

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

Vol VIII, No.2

April 1996

ISSN1042-2277

Relationships...



Endurance

Of late, it seems
the calendar of my soul
whispers springtime.
There is something moving
there —
growing
stretching
smiling.
It is new and unfamiliar
and it fills me to overflowing.

As serene music plays in my
head,
gentle, hopeful poetry spills
unsummoned
from my hand.
Delicate drawings of pale
flowers
bloom under my touch.

I have endured a long, dark
winter.
The cold penetrated to my
very core.
And, I supposed, killed the
seed therein.

But the words, the drawings,
proved the seed outlived the
winter.

For divinely created life is a
hearty thing,
thank
goodness.

By CE, May 1994

A Dissociative Couple

LEAH: Michael and I are both MPD. The diagnosis certainly helped explain the complexity of our relationship! A standard joke is, "How many people are there on this couch?" There is no boredom in this relationship.

Many of my alters have very specific relationships and interactions with many of Michael's. We take it one day (or one moment) at a time. Whoever is "out front" in him will often elicit a corresponding alter "out front" in me. This is particularly true if his or my hurt children emerge and need comfort, support, or an open ear.

Mutual decision-making is a doubly difficult challenge. Michael's standard line is, ala Family Feud, "One hundred people surveyed; most popular answer is. . ." We work hard to accommodate everyone's needs.

The underlying fear is, if I heal, will he still love me? The answer has always been a resounding "yes." As my alters emerge and tell their stories, Michael has been consistently supportive, even when my revelations frighten him because they are so close to his own. We each cannot always give as much to the other as we want, due to the limitations of our own levels of recovery. But we both understand this. Accommodation and acceptance go a long way.

A few times, the less stable, more depressed or dangerous alters in both of us have emerged simultaneously. Things feel very unsafe and out of control at such times. But that rarely occurs any more, as we both progress in therapy and healing.

It is wonderful for me to know that Michael really understands the complex changes constantly occurring within me. It is also helpful, and chagrinning, to tell him something I see in him, only to have him teach me the same lesson six months later, by which time I've forgotten it.

We each love the other very deeply — and all the other's others. Despite the complexities, the relationship has worked for us for over eight years. And as we both heal, it just gets better, as

we have more insight, energy, and joy to share.

MICHAEL: In our case, quite often the rocks in my head fit into the holes in hers. On other occasions our respective abreactions aggravate each other to the point where we bump heads rather painfully.

We were thrust upon each other long before either of us had a diagnosis, and so we had to learn as we went. We were both aware that something was wrong; we'd had problems with relationships all of our lives, but weren't sure why.

The one thing that we both did was to swear, on an almost cellular level, not to cause each other the pain that we knew we could cause, the pain we both felt even if we couldn't remember where it came from at the time.

We're now into our ninth year together, almost a record for both of us. The problems that we have currently, with both of us in rather heavy therapy, appear to be much smaller now.

One of the prime problems is regular communication. We're both switching often enough that sometimes we have to say the same thing three or four times to each other before everyone that has a "turn at the wheel" knows what's going on. It's much easier now, with a diagnosis and obvious reason, than it was then, when we spent a lot of time and energy getting hostile with each other because we were being ignored.

We are also fortunate in having each other as an "observer" who keeps track of what we're doing, no matter how bizarre or self-destructive. That means that when we come around to a responsible "driver," we can remember what we did and try to work out with our therapists and with each other why we did it.

It's often an uphill struggle, but so far it's been worth it.

MV

I Want Dessert

I want the good things in life,
I want dessert.
From childhood to adulthood
The sweet taste of hope.
Give it to me now.
I want dessert.

Education being like fruits and vegetables,
Daily life the meat and potatoes.
Watch what you eat and drink.
Yet, look for what's next.
Bring me dessert.

I'll have a scoop of this
And a small slice of that.
A spoon full of vanity and
A double helping of self-esteem.
Watch for the pie in the face.
Where's the dessert?

I want the end result.
The last thing served in my life.
Where is the finish?
I claim the things I never had
because of
Poverty of mind.

Rethink your direction.
A chance to rest and revive.
Spend time on your healing.
Think, access, decide.

Desire, demand,
Claim the extra, the unnecessary,
The best you can give to you.
Here's the retreat...
Things that build self-esteem.
Consider loving yourself.
Perhaps that is the dessert.

Drink in the aura.
Find the path home.
Plan the entire meal.
And when you're as full as full can be...
Look for the sweet extra part,
The thing that finishes it all.

Dreaming can be delicious,
An appetizing result.
Even without dessert.

By j p grant

MV

The Body

It will carry you around,
Wherever you want to go
it will take you there.
Maybe it will tell you,
"I'm tired; let's not go,"
but it will go if you say so.
It won't lay down and throw a fit.
It will go, and keep going,
all over the place.
If you fall down
it will sigh
but it will get back up
and keep on walking.
You feed it drugs
and it will revive.
You cut it
and it heals itself.
So now we say, *No More!*
Treat it Nice!
"Anyway," a voice says
"When you treat it nice
it rewards you by feeling good."
And you know what?
That voice is right.
We will *love* our body.

By Sherry

MV

It's (almost) here! The long-awaited book *Poems To Our Therapists* is (almost) ready for the printer and should be available by mid-May at the latest. Poetry and art by *Many Voices'* readers focuses on the experience of therapy...mostly in a positive light, but here and there, a bit of realistic anger, too. Price will be \$10 plus \$2 shipping in US, or \$4US shipping elsewhere. Checks, credit cards or money orders in US currency are OK. We'll hold your payment (undeposited) until the books are ready. Order direct through *MANY VOICES*, at PO Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639.

Also, if you call *MV* and don't get a call back, write or call again. Recently we had calls on the answering machine where the return phone number was unclear, or actually cut off. We try to return all calls, but can't do it without your number!

And finally, a personal concern...Though I quit watching TV (except for moon landings & major catastrophes) some years ago, and for

MANY VOICES wishes to thank the following generous contributors for their help in supporting our work:

Angels:



THE CENTER FOR TRAUMA AND DISSOCIATION

4400 East Iliff Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80222
1-800-441-6921

Dr. Nancy Cole, Clinical Director

This organization is not affiliated with nor has input to or control over the contents of this publication. MANY VOICES and its staff have no influence on their operations.

For more information on how
YOU can help support
MANY VOICES, write to us at
PO BOX 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201.
Or call (513) 531-5415. THANK YOU!

MV Update

the sake of my blood pressure and peace of mind I absolutely *refuse* to watch anything that discusses Dissociative Disorder, **more and more people are writing to MANY VOICES about objectionable TV shows.** Numerous "documentaries" in recent months have promoted the views of False Memory Syndrome proselytizers. These radically-skewed presentations suggest that vast numbers of therapists are misguided or dishonest, and that it is common practice for them to "create" abuse memories in clients. Not surprisingly, our readers are indignant about this nonsense being promoted as "fact." (Special thanks to B., who sent a series of write-ups from the Toronto Star, after "Divided Memories" appeared there.) We're not set up at *MV* to do much about this, but I do appreciate people keeping me posted and I encourage all of you who are angry to write to local newspapers after an airing, as well as to the TV shows and to those companies who advertise on the shows. It will also help if you support

One Voice (see Resources, this issue) which was formed to counter ill-informed media attacks on therapy, the reality of abuse, and memory processes. We also received complaints about the media-promoted **child abuse which takes place on scandal-talk shows.** Programs that exploit dysfunctional parents and children together, in public, for the "amusement" or titillation of others, are cruel, hurtful, and dangerous to all of us. (Special thanks to Jill, who let me know about a particularly disgusting presentation on *Sally Jessy Raphael*.) If you see a show that turns your stomach, write, call, complain, and tell the advertisers what you think, as Jill did. These shows are created to assemble an audience that can be sold to advertisers. If enough people complain about content, the advertisers will get skittish, and the content will change...we hope. Thank you again for writing and sharing your healing ideas!

Best wishes to all — LW

MV

Building Relationships

The fact is, we're pretty new to this MPD stuff. That is not to say we are new to the damage our "condition" has had on relationships, jobs, finances, substance abuse, health, and where we live. For many years, we have been on a crazy roller coaster ride trying to run away from the fears that rip our insides apart. Recently, we are drawn toward the hope that we can somehow understand what happened and learn to live inside our own skin.

Today, we are married, for the third time. We have a daughter, Wendy, from our first marriage who lives with us. We have been sober for over seven years, and have been in intense MPD-related therapy for over a year. We have a sponsor-like relationship with another multiple who has helped us realize that we are not alone. We are *not* integrated, and are not sure that is even our goal. The toughest problem we have faced, hands down, has had to do with the relationship each "me" has with Sarah, our wife. This is made especially difficult in that several of the strongest of us are female. (The body is male.)

