

MANY VOICES

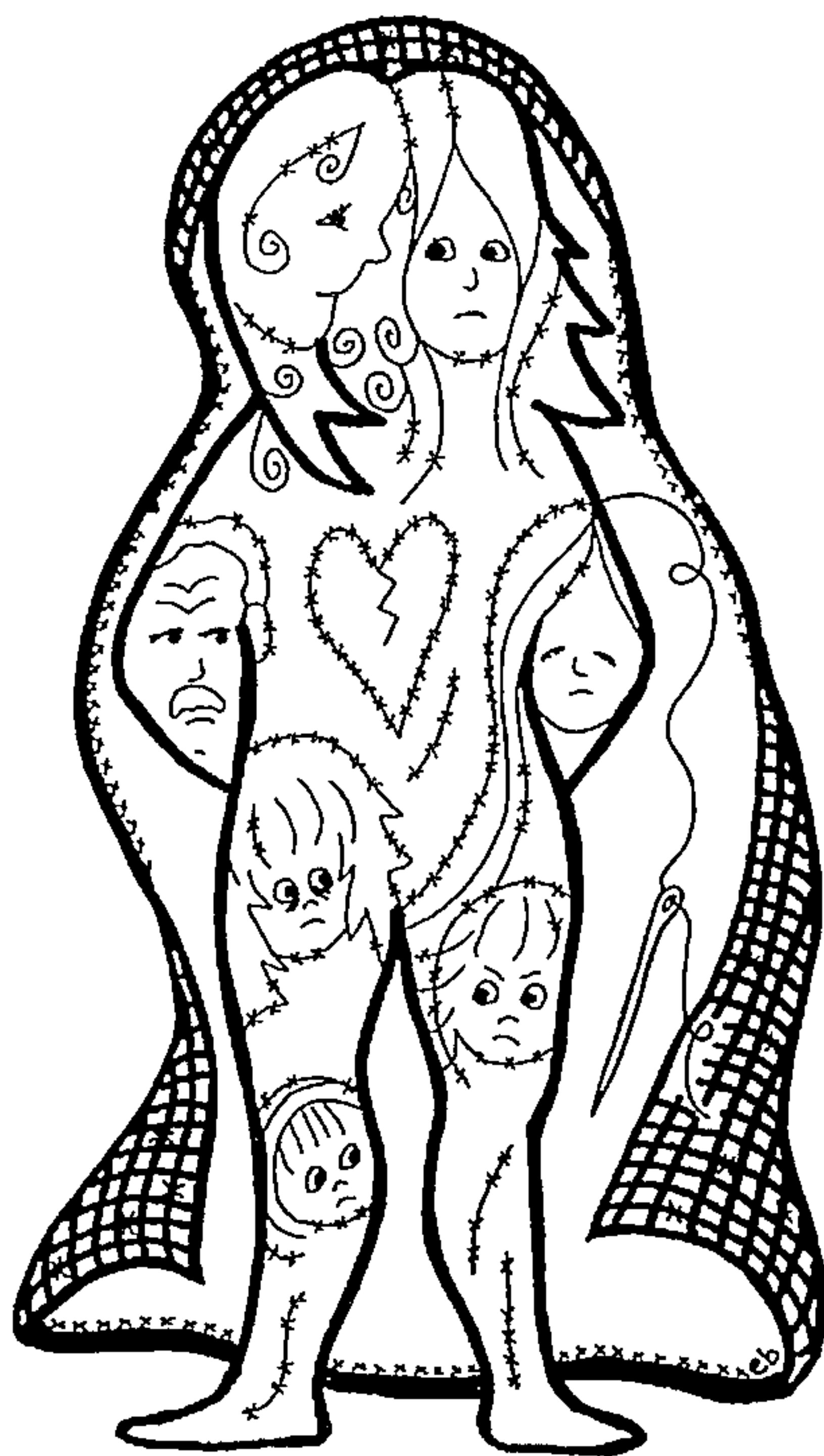
WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

Vol VII, No.6

December 1995

ISSN1042-2277

Integration... Is Wholeness Worth It?



Right now, finding peace within means hard work — getting to know each other, learning to accept each other, sharing space and time. We are starting to mend the tattered edges, stitch up wounds, and create the pattern needed to join us together, someday...maybe. It is hard work because the needle is sharp. It pierces to our heart and hurts. We are finding out that finding peace within is very delicate work, and it can't be hurried.

By Ellie's friends who live on the plane where Life happens

Dream Hero

Last night in twilight slumber
I held me close, in thought of
future, present, past.
Dreaming that I'm a hero is easy.

My voice becomes distant
as I ponder...
Who I will be tonight.
Maybe I'll be a locksmith
and free the galley slaves.

Drifting off to sleep,
I see that it will be the rain forests
of South America
or maybe a desert filled with
Aborigines.

In any case I'm a hero. Hero to one
and all.

Tonight I'll be a celebrated scientist
and find a cure for cancer.
Just a simple thing for a hero.
Later on, I'll shoot it out with the bad
guys, then take a sailing trip around
the world in shark-infested waters.

If I have time I'll fly a jet and set a new
speed record. Later,
I'll dive to the darkest depths of the
ocean and discover a plant which has
elements to reverse the aging process.

It's my secret place to thrive and feel.

When the dream is done and life
begins again,
I've found the one who makes a
difference
is the person who touches
a single soul.
Helping an old person to peel an apple,
teaching a child to bat.

An attitude of kindness will help
me know
what I am capable of becoming.

By j. p. grant

Co-Presence/Co-Conscious

By Kathy & the Entourage

I am co-present/co-conscious. My inner system was constructed in such a way that I would always be aware (though not always in control) of what was happening around me. One of my first alters was so real to me that I talked to him and he was misconstrued as an imaginary friend by my parents. They forced me to confront that they could not see this person as vividly as I could and that I was "making it all up." I was watched constantly to assure that I had given up my imaginary friend and was punished for talking (or thinking) to him. The other voices in my head were terrified they would be treated in the same manner — destroyed by lack of understanding.

I will never know if my parents deliberately made me a multiple or didn't understand that their abuse caused multiplicity. But they did insist I behave properly at all times. I was never allowed to be a child, play noisily, run, skip, sing loudly, or even cry. So as I understand DID today, I created these people inside my head to do the things I could not do.

When I was a child and allowed the "little people" out I was severely disciplined. So we devised a way to allow them out from time to time without getting caught...we would pretend to be adults and take a deep breath and study the fluttering butterfly. We would hold ourselves erect and proper, always behaving in the expected manner dictated.

We were so clever. We all used the "one voice" of the host so no one could tell the difference. The host was always present, always aware, but not always in control. Later a committee of inside people was formed for the protection of everyone in the system. They could step in and stop any situation that got out of control immediately.

That is still the case today. Often people around me will think I am

acting silly when it is really one of my little ones reacting. When I have switched, the changes are barely perceptible because the system had to be protected at any cost. There may be subtle changes in voice or facial expression, but for the most part it's like living with all these clones. We know the body looks the same to outsiders for the most part, and we try to keep it that way.

(This probably stems from the secret need to maintain a picture of normalcy, out of fear of retribution.)

At the beginning of therapy, when one of my inside youngsters emerged, there was anticipation of everyone inside getting to have a turn being outside. The host lost control for the first time ever. Switching was not supervised and the alters felt a power they had never had before — FREEDOM.

Contracts and "coming to an understanding" have had to be initiated, but as newer levels of alters are contacted, there are oversights. A new personality will slip by and it's not until someone on the outside comments, "Who are you?" that I realize I am no longer in control. Sometimes the little ones like to "pop out" spontaneously. Other times they manifest themselves out of panic and fear. As the "little ones" gain strength and learn how to switch out, there is loss of control on the part of the host. When I'm with my therapist or supportive network of people, they feel safe and show themselves often, and that's OK. But frankly, when they come out unexpectedly it is not only unnerving and unsettling, but also unacceptable. Over that, I have no control.

It's important at this point to tell how vital it is to give these inside people credit for their jobs and to acknowledge their needs. I keep drawing materials ever-present and don't hesitate to sit on the floor and

spread crayons and coloring books around when they just want to have fun. Sometimes my therapist gives them homework, which is to draw her a picture. Then we sit at the table and get to work. We also have several teddy bears and an assorted menagerie of other stuffed animals — some for hugging and one for sleeping with at night. We need contact with one another with time to laugh and/or cry and interact, something we could never do as children.

Co-presence means the therapist doesn't have to reiterate what happened. Co-presence means "lost time" doesn't happen very often (but when it does it is still absolutely petrifying.) Co-presence means trying to have a measure of control over who can come out and when. Co-presence means not being believed, because we don't have the "accepted" behavior of the typical models portrayed by other multiples who change style of dress, tone of voice, mannerisms, etc. Let's face it, co-presence is just not dramatic! Co-presence also means one wardrobe whether everyone likes it or not...tastes and choices don't exist because we "try to keep the secret safe."

The host is in charge and hopes to keep us together and safe.

Co-presence is also being highly organized. Compulsive lists are written and followed. Calendars are religiously marked with appointments so memory stays intact. Household items are always put in their place and never moved to a new location. Journals hold thoughts and feelings of events so nothing is lost.

Co-presence does not mean a good memory. The host may be present while everything is happening, but the memory belongs to the alter experiencing it. Memory is fragmented! Without organizational skills to keep things in their place, our inner system would not be as efficient.

You might have DID (MPD) if:

You have trouble answering simple questions:

"What's your name?" or "How old are you?"

and your response is "...Checking".

"Are you gay, straight, bisexual?" and your response is

"Yes."

Your favorite modes of transportation are:

A BMW, a Harley, and Fisher-Price One, Two, Three bikes.

Your book shelves have the following: *The King James Version of the Holy Bible*, *Courage to Heal*, Stephen King's latest, and a guide to Gay and Lesbian Weddings.

You're a member of Operation Rescue and you volunteer for Planned Parenthood.

Someone comes up to you at the store and says, "Last night with you was the most memorable night of my life!" and you have no idea who this person is.

You spend hours in Toys-R-Us and you don't have any children.

You love to eat Haute Cuisine, burgers and fries, and Gerber toddler meals.

When you think about integration, it has nothing to do with Racial Harmony.

You can remember the exact ingredients of a casserole you made two years ago, but have no memories of anything that happened to you before your 12th birthday.

