

# MANY VOICES

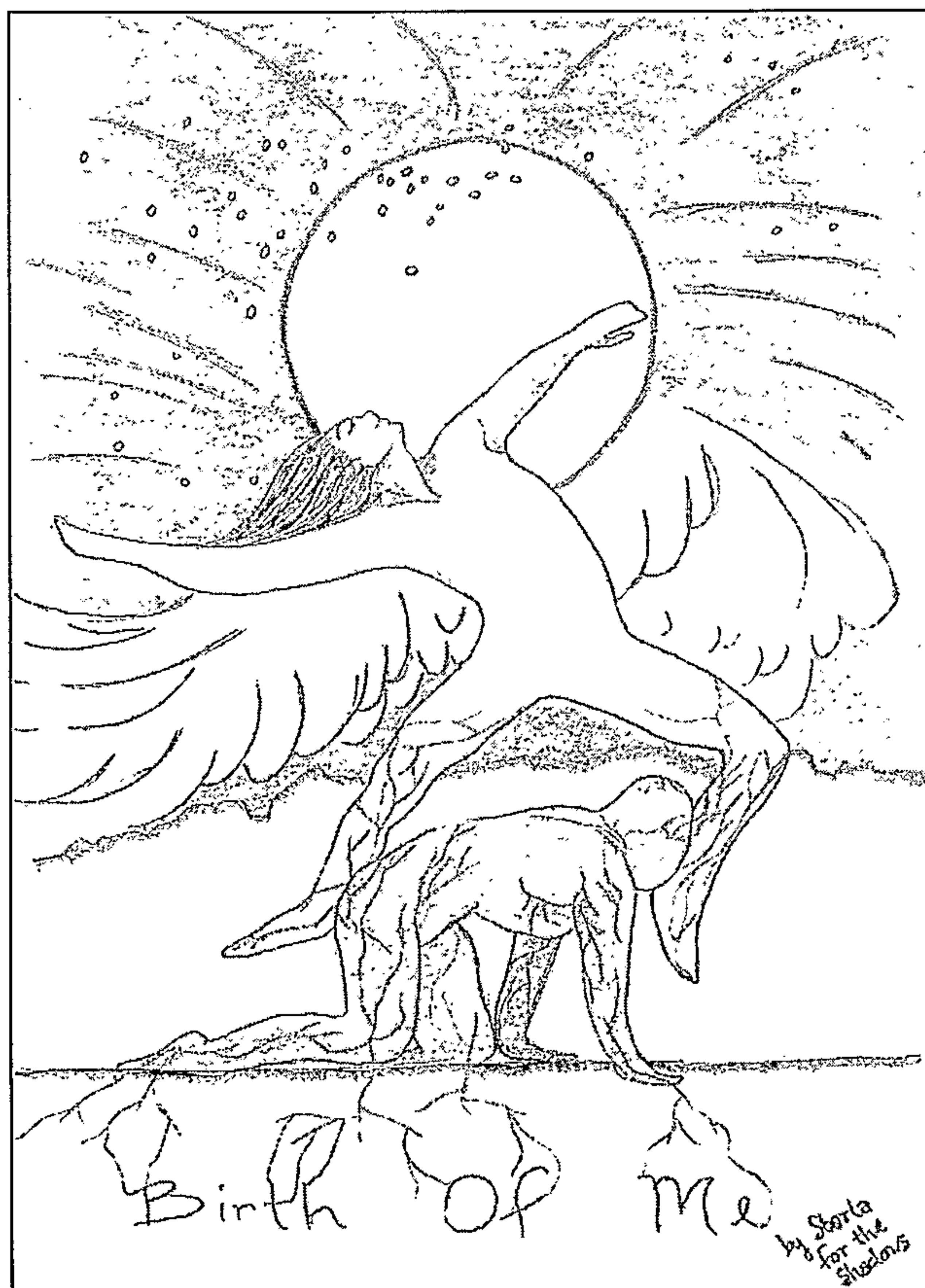
WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

Vol X, No.4

August 1998

ISSN1042-2277

## Exploring Mind, Consciousness and Personality Internal Structure: What It's Like "Inside"



1999

**Next year's themes!  
Start writing now!**

### February 1999

Help for children who dissociate.  
Parenting tips for DID parents.  
Improving internal communication.  
ART: Kids and/or Pets.  
DEADLINE: Dec. 1, 1998

### April 1999

What are you afraid to tell your therapist? Attachment issues.  
ART: Courage and freedom.  
DEADLINE: Feb. 1, 1999

### June 1999

Building healthy habits, discarding others. All addictions and obsessions discussed. ART: Your center of power.  
DEADLINE: April 1, 1999

### August 1999

Embracing joy and laughter in our lives. ART: Cartoons and silly stuff.  
DEADLINE: June 1, 1999

### October 1999

Multiple Issues: seizures, Attention deficit, traumatic medical procedures, infertility, scars, aging. ART: Health and recovery.  
DEADLINE: Aug. 1, 1999

### December 1999

Forgiveness. How to release what we don't remember. Dealing with fears of intimacy. ART: Loving yourself, sharing with others.  
DEADLINE: Oct. 1, 1999

**MV**

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# Birth Of Me

By the Shadows

**W**e found a book, just before our birthday a year ago, called *"It's Not Okay Anymore: Your Personal Guide to Ending Abuse, Taking Charge, and Loving Yourself"* by Greg Enns and Jan Black. Though it's geared more towards women who are in abusive situations with their husbands, we found it quite inspirational, and very clear and helpful. It covers the stages of understanding your situation (what is abuse?) all the way through planning what you are going to do about it. Yet it helps you respect whatever stage you are in and your choice to stay where you are, for now.

