

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE WITH MPD OR A DISSOCIATIVE DISORDER

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I Believe

Sometimes it's hard to believe
there's a God...

to have faith in an unseen
power...

to know there's a force we can
call on for help
in our darkest, most desperate
hour.

I know, I've been there myself;
though
all of our problems are not just
the same.

I know how it feels when nobody
is there...

when "God" is no more than a
man.

But I'll tell you a secret: I pray
anyway to something
I can't see or hear.

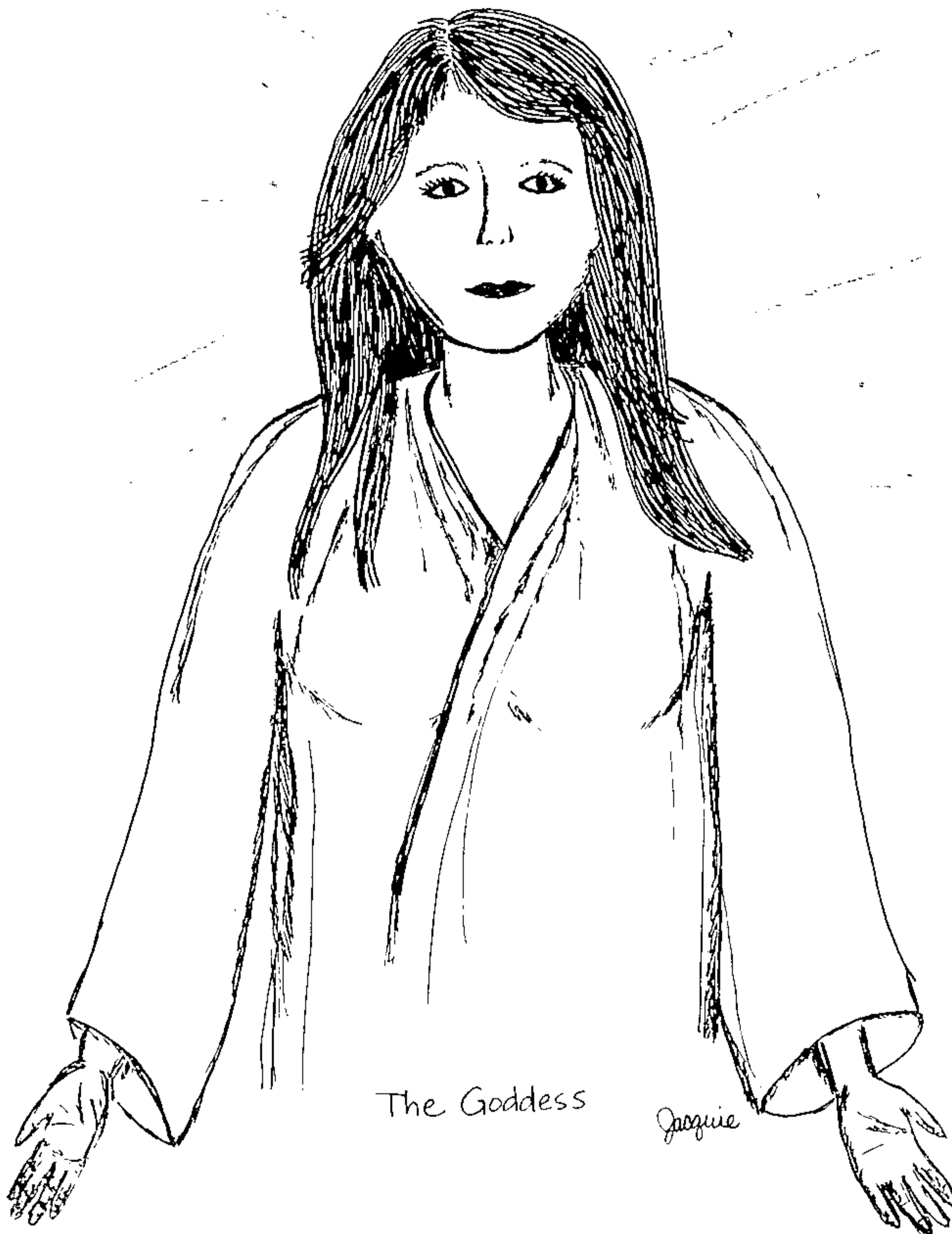
I pray to the darkness,
I pray to the night,
or to what could possibly
be holy in me. And sometimes —
not always
there comes a deep change.
I feel peaceful, set free, and made
whole.

Is it God? Is it me?
Has some power of the universe
helped me to hear my souls?
I don't have the answers.

I can't say for sure that what
I believe is true.

But if God were a fact,
wouldn't any of us need faith.
So, I say... I believe...

By Debbie 33



We call her The Goddess because she is wise and feels connected to something greater than ourselves — something spiritual. She is loving and protecting of us. She rarely talks. But when she does talk, her words are few and full of meaning. She is deeply grounded in the earth yet she can reach far into the heavens. She is the source of our strength and hope.

By Jacquie with help from big Jackie

Multiple Alters — Multiple Gods

By Madge, for all of us

I grew up with a lot of confusion about the church, God, and religion. I didn't begin recalling the abuse until I was over 50 so I didn't know the source of the confusion. The mother was the main perpetrator. She abused us physically, sexually, and emotionally. She used religious songs and ritual when she did it. We were also abused by a priest. Our father and brother both committed suicide. When I was a teenager I remember deciding whether I would kill myself or choose to live. The mother wanted me to die. I decided I needed to survive so she wouldn't win by destroying every one of us. I also knew somehow I was not alone, and would have help to do that.

Different alters have different Gods. One has taught us about being held and loved. One is strong and has taught us how to survive — to get through the pain. One is bad and lets little kids cry for help and doesn't do anything. The alter who is writing this is the one who is most interested in these things. There is also an atheist in this system, several agnostics, a traditional Catholic, an inclusive Episcopalian, one who

likes "that old time religion," a New Age meditator, some who just don't care, and some who think God is a joke.

I have learned to use traditional language to express non-traditional things. I know that my connection with what I call God is responsible for my being alive today. I have had moments of knowing I am loved. Most of the traditional language is metaphor for me. Some of us *don't care* if Jesus rose from the dead. The metaphor of the cross and empty tomb say it all, whether it happened historically or not. It happens in our psyches, and the Spirit that moved over the water at *creation*, (that word we love to use and haven't the faintest idea what we are talking about), is very present for me. Most of the deepest truths can't be adequately expressed in words.

When we go to church some of us like to sing, some of us like the ritual, some of us are disgusted, some of us go to sleep, some of us are scared, some are silly, and some are at peace.

The strongest God is the God in our center. She/he is helping us heal. On the other hand there is the God that lets little kids be

hurt. That allows mothers not to be loving. That doesn't stop the pain and fear. Some of us know that God. The stronger ones know the good God. Maybe that is why they are stronger. The God who loves is the most powerful. Love is the strongest power in the world.

My safe place inside has always been there and I have always known I wasn't alone there. This is where my core God is. This is the God of my survival, my recovery that I'm working on, my safe place, and where I experience a tiny bit of trust.

I don't pretend to know how God works. I believe God is in all this in some way but I *don't* believe God wins football games, saves someone's baby and lets someone else's die, averts accidents and lets others happen, stops one parent from abusing their child and lets another do what they want, and responds only *if* we pray hard enough. I have to step beyond all those issues to a loving God and leave all the questions and explanations for another time.

The bottom line seems to be for me, that this is one hell of a journey, but I don't have to go it alone.

MV

Becoming a Person in the Forest

The forest
Doesn't open its arms to welcome me.
It just accepts me in
With no disturbance to its majesty
The way it accepts
the butterflies
and the flowers
and the deer.

In the silent, caring forest
I slowly raise my arms,
I tentatively breathe,
I begin to take up space.
From my feet on the ground
To my head under the green

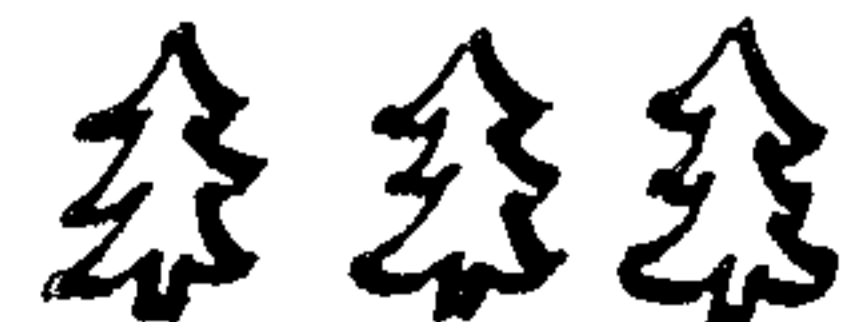
cathedral
I feel myself changing
from a two-dimensional piece
of cellophane
to a three-dimensional human
being.