You know the DSM-IV by heart and you're sure you have every diagnosis in it.

You're always talking to people, but you're always by yourself.

You find yourself answering questions like, "How do butterflies poop?" and again, you don't have any children.

By Nelli for Ellen and all

MV

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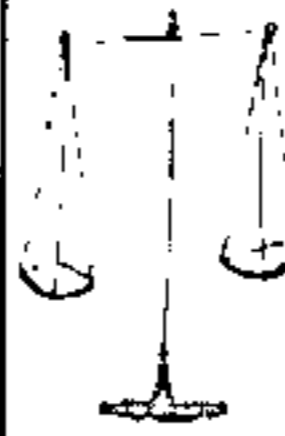


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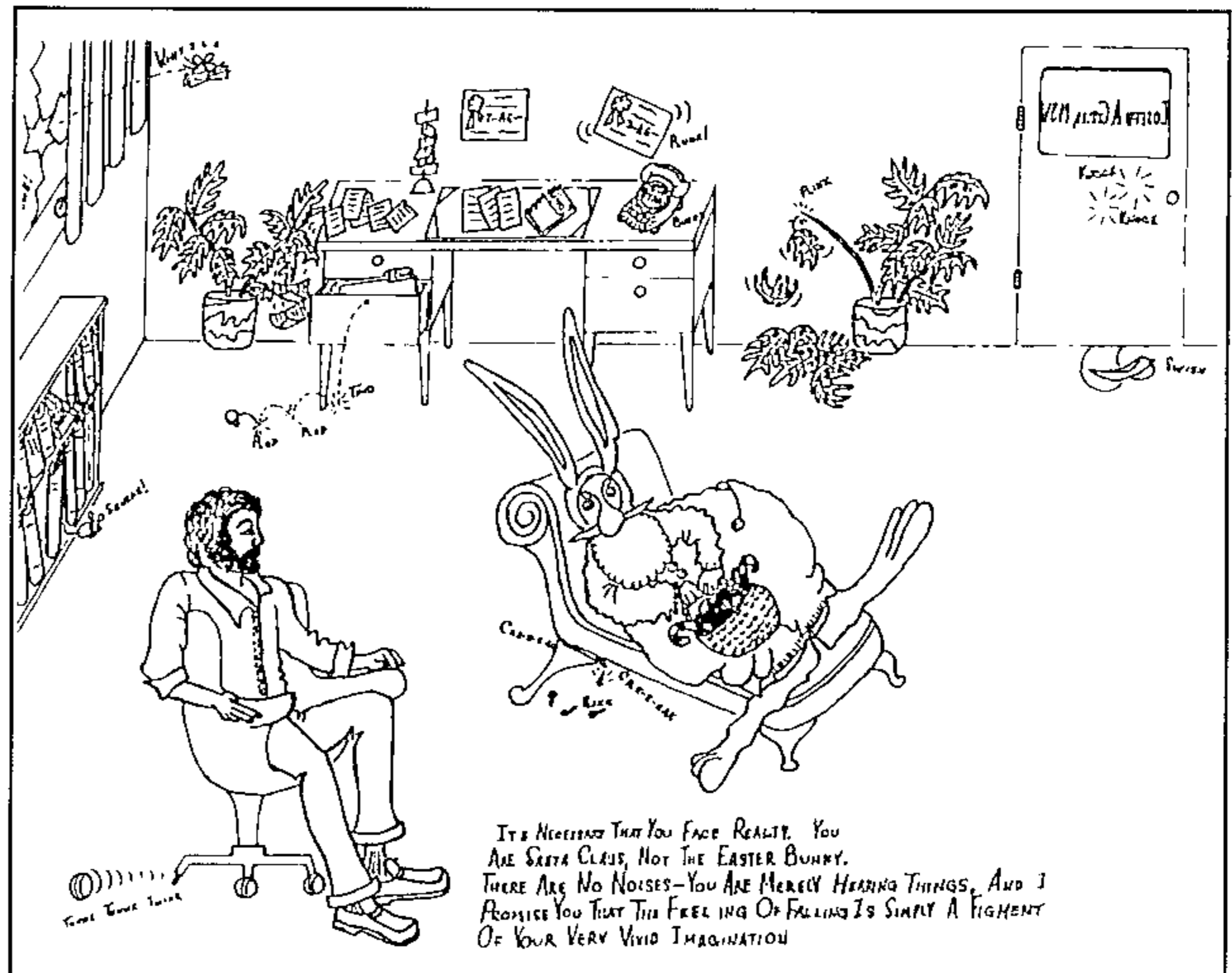
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Thoughts On I*N*T*E*G*R*A*T*I*O*N

I have been in therapy for nine years and my only goal was to be One some day. I have DID disorder and am out 95% of the time. My parts seem to come out now when they want to protect me. The barriers have come 'way down. I'm dealing with most things now. Anger is the hardest, but I'm still in therapy and learning how to cope with it by writing letters to all my family members who have caused me pain and the scars that affect me in my present life.

It seems when I felt stuck in my external life the parts were more rampant, but now that I'm in more control, they don't seem to want to run me over or take over or make fun of me anymore. Taking charge has happened with mergings of strong parts, but I'm still the gentle, kind-hearted birth PA, which used to be known as the weakest. *But not no more!* I expect to be whole and One, with maybe one part staying with me.

My INSH says when I'm done with therapy she will stay one year, then I'll be on my own. Something I will accomplish. Now I cry, laugh, get mad, feel sad, and remember it. Good Luck to All. It is hard work, but it is worth it to finally stand up for myself as a survivor. I'm worth it!

By Diana



I do not believe my alters must become one with me to have healing. We share feelings and memories. We laugh together, and rage. My alters are me. We are beginning to be able to work together. Many alters have been given new jobs because the way they protected us before was hurting us now. For example, some people with addictions are now on the walking committee and help that way, instead of using something to fight the feelings. I have grown very fond of my alters and often they are company for me. We shop and cook together. However, I realize my abuse took place

from infancy to age 9 and the majority of my alters are children. They are more easily handled than older destructive alters. We have an internal hospital where destructive alters stay, and an internal jail as well. No one wants to compromise their name, but we are willing to work with the host (which is not me). Because we have well over a hundred alters the host also works with the Higher Self and many healthy adult alters, so she does not have the responsibility of all these people alone. If some choose to integrate it will be difficult for Linda (the host) because she has become attached to many of us. She believes if we can function together safely we can heal without total integration. There have been times when other alters have wanted to take over, but now that Linda has made the commitment, and affirms she will stay present, she has established her sense of power and dominion with the system.

By Jennifer (System of My Lady)



How has integration been for me?

1. A long-term goal accomplished in Dec. 1995! (I began working towards it in 1986).

2. After integrating, I sleep at night! Yeah! No more voices talking and arguing or sharing!

3. The most shocking change was that my head was so quiet I actually felt bored! My therapist laughs at that. It took me about a month to get used to the quietness, and that I could put my own thoughts there and think about whatever I wanted. No more competing with "others."

4. I don't get triggered all the time — never knowing when I would be "thrown off." I have had four memories since integration, but they were very easy to process.

5. I can watch TV and not get triggered, although I don't watch very often because I want to do other things with my time.

6. My whole family knows how calm I am now, and how I don't over-react to them and situations. I love realizing they see the changes!

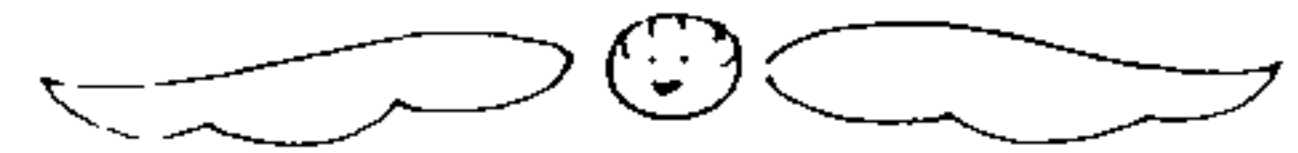
7. I do still get body sensations of the abuse at times. My mind is integrated, but still some emotions and body memories have to get healed.

8. Before I was totally integrated, one part did split off during a fight with my husband. I cried and cried, but my therapist let me know it would not be hard to integrate it back. It took me two weeks.

9. I only go to therapy every couple months. There are issues of growth I still want to work on.

10. I have much more endurance — more energy to do what I want. I feel happy, and sane and whole. I feel like my world is in my control now. Don't give up — integration is worth it, to me!

By Marilyn Clark



I have been in therapy this time for 13 years, diagnosed as MPD (DID) for the last 11 years. Finally, we begin to feel that perhaps the pain and the agony of therapy are bringing results, though we certainly don't ever feel that being a multiple has ever been or is a "gift."

I use this picture to help us: When biologists in Arctic Alaska want to study polar bears, they often need to anaesthetize the bear. If the bear is a mother she will have her cubs with her. The biologists stun the mother and then put a cord around one paw of each of her cubs. Since the cubs can't know to work together, they each try to go off in a different direction, and so they go nowhere.

We have been like those polar bear cubs, tied together, and unable to go anywhere. However, once we gave up the idea that we would be "one," be able to "integrate," we realized that we *could* all begin to pull in the same direction and take ourselves to where we want to go.

could all begin to pull in the same direction and take ourselves to where we want to go.

Another image we decided on as a goal is that of a choir — where not everyone sings the same notes, but everyone harmonizes and creates a beautiful song.

We have been working with those images for several years. Now we find that we can all head in the same direction and sing the same song. It is not integration, but it feels miles ahead of where we were. Letting go of having to be something in particular was very freeing. We do not feel that we will ever be "one." We do feel that we are on our way to a relatively happy life. For me, letting go of the goal of integration has resulted in some times achieving the goal of being happy.

*By Panthea
(our new name for all of us)*



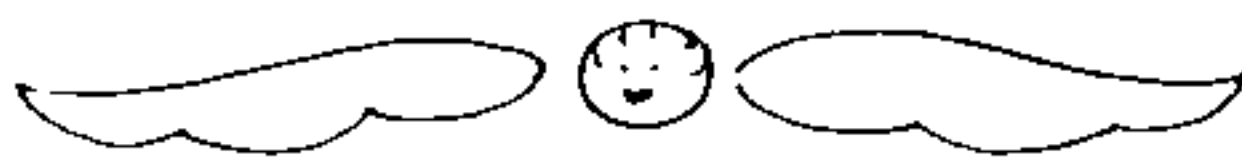
I'm an integrated multiple.

