

## **What is an empowered multiple?** by Carer-AngelaGee w/ The Collective

This question was asked by a member of an online D.I.D. self help community ([www.mosaicminds.org](http://www.mosaicminds.org)) to which we belong. There were many interesting answers but we only have the authority to reprint our own response. It follows below:-

"We subscribe to a definition of empowerment worked up by the user/survivor movement in mental health. It attributes the following qualities to empowerment:-

- Having decision-making power.
- Having access to information and resources.
- Having a range of options from which to make choices (not just yes/no, either/or.)
- Assertiveness.
- A feeling that the individual can make a difference (being hopeful).
- Learning to think critically; unlearning the conditioning; seeing things differently;
- Learning about and constructively expressing anger.
- Not feeling alone; feeling part of a group.
- Understanding that people have rights.
- Effecting change in one's life and one's community.
- Learning skills that the individual defines as important.
- Changing others' perceptions of one's competency and capacity to act.
- Coming out of the closet.
- Growth and change that is never ending and self-initiated.
- Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma.

Although this definition was developed particularly in relation to mental health system survivors we think it is applicable to people in general including multiples and whether or not one considers multiplicity a disorder.

From this definition it is clear that empowerment is a complex, multidimensional concept. We also believe that empowerment is a process of development, not a single or even a single series of events or changes in attitudes. One doesn't simply become empowered simply by describing oneself as 'empowered' although such self-labelling (or informed acceptance of another's label as applicable to you) can be a part of the process.

As it is a process, we think that a person does not have to have every single one of the defining qualities to be described as 'empowered'. Some of the qualities require an unequivocal empowering environment if they are to be achieved by the individual and environments are usually beyond the control of any one individual or individual multiple system. For instance, we don't think it is a requirement that a multiple 'come out of the closet' in all or any external environments to be defined as empowered. Without the environment being empowering it may not be safe or even healthy to do so.

When we think about the phrase 'empowered multiple' we use this definition of empowerment. The multiplicity element is just one aspect of who we are, so it is not so much that we are an 'empowered multiple' as that we are an empowered person(s) who is multiple.

There is, of course, within our multiplicity other levels at which definitions can be applied - the 'persons' that make up our multiple system. Some of these fit our definition of empowerment and some of these empowered individuals have more of the defining qualities than others within our system yet still there are others who have none of the qualities and so cannot be described as empowered at all.

Applying our definition of empowerment to ourselves -

- Are we (i.e. Carer-AngelaGee - two individuals within the Collective who are co-conscious and co-dominant at this time) empowered? **Yes!**
- Is The Collective an empowered multiple system? **Yes!**
- Is every individual within The Collective an empowered person? **No!**

Here, we have only begun to scratch the surface of the complexity of the concept of empowerment, a complexity which becomes greatly more complicated when combined with the concept of multiplicity.