Sarah is an open, loving person who tries hard to accept us. She is willing to participate in our therapy and gives us space to be who we are most of the time. Still, there are moments when the wheels come off. Intimacy is sometimes interrupted by young ones, and our women crave affection, which Sarah is not always comfortable providing. Moody insiders sometimes affect our decision making, which means we are not always able to participate in family business as a real partner. Sarah's needs sometimes come in second, third, fourth, or lower when we are going through a rough period. She has become pretty good at reading our swings and switches and can end up being wife, mom, best friend, and/or lover, all before breakfast!

Wendy is accepting of everyone she has met in us and knows to ask "who's here" before talking about important stuff. She also asks before inviting her

boyfriend over to make sure someone Dad-looking is around. We were concerned about the effect our sometimes-chaotic behavior would have on our daughter. After all, Wendy didn't choose to have a dad with MPD. So far, it has been no problem. In fact, several of us have developed nice friendships with her.

To manage this busy household, Sarah, Wendy, and all of us try to maintain open and honest communication as much as possible. Those inside us are usually comfortable being "out" at home. This includes the girls and women, who have their own wardrobe and tastes in everything from magazines to shampoo. Kids get to draw and sleep with stuffies. One even has his own glow-in-the-dark toothbrush!

Through therapy and talks with our MPD friend, we have learned to have some rules about who drives, who has intimate relations, and who has responsibilities like bill-paying and other adult decision-making. (It's not fair to switch to a kid every time a tough family matter comes up. It's also not fair to only let adults choose all the movies, desserts, or when to go to bed!)

Of course, there are problems and tense days. We try to make sure that every person living in the house gets their fair share of attention. *Everyone* gets respect. Honesty is essential. We feel lucky to live with two people who understand as much as they can and love us unconditionally as we come to terms with our past.

By Nathan and Angel (mostly)



I'm 33 years old and have been solidly and successfully fused for seven months. Since my first integration experience two years ago, I have suffered with single personality disorder. My protector personality,

Donna, was my best friend for twenty years and I missed her terribly. There were many times that I considered creating another personality like her but I refuse to backslide into DID.

In the last month, I have come to realize that along with integrating inside and integrating with life, I must also integrate with my husband. I do not need another best friend inside but I could use a replacement from the outside. For years I have neglected Tom, my husband. I have never needed him — I had plenty of help on the inside. Even after integration I withdrew from him when I experienced flashbacks and ab reactions. I would hide myself behind a closed door and cry out all the pain from the past and he never knew it. When I told him, after my first therapy session, that I had other people living inside of me,, he said that it explained a lot about me. He struggled with believing in DID for months and then finally accepted it. He has become very supportive and even offered suggestions when I started my own support group for multiples. He is considering starting a support group for spouses of multiples. I thank God for my husband and I thank God that I can allow myself to need him now.

One day I said to Tom, "I want to get to know you again."

"My name is Tom," he said.

"So, I've heard. Have you ever wondered what life would be like with just you and me, and no children?"

"We had four years together before our children and we had a good time," he said.

"No, we didn't. You spent that time with another woman. It was you and Baby who enjoyed each other that four years. I want to experience times like that with you."

We decided to take time out to be together—to go out together and enjoy the art museums, waterfront cafes, movies, or just a moonlit walk. I have realized that Tom can replace Donna. All my innermost thoughts and feelings that I shared with Donna, I can

now share with Tom. I won't hide anymore. He has proven his love, patience and loyalty to me for thirteen years. It is time for both of us to give and receive.

By Teresa B.



I have been married for 21 years to a very supportive husband. I never realized until everything came down how fortunate I am. I always wondered why anyone would or could ever love me. He has given me the time and space that I need. He is a very loving person who knows everything about me. He is interested in my healing and well being, and supports me as his wife and friend.

It has been very hard for him at times. Before I was properly diagnosed, I had several suicide attempts. I was hospitalized three times in a year. To know that he still loves me after all that we have gone through is truly amazing. Petey, I/we love you very much.

By Maria & Herfam



I am 27 years old, and have MPD. I have been in therapy for a number of years. I am also currently in a relationship with a very special man. He is very kind and unbelievably patient and caring. He doesn't exactly know that I have very different parts/people with different ages. (He says I'm moody.)

When we met him, we felt very safe with him, which is surprising, considering my/our background. But when it came time to tell him what was going on, we didn't exactly tell him that we have MPD; we told him that we dissociate. And that I have a dissociative disorder. We explained the continuum of dissociating, and that I have times when I am "out of it" and go to a safe place inside my head. That I have blackouts where, when I "wake

up" I might not remember what I've said or done. Basically, he was told I had MPD without actually saying it. He has said that he doesn't think or believe that I am a multiple, because no one has come out and said, "Hi, my name is Suzy and I'm 6 years old." or "Hi, I'm Lisa and I'm 15 years old." When actually, he has dealt with Suzy, Lisa, me and the others inside, one on one. When Suzy is out, coloring and being, acting, and talking very much like a 6 year old, he leaves her alone to do her thing. He says, (when I or someone older comes back) that I was just "out of it" or gone. Somehow, he is able to simply go with the flow. I guess what he doesn't understand, he just accepts.

My system has more or less agreed to not come out and identify themselves for the time being. And for the most part the "right" part is out at the "right" time, without someone popping out at a time that may not be appropriate. Maybe this is because our system has gotten far enough in our healing, or maybe we just don't want to lose another person we care about, so we have to cooperate. I think maybe it is a little bit of both. Don't get me wrong—there are constantly problems, but we have made safe boundaries that we keep, and my boyfriend understands. Even if he doesn't, he understands or tries to. This is because he knows that no matter how unusual the boundary is, there is a good reason behind it. Some of our boundaries are:

- * My therapy sessions are private and if I bring something up that's ok, but he isn't supposed to ask.

- * Sometimes he or I will overly worry about what the other one is thinking or feeling, or that we did something wrong; when this happens we say "stop it" or "slow down," and when either one hears the other say this, this means we are overly worrying and nothing is really wrong.

- * He can smoke, but not in my apartment. And when he *does* smoke, it can be any brand but what my abuser smoked. (*Big trigger.*)

- * When one of us needs time and space alone, we say so.

- * No "fooling around" after he's gone out or has drank any amount of alcohol.

- * We each need to do what we have to, to take care of ourselves.

Some *inside* boundaries that my system has for its self are:

- * Don't encourage intimacy if you're not willing to stay out and follow through with whatever may happen next.

- * Don't ask for his opinion unless you're willing to hear the answer.

- * Don't go to him with therapy issues. His job is not to *fix* us.

- * Everyone must use and respond to the name Sue or Susan, until *everyone* agrees otherwise.

- * Whoever is out must use "I".

- * If we are having any kind of memories or flashbacks, we can say we're having memories (*no details!*) and we don't feel safe.

- * Little ones can play with the boyfriend's son (age 7) as long as a big person is watching from inside.

- * If someone is feeling suicidal or self-destructive, we say we're having a hard time and need a hug, and don't want to be alone. Usually simply asking for a hug helps a lot. (*Hugs are worth more than words, sometimes.*)

- * If the suicidal part is beyond a hug, we call a 24-hour on-call number.

I guess what it comes down to is that, we need to respect each other and to communicate. If another dissociative person asked me how we manage to have a relationship, I'd say making, keeping, and identifying boundaries is the biggest and best way to do it. There are other things that make relationships work, and play a part of it, but for us it is boundaries and trusting myself/selves.

By Susan S. for everyone inside.

MV



Therapist's Page

By Judith M. Pomerantz, Psy.D.

Judith M. Pomerantz, Psy D., is Program Coordinator for The Center for Trauma and Dissociation, located in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Pomerantz specializes in the treatment of trauma and dissociative disorders. She has conducted research on the nature of delayed memories of childhood abuse, and maintains a private practice that includes psychotherapy and assessment.

(For ease of reading, this article refers to survivors using pronouns of the feminine gender. However, it is noted that both men and women are abused and become dissociative, and that partners may be of either gender.)

The Search For Connection

I meet many couples who have reached various impasses in their relationships with each other. As I listen to their stories, I hear of beginnings, where with anticipation, apprehension, and courage, they find a kindred spirit and a sense of feeling *at home*. Often, there are aspects to their early relationship in which fantasies of connection now feel real and possible with each other. They experience a hopefulness that they never believed would be part of their life experience. They feel an acceptance and receptivity radiating in themselves and in their partners.

