

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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Grief and Loss Asking for Help Searching for Hope

Healing

Dear Readers,

I am writing to you to let you know there is hope for people with D.I.D. In June 1994 my husband passed away. I was married 21 years. I am 44 years old. I was diagnosed with D.I.D. in 1986. Somehow, because he was so used to me being in parts, he liked it that way. He could never celebrate with me as I became more whole, so he actually held me back.

I have grown more since he passed away. I've cried. I miss him and loved him. Yet I somehow gained freedom to be me. I thought I was trapped or stuck in the relationship because I had D.I.D. I am evidence you can do anything, even if Fate had to be the one to prove it to me. I felt I owed him because when we married we didn't know I had an illness.

He actually liked the parts better than me, the host. For he cried when they were merging with me, instead of celebrating me being more One.

My children learned how to bring out the young ones so they could play instead of doing chores. Now when they try it I *sing* "It's not going to work anymore!" I really did not have a supportive family. This made it much harder to get well.

But I want to be One more than anything in the world, and I will be. So please readers, no matter how stuck it feels you are in a relationship, you can do it. You *can* pull yourself out. In the grieving process, support groups help a lot, doing things different helps, and being good to you *because you deserve it.*

By Diana



When You Feel Like Dying

By Rainbow Inc. Kidz

It was very difficult for me to comfort my sister-in-law following the death of her mother. Her mother had depression and committed suicide. We had pen pal friends who talked about suicide and the kids made their friends a booklet called "What To Do When You Feel Like Dying." They drew pictures and wrote the following:

Sometimes a black cloud follows me around. It is called depression. I feel sad and can't smile.

Pills don't make me happy either. The black cloud follows me everywhere. I cry. Nothing is fun. Soon I want to die. Have you ever felt that way?

One day I remembered someone special, my angel. She told me, "Please don't die. There is much to do on Earth." You, too, have angels. Their message to you is the same. "Please don't die!"

When we feel like dying, we remember our angels. We have angel pictures, posters, and ornaments nearby. We wear a special angel pin. We even draw angels. Angels keep us safe. They keep you safe, too. Remember your angels.

When we feel like dying, we put on safe colors. We feel safe in the color purple. Do you have a safe color, too? Sometimes we put on an old sweater of a friend or important person in our life. We feel safer.

When you feel like dying, read a storybook instead. The storybook characters sometimes have more problems than we do and they solve them. Maybe we can, too. It's worth a try.

When you feel like dying and the house is scary, take a trip to the park or mall. We go to the mall a lot. We buy storybooks, crayons, a little toy or barrette for our hair. Sometimes we just look. Other times Ted and Pup get a new outfit.

When you feel like dying, stay away from sharp objects and do not open pill bottles. We stay upstairs if we are alone. We hug stuffed animals. We have lots of stuffed animal friends.

When you feel like dying, take out the crayons and draw beautiful rainbows. We think about the rainbows we saw in the sky. How pretty they are. Pretty enough to paint. *Rainbow* in our name stands for *after the storm*.

When we feel like dying, we know the black cloud will be blown away. The storm will be over. The rain will bring flowers.

When you feel like dying, take a walk outside and pick a bouquet of wildflowers. The gift of life is such a beautiful thing.

When you feel like dying, tell yourself: "I don't want my abusers to win!" "You aren't going to win. I'm not going to die!" We have made our own support tape we can play. Our therapist makes us tapes, too.

Sometimes we get cued or triggered to feel like dying. We started paying attention and asking ourselves, "Why do we feel this way?"

We started keeping track: the beeping smoke detector when the battery is low, various words repeated, new memories surfacing. Knowing why you feel like dying is important. It's like knowing if you have a cold versus the flu. You can act appropriately.

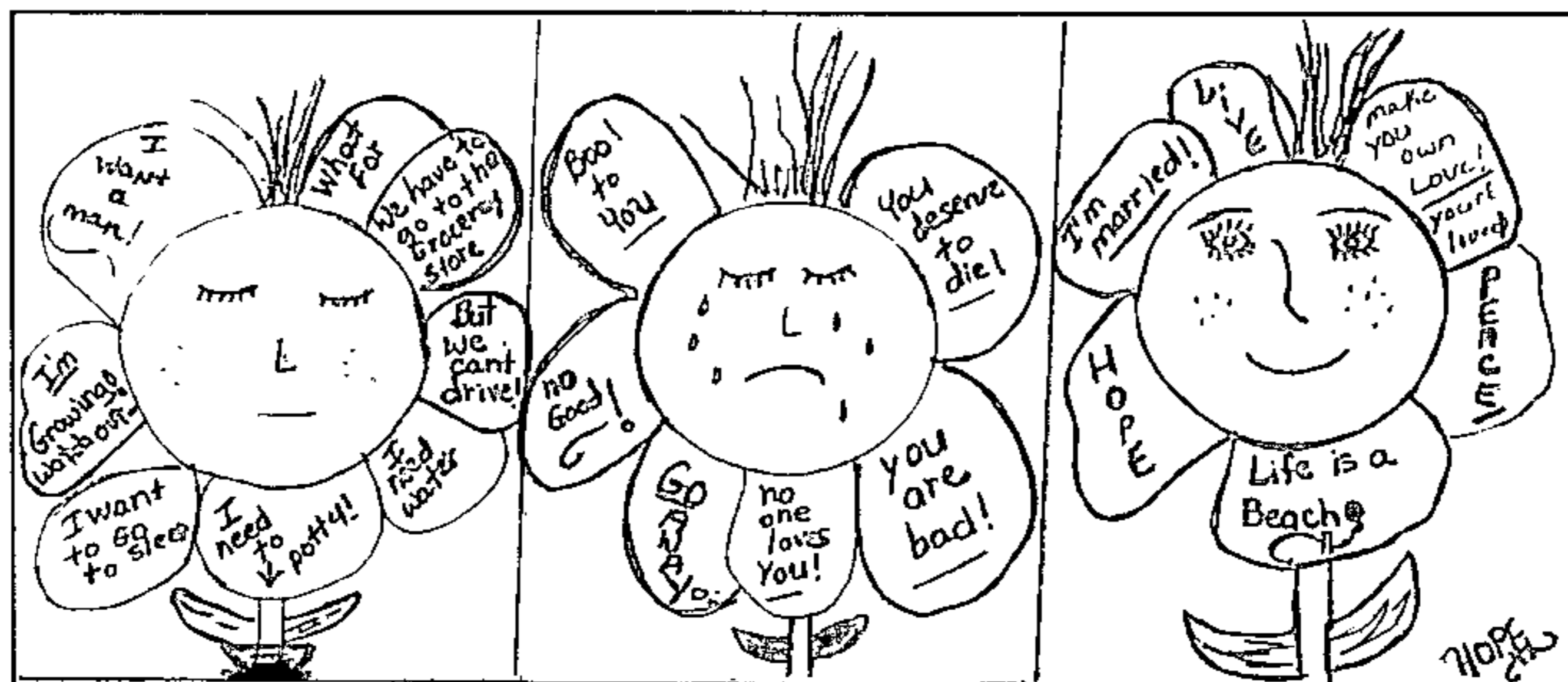
Cued responses were taught. It is important to identify the cues so you don't accidentally die.

If you feel you are going to hurt yourself, call your therapist, crisis hot line, or go into the hospital. Please don't act. Do not cut yourself or take pills. Someone may not rescue you.

The black cloud is just a cloud. It doesn't snuff out life. Your life is important. Check into a hospital until the storm passes. Take a stuffed animal friend along, too. Remember you are an important person. Draw a picture of you. You are not going to let your abusers win! Neither are we! We love and care about you.

(All my five hospital admissions were for suicidal ideation/acts. Since 1992, I have been able to remain out of the hospital and rarely contemplate suicide. When the thought comes up, I know it is a programmed response to something going on in my life. I do think the kidz make some good points. These things we do to stay safe are inexpensive, or simply self-reminders.)

MV



2 poems by Shari

Casualties of War

Nurse! Bedpan! Nurse! Marco calls
 from behind the walls
 of 305. His bedridden body creaks.
 My strong body speaks to me in
 pictures, hexed
 by squirrel-squeaks, rodents
 mummified to silence.
 Two young boys warn me I'm next.

