness in failing to stop my addiction to nappies. It was a recurring cycle that ran alongside the cycle of bingeing and purging my baby clothes.

Over-compensation can be a potent form of self-sabotage. I was never driven to self-harm or open thoughts of suicide directly

because of my AB side. But my over-compensation led me to invest all of my self-esteem in my career, to offset my shame at being AB. And that made my psyche vulnerable to setbacks in my career and caused me to once contemplate suicide in a midlife crisis.

There were other ways I over-compensated. My baby 'side' had a guilty attraction to 'sissy' things like dresses, pink clothes and dolls. As a result, I emphasized sides of my personality that 'proved' my masculinity. As an adolescent, I wanted to be a soldier and subsequently served briefly and proudly in the military reserve. Sharing my father and grandfather's interest in military history, was another way of telling myself 'I'm a man. I always loved guns and became a good shot. Having 'come out' to myself as an AB I don't see anything intrinsically wrong with those pursuits. However, I can also see that I was more invested in them than I otherwise would have been – to make myself feel better about a baby 'side' I did not fully understand or accept.

The key point is that while we are living with such a strong conflict about and within ourselves, we are not fully aware of its' effects on our life.

Problems with Partners

Not surprisingly being AB causes lots of problems with our partners. I have been incredibly fortunate. My wife of over thirty years is the love of my life. She is older than I am, and from the start, brought to me and our relationship a warm knowing about life and people. She is also a skilled psychotherapist (we did not meet in her professional capacity, but through mutual friends). But even with all these advantages, being AB caused problems and distance in our relationship.