Somehow, that sense of connection begins to drift. For many, the moment when things change cannot be identified; but the feelings of loss and loneliness stand out boldly and clearly. And while many of these couples have not been able to recapture their original connection, a steady and unflinching support remains, solid, even through the difficult times. Something brings them to therapy, and something sustains their loyalty to each other, even in the worst of times. It is as if they know that the possibility of connection is but one step away, even while the gulf between them is deep.

However, people strive for connection, not only with others, but with themselves as well. Survivors of relational trauma (trauma at the hands of assumed-to-be-trusted others) learned to *disconnect* in order to survive. They are left with an on-going struggle: to be suspicious, defended, and distant, or to take the risk of being present and connected with themselves and with others. This battle

is not philosophical; it is an emotional marathon filled with pain and terror.

A healthy childhood allows one to develop a sense of self that is fortified with acceptance and nurturance. The child knows its own feelings and thoughts, and can express them free of shame and fear. This permits true intimacy. The healthy person knows where s/he leaves off and the other person begins. Knowing oneself is being in connection with oneself; expressing oneself without shame or fear is being in connection with another.

Various schools of psychological practice entertain theories on the link between childhood experience and adult behavior. But it is the survivor and his therapist who are most aware of the ways childhood experience have marred the adult's life. This is the insight we must bring to bear when trauma survivors come to therapy with their partners for help with the relationship.

In the context of relational trauma, couples therapy will reveal two parallel themes: the experience of self and other that grew out of trauma, and its consequent impact on the ability to be connected in the present. The survivor will confuse past and present; she will construe current couple and family conflicts as if she is once again living in that childhood home, with all its fears and abuses, and the accompanying need to dissociate and disconnect in order to survive.

Spouse or partner may become "perpetrator" through the survivor's eyes. More importantly, the survivor can become trapped in the perception that she needs to hide, to conceal the true self in order to be protected from a state of vulnerability — the vulnerability that leaves one open to

hurt, but is also essential in order to achieve real intimacy.

Two people come together for many different reasons. From a psychological perspective, one understanding of how people choose each other is related to the way in which their psychological profiles fit together. For example, one partner may present as dependent and weak, while the other may act as caretaker and the stabilizing force of the relationship. However, a deeper look will reveal that both people have both aspects in themselves, alternating between dependent and caretaking, and between weak and stabilizing. This can be brought to light as one of the partners, who may be in individual therapy, begins to change and becomes healthier; the way of the relationship is disrupted. The couple may even talk about leaving each other. As abandonment threatens, the *formerly* dependent and weaker one may *revert back* to this style, and equilibrium in the relationship may be temporarily restored. However, nothing has been resolved. Inevitably, conflict will arise again in the relationship.

Couples therapy can easily make the mistake of focusing on the "identified patient," usually the survivor. By focusing on the "identified patient's" needs, the therapist may re-enact the survivor's childhood environment, whereby true problems are denied. The current true problems involve *both* individuals. Good couples therapy encourages focus on both people's individual needs and the needs of the couple as a unit. Focusing primarily on the traumatized individual is more likely to occur when the survivor's individual therapist also treats the couple.

Honesty is necessary and essential in couples therapy because deception and denial have been such integral dynamics in the past abuse. Becoming honest is, only on one level, an either/or proposition; but to *discuss* becoming honest is to understand that it is a process, developed gradually. Becoming honest requires an individual to assert her sense of self by learning to be honest with herself. The individual can then develop the *freedom to be oneself* in the context of another, through her honesty with others. This is the same process that occurs in a competent, bounded, long-term therapeutic relationship. Often survivors develop a sense of self, honesty, and connection with others first through therapy, enabling them to achieve these relationship capacities with their peers.

The impairment in connecting, to oneself and to others, that occurs as a consequence of relational trauma, is profound. The loneliness, alienation and fear the survivor lives in creates an isolated and distant existence. She lives life starving for human contact and terrified of being harmed and abused if she opens the steel door even a crack. Her protection from hurt becomes her enslavement in a life of alienation from all others.

The survivor is lost in a cycle of hopeless reaching out and terrified pushing away. If she opens the door wide enough for human contact, she uses the only relational style she knows — to conceal her true self and do what she can to prevent harm. If the survivor is to grow out of this way of being, she will have to explore her

trauma and describe the old pain that connection used to mean. She will have to look long enough to know that she can truly come out and be herself without risking her life.

The partner of the survivor will also have to face his/her own painful or inadequate ways of relating. The partner will be impelled to look at the devastation that resulted when the survivor-partner was harmed in childhood. At times the tests put to the partner will feel tedious, repetitive, exhausting. The best approach to healing the relationship will be for both people to develop a stable sense of self, apart from each other, and a capacity for connection with each other. Only then will it be truly safe to live and be oneself, and to feel the true joy of connection.

MV

Two Souls

The terror and light; palpable, present
Not for all to see.
Ashamedly, I trudge and roll,
Marking this reckless "path" —
To what? What is it I seek?
Blind to direction, no dark voices at times;
I fall to emotion long buried.
Perhaps into this new season I climb.
Perhaps, Spring again, slow and deliberate.

My legs as if rubber, cannot guide,
Residing, in grief and shame,
I close my eyes.
Viewing a soul, clutching damage long past,
Seeking pain, Scars found in delight.
Twisted damage / provoked,
Not a gentle Sight.

The man that embraces most men to me,
Creating rage, not harmony.
The door to our secrets open now.
Ashamed of the wretchedness he brought.
He taught, in twisted, painful memories,
parts of what I am.
I write to confirm this memory.
To confront what is real.
Ashamed to speak, and even breathe, I write.

Words to keep the door open; unlocked.
A man of peace, far away,
Moving toward a different light.
Light too early for this self to seek —
Residing in grief and shame; mindful of his struggles.
His suffering too; a mirror of the past.
A guide to my weakness; a guide to his spirit.

My mentor, my confidant in silence of younger years,
Follows a path, bold and experienced.
He knows much of death and sorrow.
He has not hurt a soul.
A man damaged, yet gentle and kind.
So unlike the locks on my door.
He said: *Let the secrets go.*
Let them go. I did. I have.

He is on a path toward Angel's light.
Where am I to go?
Will nature be my guide?
I listen to birdsong; To his breath; To mine.
Moments of respite, in discovery — Two Souls.
I wish I could breathe a clear melody to him.
His strength in suffering will follow me,
On this venerable "path" to peace. To Quiet.
His and mine.

By JL

MV

Best Friends Forever

By PJ

We have had so many misconceptions of a good loving relationship that the person that we love and his love back are inching forward in this relationship. It is "best friends forever" at this stage. We spend a lot of time together. We really enjoy a lot of the same things or are willing to try something new, like watching football on TV, asking him questions about the game. We talk to each other about where we are in that stage of our relationship. Being in therapy helps us in our relationship because I can ask the therapist how those things are supposed to work. We get great feedback, realizing that we have a great relationship. She (the therapist) said that more people ought to be like us, in honesty and being open to each other.

My parents think he's great. He really likes them too, so that isn't a problem. We reaffirm our love, never being afraid to say "I love you" and always have bear hugs. Our adults love him too.

He is very safe to be around, even for the kid.

We had been friends before, and remet. Our old friendship from the past sparked, and we've been friends since then.

We (in me) had a *bad* relationship with our ex-husband. I don't know how we got to a good relationship, to break the cycle of abusive men to find him, and really know him as a person and a "soul" mate. We found each other in need. We both needed a close friend or would have been sad and alone everyday. He has helped us when therapy was so hard. We needed to have hugs and real love. He was—is—always there. He understands, is patient, and accepts me as an "us person."

I knew what it was like to be loved by my mother and stepfather, my therapist (Christian,) and now by him, a good-hearted man. I-we understand the nature of love better and find that having him in my life helps me to

understand God's love — like my pastor (therapist) — *Love in Action*.

I may be only 16, but I'm not stupid. I saw the ones they *almost* got mixed up with — in danger. God put him into our life.

The relationship we have is satisfying on both sides. We actually discuss the news, we have conversations that our ex couldn't have conceived of at all. We talk and share dreams and goals, our hurts and our hearts. We go on "road trips" (as he says). That's when we take off to some exotic city or drive away and window shop. We people-watch at the mall, look in stores for the best buys and sales. We pretend to be rich and leave the store with a bottle of caffeine-free diet coke!

I think finding a new or healthy relationship for people when they are in therapy can be a challenge, but it's well-worth the effort. Look around you. Don't be too shy. But sometimes being shy keeps you safe, so talk it over inside and with your therapist. Be cautious. Some people might see you and take advantage. You need supportive, kind-hearted people. One place to go is a church— but I realize for some of us it's hard to be in a church. If you ride a bus, practice making conversation. *Pray about it* after you find a mate. It takes work like a rose garden. Water and feed the plants, and beauty will be your reward. If not, the thorns will prick your heart.