Marco's been invaded by aliens, but
 different than mine:
 His time-bomb body the war-zone
 where doctors
 find the cancer in his mind,
 irradiate his distress and let him rest
 in peace.
 The young doctors tell me I'm next.

They stand safely at Marco's
 bedside,
 his dying body shrouded in sheets.
 At the edge of my clouded dreams
 they watch me
 dodge mind-mines and dead
 squirrels that only I see.

Dragonflight

Alex, dragon slayer, now you are
 a ghost inside the closet where
 you died.
 Closets where the nightmare
 dragons hide
 in boxes filled with unrelenting cries.
 I ran to you, you held me
 with your eyes;
 you quieted my screams but
 strangled yours.
 You told me box by box to
 take each down,
 Tame the dragons in your closet,
 you implored.
 You urged me open boxes
 unexplored.
 Death-driven like a moth
 to perverse light
 you relented and gave up
 the dragon fight.

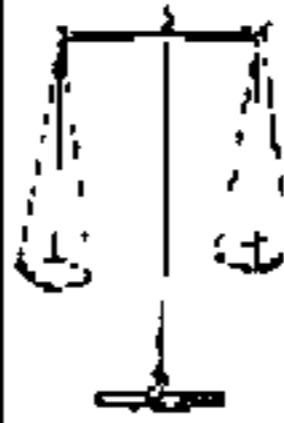
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Angels:



**THE CENTER FOR TRAUMA AND
 DISSOCIATION**
 4400 East Iliff Avenue
 Denver, Colorado 80222
 1-800-441-6921
 Dr. Nancy Cole, Clinical Director

Advocates:



**NATIONAL TREATMENT CENTER for TRAUMATIC
 & DISSOCIATIVE DISORDERS**
 Del Amo Hospital
 23700 Camino Del Sol
 Torrance, CA 90505
 1-800-645-3305 or 310-530-1151
 Walter C. Young, M.D., Medical Director

Friends:

**RENAISSANCE TREATMENT SERVICES for Dissociative
 Disorders**
 Green Oaks at Medical City Dallas
 7808 Clodus Fields Drive
 Dallas TX 75251
 (214) 991-9504 Ext. 868
 Rekha Pole, M.D., Medical Director

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By Stacy Joy

Grieving Our Sorrows

The death of our eighteen year old son last year has been the catalyst that has finally reached a place of grieving within us. We have two paths before us. One, deeper into the numb silence that feels safe but keeps us trapped — or one through the pain to healing. The problem with choosing the second path after so many years of choosing the first, is that there is a mountain of grief waiting behind the numbness. The new grief about our son gets all tangled up with the old unresolved grief about the deaths of our brother and nephew. The pain triggers awareness of the death of our own innocence and the despair of our lost youth and dreams. The whole process has often felt overwhelming and hopeless.

Often I just want a big lap to crawl up into and just cry till there is no pain left. I also do not trust anyone enough to allow them to see how vulnerable I am. So far, the only way I can stay on the second path is just to keep writing and talking about what it might feel like to have that safety. Never-the-less, I/we know that each new day brings a whole new set of possibilities. Today may bring the piece of my life's puzzle that will solve this problem. Today, I may learn how to cry. Today, I might find a way to allow arms to comfort me. Today, I might learn how to forgive myself. Today, this is how I/we deal with the grief.

By Wendy Lee

Here are some ideas that my therapist and I found to help deal with grief and loss:

1. Performing a simple rag doll burial by myself in a beautiful, secluded, wooded area, was a wonderful healer for a funeral of a child that I was not able to attend many years earlier, and for whom I'll always grieve. He was my first son.

2. Creating a phone list and calling everyone on it, until someone answers, is a big help. I keep this handy for emergencies! Besides 24-hour hotline numbers to call (for example, suicide hotlines) did you know that hospitals even have staff available in emergency rooms to talk on the phone? Many times these wonderful hospital social workers have affirmed that I'm not the only dissociative person around, and talk me through a crisis, even volunteering to meet me in the emergency room if I don't think I'll make it!

3. Yellow is the color of hope. So if nothing else helps, at least I wear a yellow comb in my hair, or put on some clothing with yellow in it.

4. To ask for help, I check out library books on the subject I need help with! For instance, if I'm having a problem dealing with grief, I look up "Grief" in the library, and books on MPD and other survivor types associated with incest/child abuse issues. Sometimes video tapes and cassettes are available too.

Then I read to find out how others have coped, and list their different techniques. Some go to their ministers for help. Others check out groups at local hospitals, or clinics in the area. And some seek counselors, therapists.

Finally, I take action! I go through the list and seek similar help. Lots of times, several sources have helped, each in their own way. What a nice reward for my efforts!

Good luck in your research, everyone, and don't be afraid to take some action! A little bit sure can go a long way!

By Diana Barnum

I am really sad today because our group leader's son drowned. We get to go to the memorial service, and it hurts so much 'cause we love her so much. I am trying to work hard at being good and healthy so that we'll be in good shape when she comes back to work.

We knew him since he was a little boy and he went to our school. I don't know why so many people have to die. This year, three did: a student of ours killed herself, our dad died, and now her son. Guess I shouldn't stay sad but I am sad today.

Love, Angel

MV



Recovering

By CC and Co.

(CC and Co. is a case manager at a hospital, and is also recovering from a dissociative disorder)

Good Grief!

Grief work must be an ongoing process throughout the recovery from Dissociative Identity Disorder. We make this statement not only from our own experience but from the perspective of a helping professional who witnesses others process their grief and loss. We believe that those of us who suffer from a dissociative disorder have protected ourselves from experiencing pain as much as possible, which creates multiple layers of unresolved grief and loss.

The first part of the recovery process usually begins from the perspective of the alters who deal with the external world and who must realize they are not alone. This realization creates anger, resentment, and finally acceptance that "I" is really a "We". What a loss to accept that somehow you were traumatized as a child and as protection you fragmented into different selves! Overwhelming feelings of sadness force you to accept that grieving is part of what needs to be done to achieve health.

The second stage of grief and loss occurs as each layer of the internal world comes forward to add its piece to the puzzle. Each alter must deal with the same grief and loss issues, therefore, it becomes a cycle whereby someone within the system is always working on grief and loss.

Dissociative Disorders are defense mechanisms that we have used to protect us from the reality of our world. We have lived in our own secret world for so long that it feels safe and comfortable.

Our disorders have protected us from the horror of our past, and the thought of giving them up generates the feeling of loss. Each time a memory surfaces it makes waves throughout the system. This new piece of knowledge passes from one alter to the next, and a small portion of our "fairy tale" life history must be given up.

This is a difficult task. The reality of the past must be faced, processed and integrated. We have never met anyone eager to replace their "fantasy" life with their worst nightmare. However, progress means gaining strength by really knowing *who you are*. The excruciating loss comes from giving up the dreams of *who you thought you were*. To us, knowledge and loss go hand in hand. Acceptance generates havoc, because we recognize that we do not have the family we always wanted, and we realize that the childhood we always wanted can never be.

Another loss we have felt profoundly is the isolation that this disorder creates. Who can you tell? Not many people understand. We have known that our reality was a "we" for six years. Our family validated the diagnosis and we were excited with our new identities. However, the reality is that we have lost most of our friends during the process of recovery and almost lost our job. This makes us profoundly sad. We really wanted to believe that the stigma of having a "mental illness" was part of the past. We were forced to learn that the majority of the public still "blames the victim." We are more careful now who we tell, but we regret the loss of so many important relationships.

We finally acknowledge that to break all the layers of denial we must accept that the people who were entrusted with our care as a child failed us. *What a loss!* Not only were our secrets encased in stone, they were buried so deep that only after eight years of therapy have our truths begun to reveal themselves enough to break down these walls of denial.

We constantly say to ourselves, "Good Grief, what is wrong with us that we have not followed the normal pattern of recovery? Why are we taking so long? We should be done by now?" More Shame! More Blame! We

get angry because so much time, money, and energy has been spent learning who we are. Anger is also a part of the grief process and we understand this now. We must be allowed to grieve periodically. We now understand that recovery is a process, and that there are no magic pills or magic wands that can fix us. We recognize that it is hazardous to our health to push too hard and fast. We must always remind ourselves that each of us has our own time frame. We must give ourselves permission to remember that each of us with a dissociative disorder is a *unique* individual. When we are ready to accept more pieces to *our puzzle* they will be revealed to us. We will grieve our losses repeatedly but each time with a different perspective than before. We now concede that slow and steady wins the race.