It explains, with checklists, very black and white, exactly what abuse is...not only physical or sexual abuse, but also emotional, social and spiritual abuse. It really gets down to the basics, which is what we needed. The authors call themselves "life coaches," which I thought was perfect and kind of what our therapist is as well.

For us, the intro was immediately a big eye opener. It begins *"Your life belongs to you. It is yours. You get to make choices for it. Choices that satisfy you, help others, make you feel good, let you express who you are inside, and make a difference. You get to decide what to learn, who to love, where to work, what to play, who to be with, what colors to wear, what styles you like, how to arrange your living room, what kind of parent, friend, lover you will be, what authors to read, what movies to enjoy, and what Saturday mornings will be like for you. Your life belongs to you, unless you give it away. Then someone else will make these choices for you and you will live your life with a knot in your gut that begs you to take your life back again."*

At the end of the book, the authors talk about marking the important moment when you decide "it's not OK anymore." They suggested calling it one's 'loving yourself birthday'. We decided to call it our *Birth Of Me* day. It is the day we claimed, "It is not OK

anymore to be abused." It marks the continuing process of freedom from those who have hurt us. It marks the beginning of our *New Life* where we make *all* our own choices for ourselves. (And we are 31 and living on our own for just barely three years. We were immobilized without our parents at first because they made *every single decision* for us all our life!) But we will not give our life over to anyone anymore!

We planned a very special Birth of Me day for ourselves to mark this moment. Our therapist celebrated with us with a muffin and making a wish on a candle and gave us a special card. We wore our favorite dress and took a long walk in the sunshine, and came upon a field of dandelions...and made more wishes for our New Life and blew them into the wind. (Aria is still working on a poem called Dandelion Wishes). We even bought ourselves flowers, which we would never have thought to do for ourselves! (Our therapist did it once thought for herself. We were in awe of that. She explained how buying things for oneself could be even more special than someone else buying for you.) We also bought ourselves a Birth Of Me card and wrote the books' intro on it. (Now we keep it in our comfort basket, as a reminder for the future tough days we know will still come.) In general, we just had a very relaxing, "happy" day.

Later, when we told our therapist how the rest of our Birth Of Me day went, she told us not many people (even non-abused people) could ever do something like what we did. We really took a whole day to take care of ourselves and treat ourselves as special. The challenge now seems to be to live out what we learned and claimed for our New Life on a day-to-day basis. It's not nearly as easy as we thought. We've got a lot of work to do, but we've got our therapist and people at the Day Program that we are a part of (all our "life coaches") helping us! Maybe this idea will help you too.

MV

## The End of Inner Battles

War

The battles inside of me  
Angry, mean,  
fearful, hurt.

Peace

A war put to rest  
Tired, relieved,  
vulnerable, growing.

Armor

Protection from pain  
Tough, impervious,  
removed slowly.

Trust

Opening to caring  
Sensitive, feeling  
often embarrassed.