Don't invade space: body space or head-space. Your mate has the right to privacy. Use give and take. Be willing to not always get your way. Even the little ones inside can learn to share. Sit down as your relationship blossoms and talk about where you are and where you both want it to go.

Have rules. Not rigid ones, but rules like "Please put the toilet seat down" and "I won't drink all the milk up at 2 AM." From my relationship with my friend I learn these things.

Often as we move along in therapy, I learn how to relate to the world as a recovering basket case, and come out

sane in the end. Love is a response every infant is born with. Some of us have it snuffed out, but our souls cry out — No! Love me, Someone out there — *love me!*

Don't do what we did — hopped right into the first real relationship and spent eleven years of abuse and the loss of my children (I was "unstable"). Please — plant roses in the sunshine and see, look clearly, trust instinct and be *very* careful. Life has enough thorns already.

MV

Who is You

Brash and bouncy
Young and bold
Knee socks and denims
And those purple high tops

Is that you

Trapped in a mirror
Desperate to escape
Difficult to even comprehend
What horror put you there

Is that you

The gatekeeper
The facade for so long
So loving, so scared
Afraid of no future

Is that you

An artist child
Not allowed to express your talent
Now you can, if you get the time
And what beauty you create

Is that you

Pool bars and action movies
Junk jewelry and cigarettes
We laugh and joke
And listen to old music

Is that you

You arrange simple words
To make people think or cry
If you lose the self doubt
The sky's the limit

Is that you

I realize that each is each
And none are you
Because all are you
And each is their own

By Douglas (husband of a multiple)

MV

In Our World

We chiseled a hole so that you can see into our world. Normally it is not this clear and bright. The hole lets light in so we can show you what it looks like. We are climbing...and because in reality it is very very dark inside, we are climbing blind. The climb itself is very hard and difficult. Unless you are also a climber, you probably cannot even imagine what it's like. All we know is, we are climbing UP, climbing out of the black hole. It is a rough and dangerous and painful climb. We are not sure where we are going, because we cannot see the top...we only know to go UP.

One of the terrible parts of climbing is that rocks keep falling on us from above. Some of them are thrown down on purpose, I think, but most are probably accidents (although they still hurt when they hit). There is nothing to protect us anymore. Part of climbing is being naked, exposed. Everything hurts more. The rocks fall from the hands of Lack of Understanding and Impatience and others who live outside of our world...those who have never known what it's like to try to climb, because they've never found themselves in a black hole before. Climbing would be easier if there were a way to protect ourselves from falling rocks.

At times,, we would give up the climb, except that I know we're not alone in the hole. I don't know why, but there are some people who are willing to go down into other people's black holes. They are very *very* special people. They have supportive hands that keep us from falling back down into the hole once we've begun climbing (sometimes we slip, but they catch us before we fall too far back). The warmth and softness they offer in a world of jagged edges and cold hard rock is soothing and comforting to a frightened, weary, and wounded climber. There was a day when scrapes and bruises from the climb distracted us. They seemed like sweet relief from the pain within, (the pain that lines the hole and radiates up from the bottom...) but we are learning that there is really no getting away from

anything. The hole, the climb, is really no place to be...and it is *not* relief (in some ways it's almost worse than the days when we were at the bottom). The only way to find relief, to get out of the hole, to be in a place where there is light, is to keep climbing up, *through* and despite the pain. We are grateful for the hands that hold us up in the dark. The hands that long to reach out and protect us from the falling rocks. The hands that tend to the bruises they leave behind. The hands that offer soothing comfort in the cold, hard, painful world we find ourselves in.

Part of climbing up through pain, is experiencing the agony when secret wounds, long hidden, burst open. No one cuts you, no rock reaches out and scrapes skin away...it is not anything from the outside in. It's a wound that comes from the inside out. Inside-out wounds are *much more* painful than outside-in wounds...if you've ever had one, you would know what I mean. Sometimes, although I hate to say it, as we've been climbing, we've ended up hurting each other. I'm not sure why. Maybe it's jealousy or competition. Who knows? I think mostly it's because at times we just get so frustrated and angry with how slow everything is and how dark and hard the climbing is...(don't "they" say that you always hurt the ones closest to you? the ones you "love"? Could it be?) We are closest to each other (closer than siblings or twins or even conjoined twins) and so, it is easiest, I suppose, to strike out at each other in our frustration and anger. As time goes by, though, we are occasionally surprised to feel tiny inside fingers

gently, hesitatingly placing a Band-Aid on a hurt. Occasionally a hand reaches out from within and offers a fresh bandage for a new gaping wound that we're sure will *never* heal. Sometimes we surprise each other. I think we are learning how to help each other with the pain, and the climb.

Our world is dark and hard and painful and it is uphill all the way, but



we are not alone and there are lots of Band-Aids to go around. Healing takes time, we suppose. We are actually glad for each other, some days. We are glad for *very* special people who help us. We are glad we are still able to find the strength and resolve to keep climbing, despite the cost. *We are glad we are no longer at the bottom.*

By hope and ellen for Ellie and all of us who are her friends.

Hey! What About Us Spouses!

(A Husband's View, by A.Thomas)

Even though I share the world with my wife, I feel I've lost her in the shadows of the past. The first twenty-five years of our marriage has been as husband and wife. Since the multiplicity erupted five years ago, our lives are as roommates, sharing the house, but having separate bedrooms. Very little physical touching (handshakes are okay).

Because of the prior abuse, our sexual activity is almost non-existent. When memories first started, any type of sexual advance from me would trigger screams and fear, as the children-alter emerged and got caught up in a traumatic memory. My days were filled with anxiety, awareness, and caution in movements and words. The slightest thing would cause a flash of anger, interrupting the calm of a quiet time. It's like being on-guard for the unexpected. I feel deprived from enjoying the company of my wife. I've had to sit by and see my wife change from the one I used to know, into many different "people," sharing one body.

I knew very little about the complexity of the mind and the emotional effect that trauma can have on a person. I felt helpless as I saw her being consumed by depression as she withdrew into her own world. I had no idea what was going on within her; she wouldn't talk. I felt as though she was mad at me all the time.

I couldn't seem to find a way to help ease her sadness. I wanted to be with her, but it was getting very difficult to cope with her mood. It left me confused as we tried to talk, but the communication wasn't there. I couldn't speak in fear of what it might evoke. As the days passed, my confusion turned to guilt as I tried to rationalize what I was doing to cause her sadness.

We often took long car rides, going nowhere, running from our problem but taking it with us. It was during one of these rides that I was confronted with the unexpected Multiplicity. For three days I had sensed an air of intense emotions surrounding my wife; it was deeper than the depression that had been in the forefront. This was much more volatile than before. We were returning home in the car as she sat, very quiet and somber. In a split second, it appeared as though she was taken and replaced by another person mentally, not physically. This person beside me called herself Ms Prissy. She wasn't rational and made statements of having sexual activity with a relative. At that moment all sorts of thoughts raced through my mind as to what was going on. Did her mind snap? Is she having a

nervous breakdown? It scared me — caught me off-guard. I tried to regain my composure to focus on her safety and my next course of action.

I took her to the psychiatric unit with this person still claiming to be Ms Prissy. Watching her hit walls, crying, and letting out this scream filled with anguish was painful for me. I felt as though my world was being torn apart. It hurt to see the pain in her eyes and not be able to make it go away. My heart was shattered as this unknown anger lashed out at me. It's as though she was seeing someone else, but I was the target of her anger and rage.

Now I know why and understand. Since the diagnosis, we gathered all the material we could on the subject to help us understand what is going on, to help us cope. Going with my wife to her therapy sessions makes me feel I'm a part of her healing process; I'm not left out in the cold. This also helps me to know how to react to the alters in different situations. I've learned to read her eyes and the body language of the alters. I know immediately when someone else has emerged.

Each day has brought a new experience in her healing, and in our relationship. With every personality came new memories and emotional scarring. There's been many times I became the target of anger, hate, and any expression of emotional pain they have been holding inside. Yes, it cut deep in my heart when I was told they hated me or asked for a divorce or wanted me out of their life, but with God's help, I'm able to focus on their hurt and understand the anger isn't at me but through me as they visualize memories.

I have a lot of anger as I realize our entire family are victims of her abusers. Happiness has been taken from us. I feel cheated that we can't enjoy the activities we used to do together. I feel as a caretaker, for now. Reassuring the ones inside, making them feel safe, earning trust. The little ones inside view our home as their safe place where no one can intrude. For this reason, we seldom have visitors, including our own children. We seldom try to go away for overnight.