MV

Rejection

Oh! How it hurts to be rejected.

To have someone who says

I love you.

I care for you.

I understand you,

and I want to be there for you.

And then when you feel trust within yourself and them,

Then it's all taken away.

They no longer,

Love you

Care for you,

Understand you,

or want you.

You are too much for them to handle, understand, or take care of.

So again, you are all alone.

As it was before

all alone.

By Mary Judith S.

Therapist's Page

By Christine for the Clan

Christine is a professional counselor who is recovering from a dissociative disorder.

In the June 1995 issue of MV, a woman wrote about her difficulty in being denied health insurance after admitting to her diagnosis as a multiple. I would like to address this since I have just spent months researching getting myself health insurance once my COBRA ran out. I talked to about fifteen different agents for the few companies that offer individual coverage that I needed. I experimented with what I could say and what would guarantee that I would not get more than catastrophic coverage, if any at all. One agent told me, after I admitted to having had "some" therapy in the last 60 months, (which I called only "mild depression" to her) that she checked and noted in my file as I applied, that the company would not exclude me for that diagnosis, but might not cover further therapy for that diagnosis, but they would for a *different* diagnosis. She went on about how she hoped I didn't turn out to be a schizophrenic, since they "don't like to pay for therapy every week, week in and week out." Pretty frustrating to hear, as a client and therapist both! I discovered a lot of

shysters and agents who do not know their product, but I learned a few tricks of the trade as well that I would like to share.

It is important to know when applying for health insurance, anything that has been paid for by cash does not have to be reported to the insurance company for which you are giving a history. I have been told this directly from the agent from whom I bought my policy. Some policies will go back up to 60 months (5 years) of your medical history...wanting to know what doctors, therapists, medications, hospitals you have been to, and why. So if you have paid for any therapy out of pocket, that does not have to be reported. If you pay for any medication out of pocket, that doesn't have to be reported. So, since my COBRA only covered \$2,000 of therapy a year (which I use up in about 2 months!) I only reported that I had been in therapy for two months of 1995. When they asked why, I was not about to give out my diagnosis, knowing that once that kind of confidentiality is breached, there is no way to control who else gets that information. So, I

experimented with different companies as I learned. To some agents I said I am an "incest survivor," then I toned it down to "anxiety," then I only mentioned "mild depression after the break up of a relationship" (which had been partially true 3 years ago!), then only that I had mild depression from stress and overwork. I learned the same hard way how to tell an agent that I take a prescription medication, Klonopin. I always avoided saying my diagnosis, but first admitted to taking an anti-anxiety medication. After talking to my psychiatrist, she said she would never breach confidentiality, and since she has often prescribed this medication as a sleeping pill, I could say that, and she would back me on it.

I have discovered that they handle checking the information on the application in at least one of three ways. First, they may call you on the phone and verify the information, and make sure what you wrote on the application comes out the same on the phone. (So be sure you keep a copy of the information you put on your application.)

Cont'd. on page 7

Resources

I.S.S.U.E., a women's self-help support group, is sponsoring its first public art show of incest-survivor art and writings. See this exhibit **Oct. 19-Nov. 11** at **Westchester Community College**, Downtown Gallery, in **White Plains, New York**. Call Fran at (914) 245-4648 for special showings.

If you have a **World Wide Web/Internet** connection, you can reach the index home page of "Ritual Abuse, Ritual Crime, and Healing." The address is <http://www.xroads.com/rainbow/rahome.html> or else <ftp://ftp.xroads.com/pub/rainbow> This is a volunteer effort by survivors. Support them at rahome@xroads.com !

While on this subject, *Many Voices* now has an e-mail address (tho I'm still not 100% past online-phobia). You can e-mail us at LynnWatMV@aol.com. I'll try to be good and check the mail frequently! (I still

don't post anything, as of this writing. One step at a time...)

Safe Space Inc. is presenting a conference **Oct. 27-28** in **Rochester, New York**. The theme is **Sexual Abuse Trauma and Recovery: Solving the Puzzle**. Call Carol D'Agostino at (716) 723-7795 for information.

A Celebration of Healing for survivors of childhood sexual abuse will be held **Oct. 21** in **South San Francisco**. For details, call (415) 728-0339.

Volunteers wanted to distribute self-help publication *In Search of Healing*. Call 505/880-8683 for information.

Workshops designed specifically for non-offending mothers of abuse survivors, partners of sexual abuse survivors, and a therapeutic movement/exercise class are offered by **Marcie Mitler, M.Ed.** in

Cambridge, MA. Call (617) 497-5283 for information.

Attention—people recovering from trauma and dissociation: If you have not sent in your free survivor ad (50 words, classified style) for *MANY VOICES/MULTIPLE CHOICES* resource guide — do so immediately. It's late, but I'll try to work it in! A few display ad spaces (business card size and larger) are also available. Write to MV-ADS, PO Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201 or call (513)531-5415.

Therapist's Page, Cont'd.

Second, they may contact any or all of those doctors. You must have an understanding with your doctors about what information to release. To tell any insurance carrier that we take Klonopin for anxiety, or for being multiple, will not only breach confidentiality about the diagnosis, but will guarantee that this medication will be excluded by a rider from the policy. Worse, the disclosure of anxiety medication could result in a rider eliminating anything concerning mental health benefits, medications, or possibly would keep the insurance company from issuing any policy at all.

The third way all insurance companies check is through an organization called M.I.B., or the Medical Information Bureau. M.I.B. operates like a clearing house. It keeps records reported by doctors to them on the medical history of Americans for the last seven years. By their own claim, they have records on only two of every twenty Americans, but if they

have something on you, I believe it is best to know this before applying for insurance. You don't want the insurance company to find out first. Sometimes their information is in error, and M.I.B. is eager to correct errors. You can contact M.I.B. yourself at Box 105, Essex Station, Boston, MA 02112.

They will suggest that you probably do not need to check with them, since they have information on such a small number of people, but they will also enclose an application for the information. If you choose to have your file checked, there is an \$8 fee. I checked, and they had no file on me at all, to my relief.

I finally applied to two different companies, and had a month to choose between the two and still get my money back. One qualified policy came after three weeks, while the other company dragged its feet, seemingly unable to locate my psychiatrist to check on my medication. Despite my giving the

agent the phone number for the M.D., I was running out of time and had to make a decision between the companies. The second company was still unable to "find" the M.D. by the end of the month. I chose to take the first and more expensive coverage I qualified for. It included the Klonopin, but the only mental health benefits are for substance abuse...something I didn't know until after receiving the policy, several weeks after paying the premium. I cancelled the second, cheaper policy, since if they decided to decline my application for any reason, I would then have *that* on my record. Though I would have preferred the cheaper of the two policies, I am relieved to have a policy at all. I am glad to be able to share my education and tips with any of you who may be looking for insurance. As a client and a therapist, I think your recovery should be confidential, and people should not be denied health insurance coverage simply because they are working hard to become more healthy.

MV

This poem was created out of my grieving a double loss: that of my "real" identity and also, as my healing process continues, the loss of my inflated fantasies, in my ongoing struggle for self-acceptance. - LJ

Lost Treasure

It's been so hard
Trying to find me
Crushed between two forces
That battle for control

"You could be great
Your life could be
Incredible, awesome
You could be so beautiful
Wondrous things could happen
Just wait"

Versus

"Terrible things
Could happen in life
Something hideous might be there
Waiting
Just
Don't move."

Look underneath
Mom and Dad
Magnificent dreams opposing
Unspeakable horrors

Dazzling me
Terrorizing me
Never once telling me
How to find the reality
Of who I am

Never good enough
Never safe enough
Never giving me anything
To go on

Painting me over
Pounding me into passivity
How can I say
What is me
How can I become

Only wait for the magic
Only pray for some mercy
I am lost
In stars that blind me
In storms that batter me
No wonder it seems
I've gone away somewhere

Where did I go
In the midst of all the thunder
Am I willing to find out
Who was lost
Can she be coaxed back
What would I need
To be able to do that

If she does return
Would I remember
Not to scare her
With raging storm-clouds
Of my own

Could I learn
Not to drown her
With huge tears
I might feel tempted to pour down
If it turns out that
She's not someone
Destined for greatness
Just a human girl, after all

*By Lori J, from Kathy and
Jeremy for Lost Child*

MV

Question: Is there Hope for Me?