I walk through the forest
And the trees stay quiet and
still.
They don't walk through
themselves
The way they let me walk
through them
But I know

they know
I am there.

Alone in the forest
I get born into being real
And I can cry without covering
my face.

By no name yet



Love and Spirituality

By Robin & the Dimensions

With over 2100 penpals on the globe, we have the opportunity to be part of humanity all around the world. We see and share in spirituality among people such as Molly, a Liberian refugee in Ghana. War claimed the life of his family, his job and his home. In the midst of disease and despair, Molly's faith in God keeps him strong. He speaks often of hope.

Or Randy, on America's Death Row. In his cell, he creates beautiful artwork expressing his innermost self.

Katy, in China, was secretly baptized two years ago. In spite of danger, she continues to live a life of faith and speaks of joy when she meets another secret believer.

Jerry writes from his Death Row cell in very careful script. He is learning to read and write. His excitement is contagious.

Almante tells me that Lithuania is proclaiming independence. Although her children are ill with diabetes and the shops are empty, she believes this suffering is necessary for their future independence. God is with them.

Sofwat was forced to fight in the Gulf War, an Iraqi, the supposed enemy. Yet our friendship continued as he, also, spoke of pain and a desire for peace. He has it now. He was a casualty of war.

For me, spirituality is much more than church. It's the essence of life, of humanity. It's in the pain, fear, hope, love, tragedy, and triumph. The essence of who we are.

MV

Harmony

In the harmony of nature
A place no man has spoiled
I sense a Higher Power
Greater than I've known
I find a place of quiet
To renew my troubled Soul.

By Allie

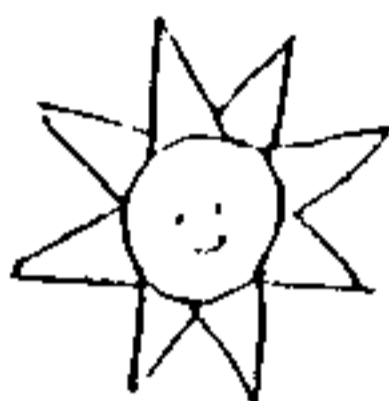
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Spirit Guides

Therapists' Page

By Elizabeth S. Bowman, MD, STM*

**Master of Sacred Theology*

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Q *When I told my pastor that I have MPD she* became very uncomfortable and changed the subject. I and my younger alters have a lot of questions about God and our abuse. What kind of help should I expect from my pastor?*

A Pastors are people, too. Just like therapists, they vary in their knowledge of and comfort with dissociative disorders (DD) and child abuse. Many pastors are initially frightened by MPD because they know little about it. Unfortunately, you are probably the first person with a dissociative disorder that your pastor has met. Congratulations! You get the job of beginning his education about people with many parts.

Begin by asking if your pastor wants to learn more about dissociative disorders. If she says no, you might as well look for another pastoral helper (see below). You can't force a pastor to be comfortable with dissociation any more than you can force a therapist to believe MPD exists. If she is willing, gather some basic articles on MPD and on religious aspects of MPD and give them to her. If you don't know any basic articles, ask your therapists.

References on religious aspects of MPD are at the end of this article.

Next, ask your therapist if she is willing to talk to your pastor about your DD. Most pastors are pretty unnerved the first time they see a switch of personalities (especially if a child or religion-hating alter emerges). Your pastor might be more comfortable working with you if he knew there was someone he could call with questions.

Pastors are often afraid they will say the wrong thing that will hurt you; your therapist can help your pastor know the best way to help you. Pastors usually become more comfortable and skilled with MPD after they have known you longer. Be patient for awhile but don't be

afraid to move on to another minister if your pastor just can't handle dissociative disorders.

Your pastor is *not* another therapist, so don't try to use her as one. Your pastor should not be encouraging abreactions of abuse, or trying to solve the emotional problems that follow child abuse. Your pastor should not be offering exorcism as a way of curing your MPD. Alters and evil spirits are *not* the same thing. There is no evidence that exorcism cures MPD, but there is evidence that it can frighten alters and can drive them deeper inside. Your pastor should not be encouraging you to submit to situations of abuse (such as spouse abuse). You cannot make much progress in therapy if you are not safe at home.

So, what *should* your pastor do? Pastors should answer your religious and spiritual questions. Young alters may know little about God or religion and need very basic education about God, Jesus, scriptures, etc. Your pastor's answers may be the same as those of adult alters, but are probably more believable to young alters just because he is a pastor.

Your pastor should listen to how your abuse affects your faith and your relationship with God. She should help you see where your view of God has been distorted by abuse experiences. She should encourage you to struggle with tough issues, such as whether your suffering has any meaning or whether God could have stopped the abuse. Your pastor should be tolerant of your anger at God and even of the hatred some personalities have about religion (the latter one is tough for some pastors). Your pastor should also encourage you to become involved with supportive people in the congregation, so you are not alone with your pain. Most of all, he should dispense lots of hope and

reassurance that God will not abandon you even when you can't imagine feeling the presence of a deity.

What if you can't stand the sight of a church/synagogue or don't have a pastor, but need some spiritual help? I suggest you seek a chaplain at a local hospital or consider a limited number of sessions with a pastoral counselor or spiritual director. Be a smart consumer — find out if the minister is knowledgeable about dissociation/child abuse or is willing to learn. Regardless of who you see, I suggest limiting the number and frequency of sessions so you don't become overly-dependent on the minister. After all, she isn't supposed to be your whole support system.

After you have reached a significant stage of healing, your pastor might help you by presiding at a healing ceremony that celebrates or consolidates your new emotional and spiritual freedom.

Q *I would like to feel close to God, but I feel so angry at God for letting my Dad abuse me. Besides, I feel so dirty from the abuse that I can't imagine God could really love me. I guess I'm really confused about God right now. Will I ever feel close to God again?*

A Feelings like yours are very common among persons who were abused by parents or clergy, regardless of whether they have DD's. As you go through therapy and realize the full impact of your abuse, strong feelings arise, including anger and disgust. These feelings need expression, but it may not be possible for you to direct them at your abuser. God often catches some of the emotional flak that belongs to abusers because God is big and powerful (like abusers were) but is

* Alternating male and female pronouns will be used to refer to clergy.

a safer "person" at whom to express rage.

Many studies have shown that the way we view God is very personal — it is a little different for each person — and parallels our feelings about our parents and ourselves. Most religions depict God as a parent, most often as a father. Accordingly, we tend to interact with God and feel about God as we do about our parents, whether we are conscious of this or not (usually, we're not). If your father abused you and you feel angry about it, you may feel that God is angry and only wants to punish you. If your mother turned her back and refused to deal with the incest, you may also feel that God is powerless, useless, and just ignores people's pain.

It is the norm for people in therapy for DD's to find that they go through a period of feeling far from or angry at God as they remember and work through their abuse. This period usually parallels the time during which they want almost nothing to do with abusive parents. As the rage begins to recede, they might move on to more loving and healthy images of God, regardless of whether they re-establish parental contact.

Your view of God also parallels your opinion of yourself. Many abused persons, especially the host personalities of MPD patients, feel unworthy of God's love. This generally happens during the period of therapy when you are blaming yourself for the abuse or

believe that it made you dirty. You might be hating yourself because of the abuse or because your abuser taught you to do so. This self-view gets attributed to God who is seen as disapproving of you or too good to want you. As DD sufferers begin to see themselves in a more positive (and realistic) light, they often begin to see God as one who loves them and is saddened by the evil they endured.

Because your view of God is connected to your experiences with your parents and your view of yourself, your alters will all have a somewhat different image of God. Several small studies of God images in MPD patients have found that God images correlate with the function of the alter in the system, such as protector, anger-bearer, or happy-go-lucky. Alters' God images also correlate with their life experiences, such as having been loved by a devout grandma or abused by a priest or "devout" parent. Host personalities have often had some good religious experiences and experienced some love as well as some hatred/abuse. They often have very contradictory images of God. Their God is often theoretically loving but feels condemning. They often strive endlessly to please God, but always feel inadequate and deprived of God's approval and love. Alter personalities tend to see God in black or white terms. They are less likely to have much religious education, less likely to

believe in a deity, more likely to be enraged at God for not intervening in abuse, or likely to see God as distant and uninvolved.