We do have our moments of laughter, when some of the alters express themselves. I've had many tea parties, taken the little ones shopping for certain toys, taken the teen shopping for clothes (they think I'm made of money!)

Our world after five years is starting to settle down to a more regular routine. The alters are releasing their memories, along with the pain they endured. I can see my wife becoming more "together." Through

this, I've seen her become a more assertive, self-assured person. She appears to have more self-esteem. This experience has helped us to be more open with our feelings and thoughts towards each other. It has shown us the amount of deep hurt people have within their being, which has made us more sensitive towards others. Before the Multiplicity emerged, her career was as a nurse, which she had to give up for now. She never wrote before, so this is new. Maybe I'm going to have a writer as a wife now! She's having a different article coming out in another newsletter later in the year. Who knows what other hidden talent lies within her many selves!

I realize that our life will never be like it was before, nor would I want it to be. Our experience in this has brought us closer together, and as we progress, our relationship will be enhanced. Having a Multiple as a spouse can make every day different! Yes, it gets rough at times, but I've seen a woman start out in a cocoon, emerging into a beautiful butterfly. Her wings aren't being held down by the past now; the inner chains that kept her from growing as a full human being are being broken.

Men or women, whomever your significant half is, I will pass on those three famous words told to me when times got rough — Hang In There!

MV



Love in Pieces

by Diana and Lori J
For the aspiring women inside

1.

I am only fragments of what
They wanted me to be
So many pieces of identities formed
As each friend or would-be lover
Or even just five minutes of
conversation
Could form a new piece
So great was the terror
The body would be left alone
"Be yourself"
The magazines would say
Right after listing
500 rules of what to do on a date
"It's OK to show yourself"
One therapist said
Right after telling me
300 things I needed to do differently
Too many changes expected
One person to the next
I could not keep up
And got left anyway
I could not evolve a new self fast
enough
Or maybe they didn't like themselves
And so were frightened off
By the mirror-image I was becoming

I could not keep a sense of self
With someone else around
So much has piled up now
Past and present all in jumbled heaps
Too much noise now from within
Too many part-selves
Clinging onto old identities
Formed to please someone we might
have loved
Like mementos in a scrapbook
One cannot bear to throw away
I have to close for inventory

2.

Even as I try to keep up
A current relationship on the outside
I don't even know if I want
I'm not even sure if he wants
Modern thinking says
"First have a good relationship with
yourself"
But "myself" is buried somewhere deep
Under layers and layers of adaptations
Like a chambered nautilus shell
Coiled round and round my soul
And if both of us in our own way
Are struggling between

Adaptive mutations vs forming of self
How would we ever know if we really
connect?
How would we ever know if it was time
to let go?
It's such a fight to get real
To try to love another at the same time
Is even harder

3.

At least this time I got closer
And didn't get swallowed up
At least this time I didn't push away
too fast
This time I didn't always feel quite so
hollow
I even saw a little deeper under his
surface-self too
Being real doesn't always mean it
works out
But it beats losing more of myself
This doesn't feel like it will last Forever
But it lasted longer than others before
And if I can learn to be more real
Maybe love can be real even more

MV

Dating Progress

I wasn't really allowed to date in high school. Any dating feelings I had were quite cut off/dissociated. (Must be a side effect of incest! ha ha.)

But after many many many years of trying to kill myself, and being institutionalized most of my adult life, I decided to live. It's a long story, and I'll cut to the chase on my theory of dating...

I think I never found a good date/boyfriend/lover because I hated myself so much I only had experience with psychopaths, abusive men, and years of abstinence. I figured there must be something about *me* that was attracting this element to myself *and* was putting up with it. So I spent my years of abstinence working on me and making myself more attractive to myself, on the inside. Time well spent. I feel good inside, and this shows — I'm attracting a better class of guys because I can recognize the bad ones and steer clear.

Last summer I placed a personal ad, stated *my* criteria, what I was looking for in

a mate. I got 30-40 responses. On the third response I hit a real nice guy. He's good to me, we have fun together, and I'm pretty happy.

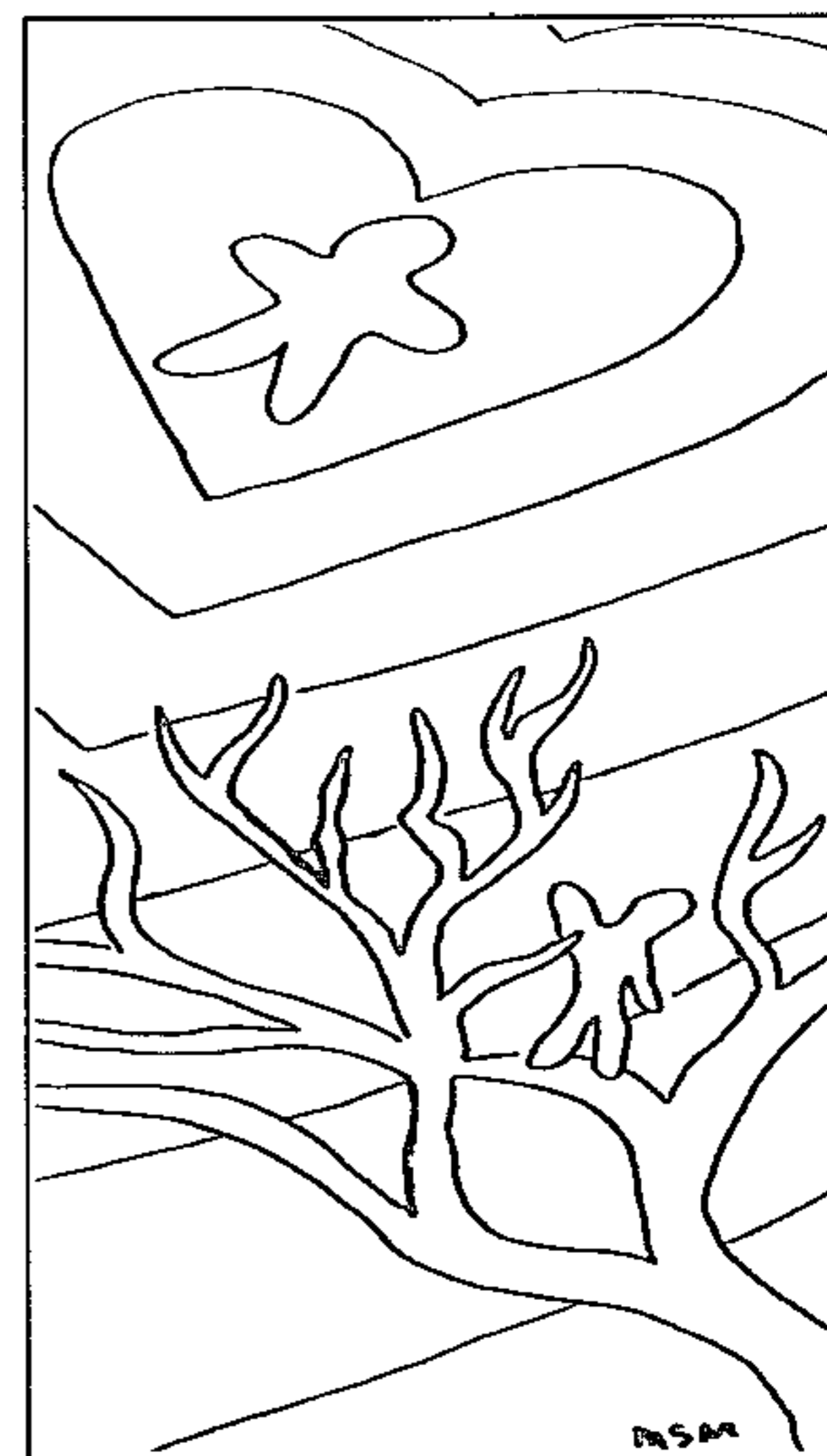
So my advice is: know what *you* want. Be realistic in your expectations. And remember only you can make *you* happy. If you depend on your mate to make you complete or fulfilled, you're doomed to be disappointed.

I hope this helps some MV readers. Hopefully you won't have to work as long as I did. I really mourn the life I could have had, but lost to incest/abuse. But I remember that I should be dead, but I'm not. I worked real hard, and I'm probably more alive now than most people ever will be in their lives.

So while I lost a *lot*, I really have a lot to be thankful for.

Good luck!

By Barb W.



MV

My Twenty Seven Daughters

Many mothers, including mine, deny knowledge of the sexual battery of their children. Mother/perpetrators have a vested interest in denial. Others, fearful of abandonment, ally themselves with the offender. I am a non-offending parent who is also a survivor.