By Viv T.

We who are diagnosed as multiples, or now the politically-correct "Dissociative Identity Disorder" (it took me four months just to understand and accept the old diagnosis), live in a self-made prison. Most prisons have windows, and some form of doors to escape by, but not this prison. It is small by size, and yet expansive. You can only shift prisoners room to room, or cell to cell. We all have certain feelings and yet just as in a prison, we are all here for a different cause, with not much hope for parole. Most all of us will claim we are innocent, but there are the few that are so hardened that they seem to deserve to be locked up. Then there are those who do not follow the rules and end up in solitary — for how long, I do not know. Only time will tell, and do I want to hear what *they* have to say?

As in a prison, there are the tough guys, and the weak ones. There are those who were sexually abused, there are those who are fearful of their lives, not knowing who will perpetrate this. Then there are the self-assured ones, the ones who know the ropes, and fear nothing. It is a prison that has its riots, and all speak at once. All want to be free. The frustration, and the possible hostage taking, is due to knowledge

that they can never be set free. The unfortunate truth is that there really isn't an *escape*. They are all stuck in the crevices of my mind waiting for the day of the *melting pot*.

It is painful every day. You wonder what voices you will hear today and what direction you will be taken, and how many times. You have to be careful who you tell. We have an overseer, who doesn't allow any type of information, or potential unacceptable behavior that may alert others to our disorder. We are very misunderstood. We are smart, and very alert. Some of us have professional jobs; some don't. However, because we are so diversified, we usually have an alter who excels in everything we do.

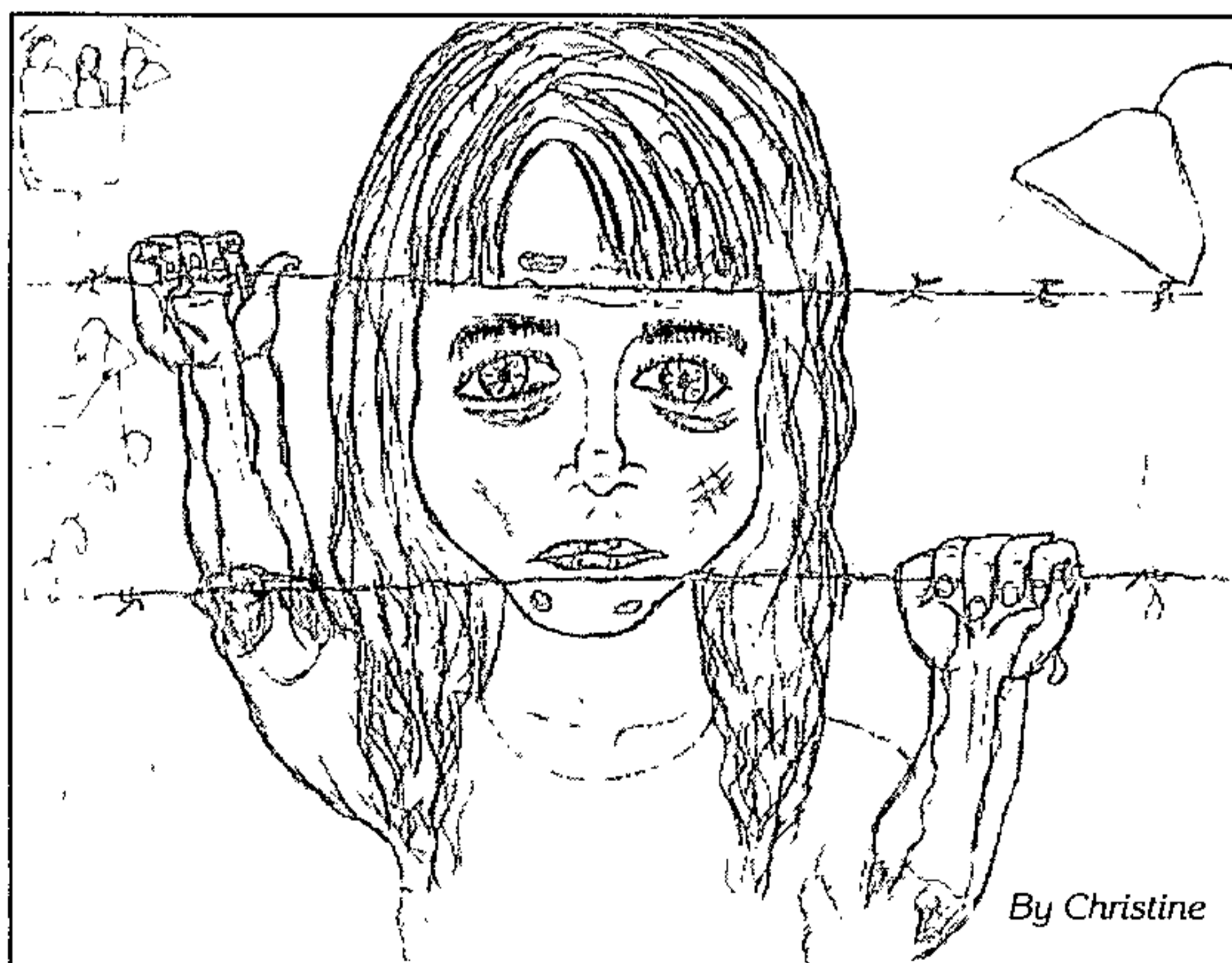
We try everyday to follow that everlasting journey upon which we tread with faith. We find obstacles, not of a kind that are endured in the Army or Marines boot camp, but the kind that tear your heart out, that sneak into your very being with fear, shame and worthlessness.

These are not trials and tribulations, these are mental games that are played with those who dwell in the mental prison (aka concentration camp). Your mind becomes the battleground which leads to the

explosion of emotions. It is during this time that the enemy will writhe his way into one of those cracks and fester his poison. They work and work at it until the only thought on your mind is how worthless you are, and even though everyone is relaying to you the wonderful work you have done in their lives, you cannot believe nor accept that, because it all melts into one great big lie within your being. The only presumable truth that raises to the surface is that you are trash and you are making a mockery of life by being alive — thus, you should be dead.

We are not freaks of nature. We are not freaks. We are a product of freaks and *their* nature, and *we survived*. You do not know what it is like to feel so much hate and despair against yourself. It was ingrained to your bone marrow. You do not know the fear that one like me lives with daily? Fear that I will be left alone to wither away with my atrocities and traumas, and yet, somewhere deep within, to be alone is sometimes the thing I wish for most. *Alone with silence*. When you find out what we are, if we feel comfortable enough to tell you, keep in mind that we are not in the entertainment business and do not switch on command for your whim and pleasure.

Cont'd. on Page 9



Hope for Me? Cont'd.

The truth of it is, that some of us cut and draw our own blood. It communicates, throughout the system, the loss of some of the poison that we see and feel within ourselves, but it is never enough. It does not make the pain change, it only allows momentary comfort and peace. So momentary that you find yourself repeating the ritual, over and over again. You are then left with an additional secret to add to your other cryptic information. You want to tell someone so that they may know the pain that you are in, but you must remember that this is not acceptable behavior to the outside world, so you are careful who you tell, if anyone, because you are terrified. You are no longer *just* a multiple, but a self-mutilator also. Will it ever reach a manageable level? You are left with numerous scars once more, only these the world can see and not comprehend.

All your life you worked so hard to keep the defiling traumas, horrible vicious acts perpetrated upon your very

being (usually in darkness, secret, and/or day and night as in a "war zone"), from affecting you, and pretended so very hard, so very long that none of those crazy people or events achieved their goals to assassinate, maim, or crack you. You thought if you just quest hard enough, you will survive to be sane one day (*whatever that is*). Then one day, month, or year, you find yourself back at the same doorsteps of the horror you thought you had traveled millions of miles from and had successfully escaped detection. You truly thought you were free from this nightmare that replayed itself over and over again, until you lost count. You thought that there were no longer any lingering traces of this horror left behind in you. "Do we need to meet some sort of criteria of continuous suffering to qualify for peace?" you ask, as you numb the pain with various mind- and mood-altering drugs and alcohol, to no avail. That just enhances your particular alter(s) at the time. Now you can add an alcoholic and/or drug addict to the equation, as you attempt

to live each day as a normal (*definition please?*) human being.