Don't despair; your image of God can grow throughout therapy. As a therapist, I have noticed that as alters become less different from each other, they begin to unify their spiritual/religious beliefs. This has always gone in the direction of healthier, happier images and spirituality. As atheist/agnostic alters grow less angry, they often begin to covet the beliefs of spiritual alters. Religious conversion of alters can occur as they develop themselves spiritually. This growth might occur on its own, but it is much more likely to happen if you actively work at it. The most helpful course is to find a good clergy person and begin to work on questioning and changing your God images. This involves looking at how you got them, who in your life acted like you believe God acts toward you, if your images are supported by your own scriptures or religious teachings, or if they are logical. Your *opinion* about God will change before your *feelings* about how God treats you will change. It takes time and a good minister, but those who have done it say it is well worth it.

If you were abused by a man, the male images of God found in Judaism and Christianity may be impossible for you to use. Explore feminist spiritual writings or the

(cont'd on page 6)

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(Therapists' Page *cont d*)

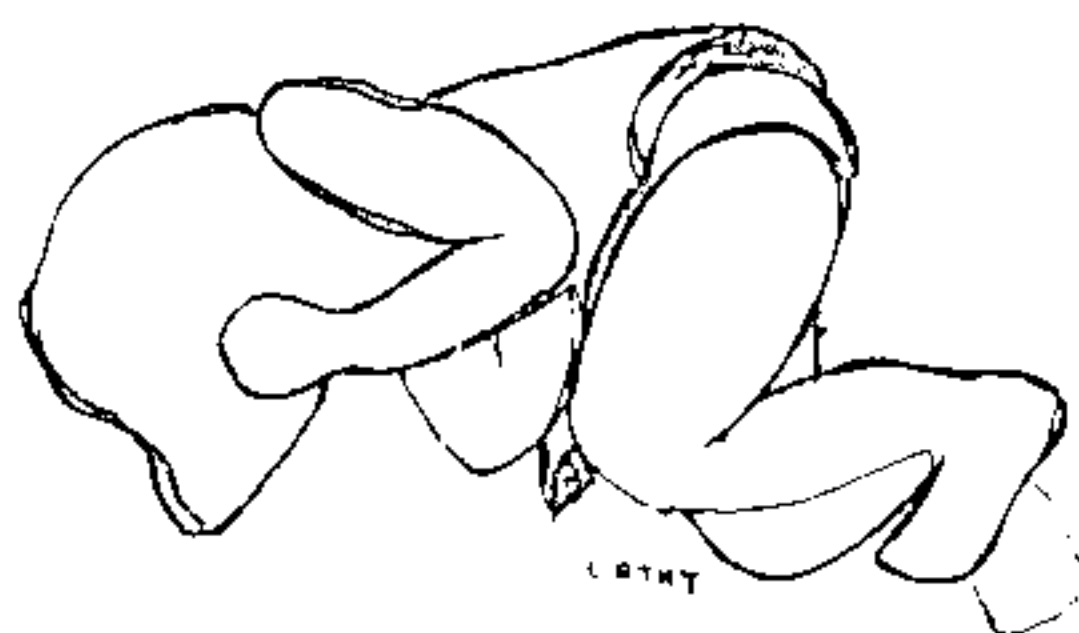
Seek Ye the Men of God An experience of exorcism

By Robin, with input from others

use of inclusive (non-sexist) language to construct images of God that do not remind you of abusers. If you had a loving grandmother that you went to when hurt or upset, try to imagine God as a loving Grandma who holds you in her lap, cuddles you and wipes your tears. Consider new theological positions, such as those who teach that God's nature is such that God cannot physically intervene to stop abuse, but is one who weeps in grief at your pain. Such images can decrease your sense of isolation from God. Explore alternative spiritualities such as Goddess worship or native American spirituality (the latter's deity is less gender-bound).

The topic of healthy spirituality is beyond the scope of this short article, but I urge you not to let your abuse and dissociative dividedness squelch your spiritual growth. Many of my patients survived their abuse and therapy precisely because their faith gave them a sense of purpose in their lives and suffering — even in those moments when they didn't have a clue what that purpose was. Being connected to something greater than yourself — a congregation, God, Goddess, the universal life force, or whatever — can be a vital ingredient that helps you make it through the long and difficult recovery from MPD. Regardless of how malevolent God may seem right now, don't give up on spiritual growth. Others have recovered not only their psychological unity, but their spiritual unity as well.

MV



Words spoken in therapy. We weren't sure who spoke those words, but later cursed that one. In the mid-1980's, a young inexperienced therapist in a small town attempted to treat MPD. He took these words, "Seek Ye the Men of God", literally, and sought out a minister. Our therapist met us at a church where eight ministers and elders greeted us. They explained exorcism, and then commenced.

The result: fourteen long hours of mass confusion on our part. There's nothing like having eight men yelling, praying, and holding down a struggling female to drive most of us to the back in terror. Yes, they awoke our demon: she happens to be our host person, whom we had managed to keep hidden for the past ten years. Yeah, she awoke, and did her normal thing — split again. A split always causes confusion and retreat on the inside. We stayed hidden and the newly-created "Kathy" stayed out. Being new to this world and thus not recognizing our therapist, "Kathy" was adopted by one of the ministers who declared her "God's Creation". Oh, they were all so proud of their power in God's word!

A year passed during which this married minister literally controlled "Kathy". He told her all therapists were bad and unnecessary since she had the "Word" of God. He taught her bible inside and out, which created havoc for us inside who were raised in the occult and only knew Satan as the "Word". Eventually, the minister raped "Kathy", blamed her and sent her away. Now we were back in control. This we could relate to: rape, pain, blame. This minister then left his family and married a psychologist who worked at the center where we had gone for therapy. She had told our therapist two years earlier we did not have MPD. (Good riddance. Another score for Satan.)

By chance, we met another charismatic minister who believed

in MPD and knew exorcism was wrong for treatment. He met several of us and taught us about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit — that small, still, quiet voice. He convinced us to return to our therapist and explain what had happened on the inside during the exorcism and our experiences the following year. Between our minister and our former therapist, much praying occurred. Everyone felt God was leading us to leave the small town and go to Houston where we could seek an experienced therapist.

I guess God was right. We did move and have found not one, but two therapists who see us together. Now we struggle to separate Satan's early teaching from the Lord's on a safe ground. Exorcism doesn't work for people with MPD. We are not evil spirits to be cast out; we are individuals who desire to be rid of evil memories and evil lessons taught long ago. With our experienced and highly-trained therapists, we are beginning that path.

Underneath the Snarl

What does it feel like inside
To be obsessed with fear and
control
Underneath the snarl
Looking out
Unto a world
Landing place
I thought I saw a landing place
To come down
To touch the Earth again
The first painful touch
And let the tears of long
separation wash over me
The Earth
To get to come back down
And rejoin the World
That I see
Looking out
Underneath the snarl
Behind my control illusion
That separates me from the world

By Daniel S.

Seeking a Spiritual Path

My spirituality has been challenged all my life. As a child, my true spirituality was ridiculed and punished. I learned to hide its differentness from others and express only its commonality through intense "appropriate" religious devotion. When I left home, I also left the church which taught that women are the cause of all men's evil. All my life, I had suffered the pain my "inherent female wickedness" had "caused" men to do to me, and I could no longer tolerate being constantly vilified for my guilt.

My childhood abusers were Catholic and Christian. My adult abusers and detractors were Christian as well. My country declared religious freedom while discriminating against non-Christians economically and socially. Is Hanukkah a lawfully-paid holiday like Christmas? Is Passover celebrated in storefront windows? My country declared individual freedom to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness while discriminating economically and socially against all persons who did not fit a narrow "American" profile — against women, children, people of different religion, race, social background, color. . .

For twenty years, as an adult, I wandered in the desert with brief, vivid, yet elusive glances into my true spirituality. The childhood incest and ritual abuse had continued for so many years that I felt dark, dirty, evil in my core. My spirituality had become hidden even from me, enshrouded in the darkness of the forgotten abuse.

In 1992, I started child abuse therapy with a psychologist who was Jewish, had a New York accent and a "natural", curled like a halo around his head. He looked and sounded like none of my abusers and seemed compassionate and kind. I felt safe with him. Last Fall we celebrated Rosh Hashanah together. I from my recovered personal spiritual perspective as a pantheist (honoring the life force in all its manifestations), he from his personal Jewish perspective.

This June I discovered that he believes in pedophilia (child prostitution disguised as love), and pederasty (child prostitution disguised as education). He was able to hide his true beliefs because the childhood abuse I suffered was so violent he could never confuse it as "love" or "education". He always comforted me and shared my anger. But he knew I believed all sex with children is abusive and pretended to agree!