Certainly, I did not seek integration. It was a dirty word. Looking back, it was fear. Integration = great unknown. It wasn't a single-moment event. At some point, it occurred to me I wasn't losing time or struggling with old demons. I felt strong, healthy. Friends noticed. (Pre-integration, I had no idea I had friends!)

No one in the system died or "went away." Rather, a blending of the collective strengths occurred. I never dreamed I could feel so well and at peace. I sleep, eat, my blood sugars are stable...

As with any multiple, my past was a nightmare. Time loss, flashbacks, self-inflicted violence, fears, depressions, etc., plagued adulthood. But writing this, I *know* the past is over. I won the battle. My revenge is Living Well.

By Robin M. Harris



I have eighty-plus alters integrated, with a few in-process. We are waiting to resolve parameters of marriage with our husband. When

resolved so that these few alters are comfortable they will also join the group. What has happened in integration is a feeling of being out of balance mentally and physically. The person whom everyone believed to be "the host" personality was a facade.

She was like the city of Jericho. When the walls came tumbling down, Jericho as it was previously known, no longer existed. When the walls of isolation within my mind no longer existed, the need for the facade personality no longer was needed and she disappeared. Thus, integration has not felt as I would have hoped. But balance and peace are coming slowly.

To backtrack a bit: I'm in my forties, have a married daughter with her own child, a teenage son still living at home, and a husband of 22 years. Integrating took place as we have gone through therapy, rather than waiting until the end to do it all at once. It has been extremely lonely since integrating the last three. Forty-some years of voices of "friends-of-the-interior" to keep me company, and now a sense of wholeness, but so very quiet. It's as if my whole family has moved away. The loneliness is subsiding everyday, so I am adjusting.

What is so wonderful is the memories I have now. I can look back at my weekend and recount it all to my therapist. In fact, today, I could tell him everything I did last week. I remember holding my granddaughter and the sweetness of it all. Five alters raised my children, and so they held the memories of entire vacations, etc.

Because of my husband's job, we have lived in various states. My children reference their childhoods to which house we lived in. When Sarah came out in therapy, my son recognized her as the one who used to play with him during the years in the Howard Dr. house. He has missed her and mourned her disappearance due to integration. He has written a song called, "The House on Hollow Lane," that expressed his feelings about living with Sarah, me, and others. It's quite masked so other people don't recognized his real meaning.

Crises come and I don't split off. At first I had difficulty because I had no pigeon-hole in which to put my

feelings. That was very uncomfortable because I tend to send my emotions into my body and I end up with physical/medical problems.

The results of integration give me different problems to deal with, but not worse problems. My husband has been very supportive throughout and has been doing his own therapy now. He is changing his own coping mechanisms since he will no longer need them, and our new relationship would be harmed by some of the ways he learned to keep the family functioning before.

To achieve a freedom from the nightmares and pain of the past, I have been willing to do anything constructive and healthy to get integrated and shed myself of all that. I see it as a definite possibility now, and it looks positive.

After all the secrecy of keeping MPD/DID hidden so I could keep working, it is great to be able to "talk" about it here.

By Anon (no name on manuscript)



Well, I have a lot to say on the subject of "wholeness." Though we are not "integrated," (we probably never really *can* be) we are what we call "highly merged." That is to say that we function as a unit, sharing all memories (current), knowledge and decisions, plus we have not had current-time-amnesia in five years. We are able to split apart if we really want to, but we usual don't, 'cuz it works pretty well as one person.

I like to describe us as a "Cool Runnings Team"... like in the movie, where there was a team who won respect because of the level of strength and integrity they showed, just like we have, as we run the race of life. That is more important than finishing First Place.

We use a name "NOMI" that's pronounced "No-Mee!", or "know-me" (like, to know me is to love me.) That is no single "person's" name, but a name for the whole body. We used to be a 25-member chaos. I won't even say family, 'cuz it really wasn't. We believe

Continued on Page 6

INTEGRATION, Cont'd.

years. However, it became Chaos in the adult world as we were still using the old rules in new situations! Knee-jerk reactions are the pits!!

We now function as basically a 3-merged-member team. An adult (who is comprised of five formerly-separate adults), me, and my little sister Amanda. Sometimes the littlest ones come out, but mostly they just live happily and safely in the mountains inside our heart. As do the others, who no longer choose to live in this world, now that their protective and/or other skills and services are no longer needed. We know that if they were needed, they would share info or come out and join the team. However, we no longer live in that type of dangerous situation any more. We take better care of the body now!

It works pretty well...most times, that is. We've made mid-life career changes based upon decisions that include all interested-people's skills and talents. We *all* like that our life is no longer the crazy, dangerous, dysfunctional, adrenalin-filled, "reacting" (that means the knee-jerk approach to memories/stimuli) instead of "acting" kind of life. We "act" now; that is, we choose our actions based upon current life information and choices. We all share the body's clean/sober date of 8/10/1982 (that's 13 years clean!). We don't have to fight anymore to get each individual

people's needs met. It all just seems to flow better now. I'm still not sure how, but it does.

We have recently befriended a "household" who is at a similar stage in their healing as we were at their age, and that was six years ago. Boy! Has that brought back memories! They have really helped us remember what life was like then, and how much work we did to get where we are today. We wouldn't trade our life now for any life we had in the past. No way! Not even when we had a lot of money! *No, not even then!*

How different and better our life is today. We are very grateful how much we have worked and the many friends who have helped us along the way.

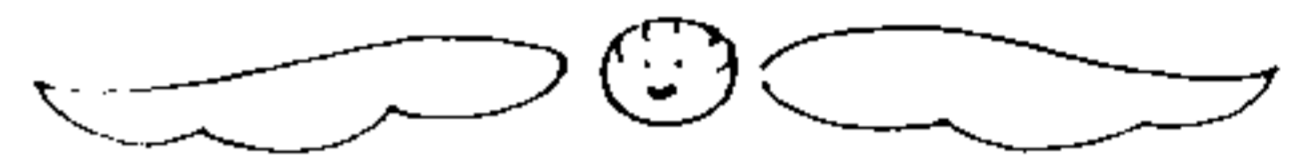
So it's all worked pretty well. But lately I think that I have had the hardest time. You see, just when I began to realize that I am not one alone, but that I *am* part of a team, I had a hard reality to face.

You see, here I am 13 years old! After all the years of work, I finally get to live my own life, free from all the fear and craziness. *But*, the body is, like, 38 years old (I mean, like, *really old!*) It has a neurological damage and a degenerative nerve/muscle disease. This means we use a cane, we have a service dog, we have to be real careful with body stress ('cuz it collapses and gets more degenerative if there is too much stress,) *plus* we have to take

medicine *and* see a bunch of medical doctors!

Plus, we can never work full-time again (ever!) It's real hard not to be able to have the body I always thought I had. I think I do a very good job of *accepting* the limits. But sometimes I still get frustrated. Especially 'cuz the damage to the body was caused by our abusers. So even though we finally have our mind and life free from their control, our body is medically limited by their abuse. It's hard to accept, kind of like never really being free. But it *is* reality, so we live with it the best I can. I think I do a pretty good job of *accepting*. The team says so, too!

By A Member of the Cool-Runnings-Team



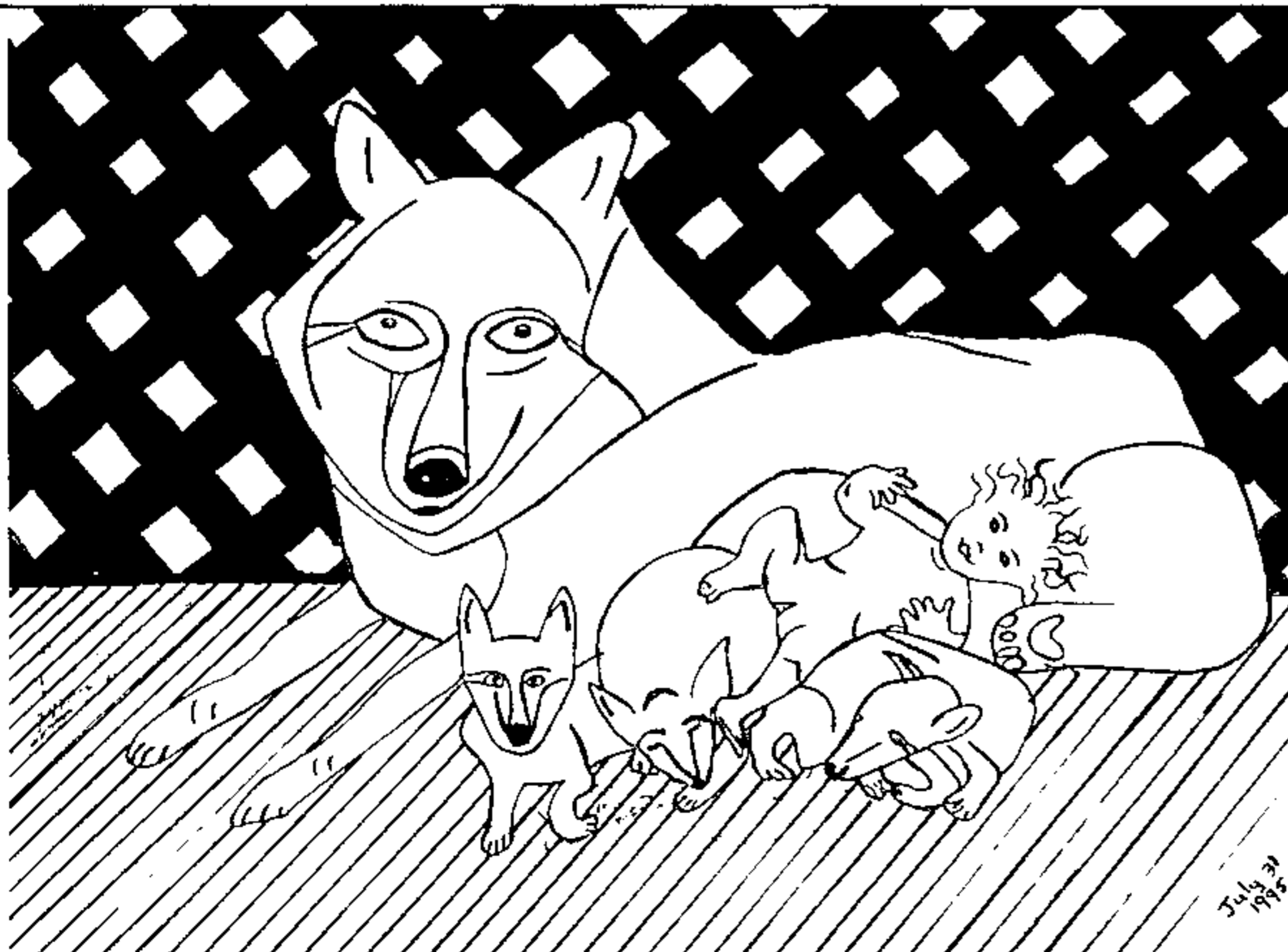
I want to speak up for something other than integration as a goal of therapy.