There are continuous whispers ever-so-softly in my mind, "*Death will set you free.*" I'm sure they think I'm stupid enough not to know that they are trying to silence me so that I may never share any of my experiences with others, and maybe they know that my story may be powerful enough to change lives. Maybe they also know how tiring this battle is. We continuously try to round everyone up and stay or gain control. I liken it to an effort to get thousands of bees rounded up into a ring box.

We do not have the answers, but we are filled with questions. I only know that we need support and encouragement. The therapy is long and hard, and so easy to give up. The results, I hope, will deliver me from this "outlet mall" of voices and contradictions in my head. I have to continue on; I have experienced the alternative, and it's worse than the cure. "*We who are many, are one body in Christ.*" Ain't it the truth?

MV

Seeking a Support Team

By Sally and Elaine

Asking for help is risky, but necessary. At this point, my therapist and I know that some very difficult issues are ahead, and she has asked me to get a support team together before we set sail on these rough seas. Finding support has not been easy, but I've found some people who are compassionate and helpful beyond my expectations.

These supportive people are open to learning about D.I.D. and about my particular needs. They ask questions. They reach out to my whole family. They make themselves available and are not afraid of new experiences. They are rare in this world of legal, emotional, and "time management" self-protection.

To find these kind women, I have endured a lot of hurt. I have been judged as:

* Too ill: "You need more help than we can give."

* Too well: "You seem to be doing just fine!"

* Mysterious: "I don't want to get involved with this weird stuff — I don't understand it."

* Satanic: "Alters don't exist. They're demons. Pray and cast them out and you'll be healed."

* A liar: "Well, I only know one Sally. You're making up alters for attention."

* Deceived: "There's no such thing as biological depression. Medication won't help."

Just when I think I am doomed to suffer from loneliness and misunderstanding in this struggle for healing, God brings a refreshing person into my life:

* My best friend (who lives 1,500 miles away) will call. She's also D.I.D., and we relate to each other easily. We avoid "triggering" each other or calling when we feel suicidal at the same time. Then we turn to others.

* Another woman brought me delicious, healthy food to entice me when my body was refusing to eat.

* Friends from church watched our children for a few days while I was in the hospital and my husband had to work.

* Some people have offered to pray during a crisis.

* My husband's best friend is a great support to him. He and his wife listen well and give wise advice.

This is not the unified, cohesive, purposeful team I desired in my idealism, but these people are doing what they can to help, and I am very grateful. I wish I could better express to them what a lifeline they are. I had to ask for help from each of them, which was scary after so much rejection. Their generous responses have given me hope and the boldness to keep reaching out when my instinct is to withdraw. If you share this tendency to hide, take courage from my search. Many will turn you down, but there are loving, caring, willing people — gems worth digging for through otherwise rocky soil.

MV

Come Forth from the Shadows, and Live (dedicated to the Shadow People)

By The Clan

Heaviness to the very marrow, and aching with dull pain.

I want to move my fingers, holding the recorder, blowing softly,

the tears transformed into prayers of melody and melancholy

I long to feel the jig of the dulcimer hammers in my hands,
lightly dancing over the strings, lifting my spirit,
easing my pain.

But somehow *I can't* move. I can't lift up my body.

I cannot simply walk across the room,
pick up the instrument and play.

My life source has been cut off, tourniqueted for survival.

Too much to do. Too much to do.

Can't do it all.

How will I do it all?

(Why?)

I listen to the music, but *I need to create it*.

I need to have it flow from my heart,
through my breath, into my fingers,
vibrating through my body, all the healing tones.

I long to dance, leap into a springing step,
the sagging body coming alive,
like a fiddlehead fern, unfolding in the March snowfall.

But my body feels empty, yet made of lead.

I can't bear the pain of sitting still,
much less contemplating moving even just a finger.

Strange, but I *know* how to break this prison open,

I just can't coordinate body and spirit and mind
to move us across the room,
pick up the recorder and play,
tune the dulcimer and dance
and quite simply *live*
(and the pain slips away, replaced with a rising tide of life).

I want to give up. I want to die.

I want to just forget anything
before this moment, including this moment.

(I want to exist.)

If this existence is what is,
then I no longer want to be a part of what is.
Fuck what is.

But I know I hold the key,
and I know it is my choice,
and yet I continue to choose not
rather than live, breathe, move, dance, sing,
come forth from the shadows.

I dream, but can't ever seem to find the energy to create it.
I long for it, but can't quite stretch to reach it.

Inwardly I condemn myself for being weak,
spineless, a quitter,
not good enough, not accomplished enough.
I condemn and condemn until the spirit is broken again.
Pain and fear rule again.

You took so much from me.

How can I let you now take these gifts of
expression and life

years later and miles away?

Damn you! It's your voice I've become,
your criticism I've put on like lethargy:

Perfection, perfection, perfection.

I can't any longer pretend perfection.

I'm not one. I'm not whole.

I'm flawed, splintered and fractured.

I'm in pieces here on the ground
and can't get together enough to stand up.

Dry bones in the desert, apart and in pieces.

They'll never walk this earth again.

Leave them for lost.

Leave them for dead.

Hopeless.

NOOOOO!!!

*We will pull this body and these spirits together
and*

WE WILL SING, letting our voice be released!

WE WILL DANCE, shaking off the lethargy!

WE WILL CREATE MUSIC,

pray the pain through the recorder,

vibrate with beauty through the dulcimer!

WE WILL WRITE our truth, our love and our life!

*WE WILL LIVE AND LET LIFE COME FORTH
FROM THE SHADOWS.*

Movies and Dissociation

by Phoenix Hunter

I love movies. As a child, I saw all the Walt Disney features, both animated and live action, that came to town. Hayley Mills' movies were the best. She played intelligent, special and spunky characters. My favorite animated feature was *101 Dalmatians*, with its jaunty music, adorable puppies, human "pets", and of course, Cruella DeVille. My parents took me to more adult fare, usually movies of historical events or people, sometimes musicals or comedies. For me back then, movies were an escape from the horrors at home and a window on a wider world of experience. They still are. And I've learned that movies can also play a role in my healing from childhood abuse.

Movies are stories. Good movies totally engage the viewer, emotionally and intellectually, in the characters and story. As powerful as storytelling is orally or on paper, movies possess a special power which arises from the combination of visual immediacy, real people acting characters, and the larger-than-life effect of viewing them on a theater screen with the added bonus of state-of-the-art sound. Hollywood has mastered the art of creating film illusions that portray the world and human experience realistically, even in more fantastic science fiction stories.

Over the years, I've tried to be more aware of how I respond to the elements that make movies such a powerful story experience, especially as someone healing from childhood abuse. I suspected that in the past I might have dissociated during scenes of graphic violence, particularly involving sharp weapons and lots of blood, and during nude or "steamy" sex scenes. I learned to read movie reviews for warnings about explicit violence and sex, and for plot summaries. I avoided horror films. They were too close to my childhood abuse experience. Although I learned to protect myself from potentially damaging movies, nothing prepared me for my experience in September 1992.

That month, *The Last of the Mohicans* opened in local theaters. I had grown up in James Fenimore Cooper country hearing the *Leatherstocking Tales*, of which *The Last of the Mohicans* is the first, and hiked with family through the fields, woods and valleys of Cooper country. As a child, Cooper's stories fascinated me. I believed his characters were real, not fictional, people. My hero was Chingachgook, the Mohican who had adopted and raised Hawkeye, the hero of the stories. Often on those childhood hikes through the woods, I had wished for Chingachgook to appear, carry me away and adopt me, too.

I wanted to see the movie. I prepared as usual, reading as much about the film as I could find. I already knew the story. The movie had been shot in North Carolina and contained some scenes of graphic violence. I reasoned that the story's time, during the French and Indian Wars, had been a violent one in American history. Michael Mann, the director, had endeavored to make the film as authentic as possible regarding dress, manners, weapons, the Native American involvement, and the motives of the people in the 18th century. It seemed to me that the only thing I needed to brace myself for was the explicit violence.