So now, I feel the pain of loss, not only during Christian holidays, but during Jewish as well, especially Rosh Hashanah.

But I have recovered my spirituality! I know that I am good, loving, beautiful, strong, and my life is valuable. Despite his deceit, I did powerful recovery work and I have reconnected to my true being and my source.

By Crystal for the Galaxy



My recovery from sexual abuse depends on my development of healthy spirituality. It is an ongoing task that is allowing me to develop a sense of inner peace. When I was diagnosed with dissociative disorder it was difficult to accept at first. I was talked into going in-patient with people who were supposed to understand the disorder. I did not find in-patient treatment helpful. For me it was cruel and abusive.

I attend a 12-step meeting of Incest Survivors Anonymous where I learned that I am a survivor and will not take the role of victim again. I don't focus on the past but utilize the slogans "Just for today" and "One day at a time." When I realize that I am powerless over the past I trust my higher power, who I call God, and turn my life and my will over to him. The God I worship is one of love, not the wrathful God of my youth. I have learned to accept people with unconditional love: not sacrificing

myself or expecting something in return. I live the serenity prayer which states "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

My journey to achieve a sense of spirituality has been a long, difficult process of overcoming painful situations. When I was a child, my spirit was stolen from me as a result of sexual abuse. Through the recovery process I had to admit that I was powerless over my perpetrators. I turn my pain over to my higher power because the pain is too much to handle alone.

After turning over my problems to God I found that my hate for my perpetrator was consuming my life. I have never forgiven him, but I no longer allow him to have power over me as a person. After I allowed myself to let go of the hate, I found that I had fewer flashbacks and nightmares. Without this interference, I was able to take in the godly beauty that surrounded me.

The unconditional acceptance of two people in my life have helped me with my self-esteem, which allows me to develop my spirituality. I recently lost one of these people to an untimely death, but the memory of a spiritual glow and acceptance of me as a person, remains. The other spiritual person has taught me that I can be whatever I want to be. I have learned to visualize and shrink my oppressors, destroying their power over me. Both of these people taught me to laugh and use humor to help in the recovery process.

I also use relaxation techniques. I look at the beauty of the moment and clear my mind of any barriers. The process of relaxing even a little took several years to develop. I find comfort in reading the Psalms and in prayerful reflection. I pray for other people and give what I can of myself. I

(cont'd on page 8)

(Spiritual Path cont'd)

am able to count my blessings and have stopped cursing God. I believe in an after-life and look forward to it.

The abuse of my childhood was hard to accept and live through, and I will never understand why an adult would hurt a child. I have learned to enjoy life through my child, who is a spiritual being and has taught me how to play and laugh.

I still need to work on how to appropriately give myself to others. I have to learn to create boundaries without being too rigid or having no boundaries. I tend to draw in people who use me for their personal gain, which causes feelings of violation.

My life is not perfect and numerous problems still occur. But although the trauma of my life has caused me spiritual and emotional pain, it has also taught me how to live.

By Anne C.



My internal selves have always known that God exists because music exists. After integration, however, my "music is God, God is music" credo proved insufficient. Spirituality needed expression in a changed form. The integration process is, by its very nature, also a spiritual process. I was aided by two caring professionals: my Religious Studies professor and my psychologist.

With the goal of integration in mind, my professor tackled the problem of multiplicity from a Religious Studies perspective. He recognized my internal chaos as the same as would exist in a community of 30 separate individuals living in close proximity but unable to cooperate. A functional community needed to be achieved, with a sense of group identity and a group spiritual center. Conceptualized in this way, the many selves in our community could come forward to release anguish and make spiritual needs known. All alters agreed to sit

together at "community meetings" several times a week, with the internal conversations made visible for outside review by one alter typing the conversations on our computer.

In this way grievances between alters were aired, shifting allegiances were explored and the very different religious perspectives were discussed. Each alter was then, in turn, asked to compromise what was non-essential, in order to create a more harmonious community. For example, Mary's theological fanaticism softened while Sammy's religious hostility lessened. As Johnathan's "it's not my decision to make" changed, so did Elizabeth's "I don't give a damn about religion" change to a caring concern for the community. These typed conversations helped previously insurmountable religious differences to blend, and lessened the integration-process time.

What has remained after integration is my need to connect with the eternal, always personified as music, yet now recognized as existing apart from and having made/maintained that "dancing of the notes" that is the essence of each and all. While now uncomfortable in a specific church, I still need a spiritual center manifested in a physical form. I decided to create such a place.

With the help of my Professor, a spot was located two hours from my home. The site, on a cool pine mountain, was chosen for its dominating trait: large outcroppings of stone springing forth from the earth. A grouping of seven stones stand taller than the others: these centre-stones represent the five co-conscious alters who lived before me. I can sit between these and lean against them. Around this spiritual centre I have built a circle of 28 smaller stone structures, one for each alter, and painted a small design or emblem to represent that alter. At a private ceremony each alter was given to live in their stone, while a possession of each was buried beneath its respective stone.

Upon entering my "henge", a

greeting is given, a six-inch chip from one stone is carried back and forth as key, and songs are sung. The henge is a special place. As the birds twitter melodies to the whispering accompaniment of pine-tree wind and percussive brook, bubbling distant through the rocks, I sit with my back against the solid, very real stones that are Johnathan and Sammy, Elizabeth and Mary, and all the others circled around me; I am connected to the earth, to the music of the spheres, and to those who came before me.

By Libbie K.

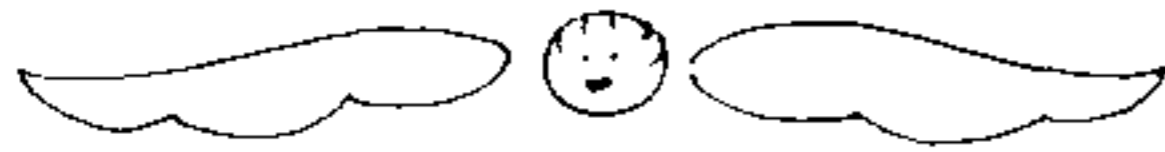


I believe in a God very deeply involved in the emotional component of my life. While I may turn from Him I believe He has never turned from me. I believe He cares very much what happens in my life and directs its events, both good times and bad. I've been at war with myself wondering in all this emotional turmoil of recovering, "Where is God and why does He allow this confusion in my life"? Yet I believe He has incredible love for me and cares very much for me. I believe God provided MPD to protect me.

Spirituality is inextricably intertwined in all my life. It is not a separate "church thing", or "God part" of my life. It is *all* my livelihood. Spirituality is who I believe myself to be, who God says I am, and all I am to become. It is learning that suffering strengthens me. Discovering that God's way of escape from hard times is *not* suicide but something precious and wonderful. It is love, acceptance, and forgiveness. It is the development of communication within the system, in the therapy session, at work, in social and family settings, or any other time or place where two or more people, inside or out, interact with one another. It is asking help of a friend who is discovering her own

relationship with a personal God. It is all this and more. Spirituality is life and growth. I welcome it.

By Karleen, et al



My spiritual and psychological growth has been phenomenal since I have finally accepted myself (selves) and God's love for me "just as I am." He knows where I've been and where I'm at and where I'm going (even when I don't) and it's a comfort to know He's in control (even when I'm not). He is as pleased with me and my progress as He was with His Son's. He has given us different and difficult challenges, but also the strength and the means to meet them. We are no less loved, attended, and fashioned by Him than His son Jesus. This awareness gives me the courage to accept, heal, and know how special I am. Whose opinion is greater than our Maker's? I'll let Him, with His love and mercy, and only Him, be my judge!

By Pamela Lyn (& significant others)



Healthy spirituality is a difficult achievement. For us, spirituality is so mixed up with religion, and to be healthy, it shouldn't be.

Deborah is our main spiritual person. She was an Episcopal nun for awhile and she still longs to go back to the Convent even though the rest of us want no part of it. Some of the Others inside were abused by a priest and a minister, so the idea of religion is volatile.

Susan is more of a feminist, and it makes her angry to see the patriarchy of religion, as well as the overt prejudice toward certain groups, such as gays.

Scalper bristles at the mention of the word "God" or even "Higher Power". The anger that rises up from him is so great that Sue cannot even attend 12-step meetings anymore.

Slowly though, things are beginning to change. Deborah has been willing to put her religion aside and search for something that will satisfy her and still be comfortable for the Others. She now calls the Force outside herself her "Spiritual Source".