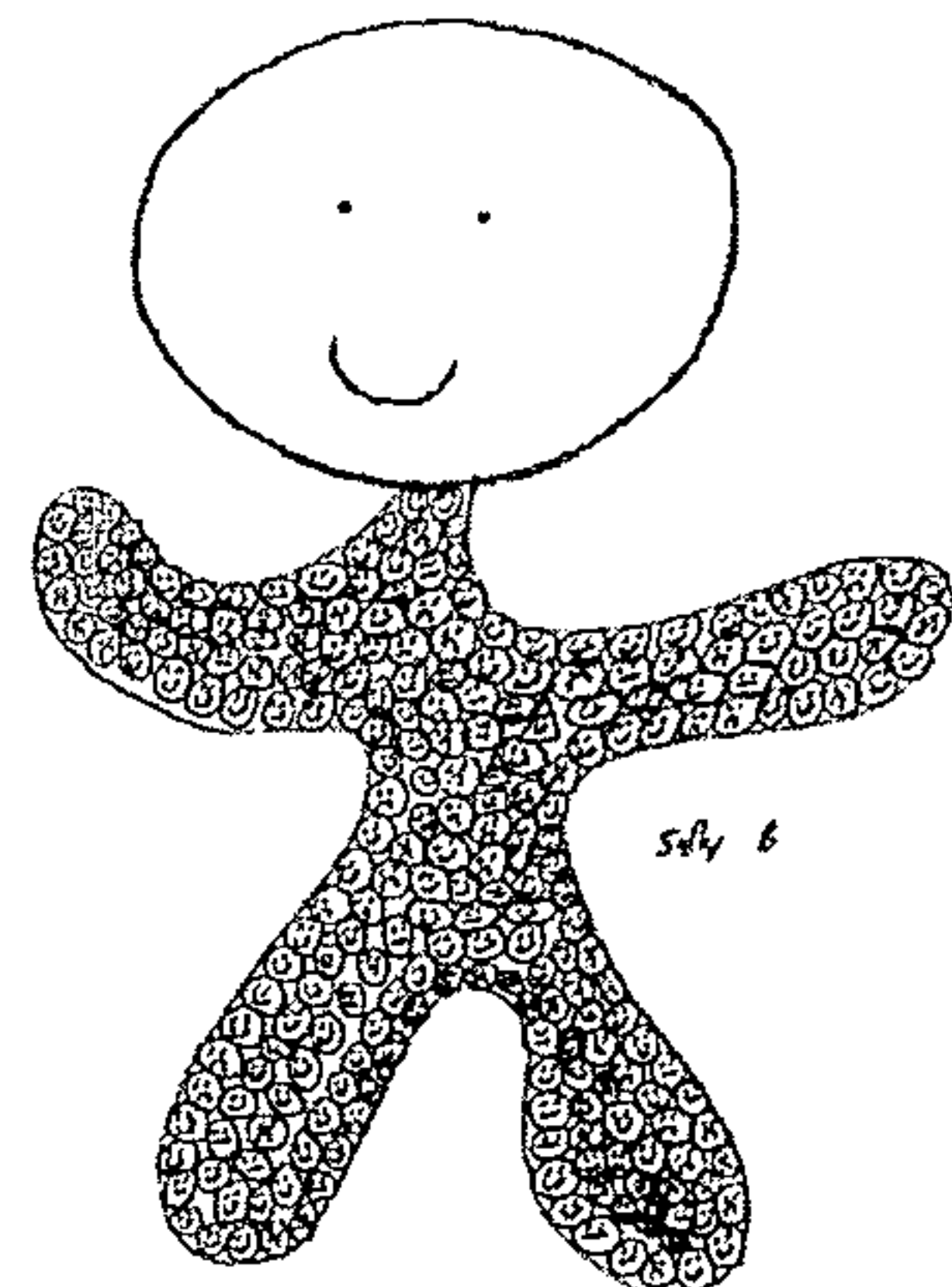
Wholeness

Bringing the battling me together  
Relief, exhaustion,  
finally, peace.

By Susan in the family of Susan et al

MV

MANY ME'S



July 6



## We are Special

We are special! In all the world there's nobody like us.

Since the beginning of time there has never been another person like us. Nobody has our smile, nobody has our eyes, our nose, our hair, our hands, our voice. We are special.

No one can be found who has our handwriting. Nobody anywhere has our taste—for food, music or art. No one sees things just as we do. In all of time there's been no one who laughs like us, no one who cries like us, and what makes us laugh and cry will never provoke identical laughter and tears from anybody else, ever.

No one reacts to any situation just as we react. We are special. We are the only one in all of creation who has our talents and set of abilities. Oh, we are sure there will always be somebody who is better at one of the things we're good at, but no one in the universe can reach the quality of our combination of talents, ideas, abilities and feelings.

Like a room full of musical instruments, some may excel alone, but none can match the symphony sound when all are played together. We are a symphony.

Through all of eternity no one will ever look, talk, walk, think or do like us. We are special. We are rare. In all rarity there is great value. Because of our great rare value, we need not attempt to imitate others. We will accept...yes, celebrate...our differences.

We are special. We are beginning to realize it's no accident that we're special. We are beginning to see that God made us special for a very special purpose. Out of billions of applicants, only one is qualified, only one has the right combination of what it takes.

That one is US.

Because...We are Special.

*By Us etc. for Melody*

**MV**



## MANY VOICES needs an Angel or Two!

Please think of us when you can! Thanks very much. Lynn W., Editor

## Exploring Mind

By A. Irving Rosenberg

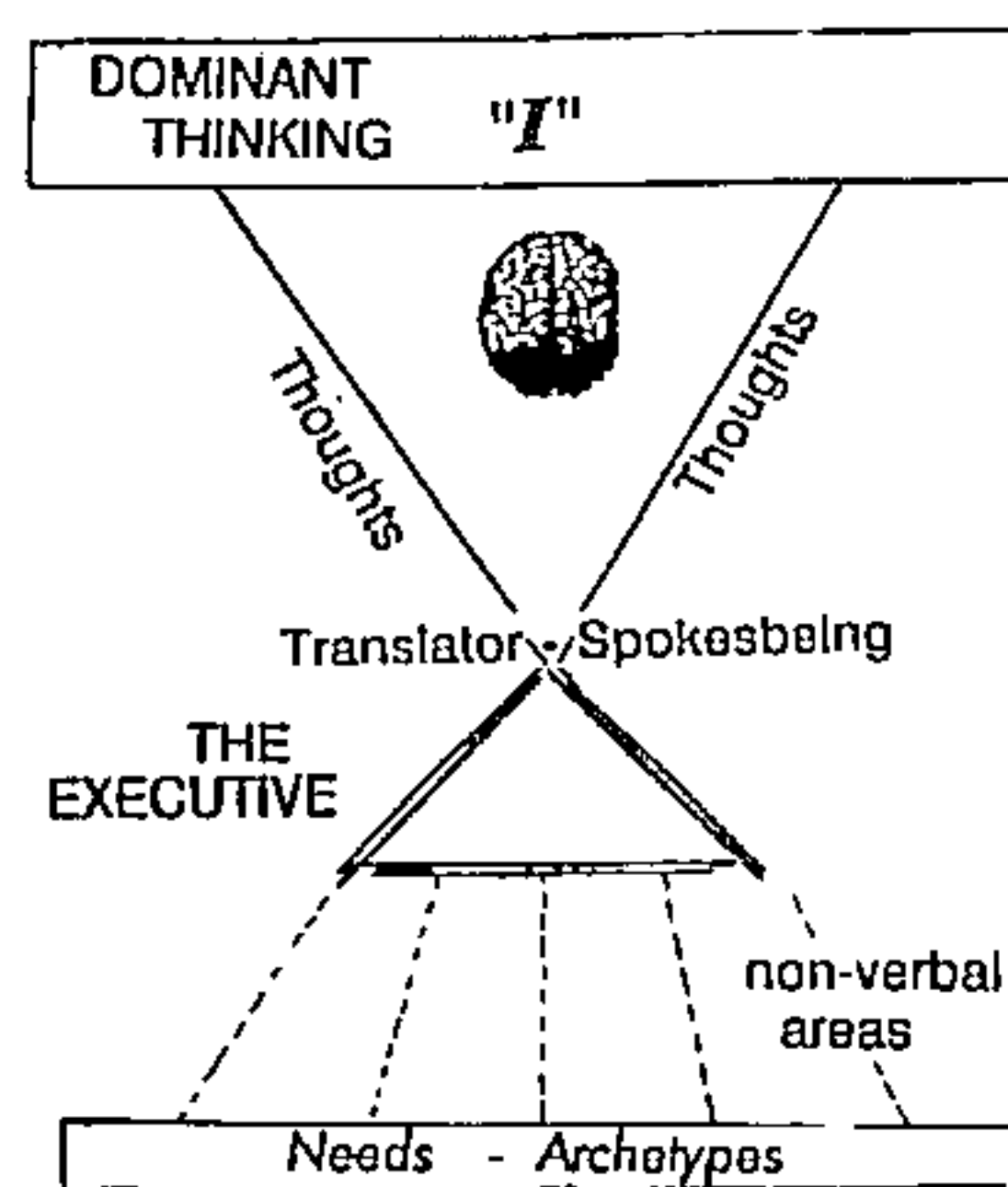
I am a 76-year-old attorney at law who has engaged in Automatic Writing for over 25 years as an experimental gateway into knowledge of internal mental structures, which have similarities to dissociative features in the clinical population.