One Sunday afternoon a friend and I went to the movie. It opens with a vista of mist-shrouded mountains, a familiar landscape from my childhood. Then it moves down to the forest and a sequence of Hawkeye (played by Daniel Day-Lewis) running through the woods. I was shocked that the forest so closely resembled the woods I'd hiked through as a child. I began to feel as if a mist was enveloping my head. At the same time, I was thinking, "He's running!" The last time I'd seen Day-Lewis, he'd been in a wheelchair as Christy Brown in *My Left Foot*. Chingachgook (played by Russell Means) appeared, scurrying up a steep trail. My childhood wish had been granted at last — Chingachgook was right there in front of me. But the fog around my head persisted, thickened. I knew something was wrong, but not what. I felt an inner agitation, usually a signal of fear, but I dismissed it. Nothing threatened me. It was just a movie.

The inner agitation and fogginess continued. I paid no attention to them, focusing on the movie instead. Dialogue sounded garbled to me at times, and I wondered what was wrong with the audio. Some scenes appeared blurry to me. I felt as if I was only half there in the theater seat, but attributed that dissociative sensation to the scenes of bloody violence, a reaction I had anticipated.

After the movie, during the drive home, my friend and I discussed the film. I asked her if there had been problems with the sound. No. She talked about a crucial scene that preceded the big massacre, and I disagreed with her assessment of it. She gave me a puzzled look. I wondered if I'd missed some dialogue somewhere. By the time I arrived home, though, I had concluded that something had been seriously wrong with my hearing and vision, and it had begun during the opening sequence of Hawkeye running through the woods.

As the days passed, I experienced the confusion and panic accompanying

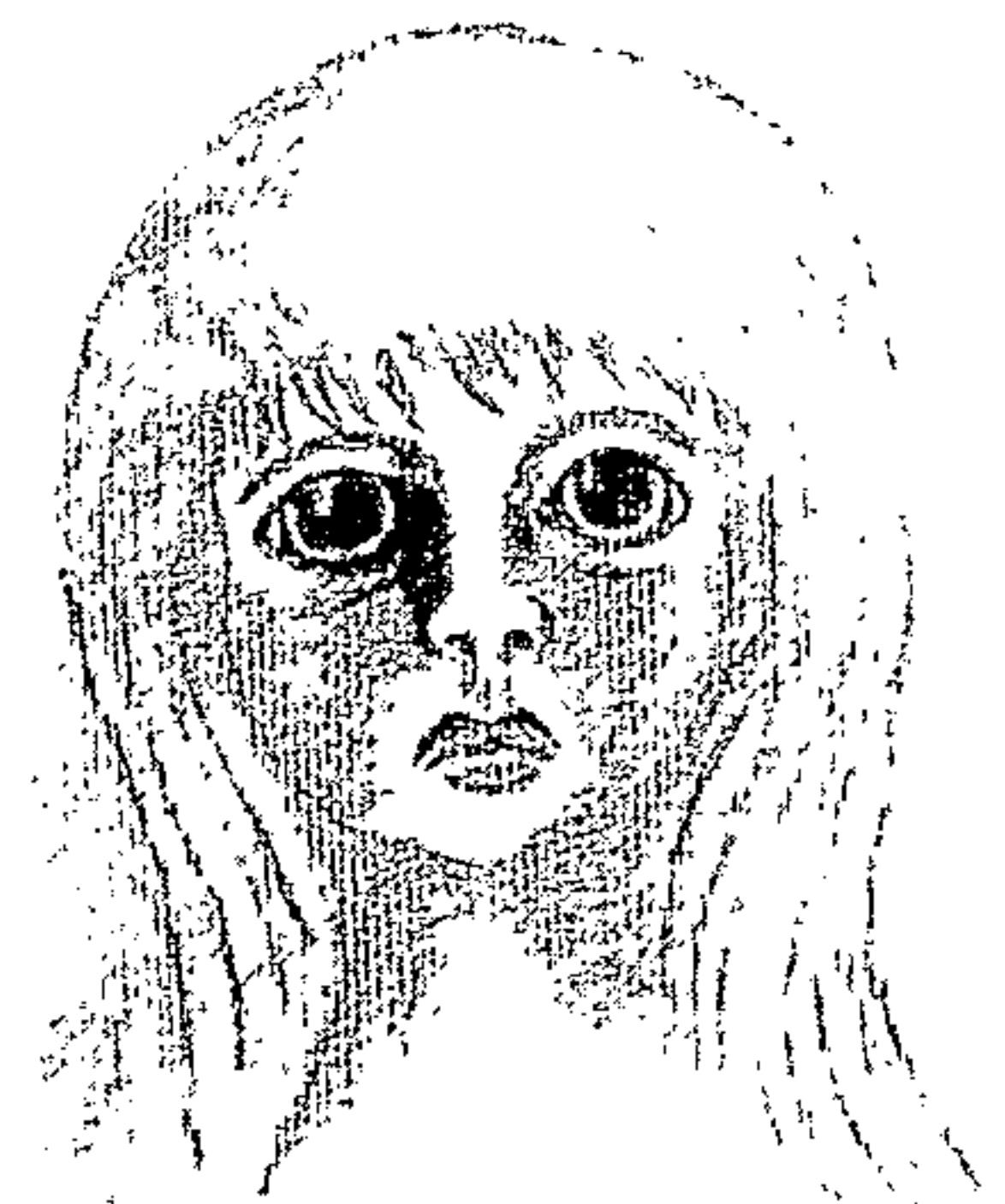
intensified Post-Traumatic Stress. My therapist and I discussed my reaction to the movie. I realized that at the beginning, the forest had frightened me to my core because of its close resemblance to the woods I'd hiked through as a child. It took two weeks for the memory of being sexually abused in the woods to emerge; but when it did, I understood, finally, why as a child hiking in the woods I'd wished for Chingachgook to appear, take me away and adopt me.

I returned to the same theater to see the movie again. This time, I did not dissociate but the fear remained. I was surprised how much of the film I'd missed the first time. It would take two more viewings before I felt no fear, *The Last of the Mohicans* was truly just a movie, and I'd identified all the elements that had caused my dissociation the first time.

Now I know that movies are an entertaining escape most of the time, but sometimes they can trigger dissociation and abuse memories. Movies can also serve as a window on my inner world for therapy, when a character reminds me of one of my abusers or a film situation brings up issues, feelings and behavior choices I can discuss with my therapist.

I still love movies. However, I'm even more discriminating about what I see in a theater, where movies are their most powerful. So, I bought a VCR. With it, I watch the movies I choose not to see in a theater. I have total control over the experience (and can stop a movie for a bathroom break). The best part of owning a VCR? Watching all my favorite Walt Disney feature films again, which bring back only good, pleasant memories.

MV



2000

Letters

This month we have received letters from several people who are puzzled and hurting. I'll print excerpts, and if some of you have suggestions that might help, send them to MV and I'll forward them. Also, if J.&J. from California reads this, please write again and include your address so I can send you information. Thanks! — Lynn W.

I wanted to write to you about my experiences as an MPD. It is absolute hell and prison, and I don't know how to get out.

I used to see your paper in therapy, and it would make me feel hopeful to know there were others like this in the world, and living life. I believed there was hope. But I don't anymore. Now if I read it, I get angry! Because it seems like all the people who write have some type of help, something to keep them going, and I don't have that. Why can't I find help here where I live? There is none.

I am a 32-year-old single mom of two. For four years I have struggled with MPD, divorce, poverty, stress as a single mom, no family, no friends, no system, and day-after-day problems. I am unable to work because I am so broken, but I feel massive shame because I don't work. I avoid people because of what I am. I don't blame myself for it all, but I know from experience that most people want nothing to do with a person if they are like this. I feel like I am in a prison of shame.

I was in therapy for a few years, but it was not helping. I felt the person I was working with did not realize how bad things were, and that I needed a lot more than I was getting...She would brush off my complaints and blame it on my conditions. This left me feeling unheard...and once again, very *alone*. She would quickly validate my thoughts or opinions on anything else, but not ever my unhappiness or dissatisfaction with therapy. This would make me angry and distrustful. I feel she was not strong enough to work with me. I know I am no picnic to work with, but I need somebody who will stick with me even when things get tough. So I stopped going in.