Something that seems to agree with everyone inside is a form of American Indian spirituality — the spirituality of the earth and sky and life. Deborah feels the deepness of these beliefs of Brother Sun, Mother Earth, Sister Sky, etc. The Others inside can accept these without the burden of having to separate them from religion.

Scalper feels a bond with the Indian warrior anyway; Bobby loves the earth and animals; and the Others like the simplicity and ceremonies that are not threatening.

We've combined other things into this. Sometimes we light a fragrant incense or candle — smells do a lot to attain calmness and a spiritual frame of mind. It's like a real grounding that is especially needed in the tough times. We're not yet practiced enough to lean on it or reach for it as often as we should or could, but hopefully in time it will get better.

There are still blocks to leaning on anything or anyone, but the safety of our therapy is helping to show that sometimes it can be OK to rely on something/someone outside ourselves.

Another thing that has helped with attaining some form of spirituality is the practice of Tai Chi. It has been called "meditation in movement", and it has a wondrously centering effect. It's not at all strenuous like some yoga, but is graceful and smooth and slow — it even makes a clumsy person like me feel a bit graceful.

It's been really difficult to separate religion from spirituality, but I think it's beginning to happen for us.

By Diana

MV



Inner Healing Force maintains contact with my Higher Power.

Kabbalah and Healing

By Debbie M.

I have always been very interested in spirituality or mysticism, and have spent many years searching for something that had meaning for me. For several years during my childhood I was involved in a cult which practiced black magic. Of course I forgot this as soon as it happened, and only remembered several years ago. Before the memories came, when I attempted to find some meaningful spiritual path, I would become frightened by the idea of spirits, powerful energies, or some other unidentified fears. I eventually dealt with the memories and feelings of my abuse.

This past year I became involved in Kabbalah, or what is known as Jewish mysticism. Even without practicing any Judaism, it teaches one how to gain control over oneself, one's mind, one's actions, and one's life. It teaches that we are all part of one unified whole, and the way to help ourselves is to share and care about people. My abuse was explained through reincarnation. This idea may turn a lot of people away, but it made sense to me when nothing or no one else could.

Through its teachings, I came to understand that the personalities in MPD are states of consciousness. Psychology agrees. By working on myself and deliberately changing and raising my state of consciousness, I became unified, or what is called *integrated*. In a sense I rose above the fragmentation. Kabbalah and psychology both suggest looking inside the self for answers to life's difficulties, and changing the self instead of others.

There are many similarities between dissociative disorders, the global situation, and the spiritual view of the world. In each, fragmentation exists from the perspective of the viewer, and changes when the viewpoint is changed. The DD personalities exist in one's internal world and political separation exists from the idea of separate and incompatible

goals. The therapeutic model of healing DD is precisely that required to heal our world.

Many of the dissociated parts believe themselves to be separate and distinct from the others; they do not realize none would be alive if not for the contribution of each. In the internal war, as in global war, parts may attempt or succeed in harming others. The methods vary from emotional blackmail to physical destruction or death. When one part attempts to destroy another, s/he may not realize that if one is harmed or killed, so are all.

In the external world, countries are at war within themselves and with each other; the natural world which supports our life is ignored and endangered. Our treatment of and attitude towards the global ecology reflects our perceptions of separation. We often forget our actions affect others in ways we cannot begin to imagine. For example, eliminating the rain forests reduces the amount of oxygen available. Chemicals released into the atmosphere and waterways will find their way into the food chain and harm us.

Although each of us, and/or our inner states, acts as if it is an autonomous unit responsible only for itself, all are dependent on the surrounding physical environment (body or globe) and its resources, for collective survival. With this in mind, it is difficult to imagine violence to another without it in some way harming all. Similarly, if we help another, many are helped.

The problem in our world and ourselves is a result of separation. Each fragment views itself as separate and distinct from the others. Existing separately, each acts in its own best interests, often with little regard for the welfare of others or the system as a whole. Independence and individual rights must be achieved and held at all costs. For one to prosper another must fail.

When a fragmented individual begins to heal, it is necessary for the parts to realize they all make

one whole. This leads to awareness of and communication with the others. Each learns that only with cooperation can the individual needs of all be met. With cooperation, all win. This same awareness will heal global and interpersonal difficulties.

Two sayings express this: "As above, so below," and "the microcosm is a reflection of the macrocosm." These tell us that what is here on Earth is a recreation of the Heavens. Everything here exists in some form in the higher world; therefore, if separation and fragmentation occur here, it also exists in some form on a higher spiritual plane. The Big Bang tells us our physical origins are from one source, therefore our spiritual origins must also be from one source. The physical act of creation caused both physical and spiritual separation. This physical world is a world of fragmentation.

Unity and fragmentation both exist simultaneously, but on different levels. What may appear as separate parts or bodies are actually numerous parts of the whole. As we see globally and in ourselves, all parts interact in many ways to form one interactive living creation. In the fragmented individual, separate parts can be unified to a whole. What appears as separate is unified on another level.

Everything originated from Unity and only appears separate. On a higher spiritual level we are One, but are unable to see or experience it in our ordinary lives. If we understand and act from this knowledge, peace and cooperation can be the only way, as within the integrated multiple. Child abuse happens when one can't see beyond the self to the effects of one's actions: to forget that actions are not isolated and their effects are far-reaching. When one acts and thinks only of and for oneself, fragmentation is created.

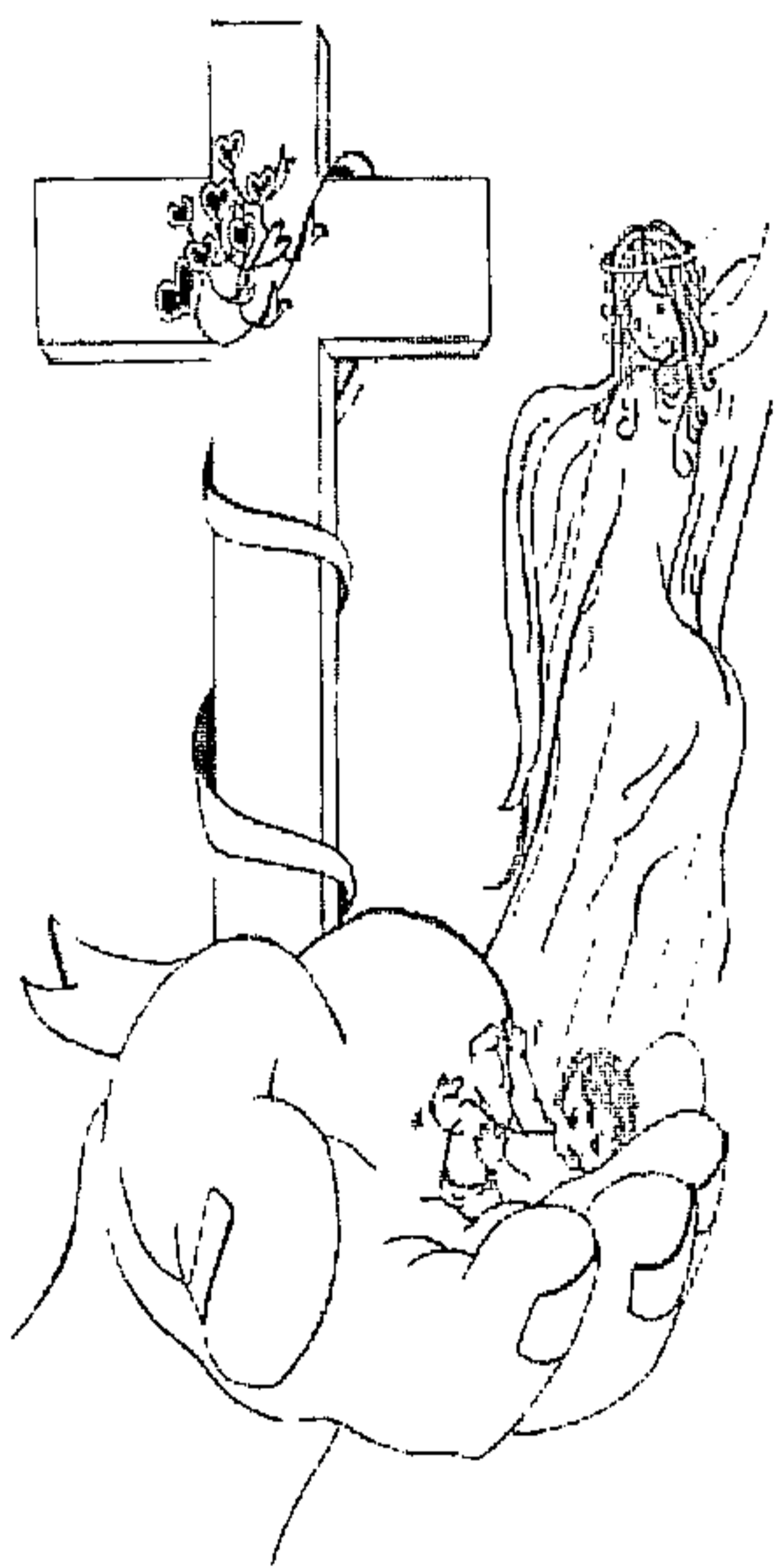
(cont'd on page 11)

(Kabbalah cont'd)

Internal fragmentation is a reflection thinking only of oneself. A politically fragmented world view is the result of a society where we see only ourselves. The only means of healing ourselves and our globe is to find unity in the fragmentation of ourselves; our social and political framework will require awareness and collaboration. When we finally realize our collective survival depends on connection, we will lose the false idea that we must take care of ourselves first. Only then will we stop acting at the expense of others and realize we all succeed with cooperation.