My goal is to get to know my inside parts. Most of my life I thought I lived an ordinary life. I was ashamed of my compulsive need to whine and complain when I had been given so many advantages in life. It was a huge relief to learn that there really was something big to complain about. There was serious abuse and parts inside me remember it! I have inner children with ideas, opinions, personalities, feelings and memories

We have many animals inside of us.

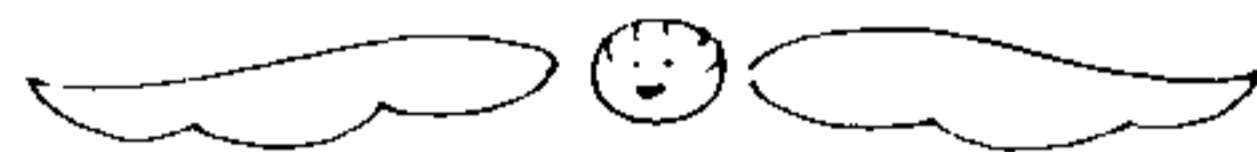
Mostly they have been mean and scary. Our therapist says that we have to learn to comfort the little ones and babies inside. This picture is the first time we drew animal wolf inside, being nice to the baby. We don't even trust love from outside people so we think this picture is very important. Maybe we can start trusting insiders to take care of us. Maybe other people who have people inside have scary animals that can help them too, and they can see in our picture that we are starting to do it.

By The Four Dragons



personalities, feelings and memories and *names*. Some have come forward eagerly, very hungry for love and attention. Others, I still hardly know. I want to know them and also I fear it. There is so much good, hard work to do. We want to know one another and do it safely and respectfully. That's a lot to ask. When I reach the day that I know all of my parts and we have processed all the memories (whatever that means), it will be a miracle, and it will be time to say "Thank-you God." Then I will move on to whatever the challenges of that day happen to be: probably something other than integration. Integration just doesn't seem very important; getting to know me and my parts is what counts.

By Ellen



I'm in an unusual state of partial integration. My system got organized behind my back. I don't really remember all the work done in therapy to improve from a Borderline presentation with a marginal life style

due to chaotic switching. How did I become able to function well within society? My doctor recently revealed that my ISH, Inner Self Helper (probably a Vulcan) is the dominant alter, controlling things behind the scenes.

Even though my life has improved greatly, I feel short-changed not knowing my alters except for some dreams/nightmares and occasional third-party reports. There is some co-consciousness, but I feel that my system has evolved into secret MPD, defined by Dr. Kluft: "In secret MPD, the alters, although classic, never emerge except when the host is alone...the host is unaware of the alters..." My current system is more hidden in my 30's, but was flamboyant and classic in my 20's.

I can feel my alters influence me, like a power behind the throne. There are times when I can't speak on an adult level; it can happen when an attorney calls me at home unexpectedly. I am aware, but I can't fully control my responses. Once, I felt threatened by a man who was screaming at me while wagging his

finger in my face. I felt something touch my shoulder; I looked over then felt my body thrust forward; I was watching my actions, not controlling them. My body pushed that man against the wall; I heard him yell, "Someone call Security!" as I watched my hands reach for his throat.

I started therapy when I was 17 because I ran away from home. While I was hospitalized, they discovered that I had anorexia. Studies have shown a strong correlation between eating disorders and MPD. I was originally diagnosed as Borderline Personality. When I was 18, I had a psychotic episode, which was actually a flashback. After various milestones in therapy, I have taken breaks to try out my new wings. I go back after a few years to do some more work, and gain more control and vitality. My goal is to accept and learn the skills and knowledge of my alters, who feel like folklore to me now.

By Melody S.

MV

Those Presently Patently Object Relations Low Dow Kandinsky Blues

I got those ol' after an hour
that really went sour
object relations blues

those your aggravatin'
interpretatin'
is unduly vexatin' blues

those I'm guaranteein'
that third degreein'
is not the way to go blues

those are you sure
there's a talking cure?
this ain't no pure theory blues

so don't try and bother
to be a significant other
you role playin' mother, you

you're not a mood elevator
or smooth operator
or soul liberator, it's true

I'm justified
bein' unsatisfied
'cause these are iatrogenic blues

yeah I'm pessimistic
and gettin' real sick
of the psychotherapeutic blues

I'm ironical, cynical
inimical and skeptical
singin' the farcical, psychological blues

they're autobiographical
and epigrammatical
and epitaphical too

they're the infuriatin'
exasperatin'
interpersonal relatin' blues

they're the irritatin'
excruciatin'
object relations blues

those presently, patently
object relations
low down Kandinsky blues

...oh, yeah

By K., M., and the Blues Gang



I love my selfs
with every step
toward letting go
of my
SELF-BLAME and SHAME.

By Theresa & Marj

MV

MV

Therapist's Page

By Kim Jordana Robinson, MS

Kim Jordana Robinson, M.S. is a counselor in private practice in Philadelphia. She conducts individual, marriage and family counseling, specializing in children and adolescents. For more information about martial arts as adjunctive therapy, you may contact her at (215) 462-3550. (Ed note: rather than use more clumsy forms to allude to both genders, use of "his" and "her" pronouns are alternated in this piece.)

Martial Arts Training as an integration technique.

Martial Arts training can be utilized in conjunction with psychotherapy, to aid in the integration of the core and aggressive personality clusters during the final phases of treating the client with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID, previously called MPD). The client can utilize Karate training in conjunction with counseling to gain assertiveness training, self-control, control over dissociations, self-confidence, goal attainment skills, and catharsis.

After the client has engaged in therapy and possibly hypnosis and self-hypnosis, and has engaged in the process of transference and limit setting with his therapist, he can be referred to a Martial Arts school in concordance with treatment. It is assumed that any serious deprecating behaviors towards self or others that may have existed, would have ceased by this point.

Goals should be set up by the therapist and the client during these parallel processes of psychotherapy and Karate. The first goal might be assertiveness training for the core personalities. The core personalities are most easily victimized by others as well as by the client's own aggressive personalities.

Martial arts can assist the client with DID in teaching her boundaries and self-defense techniques to ward off hostile aggression. For instance, a client with DID who may be victimized by others, may also allow herself to be *again* victimized by her own aggressive personality. (ie. by cutting the self for being "weak".) Martial Arts training can strengthen the character of the core personalities. This can decrease the likelihood of "external"

and "internal" attacks on the once "weak" core personalities.

The aggressive personalities can be taught limit-setting through Martial Arts training. First, Martial Arts training commands structure and respect for authority (the instructor). The oppositional, defiant aggressive personalities may learn to diminish their intensity due to the boundaries internalized by the training. Secondly, students are taught self-control in terms of their aggression and their body movements, so as not to harm themselves or other classmates.

Karate is helpful in treating clients with dissociative disorders, because it teaches focus, attention, body awareness, and integration of "mind, body, and spirit." The Karate instructor demands focus and attention of his students for self-protective reasons as well as instructional reasons. The Martial Arts instructor knows that if a person freezes and "spaces out" when attacked out on the street, the person could be raped or killed. In a client with DID, a dissociative state or state of altered consciousness usually occurs in response to anxiety or a perceived threat. Martial Arts training teaches the student to harness that fear and *react* to defend oneself, instead of "freezing" or running away. This is a vital psycho-educational process for the client who dissociates.

Confidence is also taught as an important skill in the Martial Arts. Confidence comes into play during tournaments through fighting and forms presentations. Confidence is a *skill* that is *taught* and can decrease the client's depressive symptoms. The Martial Arts instructor teaches this skill through role modeling behaviors, such as performance in competition,

technique mastery, physical excellence and endurance/tenacity. He also provides positive verbal reinforcement to his students during their progress.

The Martial Arts instructor teaches the student how to emit strong, confident body language to others. Confidence is also gained as the client succeeds in attaining ranks, ie. going up in belts, and by developing the skills necessary to protect herself should she ever be threatened. Confidence training can build a bridge from the core to the aggressive personalities in the client. The exercise factor in the class enhances self-esteem and increases endorphins.

Karate also teaches goal-setting behavior. The entire structure of the Karate class is focused around belt rank. The instructor assists the student in creating an action plan and work-out regime in order to succeed at the next belt test. The belts serve as a token reward system for fulfilling testing goals. Goals are an important part of the therapeutic process as well. The skill of goal-setting and goal attainment learned in Karate can enable the client to create goals towards his integration process.

Finally, Karate is a "Gestalt" experience. A Gestalt exercise (according to Perls) could include primal screams and beating up a soft target. The client with Dissociative Identity Disorder has historically suffered trauma and abuse of the most horrific type. This client typically retains a great deal of suppressed rage. The "KIYA" shouting in the Karate class is a fantastic Gestalt technique. The "KIYA" is a deep shout that comes from the diaphragm and serves as an integration of the mind,

Continued on Page 9

THERAPISTS' PAGE, Cont'd.

body, and self-defense technique system. The punching and hitting of the targets in class and the *controlled* punching and kicking of fellow classmates also serves as a release of anger to the client as well as a lesson on *anger control*. The Gestalt experiences on a regular basis may reduce the need for the aggressive personalities to come forward. Integration increases via the release of tension and aggression.

To gain the benefits of the process, Karate should be performed consistently, over a long period of time, and in conjunction with psychotherapy. Optimally, the client with Dissociative Identity Disorder might incorporate Martial Arts as part of his or her lifestyle. Discretion in client/patient referrals should be made by the counselor to a Martial Arts program, with consideration for the client's physical condition, age, etc.