But the only place in town to go for therapy (with Medicaid) is where she is. It is our local Mental Health Center, and I have never felt comfortable there. I don't feel they treat the clients very well...This does have to do with my own experiences, but they don't consider that. They just get angry. They do not show respect to me. So I cannot go there for therapy. So I am trapped!

My "world" is filled with distrust, fear, phobias, loneliness, guards, shame, belief that all people do not care, and that no one will ever like me. This is what I am trapped in! This is what keeps me in the house constantly. This is what keeps me from ever getting a job, from meeting people, from moving on with my life, from finding any happiness. The guards and distrust are so strong I can't get out! I know all this is from the past, but it's keeping me a prisoner now, even though it's ended. ...The fact is that no one has ever reached out to me and helped, nobody ever cared, and they still don't. For some reason that seems to be such a hard thing to find in people. You would think I was asking for a million bucks when all I need is for someone to care that I am here.

You need to know that there are a lot of people who can't find therapy. I know you put positive things in your paper for us to learn or have hope, but there is still a lot of ignorance and misunderstanding out there.

It's like there are people who are going through hell, but still have something left. Those people will get better, and live life. But there are some who have nothing left at all, and they are so full of despair they can't go on — like homeless people — and everyone just gives up on them. They don't even make an attempt to help them and society ignores them or hates them and thinks that is OK. That's what I'm like. This part of me has absolutely given up, but not one person even attempts to give it something to hold on to. Not therapists, or doctors, or counselors. My doctor told me he didn't think I could ever get better, because I'd been in therapy for so long.

That was the doctor at the local Mental Health Center, so he must know what he's talking about. My therapist's opinion didn't seem to matter to him at all. So I didn't feel she was very strong. And in the end, he would have more power than she would, so I didn't feel safe. Now I have nowhere to go. I'm too distrustful to have to work with different people if they don't respect each other's ideas.

So I have no hope of ever having a life. There is nowhere for me to go for therapy. I live a very isolated life. I look in the paper for groups or anything to join, but there is nothing. The one place I did have, didn't hear what I was saying.

I really hope you will print this so therapists will learn how difficult going in for therapy can be. We are carrying all this stuff with us, and feel scared and distrustful. The therapist needs to take our fears seriously, and sincerely reassure us. This is one thing I really need and have never found.

By Kathy L.



I seem to be having problems with me and my system. I realized I was "different" in college, did research, and decided I was MPD or worse. (I totally forgot I did this and just regained awareness about 2 years ago.) I started to have memories and talks with others inside about five years ago. Later I was hospitalized and told I was severely dissociative and/or MPD. I have a wonderful therapist, Becky. "They" (inside) sometimes talk to me about Becky...but they don't talk to her. I need validation from Becky that they exist, and she cannot give it, because she hasn't seen/met them. She is highly qualified and I trust her more than I trust anyone else. So I feel crazy with them (my system) and without them. There is this war inside. I often do "headwork", rather than "hard soul" stuff. Has anyone there had the same or heard of it? I need help and support!

By Desiree and the System

Cont'd. on Page 13

Letters, Cont'd.

I have been reading *Many Voices* for almost a year now and realize that it is meant to be "words of hope for people recovering from trauma and dissociation." Still, I don't really feel included in it, even though I am trying to recover from trauma and dissociation. It could be that I'm just not ready for it, but I don't find myself there. Certainly I can relate to much of what the artists and writers contribute, yet there is a big gap for me.

It seems to me that the newsletter presents almost exclusively "positive" information. MPD is seen from its "best side" — and I begin to wonder if I am the only one who, after years of effort, cannot accept my MPD, cannot live with it, don't want it, don't like it, and don't by any stretch of the imagination see it as a "gift." I become filled with rage and hate when I try to deal with it head-on. I can't stop therapy because the "parts" go wild, yet I am overcome with such hatred and anger that dealing with it (if that is possible) is *impossible*. So, as I see it, I can't live with it and I can't get rid of it.

I have sincerely tried everything that has been recommended to me therapeutically. I believe my therapist is tops in her field and our relationship is excellent. It really is me—I just can't do it! I read the stories and letters in *Many Voices* and it tears me apart. All those people can find a way to deal with this, so why can't I? It's been a long, hard struggle for very little payoff as far as I can tell. Is there anyone else out there who feels as I do?

By B.C.

MV

The Abyss of My Maternal Longing

By Edie Santa Cruz

If my mother had loved me...

we would have fond memories of so many years past. We would remember some of our "confidential and personal" conversations or what we had secretly bought together while shopping. We would talk of friends old and new and about our favorite music and the moods that different songs bring on. We would talk "woman talk" and wear each other's clothes. Maybe swap earrings.

If my mother had loved me...

I could have felt better about myself and enjoyed her support through school and strived to live up to her expectations and my potential. I could have called her when I was unable to decide on a topic for my paper in political science, her favorite subject, and hurried to tell her about the "A" I received, and credited my "A" to the help she had given me.

If my mother had loved me...

We could have stuck together through arguments, disagreements and make-ups, or when one of us suffered a set-back in our health. We could have cried together and laughed together or shared a joke or a special moment. I could have been your support when you were depressed or caught up in a bad memory. I could have simply been there for you. You could have been there for me.

We could have planted a garden of squash, string beans and tomatoes, dog sat for each other, spring-cleaned the house or nursed each other through our colds with chicken soup and sherbert. We could have given advice to each other whether asked for or not. We could have laughed together and cried together and spent two hours devouring our favorite lunch. Only the extent of my imagination could limit

how much we could have shared,

If my mother had loved me...

I no longer recall what you looked like or the sound of your voice. These have slipped into my subconscious where they will stay forever. I no longer look for you in a crowd. I no longer look at my hands and see yours. I have taken me back. When or if I should ever slip and think about "my mother" I will think of a tall, slender, light-haired woman much unlike what I have forgotten of you. And I will no longer have to think about

If my mother had loved me.

MV

Celebrate = Hope

MPD, Survivor, are just partial pictures of me. Yes, I and my alters must grieve and face the heavy losses we have suffered in life. There are times it is hard to work on our issues, but we have found hope by going to our board room to talk about our present and future. It's our place to dream dreams and make goals. My core personality and my alters vote on issues from adopting a motto for us: One for all and all for one! to trying to get in touch with what is the best way to plan our present and our future.

We have decided that we can't stay stuck in the past and allow the past abuse to rob

us of a present or a future. Our abusers wanted to rob us of life and our identity. We have determined to celebrate life as the best revenge. Celebrating each day the little things, and trying to live a full life, equals Hope to me and my alters.

Part of our survival came because we could use our creativity to cope against terrible things happening to us. Yet we can use that same gift to celebrate the present and the future! In a way, as an MPD, we are given a rare opportunity to discover our true identity for the rest of our life. It is like being given a gift that takes on many different forms and shapes. Non-MPDs

have some sense of their identity and it is like an old newspaper that has been read. We have the good fortune to discover who we are! We are like the latest news happening each day!

We refuse to allow the abusers from our past to win today by robbing us of the basic human rights, to experience joy, peace, and a fuller, richer life than we had in the past. My best friend got me a bumper sticker that really summed this up: "It's never too late to have a happy childhood." My child alters can have a better childhood today too. It is never too late to celebrate!

By Jan J.

MV

Great Things About Being a Multiple

By Renee

You can take 37 people to the movies for the price of one, and you only need one seat.

With child alters, you never need to worry about forgetting what it's like to be a child.

You really know how to play with your kids.

You're never alone. There's always somebody right with you.

Whenever you get tired of your name, you can use another one.

You're always up on the latest toys.

You have a well-rounded degree of interests. (Colleges love that!)

You can let your male alter answer the phone, to let people know there's a "man" in the house.

You never need "just one more person" to play a game.

You could make up a whole baseball team, with just yourself.

You can never say there's a dull moment.

You can take several people to the doctor for the price of one.

A good excuse for all those teddy bears.

Share your toys with your alters and they seem like new, all over again.

You never run out of names for getting Birthday Presents.

You can play 2-man Nintendo, by yourself.

No need for a pen-pal, you have your own "built in".

You really understand how to write dialogues for English class.

If you're allergic to something, you can send somebody out who isn't.