My experiences involve multiple thought processes which battle for control of the writing hand, claiming to be "voices" for Needs and Tendencies that were imprinted in vestigial areas of the brain many, many years ago. Their purpose was to aid the human species to survive and to cooperate among themselves.

These biological imprints are able to communicate to Dominant Thinking (often called the Conscious Mind) by means of an Executive Function that acts as their Translator (since the Needs themselves evolved before language). The Executive also acts like a regulating conductor of a divergent orchestra, keeping the various thought patterns in balance.

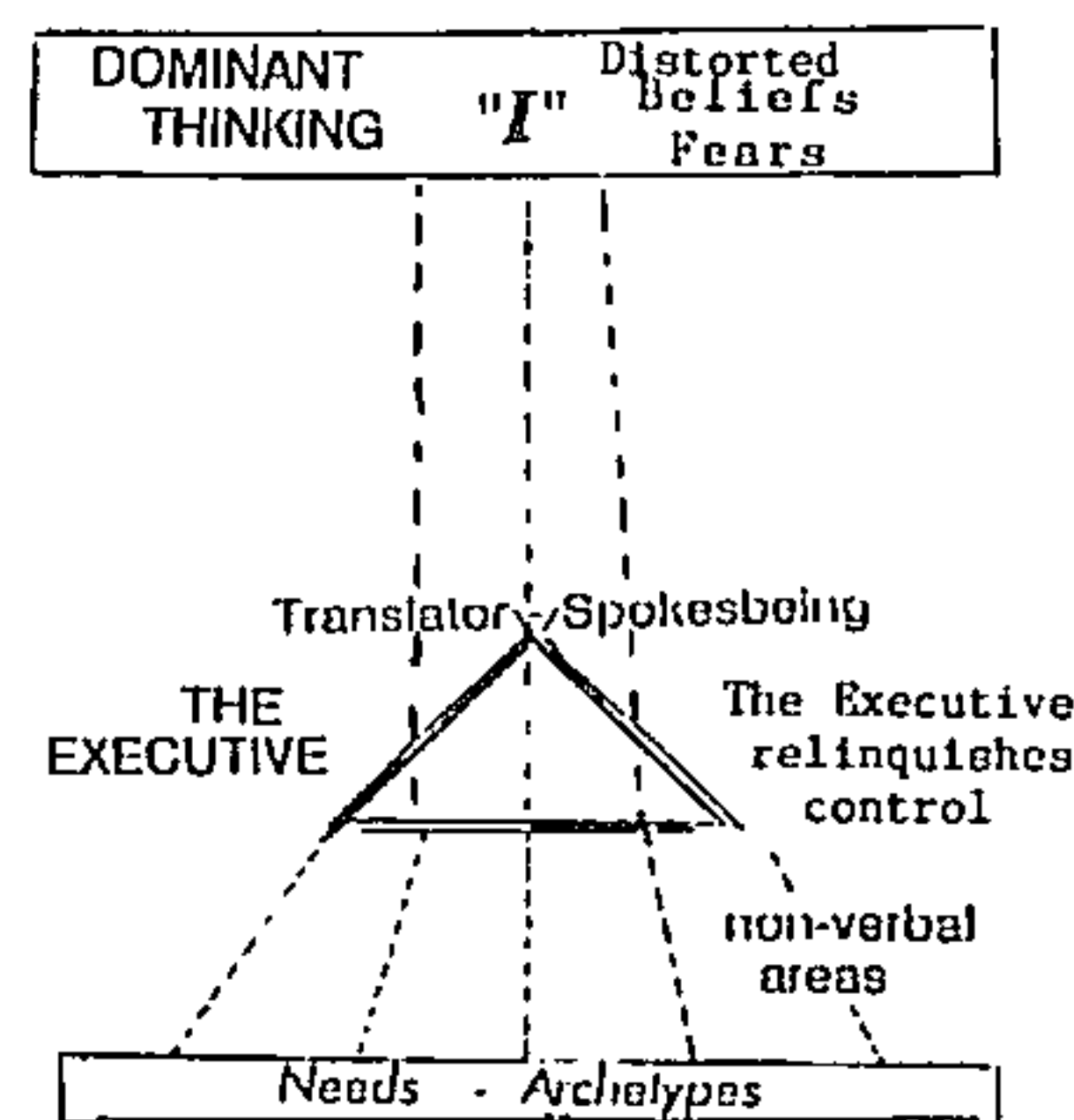
It has revealed that distorted beliefs in Dominant Thinking, created by trauma, pain, fears, etc., cause The Executive to weaken control so that the various natural thought patterns can "take over" the body. Then normal sexual and food tendencies may become sexual and eating disorders, adrenal functions can appear overly aggressive or protective, and imprinted religious tendencies may present as benevolent or tormenting "voices of god." Continuity of memory is also disturbed.