If you have further questions, please contact the author at (215) 462-3550.

MV

Back in the Garden

*In integration
eternity bound
some civilization lost
some paradise found*

By Deborah P.

Recovering

By Trish G.

(Trish is our guest columnist this month. She is a counselor with a Psy.D. degree, and is "90% integrated." This piece is excerpted from a reply to Kathy L., who wrote a letter last month.)

Q: I feel that this diagnosis is an absolute hell and prison, and I don't know how to get out... No one has ever reached out to me and helped, nobody ever cared, and they still don't...What can I do?

A: I have no answers except to say that I've managed to establish a very small but strong support system by doing the unthinkable: I let myself risk being open to people whose efforts to reach out to befriend me seemed genuine and sincere. I found that over an extended (10-16 years) period of time, I have experienced the wondrous fact that my self-perception of being ugly, stupid, utterly useless, unworthy, unlovable is *not* validated by others. So with each successful interaction, no matter how trivial (saying 'excuse me' so there'd be room for me to pass through a hallway) I gained just enough sense of safety to take the next step. Eventually I began to see risky situations as opportunities and challenges I could use to learn from and overcame fears beaten into me as a child. Very slowly (over 10 years) I started to think that, just maybe, the here and now world of 1995 is one I can trust, unlike the world of my past.

You mentioned in your letter that a psychiatrist said you'd never get better, and that you're having trouble finding therapy. There are many ways to get help outside of formal therapy, and the MD who said you'd never get better is absolutely wrong. Consider the ignorance of the source and realize that *you*, not him, are the resident

expert on your condition. Trust your own inner wisdom. To find a therapist, contact your local mental health association, or your state's Psychological Association, or its county chapter, for referrals. Psychiatric hospitals usually have a list of therapists grouped by their speciality area, so hospitals are a good resource for info. You may need to travel a distance, but it's worth it to be able to have trust and confidence in your therapist, and by extension, the therapy itself. I myself, a partially-integrated multiple and a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice, travel almost an hour one way, once a week, to see my therapist. A point to note: *shop around*. I did. I knew what I was looking for and knew in my gut I had found it when I first met my current therapist. So after almost 30 years of either negative responses or being completely ignored by the mental health profession, and despairing of *ever* getting out of the hell, I finally found the therapist who was just right for me. Please don't lose heart. You may not have found what you want, need, and deserve *yet*. But that doesn't mean he or she isn't out there somewhere. It's like the song from "The Sound of Music"... "*climb every mountain, forge every stream, follow every rainbow, 'til you find your dream.*" And *believe* that you will find it.

In the meantime, the MV readership is on your side. Take good care of yourself.

MV



Living the Aftermath

By William Reilly

After living my life (lives) as a DID, and then being integrated completely in 1992, you begin to wonder if being one is all that it is cracked up (no pun intended) to be.

Being considered a high functioning DID patient in a mental hospital brings certain drawbacks into focus. It seems to be forgotten or not recognized you were (and still are capable of being) a multiple. Having had seven personalities (now integrated) there were seven viewpoints to a problem. Now as a "new" One there is only one viewpoint but there are remains of the characteristics of the seven. This is not shed overnight. It is a growth process, learning which is the "correct" behavior, way of thinking and reacting to everyday problems of life.

I am lucky to have a very good therapist who guides me to find the way. But it is still I who must make changes and live with the results and/or mistakes I now make. Getting understanding here to the fact that I have a new personality and sometimes an infantile personality is extremely difficult. The viewpoint seems to be that if you are integrated you have no further problems. In actuality a major flaw with this type of thinking is that the patient tends to want to believe it, too...thereby overlooking the traits of the other personalities (undesirable traits) as they seep through.

"We" now thinking as "I" must deal directly with these traits and sort out which ones we want to retain that will make us think and act as one.

All the time "we" keep in mind, remembering not forgetting, which "stinking thinking" got us in trouble before. We now have all the memories to do just this.

Even after integration, living with these memories is not easy. There are certain sounds that still trigger certain memories. Sure, we are supposed to be integrated now and able to deal

with these memories in an appropriate manner. We may not have yet conquered the difficult personality traits, so that it is still sometimes a struggle.

Those of us who were sexually abused, as well as physically and emotionally abused, deal with most problems, without realizing it, as an abusive attack on ourselves. Having been raped, beaten and/or molested in some way, is it not possible that we react as if it is happening again? Maybe not physically, but psychologically being raped again. Looking at problems in this manner definitely clouds our perception and thinking as a "one" personality. I feel we possibly have an abreaction without recognizing it as one.

It is very important for those integrated from DID to remain in therapy long enough to overcome the anxiety and pressure of being "one." This will hopefully prevent a regression to coping as a multiple again. Let us not forget we still have the capacity to dissociate in this manner. The circumstances may be different from the original splits, but that doesn't prevent us from finding reasons we think are important enough to dissociate. The reasons may not be "conscious."

If possible, never let a problem fester and grow to the point that we feel we have to dissociate. Sharing these feelings will lighten the load we have to carry and could defuse a problem.

There are so many clichés that could be used, but I like my own best, for me: "Tell it true and straight." This prevents mixed messages from being sent to others and to ourselves. Maybe not all people you come into contact with in your "new" life can deal with this saying. Just remember it is for *your* benefit, not for *their* benefit. We can now live our own life as adults, not as children cowering from pain and abuse.

Remind yourself to take into consideration that not all criticism is bad, or to be viewed as a form of abuse. Yes, we were used to being whipped verbally, but try to learn that constructive criticism can be good for us.

Maintain that living with the aftermath is where "you" gain control fully. We cannot change the past, we do live in the present and should now be able to deal with it in a direct manner. As to the future, that is a clean slate that we write and shape for our own new whole lives.

MV

Wedding

By Michael Wolverton (alter)

It should be a wedding,
some holy event

When I join with you and you
with me.

A sexual revelation at the very least
My manliness and your femininity
become one.

Metamorphosis, None other can
match

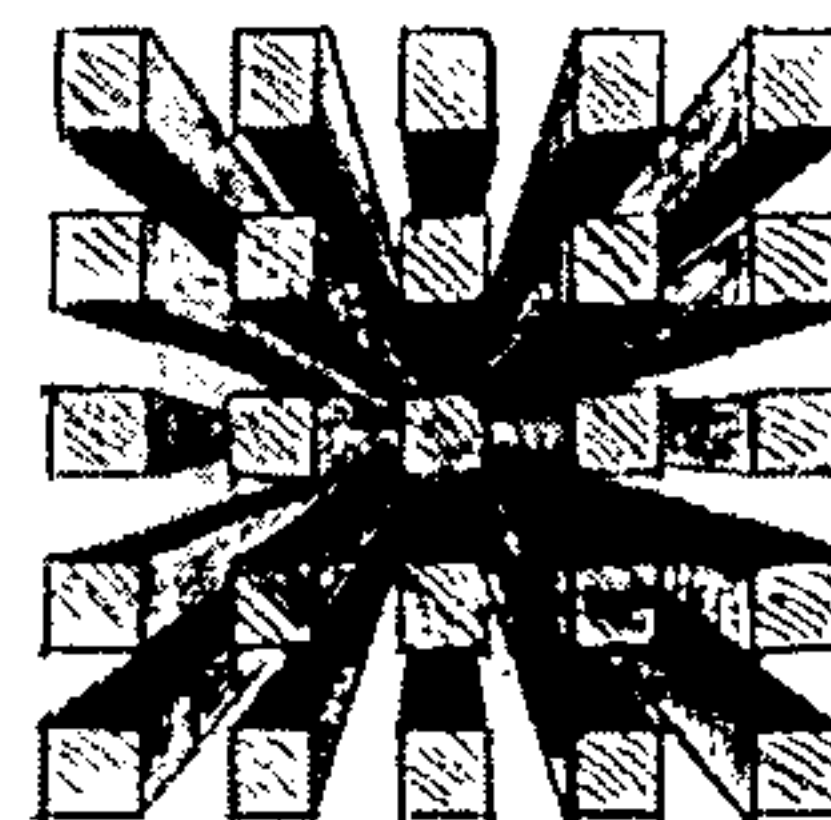
Deeper beauty than a butterfly
becoming free.

Reality becomes more real every
moment.

The magic of the day you found
me remains untouched.

No divorce can undo what we'll
accomplish.

MV



"US"
(by: chris)
5/19/95

Once Upon A Time

By Star + 2

Once upon a time there was a village where many lived, but to where none had purposely traveled. Mass confusion permeated the entire village. There was a cacophonous Noise for which nobody could locate the source. Many ran wildly about, trying to escape the horrible Noise, while others sat along the streets with heads down, arms folded tightly about themselves, crying quietly. But regardless of where they went or what they did, the Noise persisted.

One day a stranger entered the village. She looked around with great concern as everyone darted about in meaningless, unending circles and cried tears from deep within. When she tried to ask what was troubling them, the villagers only shook their heads, squeezed their eyes tightly together, and placed their hands over their ears. How sad, she thought to herself, for this to have happened. This village was so beautiful and warm. What a shame the villagers could not enjoy the wondrous beauty that surrounded them — that *was* them. She had seen this before, and knew what had to be done.

Shrouded in her modest attire she walked a slow and deliberate pace to the outskirts of the village. Upon reaching the edge of the village she stopped, breathed a long, slow, deep breath...held it momentarily...then

slowly breathed out. As she exhaled, the villagers began to drift toward the village square. They all felt the warmth descending upon them. Puzzled, then peaceful looks began to appear on their faces. Slowly turning toward the direction in which the stranger had departed, the warmth became stronger, and some even noticed the Noise was not as bad. As they all focused on the stranger, she began to raise her arms. There was now an almost eerie quiet throughout the village. The Noise was becoming less and less audible. Frozen to the spot, the villagers watched as the stranger's arms grew. Her arms closed ever-so-slowly and softly around the entire village, gently drawing the villagers closer and closer together, closer and closer to her. They felt such a lightness and peace as they came closer together in the stranger's arms. The Noise was gone now. The villagers floated quietly toward the stranger. Again, the stranger breathed in a long, slow, deep breath...so deep it engulfed her and all the villagers. As she slowly exhaled, the young woman raised her head and looked upon the village with a feeling of sadness, yet joy. She turned slowly and walked quietly up the road, away from the village, remembering all that she need carry on her journey.

MV

The Hurts

(for Lori & Co.)