Only actions radiating from the awareness of unity can lead to both personal and global healing.

MV



SPIRITUALITY IS FEELING SAFE
—Jo-anne

The column *RECOVERING* does not appear in this issue. In its place we are printing a tribute to a therapist that has strong, spiritual meaning. Look for *RECOVERING* again in Feb. '94.

A Tribute

By Debbie et al

I am trying to live through what is probably a multiple's worst nightmare. Two days ago, my therapist died of cancer. The pain is sometimes unbearable. I'm not here to write about her death as much as to write about her life and the many gifts she gave to me.

I am a very "high functioning" multiple. At least, that's what Marie told me. I've held down a job; I'm raising a daughter; and I'm living what most people would say is a very "normal" life. I've been called moody, or been told I was depressed, high strung, etc. Until two years ago, I would have told you I was crazy, but I never knew why. At one of the high points of my insanity I found Marie.

Marie really loved her work and cared about her clients. She was patient, caring, loving and understanding. When she first told me she thought I might have MPD, I thought my world was caving in. She took her time with me. She answered my questions and gave me books to read to help me understand about MPD. The more I read the more I could relate. For once, the insanity began to make sense.

Marie was always there for me. I had a number where I could reach her even when she was out of town. I never abused this freedom because at the same time, she taught me healthy boundaries. She

always believed me even when I couldn't believe me. She always validated my feelings and never passed judgment on me.

Even when she was sick, she helped me. She was one of God's greatest gifts to me. She thought I was one of her greatest gifts. We taught each other.

The last time I had a session with her, she told me I was a success. My success I owe to her. My life I owe to her.

The "kids" are having a hard time understanding. They love Marie very much. She read them stories and made them feel special. She listened to them. No one had ever done that. She believed them. They were told no one would believe them.

We're all very scared, because our work is not done. We know that even though Marie is not physically here, she will always be in our heart.

The fact that we are feeling the pain of our loss and not running or splitting or wanting to kill ourselves is a great tribute to her.

I'm sure I'm not the only multiple to lose their therapist. The pain can be very intense at times, but I (we) will survive it and grow with it.

In loving memory of Marie B.

We love you and miss you very much.

MV

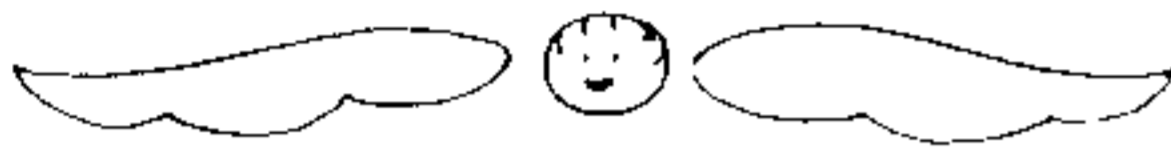


How We feel about God

God's on a yo-yo constantly spinning up and down. Sometimes I can grasp Him in my hand. Other times He's dangling by a thread. Spinning on the floor. But, sometimes when I'm the lowest, He spins His way upward offering me a chance to hold on tight.

So you ask, "Where am I with God in all of this?" The answer is — on a continuum.

By CLB and the Orchestra



The way I experience spirituality has greatly changed for me during the past two years that I've been submerged in hell. I've gone from total devotion to "I don't need you," and now I'm working on recognition, acceptance, and appreciation of how God works in my life. I would like to be able to say that my spiritual elders helped me with my questions, fears, and problems, but despite their sincere affection and concern, their comments have usually proved more harmful than helpful. This makes it difficult on both sides: they feel helpless and I feel misunderstood.

Although I've been screwed up my whole life, this nightmare began in October 1988 when I started having all manner of body memories. First smell, then hearing and feeling. Since I had no knowledge or experience of what was happening, I decided that it was all demonic activity. As the episodes increased in frequency and severity I began praying desperately for God to take away the "demons" that were wreaking havoc in my life. I prayed and I begged to be protected by Him. When I started seeing things in the dark I started reading the Bible out loud and leaving lights on everywhere. Still the nightmares persisted; I was always awake when they happened.

Finally in November 1991, I gave up on God providing any help or relief. I gave up on life,

really, and on May 31, 1992, I decided to die. I planned carefully for death without any more concern about what God thought; after all, he had abandoned me. In retrospect I realize that one of my alters saved us. I don't remember the conversation that alerted a friend to my plan. I only remember being suddenly surrounded by friends and taken to a psychiatric hospital where I started remembering. And I raged at God for allowing this. Not the incest, really, because my Christian beliefs didn't include believing that I would lead a charmed life where nothing bad would ever happen to me, but I thought the least God could do was allow me to be spared the memory of what happened.

During my hospital stay I met my first safe therapist, Chip, having already met two unhealthy ones. Chip journeyed with me through the hell of living when I wanted to die. He became my *Higher Power*. Chip was the guiding light in my nightmare. I called on Chip, not God, to rescue me from the chaos and horror. And Chip has been a wise and benevolent Higher Power in his deep compassion and in being there for me in the blackest despair; and most importantly, in knowing his limitations. When my alters began to emerge, Chip knew this was beyond his experience and interest, so he referred me to Greg, who is equally empathic and caring, and who ironically is quite familiar with MPD. He also became a *Higher Power*.

Bit by bit over the past year, Chip, and later Greg, helped me face my spiritual issues by totally accepting where I was: angry at God and determined to do without Him. No lectures. No preaching. Total, unqualified acceptance. And I started to notice things. That I have had the right kind of therapy when I needed it. That even when my savings were gone, and I wasn't working, somehow I always had the money for therapy and for living. I found an absolutely perfect job for one in my condition: a

boss who had been down the survivor's road with his sister, which gave him the compassion and patience I needed. And I came to realize that God, the one I was raised with, had been with me all along. And I'm trying to get re-acquainted with Him on His terms, not mine. And Chip is just Chip, what he always wanted to be anyway. And Greg is... well, sorry, but Greg is still up there — not quite divine, but definitely a gift of divinity nonetheless. It's been an arduous road and it seems that there is worse to come.

These days my spirituality is expressed moment by moment in staying alive, surviving, and just in being; and in learning to recognize the gifts I've been given. I see God in tiny things that I once took for granted. I'm appreciating moments of beauty because they're so rare. I see God in big things, like creating a mind that knew how to protect itself from the horror that man can inflict upon it. Given a choice, I would rather not have other "people" living inside me, but then I very likely wouldn't be alive. And today is one of those times I'm glad that I'm alive; they do happen occasionally. I am becoming acquainted with my inside people and I know I'll have to hear their stories eventually, but not yet. Still I'm confident that when the time comes we will have Greg to help and guide us, with Chip in the background still caring and concerned.

By A.C. with help from Laura



We have known over two years now that we have MPD. The flashbacks are still coming. With the help of our caring therapist and doctor, we make it through. But what helps most is the fact that our loving Heavenly Father leads us when we get lost, comforts the children in their fear, and gives us strength to face another day. Many times we don't know what the next hour will

bring. Sometimes we are afraid to go to sleep at night. When this happens, we find much strength by writing prayers to God and through meditation, communicating with Him our fears, hopes, and desires. This gives us great power to face whatever challenges we have to, and get through it. There are no mistakes too great. We know our Father can make everything OK, even if we feel we fail sometimes. This brings a comfort we never had, growing up, trying to feel sane, coming from an insane situation.

By The Council for Brenda E.



We can't draw what's most meaningful to us, as music cannot be drawn. But the other most important factor in our lives are external persons who help and support us. And we always found the suitable persons for the situations without deliberate searching! So we would like to contribute the following text:

There's no word for "more than friendship."