Replacement of the distorted beliefs and fears by more sound concepts will help restore The Executive's power to control the divergent thought patterns in their take-over attempts. As a result of a better understanding of my mental processes, whenever a thought or emotion arises I recognize what need is attempting to express itself, which helps me maintain a dynamic equilibrium among numerous biological tendencies.



NEEDS are biological imprints with ability to communicate their vestigial propensities to Dominant Thinking via the Executive Translator.

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Distorted Beliefs created by Trauma, etc., can induce The Executive to allow overpowering Tendencies to take over Dominant Thinking; which sometime appear as Alters.

**MV**

## What It's Like Inside

The Library Wheel is an internal organizational device, used by my alters to keep some sort of track of our experience and alters. It looks something like a huge donut with a tall dome shape where the hole would be. The Librarian is in charge, both of how it is set up and how it is used.

When we were a young child, the Library Wheel was used exclusively as a means of keeping track of all the memories my alters were required to suppress. As I got older and studied more and more, it was also used to keep track of my (front alter) information. This enabled me to more or less function in spite of extreme dissociation.

When we were nineteen, our first inside group was formed by alters who wanted to work together to keep from being dangerous. The Librarian exposed herself to these alters and offered them the use of the wheel she had shaped. Thus when I learned that I had alters, there were already a number of them who knew a lot about what had happened to our body. These alters have been in a good position to help the rest of us come to terms with the horrors we remember.

Because I/we suffered a lot of abuse and as a consequence have thousands of alters, this Library Wheel is by now a cumbersome thing. No one of us can comprehend all of it at once. The Librarian has organized it according to natural associative links, so that related memories can be accessed.

Nowadays, the Library Wheel is a central part of our internal healing effort. When an alter first decides to become part of the healing, she shares memories with the rest of us. These memories are, at the same time, stored into the appropriate areas in the Library Wheel. When an alter expresses an interest in broadening his understanding, he is shown the Wheel itself. There is a natural affinity for, perhaps even a link to, the part of the wheel that holds that alter's memories, but any alter can explore any part of the Library Wheel, gaining selves-knowledge in the process.

I personally have had less direct experience with the Library Wheel than many of my alters. As the front alter, I have a somewhat different job than the others. I know this because my alters have told me so in no uncertain terms. Because I have learned to trust their judgment in such matters, we work well together and make progress in healing. I count on them to help me access information from the Wheel when I need it (though I can't yet ask them to help me access information just because I want it—they have more important things to do with their time and energy). They count on me to experience their memories, to use what I know to help heal suicidal and otherwise out-of-control alters, and to use my mental strength to prevent such alters from taking over our body until they have committed to being part of the healing focus. But even though I rarely see the Library Wheel, I know that it is one of the key reasons I have ever been functional as a human being. I know it will continue to be a key factor in my life as I work the rest of my way through the memories of trauma my alters suffered.

*From Julie of Julie et al*



This is patrick writing, inside the body of Patricia. i am 8 years old and i am called the gateway. my door is the first door on the light side. i like computers so that i can tell people how it looks inside. there is a dark side where simon lives and others. then there is my side where the light is. some people live with me on my side. it looks like this inside: if you look in a mirror and you have another mirror behind you, you can see way down the mirror that you are looking at yourself in. it goes mirror after mirror. only inside there is one side that is light and the other side is dark. on each of the light and dark sides there are colored doors. every door is for one of the children inside. they live there. some still live in palau, some live in a jungle, some live in a bedroom like me.

gideon and gabriel live in a cave on the dark side. most of the inner children inside the body of patricia come in twos, so they can protect each other. like the golden rose child who is 2 lives with adrian. joe lives with his twin jim, who lives in a jungle. they are behind a green door. all the colors of the doors have feelings that they mean. like red is for fear and blue is for guilt. all the inner children live behind a color and a door. it is very pretty inside. it looks like a rainbow with doors and goes way back inside. this is what it looks inside.

*By patrick (for the body)*



The place where this is written, the place where Many Voices exists, we call "The Plane Where Life Happens."

There is a place other than this place, an inside place. It is entered through a porthole which is covered with a veil (I have come to think that the porthole might be our eyes, but I'm not sure). We live in something like a house, along a long hallway. Eleven and Ellie...we used to be fourteen, but some have "grown."