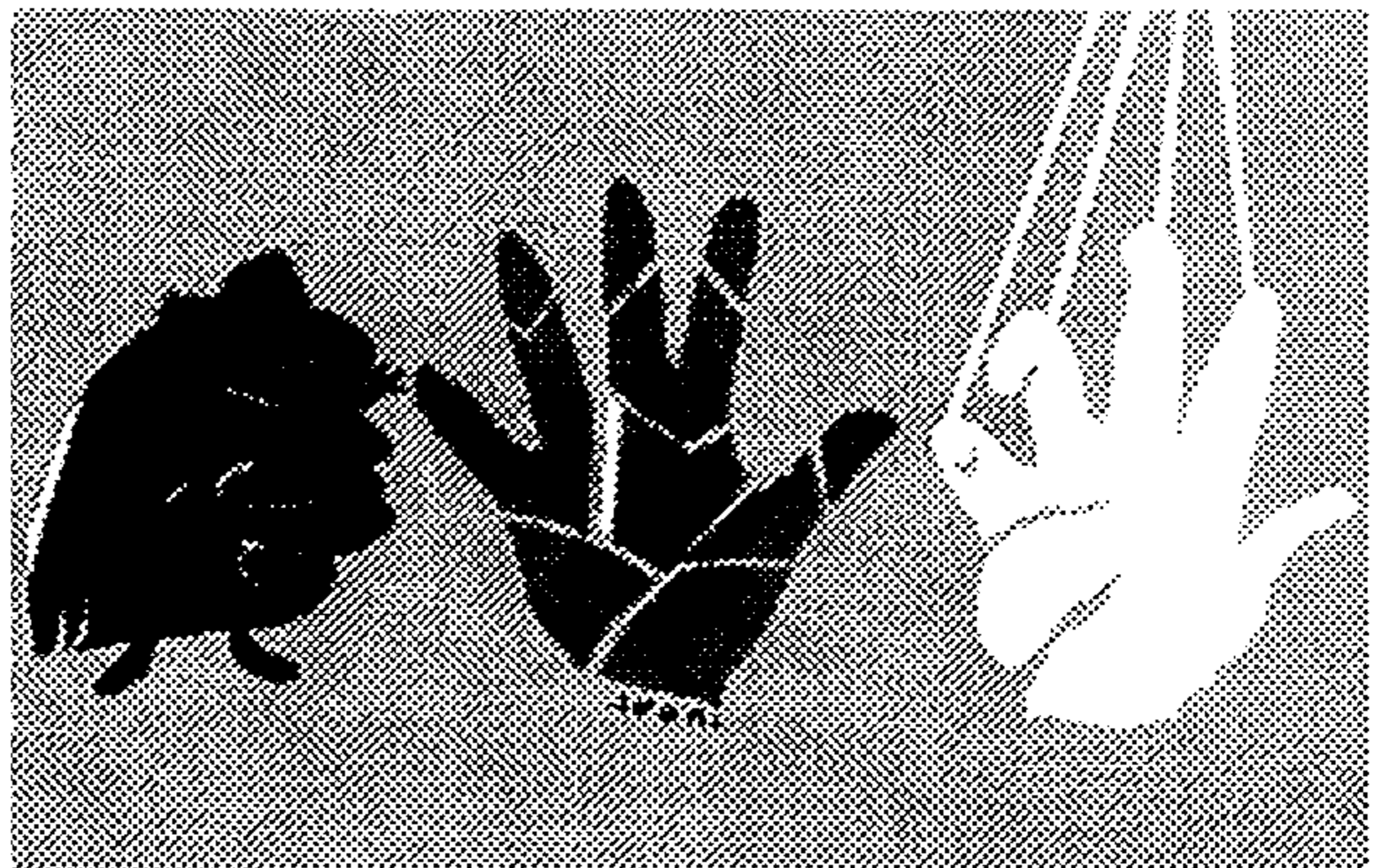
*Peeking out at the world
through eyes that seem to be another's...
Who, or what, do you see looking back?
We were six once;
That's when the hurts came
a little bit closer,
and we never failed to fail
in someone else's eyes.
The years of hurt ran into one another,
like chalk hopscotch games in the rain.
We remember remembering,
and trying even harder to forget,
twisting each violation
into a small paper bundle,
and snipping them concisely into
snowflake patterns.
We planted them on nursery walls
because that made everything seem
"normal" and
what was expected.
To make a journey like we each did,
there had to have been a purpose, a God,
anything
to make it all have a point.
Now we have found some understanding.
How the dark silence strangled us.
How we learned to shape and
remold it into a magical gift.
We will never again be alone.
It is us who choose to open the hiding
places, coax out the "keepers,"
or allow them some way to feel "safe."
If you see us hiding from the light,
don't fear the Darkness —
We're just somewhere inside,
dancing a dance
of healing...
We've gone through too much
to give up now.*

By Diane H.

Recovery

For the first 20 years of our life we were held tightly by the grip of abuse and the Black — but somehow we had a sliver of light that allowed us not to die. The last eight to ten years we have been in a recovery program that helped us get inside. We found we had broken into parts. We are learning how to use the parts together, the Black influence is less, the Light — it grows. Our hope is we will be able to open up and receive the light and love around us. Then we can give back.

By Joani



Treacherous Waters: Integration of a Multiple

By Beth Moore Jones

Six years ago I was diagnosed with Multiple Personality Disorder. Today, all my alter personalities are integrated. For the most part I have learned to cope as a whole person. Treacherous waters have become one flowing stream of harmony.

Imagine one hundred fifty people trying to mutually agree on the same career. That is only one of the dilemmas I faced as a multiple with this many alters. Daily life was filled with indecision: the clothes I wore, the dinner menu, the people I spoke to. The biggest conflict I had in my system was the host's faith in Jesus as Lord. Cult alters adamantly refused to accept this belief and there was much acting out to sabotage any spiritual growth. They had their own agenda.

The inner chaos increased depression and anxiety. My therapist Darrell encouraged me to nurture as many support systems as possible. I attended college, group therapy, a 12-step program for codependents, church. My daughter and I took walks to the park to feed ducks bread, and rented videos on dollar nights. I attempted dating a man but the fear of intimacy only resulted in more inner turmoil. However, this long-term relationship opened my eyes to a real need to heal. My rage and suicidality were out of control.

Outside of therapy I worked with a pastor to expedite my healing. Darrell encouraged unity among my alters, and spirituality was an important aspect of my mending. The pastor pointed out inconsistencies the "dark" or cult alters had among themselves. When analyzed from a solely logical point, their ideas made no sense.

For example, many cult alters believed they would be killed if they went to church. But "the body" was safe because my perpetrators were in another state and had no knowledge of what I was doing. Alters also believed they did not share the body with me and could do whatever they wanted

with no consequences to themselves. The pastor pointed out the dangers of such thinking. If they killed the host Beth, they would die, too. This realization was the beginning of integrating dark alters.

Allowing all my alters to express their feelings with no internal criticism started a process of blending. Eventually I, Beth the host, began to acknowledge my intense anger. No longer could I blame cult alters for thoughts that were not "nice." After all, I was entitled to these feelings because I had been abused.

To befriend dark alters, I began writing vicious letters to my perpetrators, especially my father, keeping them in a safe place. Of course, guilt often followed. I was desperately afraid of displeasing my Heavenly Father. Gradually I accepted that God understood the rage. Certainly He had compassion for my hurt.

I learned the dark alters were also hurt and even afraid. They had been forced to do things that my mind could not accept. I had created them for strength. They had been there through all the terror of the abuse. I thanked them and began to trust they ultimately had good motives. Their function was primarily to survive. Even self-mutilating alters just wanted to escape from the pain of the past, and really wanted rescuing and hope.

I found many ways to cope — mainly relaxing. I had not enjoyed life as a child; I deserved to, now. I allowed child alters to play, to color, to watch Winnie the Pooh. Rather than suppressing their desires, I encouraged them. This resulted in the alters trusting me and wanting to know me more intimately. Having weekly internal conferences helped my system to stabilize. We began agreeing on things. One joint decision was marrying my husband Ray, a source of Christian love I'd never felt before.

The pinnacle of my healing was a decision to convert all my alters to

Christ. I shared my faith with each of them after I had been raped by a man who my child alters wanted to trust. The situation had been so dangerous it had left me terrified. My alters all needed co-consciousness and hope in this life. Conversion would speed up ultimate healing.

Throughout five years of therapy I had integrated various alters. Integration was never complex for me. My mind was just as capable of taking back a part of me as it had been separating a part of me in childhood. In therapy I simply closed my eyes, visualized a peaceful scene such as a beach, and my alter(s) and I stepped into one another. It was like hugging a friend. I chose to always visualize Jesus there for protection.

The aftermath of integrations was shaky, though. For days or weeks following the fusion, anxiety escalated, depression hit me, and I had frequent episodes of rage. This left me confused. I felt temporarily worse off than before and questioned if I would ever heal. Over time, integration became smoother. Sometimes alters popped back out if they felt needed, and I realized I hadn't been truly ready to integrate that personality. I learned to really listen to my system's needs.

Once all the alters were converted Christians, there was more quiet inside my head. We were no longer divided over issues such as respect for other persons. We didn't need to be physically violent in relationships. I allowed my alters to use profanity because that was the only way they could let off steam without violence. By blending alters' needs, I began to use profanity, too.

Still, it was hard to function. I was tired of losing time and having uncontrollable anger, so I made a choice to rapidly integrate my remaining alters. Within several months, I integrated over a hundred alters. This required fusing about ten alters a week. Now, most therapists will advise never to do this. Certainly, my

therapist and co-therapist were concerned how this would tax my system. Members of my therapy support group voiced fear for my well-being. Everyone said I needed to slow down. But multiples know their needs best.

I learned I was pregnant when I had only a couple of alters left in my system. At that point I decided to terminate therapy and concentrate on just having fun: getting makeovers, horseback riding, reading baby books. At the end of my pregnancy, there was only one alter left. Three-year-old Eliese was shy and sweet. It would break my heart to say goodbye to her forever.

When my baby girl Leah was born, I desired to be completely whole to take the best care of her. Leah had the innocence that my alter Eliese retained...that innocence that had been stolen from me in childhood. I could nurture Leah the gentle way I cared for Eliese. I could play with Leah the way Eliese played with her stuffed

Bear. It took six weeks of tears to accept Eliese would go inside for good. Of all my alters, Eliese was dearest and I did not want to let go.