When young I was severely mistreated for years by multiple abusers. This had extremely adverse effects on my parenting patterns. Recovery found me struggling with merely recognizing my daughter had been abused. The task now is to contend with her and my healing issues.

So what's it like, living with all twenty-seven of my adult daughter's alters? Damn near impossible at times! One thing it isn't, is boring. There is always something or someone new to contend with.

It's important my mother is a survivor too. Because Ma knows what it feels like, it's a shared experience. This creates a bond that makes it easier for us to be close.

Because I know the pain of healing from abuse, it's easier to forgive Ma. She did fail to protect me, but I understand she was a victim, too.

Hearing from my mother the words, "There wasn't anything wrong with you. It was me who could not be an effective parent," goes a long way towards healing the past.

When she finds information on multiplicity it helps her understand my system. Doing this says to me that Ma has clearly changed, is really functional, and can help. I don't want to be a multiple any more than she wants her history of sexual battery.

The hardest things for me to get used to are the changes in her. How can I trust this "new" parent? I'm sometimes afraid the past will come back and snatch her away. Only time,

Confusion can't come close to describing what happens when I try to keep up with switching. This is especially frustrating when there are traumatic or fearful issues afoot. However, I need only to think of how much more frightened and confused my daughter is when uncontrolled switching takes place, to realize my problem with it is a minor irritation.

Some of her alters are affable kids, witty, bright, and mischievous. It's okay to play with them, and it's great fun.

I don't like the offender-personality. Because this perpetrator-alter has the traits of the flesh and blood man, I know he is basically a coward. I face him down and the jerk takes a hike with his tail between his legs.

There are obstinate alters, unreasonable ones (to me), the ones created to guard the core personality. "Nobody" is clever, and I'm glad she's

My Singleton Mother

and daring to trust, can prove the present is real and here to stay.

Boundaries are hard. When I didn't have a nurturing mother and desperately needed her, I formed one of my own. Now I have a mother alter and a *real* mother. When I first came home and was confronted with my real nurturing mother, I resented that as a child I was forced to create a cherishing alter.

Now Ma always shows she is real and cares about me. My mother/alter is less demanding and I'm able to regulate this identity. Sometimes I still feel "swallowed" by my flesh and blood parent's personality.

Understanding and reassuring me about feeling overwhelmed much of the time helps me fight off the fear she might not support me.

Patience is the number-one trait to practice when dealing with each other. Communication problems have to be worked out, because not doing so causes serious frustrations. I need to say things I haven't been able to say

around when the system needs her. Whenever "Nobody" takes courageous action, for instance, slapping a bully, she takes care of two problems at once. First, "Nobody" is protecting the system. When she is accused of the deed, the core personality (who is always in control then) truthfully says, "Nobody did it."

Because there are a multitude of personalities, there's usually one who knows something about whatever we happen to talk about.

At least one alter has valuable insights. For instance, when I was feeling guilty about how my disclosures of incest might hurt and alienate my birth family, she said, "It ain't like they call you up every day, Ma." She was so right. I hadn't heard from a single birth family member for months!

From my Adult Daughter's point of view then, the following...

and I need my parent to listen. I think it's important too, that she makes it safe for me to disagree with her.

Treating me like an adult with full rights and responsibilities is the key to much of my growth. When Ma remembers I always do the best I can, it helps me to feel competent.

I think the hardest thing for Ma is when I don't take her advice. She thinks I will slide back into old self-destructive patterns. Maybe she just has to trust *me* on this one.

With time, self-education, and tolerance on both our parts, we can overcome anything.

For a singleton, she does okay. Like I told her, "You've done a lot of work, Ma. You'd make somebody a good parent."

In telling our experiences, we hope parents and children will be encouraged to share their recoveries. Also, we wish to show that a strong, healthy, and rewarding relationship is possible.

By Norma Baker Blair and Daughter

Inside Relationships

Relationships and toughest problems walk hand and hand in my soul. I love too easily, yet often find it's counterfeit love. I do have a few healthy love-relationships. It's other people who I try to fix — or used to. We recently adopted a no-more-rescuer attitude.

My really good relationships are really good, decent, loving, healthy relationships. It took eight years to get here... But even now our external world confuses us, stresses us, and is often too dull, so we dissociate it all away.

Our inner relationships are strong. We have folks inside who are married or mates. Their love is no less than any two outer-people's would be. They comfort each other, honor each other, etc. (Over half of us inside are male — born protectors.)

The more we learn about our inner relationships, the more we understand our external ones, and can apply successful skills into the world we ran from. We see us as a jewel...many facets each to explore inside; On the outside, my guard is almost always up, never wanting anyone to see me. We mask it all, except for our outside support team — but even with them, we have days when we hide stuff. Like a game we played a lot when we were first diagnosed: inside/outside. One spoke inside; the other, outside. Spoke in whispers to be heard to establish the lines we needed to not-cross. To say, "yes I am out, you are in right now." Then we dug up more stuff, and began to dust the cobwebs out, and bring some light to those frozen in the dark. With each splash of light our Jewel would sparkle and shine...rainbows on the walls, a beautiful promise of God — peace.

So now as I try to rest my part of the mind, I feel the fear from other parts. I know this is real fear for a real reason, but I don't own that fear. Still I choose to stop and help them out tonight. Once upon a time this would be a perfect chance to snatch the body and stuff the in-charge person into a hole, and bury them. Now it's a common time to lend a hand and help. There are fewer backbites and crap. Many inside, though, still cuss us out and threaten us. Those relationships are strained and need vital attentions. The current head-hunters try to get to them, and reason among themselves. If this doesn't work, there are places to put the difficult ones to keep us safe until we decide what to do with them. Discipline first, for safety's sake.

By "Trevor's She"

Resources

Turn your concern about the FMS backlash into action. Support responsible media awareness of the complex processes of traumatic memory by contributing financially to **One Voice, The National Alliance for Abuse Awareness**. PO Box 27958, Washington DC 20038-7958. (202) 667-1160.

Good news! We just received a new address to order *A Healing Journal for Multiples*, by Ellyn Stevens. Send inquiries about this book to Multiply Made, 10941 W. 107th Place, Westminster, CO 80021. Double-check on the price before you send money, because the wrong address was printed in MVMC#4, and the price may have changed as well.

Research volunteers needed. For a study on grief-processing by individuals with Dissociative Identity Disorder and how that may differ from grief-processing by "singletons," I am seeking multiples who are willing to complete a brief questionnaire on their process of grieving. Send your name, address, and note "grief questionnaire" to P. Hurwitz, 350 E Del Mar, Suite 120, Pasadena CA 91101.

Book of original poetry by women abuse survivors is being prepared. Submissions accepted through Jan. 1997. Write to Morgan Night, PO Box 207, Goodlettsville TN 37070.

More newsletters: *The Sacred Circle, a Support Letter for Christians Healing from Sexual Abuse, Assault, and Incest*. Write to PO Box 296, Bottineau, ND 58318. *The Scream* (with no-holds-barred graphics, etc.) is available from 34 Short Hills Dr., Hilton, NY 14468.

Women survivors of clergy sexual abuse are invited to attend retreats sponsored by Associates in Education and Prevention in Pastoral Practice. Call (401) 295-0698 for information.

For information about the periodical Professional Counselor, or a list of sites for Dual-Diagnosis conferences sponsored by U.S. Journal Training, Inc., call (800) 998-0793.

Conferences

11th Regional Conference on Trauma, Dissociation & Related Disorders. April 18-19, Akron, OH. All plenary sessions, so you won't miss anything. Call (216) 384-6525 for information.

9th Annual Western Clinical Conference on Trauma & Dissociation. April 17-20, Costa Mesa, CA. Call (714) 978-0895 for information.

1st Annual Northwest Regional Conference on Trauma & Dissociation. April 28-30, at Campbell's Resort, Lake Chelan, WA. Sponsored by Center for Emotional Trauma Recovery at Lake Chelan. Call (206) 270-8544 for information.

8th Annual Eastern Regional Conference on Abuse, Trauma & Dissociation. May 31-June 3, Alexandria, VA. Call (800) 934-3724 for information.

6th Annual Celebration of Healing. A survivor's conference. May 31-June 1, at St. Mary's College (Notre Dame), South Bend, IN. \$50 (or less if you sign up early.) Call (219) 283-1308 for information.

1st National Conference on Children Exposed to Family Violence, June 6-8, Austin, Texas. Radisson Hotel. Call (903) 595-6600 for information.

One-day symposium for survivors, June 8, Crystal Lake, IL. Supportive focus on traumatic memories and the "false memory" debate. Sponsored by Believe the Children and SAVE. Call (708) 515-5432 for information.