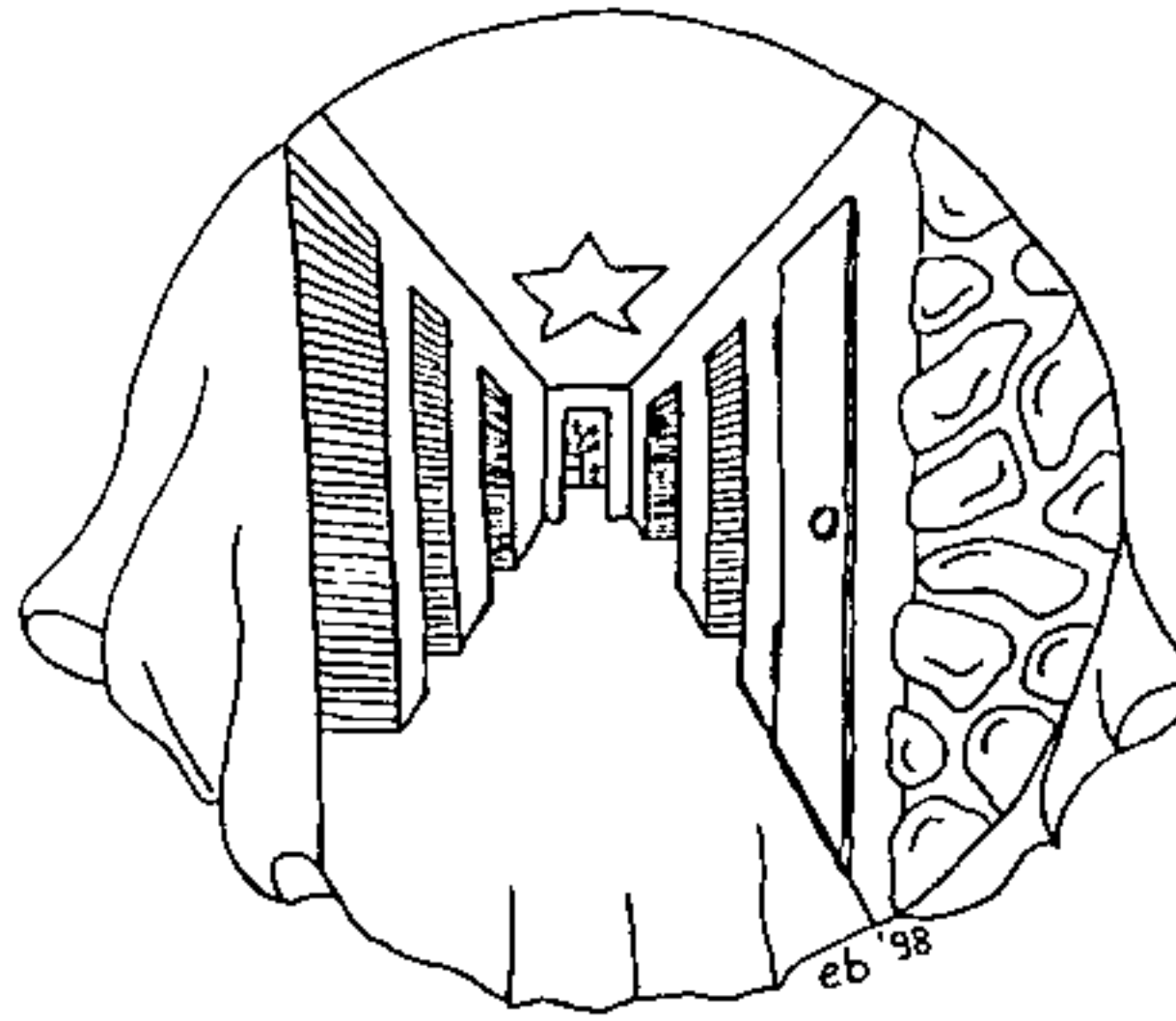
The far end of the hall used to be dark and foreboding. At first, we did not know if it ended, but as those inside have revealed themselves one by one, more light has come into the hall, until now we know the hallway ends. The hallway (generally speaking) has not been a very pleasant place to be, but it's all there was, so we made do. Sometimes it has been a safe place, but most of the time it has been a confusing, turbulent place to escape to...from an even more dangerous, confusing, and turbulent "outside" world. After some time passed (in therapy), we decided to build a garden at the far end of the hallway, outside of the room where the hallway ends. The garden is a nice place just to sit...surrounded by a thick stone wall, but sunny and open and breezy, filled with flowers and grass and trees...no shadows, just shade. Sometimes the little ones play there in the sun.



We all live in rooms along the hall, which have also improved with time (and therapy). Our rooms used to be stark and cold, but they are a little nicer now because we are learning to feel more pleasant about ourselves. Some live alone and some live with others, although where and who we live with changes occasionally. Every once in awhile therapy seems to create a mass reorganization and lots of movement. I think this is basically a good thing, even though it can be disconcerting at times. Most of our rooms do not have doors any longer, because we are not that separate any longer. We wanted to take down the doors, so we did. We like the idea of "keeping track" of each other. At times, the hall and rooms grow dark and "foggy" again, but that is usually because of external triggers or struggles, not internal choices. You've heard it said, "If these walls could talk..."? Well, the walls within us have talked at times (alters have actually emerged from them!) but we are no longer as fearful as before about emerging alters, etc. We are trying not to worry about things we have no control over. We are beginning to see how the alters, the hall, the rooms,

even the walls...are a part of us, are us, are ME, or will be me, someday, maybe...(how odd to think about!)

While most of us live in the rooms...in the ceiling above us, lives the wise one, Altair, who is our guide, and down some stone steps to the right is where Jack lives with Ellie. These steps do not lead to a dark



scary basement...they lead to a place like a diamond mine. It is a beautiful and shiny place...precious, secure, sparkling, pristine. Jack rocks Ellie, comforts and protects her. When she is not being rocked, Ellie just IS...She is oblivious to "The Plane Where Life Happens" and she is safe from all memory and pain and fear. Ellie just

IS. We do not go to see her (Jack will not allow it), but we trust him with her and maybe someday, maybe, he will bring her up to gaze through the veil, through the hazel portholes, into this world where we live the life for her...

Until then (since we will never be able to stop [or escape from] all the pain which comes with living here on The Plane Where Life Happens), we are trying to concentrate on working at improving all that runs through the center of us (the hallway, the rooms, the people...) We try to strengthen what needs to be strengthened and break down what needs to be broken. Sometimes, inside people even "grow"! We are trying to make our insides a more pleasant place to be...not so that we can stay inside all the time, but so that we can feel relatively comfortable within our own skin, out here for a change. I think when this happens, (for everyone) then maybe we will be "healed."

*By Elly for Ellie's family*

MV

## Inside

How many times in a day I wind up lost inside myself, only to wonder when this will come to some end. The memories have been coming slowly but they have a beginning and an end and the middle isn't quite ready to reveal what truly went on. So integration, now that I have overcome the fear of it, is an eventual reality, when my dear sweet little ones are ready and when I am willing emotionally to allow those parts to come up. Until then there is so much I feel and I'm so grateful with MV, a place to accept the insanities I feel and see within me, from my little crib holding all the babies, to the doorways I see on the inside of me...