I was also terrified of being like other people. I didn't know how to function as a whole person. Alters had always accepted responsibility for stressful situations or daily functions or feelings I didn't want to own. What would it be like to be normal?

During those six weeks I let Eliese hold Bear frequently, draw, eat ice cream whenever she wanted. I told her tenderly that I wouldn't suffocate her; she was always going to be a part of me. It took a lot to convince Eliese I didn't want to "get rid" of her because she didn't matter. As I did with other alters, I thanked her for a well-done job. We tried temporary fusions, or blending, several times before actual integration. Eliese quietly went inside one night and never came back out. Sometimes my husband sees her expressions on my face.

The integrations have left me with mixed emotions. I look back on days when alters cut on me, overdosed, cowered in corners from flashbacks, acted out for attention; it seems like someone else's life. I almost never feel suicidal now and I have panic attacks infrequently. I do struggle with low-grade depression from poor self-esteem and sometimes I am anxious. But the severe imbalance among my alters has stabilized because we are unified.

I am by no means recovered from all the trauma in my life. I still have mood swings. Sometimes people's conversations leave me confused because I don't follow. Occasionally fragments come out when I'm under tremendous stress and I use the mechanism of dissociation to cope again. Only time will teach me I can stay present, I don't need to be swept away by the tides of fear. But the waters are much calmer now.

MV

Conferences

JAN 22-26, 1996. San Diego Conference On Responding To Child Maltreatment. Town & Country Hotel, San Diego CA. Traditional and innovative techniques. Networking opportunities with experts. CEU's avail. Write or call: Robbie Webb, Center for Child Protection, MC 5016, 3020 Children's Way, San Diego, CA 92123-4282. (619) 495-4940.

MARCH 24-26, 1996. 7th Annual Southeastern Regional Conference On dissociative Disorders. Atlanta, Georgia. Specific site to be announced. Sponsored by Ridgeview Institute. Call (800) 329-9775, or (404) 434-4568 ext. 3025.

FEB 29-MARCH 4, 1996. Second Annual Conference On Trauma, Loss & Dissociation: Foundations of 21st Century Traumatology. Co-sponsored by CG Butler & Co and Georgetown University Medical Center. Radisson Mark Plaza, Alexandria VA. Call (800) 844-2789 or (202) 265-4704 for information.

MARCH 26-30, 1996 12th National Symposium On Child Sexual Abuse Huntsville, AL. Call (205) 534-1328 or (205) 533-0531 for information.

APRIL 17-19, 1996 2nd UK Conference .Chester, England. Sponsored by British Study Group on Dissociation. One-third of the conferences will be devoted to childhood origins of DID. If interested in submitting papers/speaking

call the British Study Group at (01244) 390121 or fax (01244) 372048.

APRIL 18-19, 1996. 11th Akron Regional Conference On Trauma & Dissociation .Akron, Ohio. Moshe Torem M.D. and his dedicated staff have run this outstanding conference for more than a decade. Beautiful site. New format: all plenary sessions, so you won't miss a thing. Phone Marilyn at (216) 384-6525 for info.

APRIL 18-20, 1996. 9th Annual Western Clinical Conference On Trauma & Dissociation. Traumatic Memory - Clinical Implications for Treatment. Preconference workshops on April 17th. Costa Mesa, CA. For info write WCC/TD, PO Box 1124, Orange, CA 92668 or call (714) 978-0895.

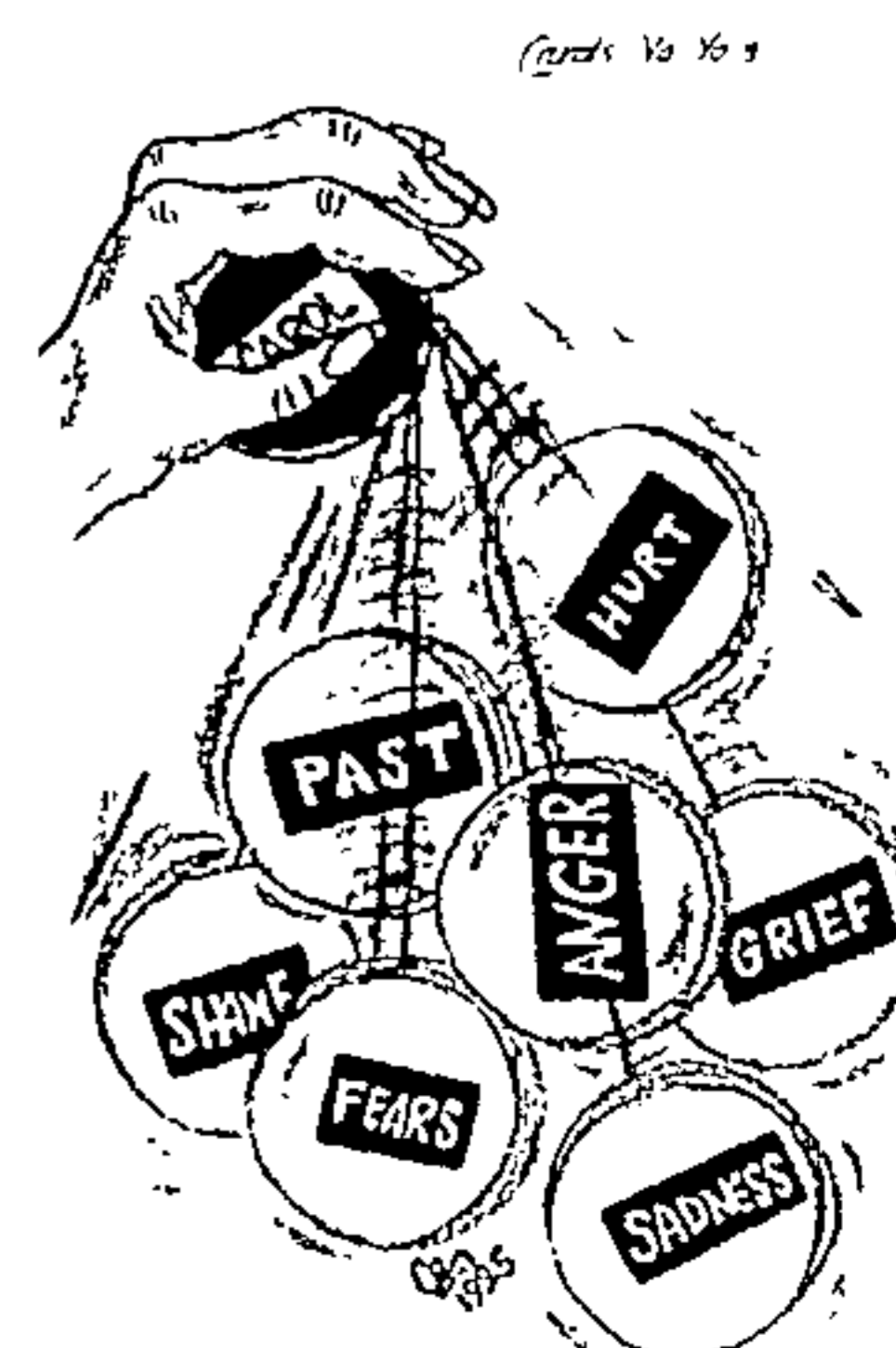
APRIL 28 -30, 1996. First Annual Northwest Regional Conference On Trauma & Dissociation. State of the Art-State of the Science. Campbell's Resort, Lake Chelan, WA. Sponsored by the Center for Emotional Trauma Recovery at Lake Chelan. Contact Wendy Ray or Erika Claasen. (206) 270-8544.

MAY 15-17, 1996. Retreat And Training For Sexual Assault Counselors. Hampton, VA. Conducted by Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault (VAASA). Call for information: (804) 979-9002.

MAY 31-JUNE 3, 1996. Eighth Annual Eastern Regional Conference On Abuse, Trauma, And Dissociation. Radisson Hotel, Alexandria Top quality, well-organized. For information contact Eastern Regional Conference, PO Box 9534, Alexandria VA 22304. Or call (202) 965-8454 or (800) 934-3724.

JAN-MAY, 1996. Dual-disorder Conferences. Various sites. Sponsored by US Journal and F.A.C.E.S. Contact Lori, (800) 851-9100 for information.

MV



And The Orchestra Plays On

By What's Her Face, et al

What's the first thing you think of when you hear the word "orchestra?" My first thought is of a group of people on a stage, all performing the same piece of music at the same time. They somehow blend into one, and I am moved by the beauty of the music. Instead of noticing each individual, I see unity. A whole.

Each musician has the same score in front of her or him. Before a performance, the audience can hear everyone warming up. What a cacophony, as the musicians play through independently, disregarding their next-chair neighbors. Wrong notes hit, incorrect speed, loudness or softness where it shouldn't be, all add up to that terrible sound. It bombards those who paid for the pleasure of hearing the sound an orchestra makes. The noise is as if an angry mob has gathered to screech and scream at one another. And then it happens...

House lights dim over the audience. After the conductor crosses the stage, silence takes its turn. The conductor raises his arms and poises his baton, ready to begin. In unison, he moves his arms and the talented musicians each do what they do best. Beautiful music flows up and over the stage, blanketing the audience. What happened to the terrible noise that was heard only minutes before? Integration. All came together to work as one. To achieve a goal. Although they are still individuals, as part of a whole each is able to better show her ability. But if all of the violins were absent, everyone would notice something missing. The same with any of the instruments, from the flutes to the bass fiddles. During the performance, certain individuals may perform solo for several bars. This enhances rather than detracts, and no one feels slighted.

With all members of the orchestra similarly attired, it would be hard for audience members to recognize any of them away from the stage and their instruments. Female or male, they are each seen as part of the whole. Their talents may be different, but each

makes a necessary and important contribution. Removing any one component would be detrimental not only to the entire orchestra, but to each individual musician. No one would be able to play two instruments at the same time, so how do they compensate for the loss? Everyone must work together to produce a melodious sound. A sound heard both externally (by the audience) and internally (by all the musicians that make up the orchestra).