The 14th Annual VOICES in Action conference, Honoring our Choices, Celebrating our Voices, August 2-4, at the Hilton in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. For survivors, pro-survivors, and professionals. Featured speaker, author and clinician Dr. Charles Whitfield. Call (800)7VOICE8 for info.

Minnesota Awareness of Ritual Abuse Network. Conference dates Aug.21-23. Call 891-6808 for info.

ISSD 13th International Fall Conference, Nov. 7-10, 1996, San Francisco, Fairmount Hotel. Deadline for submission of clinical and research abstracts is May 15. Call (847) 375-3718 for information.

Letters

Dear MV,
I have been fighting for visitation with my children since I was diagnosed with DID. Please share with me any information you may have about child custody issues and DID. Thank you.

Cher S.

Dear MV,
Would someone please define (1) relationship and (2) loving relationship? In all my life it seems I have failed miserably at this. They come, they go. They go much faster than they come. Each time I ask "What went wrong?" Whether it was family, friends, or a much-desired intimate relationship, it has always disintegrated. There has been, as a result, years of numbness and fear of allowing anyone full entry. We all understand at this stage of our lives that we carry a lot of responsibility for how things go or don't go. It's knowing what works and doesn't work that we do not understand. The therapist says it is a matter of trust. We say it is a matter of judgment of character and people simply do not care to be involved in a complex relationship. How can we know when we're expecting too much, and how much is too much? To be clear, my multiplicity is not revealed. On the very few occasions that has happened, we lose. It always comes back to who I am, who we are, the totality of us. Something is so wrong, there is such a character flaw, that people just stay away. Sometimes we will sit in the mall and just watch people. We watch everybody. Some couples are beautiful and compliment each other; they seem to fit. Others don't appear beautiful on the outside, but beauty radiates from them as well. So we wonder...it isn't just how big or how little or how bubbly or quiet. So what is it? Does anybody know how to do the people thing? Even the therapist pulled out; he calls it a break. For me, it is okay. I am having difficulty dealing with a "paid" relationship right now. It feels like another trade-off. How do others adjust to scheduling time for the inner world? How do others accept "paid" relationships? Are there other readers who have no place to be who you are? Who have no one to sit out the chaos with them? We really need help with this. Thanks.

Kel

Dear MV,
I have several people within who eat. Four all together. Does anyone have any info that would help us to just allow one to be eating? It's getting crowded with everyone eating. Help!

Maria & Herfam

Dear MV,
Why is there so much depression and so much desire to kill yourself? How can you tell if your therapist really believes, how hard it is to not kill yourself?

Judy W

Dear MV,
We are being harassed by people in the satanic cult our parents raised us in. We are afraid most of the time. The phone rings and our heart stops beating. We trace the calls, but it does no good because they call from pay phones. They follow us and leave triggering things in our car. They threaten us and our therapist. The police say they cannot do anything because the law has not been broken. We do not know what to do. If anyone has had this experience we would really appreciate any advice you can give us, or even someone else to contact for some help. Thank you.

Elizabeth

Both JoAnn R. and Sonya R. want to know more about therapy and feelings after integration. Send your ideas for them and MV readers, too.

NOTE: We've had a number of letters recently from people with physical disabilities & a dissociative diagnosis, including one from a woman who recently had an amputation. I intended to print this but due to severe MDS this month (Messy Desk Syndrome) that letter and address has vanished. I would like to ask people to respond to the physical disability question, and would request that the previous letter-writer please write or call again, so I can forward replies. Thanks much! - Lynn W. (513) 531-5415.