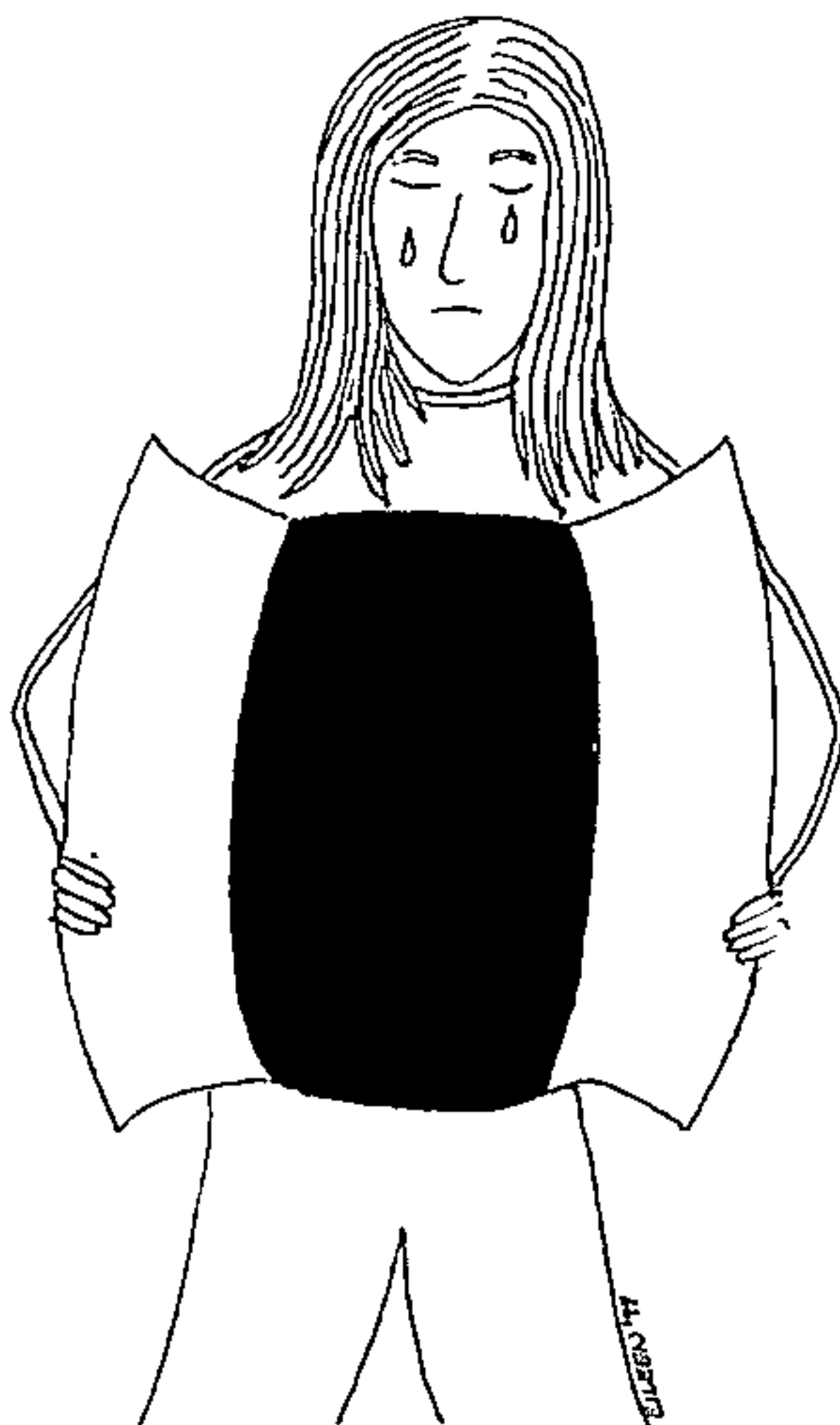
Who's who, who's who, who's who, who's me  
What's wrong with this, what's wrong with me  
How can I tell, no one's there to see

I try so hard to be aware  
but something happens and there's no one here  
When will we all rise to the top  
Scared there'll be this big loud pop

And yet I know deep inside of me  
It's going fine with my therapy  
And then one day we'll all appear  
As one complete person, all of us here...

*By mfd*

MV



# Therapist's Page

By Lisa M. Najavits, Ph.D.

Lisa M. Najavits, Ph.D., is a psychologist associated with Harvard Medical School and McLean Hospital in Boston. She was awarded two grants from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to develop a psychotherapy for women with PTSD and substance abuse. She treats women with these dual disorders.

## Trauma and Substance Abuse

Cindy: *"The more I drink the more I won't feel anything. The pain is so bad you just want to die. There is no other way out. If you talk about it, it will hurt too much. So instead, keep it a secret. No one will know."*

Cindy has discovered a terrible truth—that many women survivors attempt to use drugs or alcohol to "cope" with their pain. Studies have found that, for a very high number of women, substance abuse and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) co-occur. Estimates show that 29% to 59% of women in substance abuse programs have posttraumatic stress disorder—and sometimes very serious histories of severe, repetitive childhood traumas. Among women with PTSD, the likelihood of a substance abuse problem are 1.4 to 3.6 times higher than for women without PTSD. Unfortunately, using substances to manage trauma symptoms does not work in the long run. While it may feel good for a few minutes or hours, over time the substance becomes a problem in itself.