This one's to Ulla, who fell from heaven like an angel, when we needed her. Who shared my interest in my personality system, when nobody else believed me. Who was the first one to talk directly to the little ones, on the phone, 500 miles away, as our two current therapists surrendered. Who wrote an article full of heart and understanding, full of respect for every single person, even for those who sometimes hated her. The article — the first action in all our lives, where all of us were somehow involved! No other person has ever given us that amount of love, care, patience and understanding — and you call it simply *friendship*. We all think it's more than that, and we want to thank you. We wouldn't be where we are without you. You give us the power to go on fighting, always on the side of the little ones we still sometimes tend to forget in the heat of the action. A

phone-mummy, phone-therapist, phone-friend, phone-advisor doing the best any human being could do. Every multiple should have an Ulla. We thank you and we love you.

By Eva, Doreen, Fan, Olga, and Viktoria



My most profoundly spiritual experience was of taking a pottery class (an assignment from a therapist). We were working with red clay, which the instructor told us is red because it contains iron. We were using a technique that involved rolling out slabs of clay and cutting shapes. I decided I wanted to make a rectangular pot, but the clay refused to cooperate in forming clean angles. It was as if it had a strength and a mind of its own. Once I gave in to the clay, following its lead and allowing it to control more of its own shape (rather than trying to impose geometry upon it), I found that my projects were more beautiful, interesting, and powerful than anything I could have conceived. With the clay under my roller and in my hands, I felt a connection to the power and creativity of a living earth. It was as if I was being given a gift by being allowed to collaborate with the clay, to form unique, useful items, some of which we still have, despite the fact that I began the course intent on keeping nothing I made. I had been thinking that I wouldn't need or want any of it, but that really translated into *I don't deserve it*. I did give away some of my projects, but how could I reject a gift to us from the earth?

I want to thank you for calling this to mind, because writing about it tonight has brought back the experience, and the feeling I can only describe as awe, with the clarity and immediacy of an abreaction. This was one abreaction we didn't mind, and it was nice to be able to share it with folks inside, and you.

By Crystal (AFS)

Some of us believe in heaven and hell. Hell is for abusers and people like them who do bad things.

The children believe God will take any repentant soul into His embrace, no matter what they've done.

The children have always believed they should be punished, and they have been. They become easily confused about good and bad.

Since we've been in therapy we've come to believe that God is all-loving. He was with us and helped us through all those abusive times in our life. And He's still helping us in therapy.

Most of us in the system understand that if it weren't for God's help, we would commit suicide. The flashbacks are so awful. Then where would we go? To heaven or to hell? We believe we've lived through hell, so heaven is all that's left.

By Carol L. (I, we)

MV



The "Old One" or "One". He seldom speaks but when he does everyone listens and obeys. He has told us suicide is no longer an option, which is a relief to many in the circle.

By Stacy & Co.

Spiritual Journey

By Cathy Malloy

God came and said, "Follow me".

Loving God. I followed him into strict obedience to church teachings.

Then God asked, "Are you going to adhere to church teachings, or are you going to follow me?"

So I followed God, and he led me into situational ethics and compassion.

Then God asked me, "Are you going to remain a bystander, or are you going to follow me?"

So I followed God, and he led me to care about a real person.

Then God asked, "Are you going to continue caring as you have, or are you going to follow me?"

So I followed, and God led me into depression.

Then God asked, "Are you going to keep all the wisdom you have carefully collected over the years, or are you going to follow me?"

So I followed God, and he led

me to a psychiatrist and a psychologist. I discarded the wisdom I had collected over the years and adopted the tenets of the mental health field.

Then God asked, "Will you continue being depressed, or will you follow me?"

So I followed God into the hospital and was comforted. I went back three more times.

Then God said, "Are you going to keep going to the hospital, or are you going to follow me?"

So I followed God and he led me to take responsibility, actively problem-solve and be independent.

Then God said, "Are you going to continue to retain an image of your illness, or are you going to follow me?"

So I followed God into a change of diagnosis. I was not sick after all — just traumatized.

Then God said, "Are you going to retain your version of your past, or are you going to follow me?"

So I followed God into another, far more horrible, version of the

past. I completely discarded everything I had thought was true about my past.

Then God said, "Are you going to stay here in the darkness, or are you going to follow me?"

So I followed God out of the darkness into the grayness.

"This is boring," I told God.

"This is it," God said.

Then God said, "Are you going to continue following me, or are you going to go out and put what I have given you to the use I intended when I created you?"

"What is it?" I asked.

"You have to figure it out," he said.

"I can't," I said.

"Just try," he said.

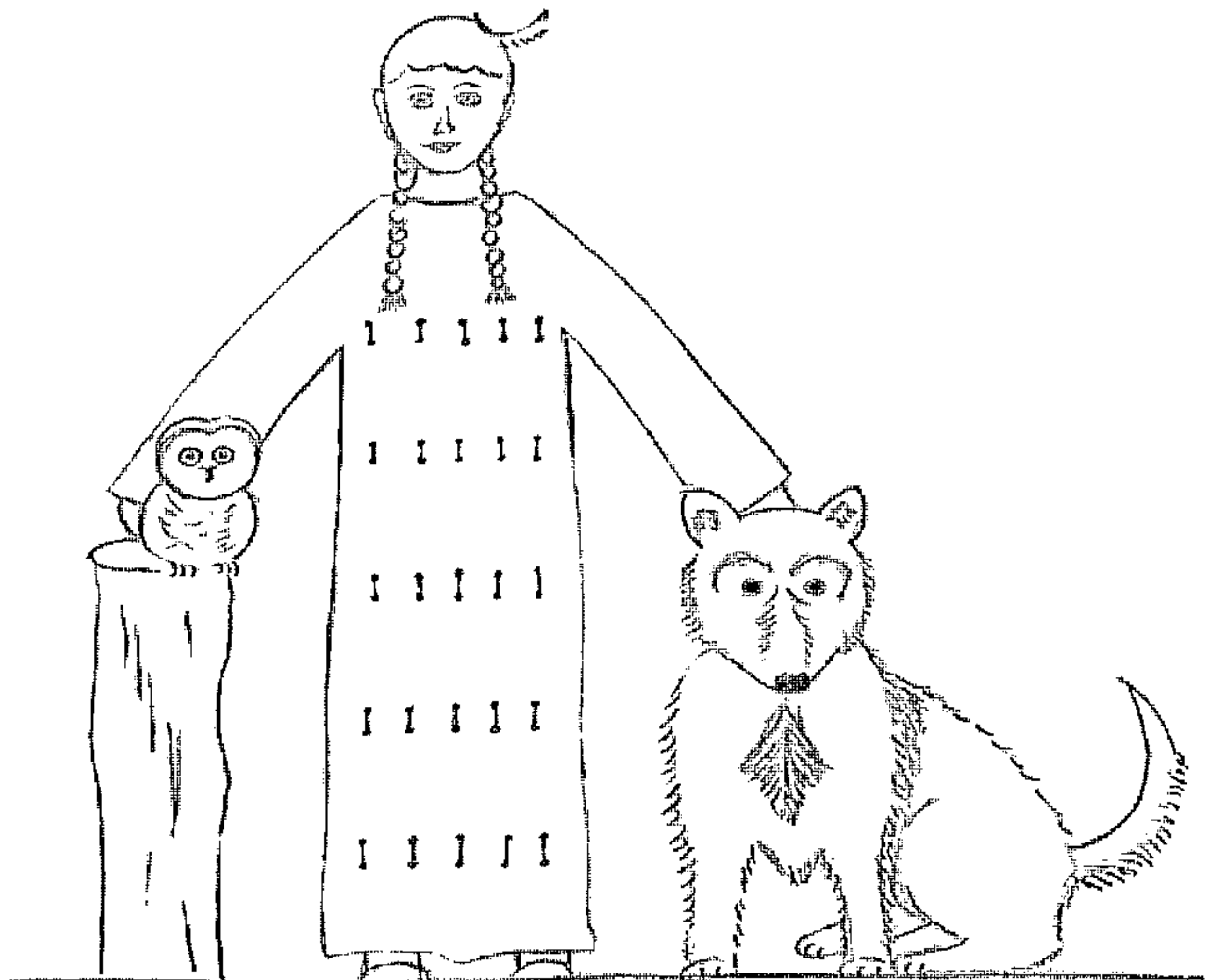
So I left God (in a sense) and started trying things. Everything felt wrong, because God is not there, not in the same way he was before.

I haven't figured anything out yet. Figuring out is overrated anyway.