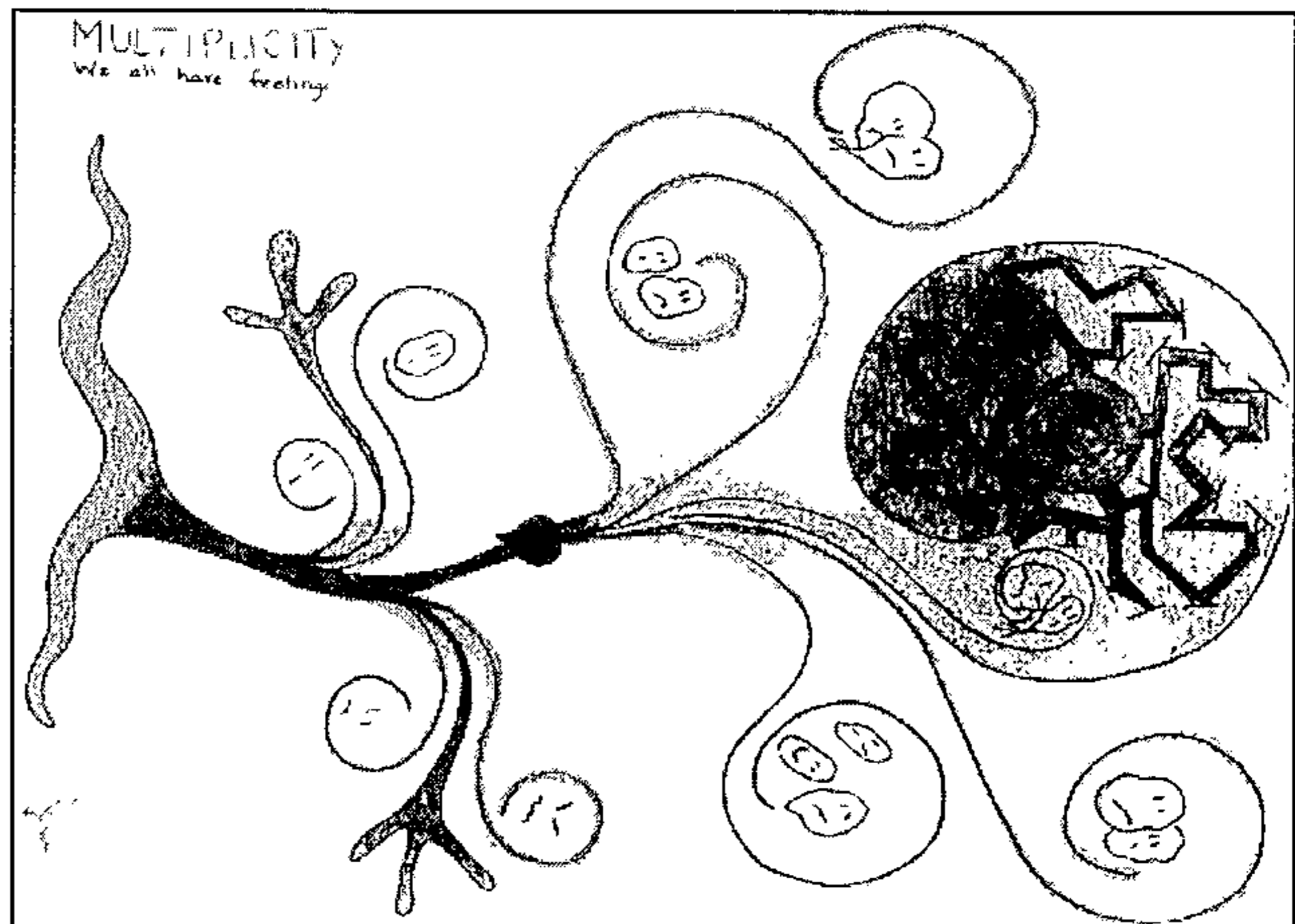
MV

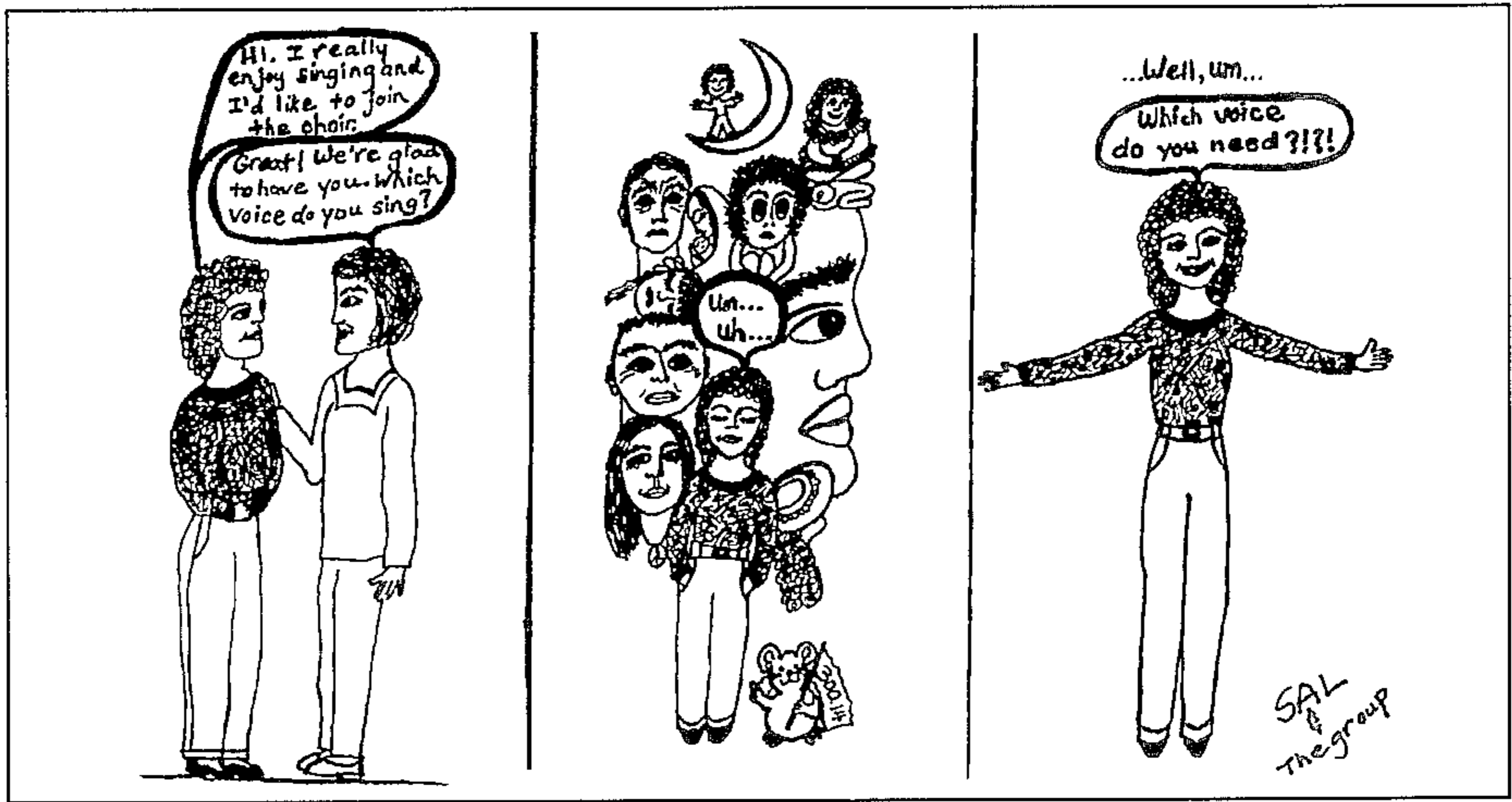
Who Are You?

Strong hands
warmth and power
Cares about little people.
soft eyes
upsetting
Stranger appeared from nowhere.
Will he stay?
Will he hurt?
we don't know.
We wait and wait for the hurting to come.
The only hurting is what he calls love.
love hurts and scares.
That's not what he does.
we don't understand.
What if love is painless?
What if there's no fear?
This is so strange.
Who is he?
Maybe he's an angel with a message from God.
the message is in his hands, his eyes, his heart.
Maybe he's my brother
and protects and cares.
He brings me out of fear and dark places.
He calls me kiddo — we like that.
Please don't go away.
We need you to stay.
Who are you?

By Barbara

MV





Books

How to Marry the Man Of Your Choice

By Margaret Kent © 1987, 1994. Warner Books Inc. 1271 Avenue of the Americas, NY NY. \$5.50. Paperback.

This is a good book. Men shouldn't be put off by this book because they can pick up some tips for themselves. Also, the woman ends up doing a lot of the work. So guys — don't cringe at the title! For women, don't think "Great! Here I am doing all the work again!" You have to work at anything you want. This book just happens to be a how-to manual for people who want to get married. The author has you take inventory of yourself and asks you to think about what qualities you are looking for in a mate and what qualities you have to offer a potential mate. She also takes you through the selection process. If you know what type of person you are looking for, you'll have a better chance of finding that special someone. Topics covered in the book are: *dressing to attract men, meeting men, date ideas, choosing the right man* (very important to those of us who have a real talent for selecting the wrong ones!) *enhancing the relationship*, and so on. There are no sexual tricks or gimmicks in here, just straightforward, common-sense approaches. A lot of times we can't figure out why everyone else seems to find the right guy and we can't seem to find the right one, no matter how hard we try. Ms. Kent's book offers a new way to look at our dating strategies. It could be that just being ourselves isn't enough; we have to know what it is we want in a mate, but more importantly, what do we have to offer? I read this book years

ago and thought it was the most Machiavellian thing I'd ever read. But then I wasn't ready to date. Now that I am ready to date I find that I see the book with new eyes. I see it as a guide to helping me achieve my goal, which is to get married. It offers some good guidelines on what a decent relationship can be. I highly recommend this book because I think too often we fall in love with love (or lust) and don't think about building a relationship with another person. Speaking as someone from a screwy family who knew nothing about relationships except how to spell the word and exploit them, I found the book real helpful. It got me thinking about what I could bring to a relationship and what I could expect in return.

Guerilla Dating Tactics

By Sharyn Wolf. ©1993. Penguin Books USA Inc. NY NY. \$11.95. Paperback

This book also offers dating strategies, though the end result is not necessarily marriage. But it offers some good tips for meeting people, like if you see a cute guy at the drugstore, you can "accidentally" drop your change so hopefully he'll help you pick it up. It's kind of a pep talk book that reminds you that dating rules have changed over the years, that you should be nice to yourself and see dating as a process. There is a good chapter in here about the AIDS issue and how to bring up condom use. I like the book because it has a nice big-sister feeling to it; she wants all the details, and wants to tell you how to meet and approach people, but she comforts you when you run into snags. I feel that this book has more of a female perspective, but that isn't necessarily bad. If

you are a guy you can also get some good tips from this book. It even gives you possible scripts when you want to call for a date or follow up. It gives happy ending examples of bad dates where the date was a real jerk but turned out nice after all — he/she was just nervous and trying too hard. The book also talks about communication, treating yourself well, and other good advice. Very good practical real-life situations and suggestions on what to do in those awkward moments. She also has suggestions for writing personal ads — like actual examples! I'd recommend it for guys and gals. I do not know much about gays, but if they date like straights it would be good for them as well.

NO Is a Complete Sentence

By Megan LeBoutillier © 1995 Ballantine Books. \$5.99. Paperback.

This is an easy-to-read paperback book on saying "No!" The author draws from her own experiences of having to learn to say No to people and situations that were making her life uncomfortable. It's a practical book that gives several examples of situations that we all run into. Situations where we'd like to say, "Now isn't a good time," or "Not today," etc., but don't. She tells us *how* to say No. It's a great book to get you started on setting your personal boundaries and assert your needs. It's written in plain English and includes helpful exercises. It isn't a power-trip, control, assertiveness book. It's more practical and common-sense. There are notes and a bibliography at the end. I like this book because we all need help in setting boundaries.

—Barb W.

THANK YOU, CONTRIBUTORS!

For your generosity and the wisdom, humor and positive outlook you share with *MANY VOICES*' readers.

Your work is always carefully read and appreciated. Please keep those wonderful ideas and artwork coming! —Lynn W.

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 yourself(ves) and a favorite activity. DEADLINE: Aug. 1, 1996.

December 1996

Dream work. Sleep disturbances. How to get a good night's sleep. ART: The place where you sleep best. DEADLINE: Oct. 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.

Subscriptions for a year (six issues) of *MANY VOICES*: \$36 in the U.S., \$42US in Canada, \$48US elsewhere. Back issues always available, each issue 1/6 yearly price. Enclose the form below (or a copy) with your check, and mail to *MANY VOICES*, P.O. Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639.

MANY VOICES

NEW!
We now accept
**Visa &
Mastercard!**



Name _____
Address _____
City/State/ZIP _____

I am a client Professional/therapist Relative/Friend

Subscription type: New Renewal Gift Send full list of past themes: _____

Full yr. (6 iss.) '89 ___ '90 ___ '91 ___ '92 ___ '93 ___ '94 ___ '95 ___ '96 ___

Other issues or preferred start date: _____

1 year: \$36 in U.S.; \$42US in Canada; Elsewhere, \$48 in U.S. currency drawn on a U.S. bank.
Make check payable to *MANY VOICES* & send with this form to
MANY VOICES, PO Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639

CHARGE IT! (Please print clearly) (circle one) VISA **MASTERCARD**

Cardholder's Name: _____

Acct# _____ Exp. Date _____ Total: \$ _____

Signature: _____ Today's Date: _____