For those who live as our Us-Person does, it is sometimes difficult to produce a melodious sound. The answer to this dilemma seems to be a word we never liked to hear — integration. We always knew the goal of therapy was to be integrated, because that's what all the authorities on this subject say. We've fought that because we all think of ourselves as important and necessary. We don't have a single host personality who feels as if we all live inside her. We all seem to live alongside each other, taking the stage individually as our internal force deems either necessary or appropriate for the situation. We have many talents, and many of us would be devastated to lose any members of our orchestra.

So instead of thinking of our treatment goal as a negative, we've found the positive. Yes, integration is an appropriate word. But not an integration that causes more pain. We've suffered enough. Our idea of integration is to work together for the good of the whole. To allow everyone to open their eyes whenever they want to. To offer a place of sanctuary for anyone needed solitude or time to rejuvenate. To keep our doors unlocked and our windows open, feeling safe and at peace with the world around us.

We have a field with colorful flowers, trees to climb, and a sun that is always shining. The children are happy there and know they are safe. They don't need to disappear for our Us-Person to function as a whole. We have hallways where we writers live,

and we communicate through the written word in both poetry and prose. We do not need to disappear for our Us-Person to function as a whole. We have hallways with rooms where the ones who helped our whole in days gone by can now rest in peace. And we have our special place, our sanctuary, for resting and healing. There is no need for anyone to disappear. As each comes face to face with our past, she has a quiet place to heal and gain strength, or heal and rest in peace.

The music heard by the outside world is played by our orchestra. Integration is not an end, but the beginning of unity. Our unity may mean there are many talented soloists. But all those playing the background music will be following the same score. You can't change a trombone into a piccolo no matter how you try to reshape it. And although a violin and cello both have strings, each has a distinct sound. Our orchestra is hard at work, practicing for our first performance. Until then, please accept our sound as that of the orchestra while warming up. We are each proficient with our individual instruments. One day we'll make beautiful music together. And the orchestra plays on.

MV



One of those days!

Letters

I wanted to say thanks to MV for the past 7 years (has it really been that long?) of hard work. I for one, really have appreciated having such a forum in this otherwise-isolated process.

I am glad to see an issue deal with the later stages of integration, merging, or whatever form it takes with each of us. I find now that my pressing concerns are no longer, "How do you hide the kids?" but "How do I explain that I missed 20 years of adult life?" That political/social/musical/headlines/sports events of the world passed me by as "our" main focus was trying to survive and to live an unlivable life? A friend recently said (unknowing of my background) "...It's like you came out of a cloistered convent five years ago!" (What a thing to say to a Jewish lesbian!! Ha ha!)

How do you explain a 10-year work history of three jobs at a time, in different fields and different names (an IRS nightmare!!) then a three-year gap of no job?

Or, how do you explain the loneliness of only a few left in our working "team" (as it were) where there used to be many? I can only imagine what the totally-integrated must feel like! How do I share my "experience, strength, and hope" with others...who not only don't understand, but who haven't the capacity (or is it experience) to respect the amount of blood, sweat, and tears that went into that work...who can never truly appreciate what a miracle we really are? ...Yes, I guess it is still a lonely world out here. Was it worth it? *You better believe it was!*

By Nomi

I am looking for feedback from anyone who has worked through a problem similar to mine. I have been "in the mental health system" since age 14, when my family discovered me trying to commit suicide. (I had overdosed at age 4 and consumed poison from my chemistry set at age 11, but those attempts didn't result in therapy.)

I am now 34. I was given the PTSD diagnosis about 9 years ago, and the DID (MPD) diagnosis after hospitalizations last year. I am my psychiatrist's first DID.

The problem: no undeniable "memories," no corroboration (I am the youngest of 6), few situations which seem to convince me that DID is an accurate diagnosis. I have "pictures in my head," nightmares, heavy depression (despite medication), fairly persistent suicidal thoughts, and an embarrassing confusion among feelings of anger, sexual desire, and pain.

I feel like I'm getting worse, not better, with every passing year. I don't know what to do next. I really want to get better. For years I've had faith that I could. Now, I doubt me/us, my therapist, friends, family, husband, my own mind...and have lost any belief in a Higher Power (as much as I try.) I've tried all kinds of therapies, programs, and alternative treatments. I am running out of steam. Should I just try to live with depression and stop looking for a way to feel better?

Has anyone else gone through the grind of living with uncertainty and suddenly had a breakthrough? I don't know how to keep living like this.

By Me & the Insiders



FACES

Tucked away within are faces as in a fog emerging from the silent years of my past. First unclear and undefined they begin showing themselves a brief droplet at a time. Slowly I begin to see their faces looking back at me. Over time their faces become known and the picture begins to clear till the one face left is me

By SLN

Books

Expressions of Healing: Embracing the Process of Grief

By Sandra Graves, PhD, ATR. © 1994 Newcastle Publishing Co. Inc., PO Box 7589 Van Nuys, CA 91409. \$14.95. 174 pages, paperback.

Sandra Graves presents journaling and art activities dealing with grief, power, identity, roles, and inner children. There are 16 color pages of example illustrations of the 20 exercises. While not designed specifically for people with DID, I found some helpful sections dealing with trauma and loss.

By A.V.

Telling Without Talking: Art as a Window into the World of Multiple Personality

By Barry M. Cohen, MA ATR and Carol Thayer Cox, MA ATR. © 1995. Published by Norton Professional Books. 314 pages. \$45 USA \$60CAN.

This book is important on several levels: it provides a systematic way of examining artwork to assist in the diagnosis of dissociative disorders; It suggests ways different research tools (including art analysis) could be used to examine the prevalence of dissociation in, for example, a substance-abuse population; and because many drawings were made years-prior to the so-

called "explosion" in diagnosis of dissociation, and without the use of hypnosis or references to sadistic abuse...these images are especially valuable as a reference-point-in-time. By their historical nature, they are uncontaminated by recent media-hype or clinical suggestion. For this reason alone, everyone who has questions regarding the validity of diagnosis or memory content should read this book and consider its message.

By LW

THANK YOU
for your support. We *greatly* appreciate your art, prose, poetry and letters! MV really needs good reproducible art (especially for covers) so *please!* Send it in! —LW

February 1996

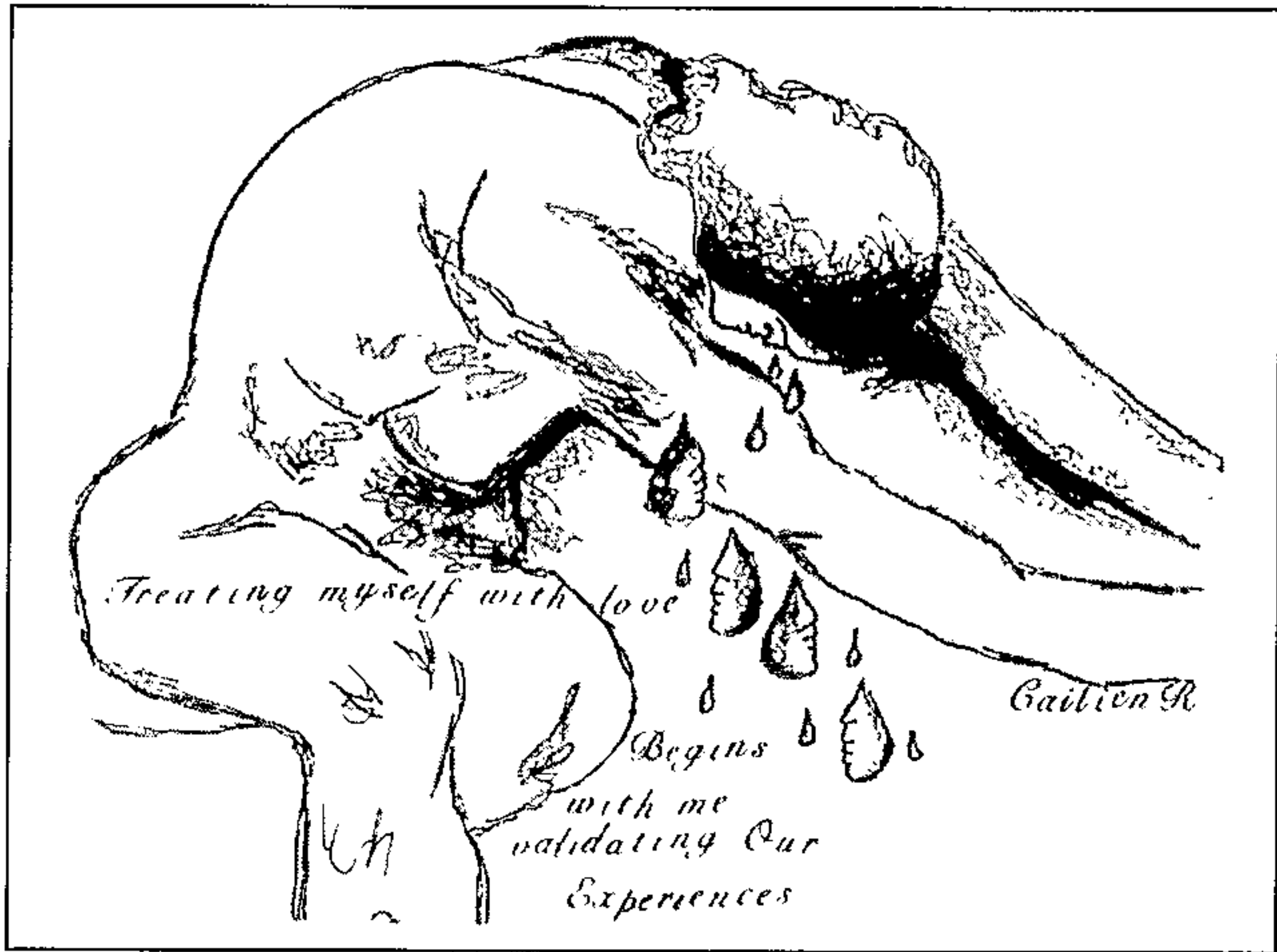
Beginning therapy for dissociation. First steps in crisis management, realistic expectations. Hope. Share your experience with those starting to heal! Glossary included. ART: Finding peace within. DEADLINE: Dec 1, 1995

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.

October 1996

Choices, choices. Making room for multiple interests, varying skill levels among alters. How to select appropriate work for your stage in therapy. Also, ways to fight the stigma of "chronic mental illness." ART: Draw yoursel(ves) and a favorite activity. DEADLINE: Aug. 1, 1996.

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. All back issues available, anytime, at 1/6 yearly price each.

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