MV

The Lakota say that everyone has a spirit animal who watches over them. As a multiple, I have two. Sister Owl, with her keen eyes and night vision, warns me of danger. Brother Wolf, with his deep-throated growl and powerful jaws, protects me from harm.

By Angelique for
The French Cousins



Night Bearing

Here is a child of night
bearing delicate treasure,
this secret self is barefoot
in a flannel nightgown
padding out of dark doorways
under the stars, the scintillate
moon,
Nightwalker, brilliant dreamer
oriented by the heart of the night,
the center of a single dream,
tracking luminescent footprints,
the spirit of the hawk —
who is seeker, who is sought —
repelled by and yet drawn
to the dark star of my anger and
lust

This was never stolen
in your midnight raids,
this is the moist summer night
whose waves would wash and wash
my face and hands in
impossible moonlight.

I am as round and full as that
whole moon.

By Joanne



Books

Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse Workshop Models for Family Life Education

By Christine A. Courtois PhD
© 1993 by Families International Inc.,
published in association with Family
Service America Inc. 11700 West Lake
Park Dr., Milwaukee WI 53224. \$16.95
& \$3 shipping 143 pgs. Paperback.

Christine Courtois is clinical
director at the Center for Abuse
Recovery & Empowerment at the
Psychiatric Institute of Washington
DC. She's had much experience
working with adults who survived
sexual abuse as children.

This book is intended to help
guide leaders of therapy groups
for survivors. In structured
assignments for eight to ten
sessions, participants are led to

understand more about child
sexual abuse and its current and
present effects on their lives.

Courtois recommends a small
group of 8 to 12 participants,
and two leaders to share the
responsibility of monitoring
reactions while material is
presented. Plenty of references
are listed for additional study, as
well as handouts for after-session
review.

An example of the value and
common sense in this book is in
Chapter 8: Questions to Ask
Before Allowing Yourself To Be
Vulnerable To Another Person.
With questions about substance
use, directness, hostility, jealousy,
negativity, openness, etc., this is a
checklist that most any survivor
should review when learning to
make safe friendships.

I strongly recommend this book
for people in groups, and those
who want to lead them.

More than a Band-Aid for the Small Child Within

Joyful Joysigns & Insights
By Marguerite Stucki © 1988. \$10.50
& 2.50 shipping (add \$2 for plastic
cover). About 100 pgs.(not numbered).
8½" x 11" softback.

This is a self-published book of
charmingly-illustrated affirmations
and ideas for self-help. It has a
strongly-positive focus, stressing
the importance of God in recovery.
There's perhaps a bit more "cute"
language than suits me, but others
may disagree. This is clearly a gift
to others written out of Stucki's
own healing process, and a very
generous gift it is.

— Lynn W.

Thank You Friends

For all your help this year! May your holiday season be a comfort and joy. Please continue to remember **MANY VOICES** when you feel that wonderful creative urge. We need you!—Lynn W.

February 1994

Dissociation and the family. Parenting with DD. Do you tell the kids? Sibling issues. Non-abusive parents. Significant others. ART: Draw your inside/outside kids together, or you and close, non-abusive relatives or friends. DEADLINE: Dec. 1, 1993.

April 1994

Double-topic issue: Experiences of men in therapy for DD. What has been helpful in finding male support. ALSO: Graduating from therapy . . . how do you know when you're ready? Therapist/client discussion. ART: From the male perspective (men or male alters.) DEADLINE: Feb. 1, 1994.

June 1994

Healing from Multiple Problems: DD and alcohol, eating disorders, other addictions; legal/criminal justice system; What do you do first? How is therapy different? ART: How you picture your healthier future life. DEADLINE: April 1, 1994.

August 1994

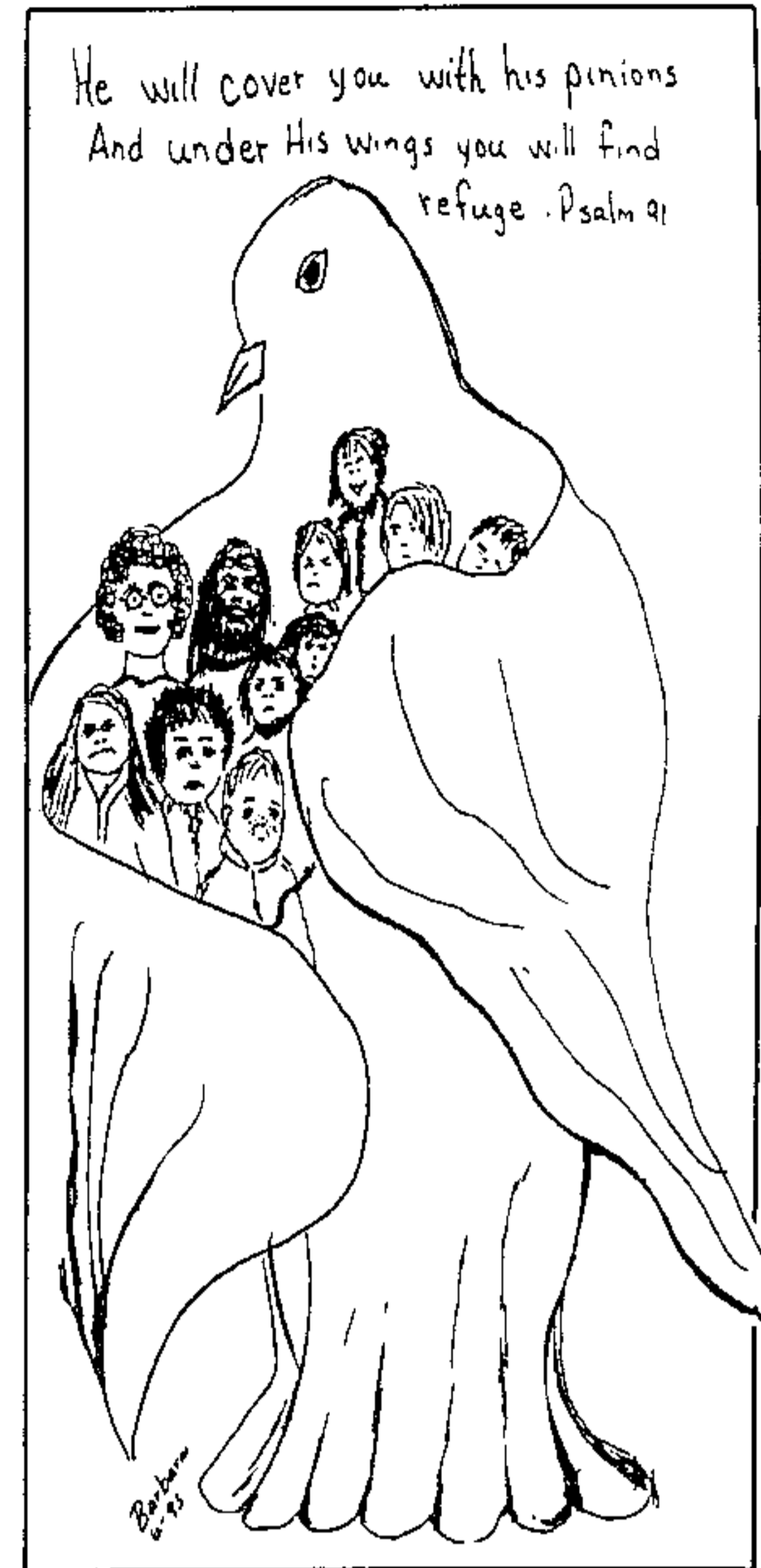
Funniest (or strangest) things that have happened in therapy for dissociation. Light-reading suggestions & kids' books. ART: cartoons and drawings of unusual occurrences in therapy. DEADLINE: June 1, 1994.

October 1994

Creating your own healthy circle. Developing social skills. Groups for therapy &/or support. Meeting peers (How To, risks, rules for safety etc.) Penpal pros & cons. ART: Socializing with outsiders. DEADLINE: August 1, 1994

December 1994

Double-topic issue: Dealing with the health-care system (insurance, medical doctors/dentists, social service agencies.) ALSO: Reducing dissociation in stressful situations. ART: A gift you'd like to give yourself, a friend, or the world. DEADLINE: October 1, 1994.



Share with us!

Prose, poetry, and art are accepted on upcoming issue themes, (and even on NON-themes, if it's really great.) DO send humor, cartoons, good ideas, and whatever is useful to you. Please limit prose to about 4 typed double-spaced pages. Line drawings (black on white) are best. We can't possibly print everything. Some pieces will be condensed, but we'll print as much as we can. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of your originals and a note giving us permission to publish and/or edit or excerpt your work.

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