You're never bored.

If you don't know the answer, somebody else does.

You meet new people all the time.

With dissociation, you can be in two places at the same time.

You never forget those Nursery Rhymes.

If people don't like you, you can be somebody else.

It takes more than two hands to count the people you're "closest to."

You could be a great actress, with a little practice.

For You (To my therapist)

You talk of hope—

When I have none.

You talk of courage—

When I am empty.

You talk of strength—

When I feel helpless.

You talk of life—

When I see only death.

You say, "I believe you can do it."

How much that means.

Someone who knows me believes in me.

Someone who knows the worst of me believes in me.

Regardless.

Believes in me.

If anything can give me

hope, courage, strength and life—

Then it is you.

I owe you so much.

So I will try to save my life—

For you.

After a while a miracle may occur,

And I may try to save my life—

For myself.

For now,

You talk of hope—

And I feel there may be some.

You talk of courage—

And I hear distant memories.

You talk of strength—

And I begin to be brave.

You talk of life—

And I dare to start believing.

By Deirdre

MV

MV

Finding and Accepting Help

I've learned—the hard way—that before I ask someone for help I have to be sure I can deal with the possibility that they might say "No", or might be unable to give the kind of help I need, due to their own personal limitations. It's a risk to reach out for help, or to reveal our diagnosis, and there's no predicting how someone will respond. I've had some bad experiences with clergy who could not understand the difference between spiritual wholeness and psychological wholeness, and so couldn't reconcile dissociative disorders with their theological views. The result was their insistence that I am whole already, because of God. This amounted to a denial of the severity of my dissociative disorder, and also, therefore, of my sexual abuse as a child. Another difficulty with some clergy is their focus on action in the

world as evidence of wholeness. I am a high-functioning person, active in my profession and in the community. Nobody would ever guess I have D.I.D. Because I am co-conscious with all my alters and we cooperate with each other, I can "act like" a together person, even though the reality is I'm not. But you know as well as I do, the difference between *acting* and *being* is tremendous! And I want to *be* whole. I have the right to pursue that, and the right to grieve the abuse that caused me to dissociate in the first place—the abuse that shattered my *be-ing*.

Sometimes the person I most want to understand and help me is the very one who cannot—who is either unwilling or unable. I try to honor that person's rights and limitations, and so pull back to a more superficial relationship. Still, it hurts. It's a

disappointment. It's another loss to grieve. When that happens, I hold on to the hope I receive from those who do understand and support me in my healing process. My therapist is Number One! I couldn't make it without him. And there are a few others I can count on. I count on the many of you who have "Many Voices", too. I also take hope from the very fact that I am a multiple, because it speaks to my ability and my will and my determination to survive. Something in my very core knew that to preserve itself from the abuse, it had to split up, go separate ways. If I could split up, I can come together again. *There is hope!*

By Rachel

MV

Just in case you wonderful writers and artists don't realize how much you help others through MV — here is a letter that gives you the credit you deserve! THANK YOU! -LW

Dear MV,

I would like to thank those who write and publish *Many Voices*. I am a professional woman who has dealt with MPD (DID) all my life, though it was not correctly diagnosed until 1983. The Therapist's Page in August, '95, by Dr. Lois A. Toews, helped me to see there are respectable, sensitive professionals who sincerely understand and care.

Was it Alice in Wonderland to whom the Unicorn said, "If you believe in me, I'll believe in you?" So many times I've felt like the Unicorn. MPD has been both recognized and reported for 100 years, yet there are still many influential members of the medical community who do not "believe" in the diagnosis. Though I can understand that not every professional has treated a case, I cannot accept that they know so little about this disorder and consider themselves professionals. I have seen true psychotics accepted more readily!

We live in a small, rural community. Our mental health professionals are impatient with what they have told me is a rare disorder (if it even exists). We have been charted as "manipulative, unreasonable

and unmanageable." The parts who have sought emergency help in a crisis are treated with disbelief and contempt. My child parts are frightened and retraumatized by the process of being restrained, locked in seclusion, and denied outside contact. Other parts become confused and combative at the betrayal of trust and are reduced into submission with "therapeutic thiorazine" because they are labeled "dangerous." I have seen my nursing notes, and I am appalled.

Thanks to MV, I now realize I am not a psychological anomaly, and what I experience is normal for MPD. Though there are times when I cannot pass in society for what is considered "normal", I am not mythological. Thanks to others who are willing to share how they manage their disorder, and express themselves as they emerge. I continue to believe in surviving this "creative form of sanity". Thank you, to all the care-givers and survivors who put forth the effort to support, encourage, and inform through this wonderful newsletter!

Sincerely,
Zoie

MV



Grief

Denial: not comprehending that a loss has occurred

Anger: the loss is felt

Bargaining: it doesn't have to be that much of a loss, does it?

Sadness: effects of loss on soul

Acceptance: soul realizing it can go forward with loss.

The System we love/hate.

By Desiree and the System

Books

Managing Traumatic Stress Through Art: Drawing from the Center

By Barry M. Cohen, MA ATR, Mary-Michola Barnes, MA ATR and Anita B. Rankin, MA. © 1995. Published by The Sidran Press (410) 825-8888. 170 pgs. Softbound. \$19.95.

This is a really wonderful guide to self-healing through art. And you don't have to be an "artist" in any way, to benefit from it. Prepared by well-respected art therapists, this is more than a simple "Draw what you know" guidebook. It is carefully structured to encourage expression without compromising safety. To prevent an increase of symptoms caused by uncontrolled emotional release, guidelines include instructions to follow the topic, specific art materials, and time frame for each project. Materials are generally inexpensive and readily available. Some tear-out pages in the appendix are also used to facilitate the exercises. The first section, which covers Basic

Tools for Managing Stress, should be completed as described, to add stress-reduction skills if the later projects release unexpected emotions. The careful use of this book as it is intended can offer everyone the opportunity "to manage symptoms of traumatic stress in a creative, life-affirming way." Highly recommended.

Reach for Joy: How to Find the Right Therapist and Therapy for You

By Lynne D. Finney, J.D., M.S.W. © 1995. Published by The Crossing Press (800) 777-1048. 327 pages. Softbound. \$16.95.

Those of us who dissociate often have problems finding safe therapy that works for us. This book is designed to try to facilitate that process, giving guidelines for evaluating therapists for adults and children. It addresses special problems (alcohol, drug addiction, eating disorders etc.) and special concerns (sexual attraction during therapy, hospitalization, helping loved ones who

need therapy.) One particularly useful chapter is entitled "Can therapy make me worse?" Here, Finney (who is herself a counselor and abuse survivor) describes the necessary (and scary) process of getting in touch with feelings. She also states clearly "You do not have to be a basket case while you are going through therapy," and gives suggestions on how to avoid this development or stop it if things are out of control. Some of the opinions (on drugs for depression, and certain new types of therapy, for example) are not sufficiently documented for my taste. If I were going to pursue (or avoid) one or more of the therapies described here, I'd search out other viewpoints before making a final decision.

But to me, by giving potential therapy clients courage and a direction in which to seek competent, helpful therapy, this book is well worth the price and the time to study it. Everyone considering a change in therapy should check it out. —LW

MV

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Children of Terror (sculpture)

By Gaylene



December 1995

Is wholeness worth it? Post-integration reports. (Partial-integration comments included.) ART: Treating your self(ves) with love. DEADLINE: October 1, 1995.

February 1996

Beginning therapy for dissociation. First steps in crisis management, realistic expectations. Hope. Share your experience with those starting to heal! Glossary included. ART: Finding peace within. DEADLINE: Dec. 1, 1995

April 1996

Relationship Q and A, for men and women with DD and their partners. Your toughest problem and how you handle it. How do people in therapy find and maintain a (new) loving relationship? Ways to establish healthy social contact. ART: Sociable activities. DEADLINE: Feb. 1, 1996.

June 1996

Finding a new therapist. Dealing with loss and change in the therapy setting. How to pay for therapy. Coping when you're "in between" therapists. ART: Your ideal place for treatment. DEADLINE: April 1, 1996.

August 1996

Loving yourself into wholeness. How you learn to transform self-injury or self-defeating behavior into self-nurture and self-respect. Improving co-consciousness. ART: Healing wounds. DEADLINE: June 1, 1996.

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