The relationship between substance abuse and trauma is only now beginning to be understood. For many years, most treatment programs typically focused on one or the other, but not both. A woman entering a program usually would not receive treatment for her substance abuse. Unfortunately, if the two disorders are not both addressed, it is less likely that the survivor will fully recover. Even very helpful programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs may not validate the importance of trauma. Some women report that when they tried to talk about their trauma, they were told instead, "just focus on the present," "all that matters is your drug use," or "get off your pity pot."

Why do substance abuse and trauma occur together for so many women?

One way to understand the connection is to recognize that a woman who grew up in a dysfunctional or abusive home often did not learn how to manage problems in a healthy way. Her parents may have used substances to cope with their problems, teaching them that escape is necessary. Or, she may have felt so much pain from her trauma, that when exposed to drugs, for example as a teenager, she found them a "perfect" solution for getting rid of feelings and memories. For other women, the substance abuse may have come first. After developing a drug problem, women have been found to be more likely to have a traumatic event occur—because they may not be taking care of themselves, may be living in a dangerous neighborhood, or may be associating with people who will hurt them. In short, the two disorders can co-occur in any number of ways, for any number of reasons. One woman, Karen, describes her story:

*"I had been abused by my brother when I was a child. My parents were alcoholic, and they didn't know what was going on. When I was around 12 or 13, I decided that I would start drinking so that they would love me, so that I could fit in with them. I tried very hard to drink, even though it made me sick."*

Fortunately, Karen is now receiving help for both her substance abuse and her trauma. The good news is that when a woman survivor with a substance abuse problem receives information and help, she can successfully recover from both. In fact, a recent study found that within three months of twice-weekly group therapy focusing on both trauma and substance abuse, the women in the group showed a significant decrease in their substance use. Their trauma

symptoms also decreased, but more slowly.

What can women survivors with substance abuse do to help themselves? Some suggestions are offered below to help guide them. All are based on what women survivors with substance abuse say has worked for them:

Start to notice the connections between your trauma and your substance abuse. Validate how the substance use may have been a way for you to survive until now. Respect yourself for honestly facing that you may have a problem with substances. This is the beginning, and most important, first step.

Be aware that as you stop using drugs, you may find that your trauma symptoms become worse for awhile. If you can "hang in" and learn to cope with those symptoms, you will get through them. Eventually, you will feel better, and you will be stronger because you will have learned to cope without drugs.

While the goal may be to completely stop using drugs, any decrease in use is a good start. If you cannot quit totally, keep trying to decrease your use until you eventually achieve your goal.

Try to learn new coping methods to make up for the loss of drugs. You may miss the drugs as you would miss a close friend. However, you can now embark on learning healthy strategies such as assertiveness, negotiation, setting boundaries, distraction, finding hobbies and activities, developing new relationships, and taking better care of yourself. Develop new, healthy parts of yourself to make up for the loss of drugs.

Finally, reach out for help for both problems. In the past, it was believed that a woman would first have to recover from her substance abuse



problems before she could work on trauma issues. It is now coming to be understood that working simultaneously on both can be extremely helpful. Karen, the woman quoted above, found that she needed both an Alcoholics Anonymous group and a survivors group. Neither alone was enough for her, but the combination felt right. Also, many of the strategies that work for trauma issues also work for substance abuse problems and vice versa. For example, learning to tolerate feelings helps with both problems at the same time. Remember, you can recover from both trauma and substance abuse!

For further information on healing from trauma and substance abuse, a new educational video on this topic is now available. It includes interviews with people who have recovered from these disorders as well as professionals who specialize in their treatment. *Numbing the Pain: Substance abuse and psychological trauma*. Cavalcade Productions, 1998, Nevada City, CA (800-345-5530).

To contact Dr. Najavits, phone (617) 855-2305, or e-mail (Lnajavits@aol.com). A description of the new treatment and its results are published in the following articles:

Najavits LM, Weiss RD, Liese BS. Group cognitive-behavioral therapy for women with PTSD and substance use disorder. *J. Substance Abuse Treatment* 1996; 13:13-22.

Najavits LM, Weiss RD, Shaw SR, Muenz L. "Seeking Safety": Outcome of a new cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy for women with posttraumatic stress disorder and substance dependence. *J. Traumatic Stress* (July 1998).

**MV**

## Learning to Be Other: How Dissociation is Taught in Spirit Possession and Child Abuse

By Karen G. Way, PhD., *Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology*

Some claim Dissociative Identity Disorder can be taught to clients by psychotherapists. One way of determining whether this is likely is to look at how dissociation is taught in other cultures where the process is open and well-documented, such as cultures that value spirit-possession.

In Haitian and West African religions such as voodoo, the initiates are prepared for their first full trance experience through careful conditioning, usually involving four factors:

1. Modeling: From childhood the initiate has seen adults move in and out of trance, and is familiar with how behavior in trance is different, unworldly, often sexual and violent. After trance, people return to normal.

2. Hyperarousal: When the time is right, the initiate undergoes a process designed to prepare mind and body to receive the destined loa or spirit. After a period of deprivation (fasting, going without sleep, lying alone in a small hut), the initiate is lightly drugged and then violently stimulated by fast dancing, loud rhythmic sound, pain, and exhaustion, leading to sensory overload, hyperarousal, and a loosening of the structure of identity.

3. Motivation: The initiate is motivated to accept the new identity of the spirit by strong social and intrapersonal factors. Receiving the spirit will relieve the physical crisis of hyperarousal, but will also provide status, access to spiritual power, and a chance to embody and act out fantasies of self and community.

4. Community Reinforcement: After the ritual, community etiquette discourages discussion of how each person behaved in trance, thus reinforcing and maintaining dissociation.

In the therapy scenario, only two of these factors are present. Except in cases of direct abuse by the therapist, clients do not see

dissociation modeled, nor are they physically hyperaroused. Motivation is certainly present, especially if the therapist allows the client to think the therapist will be more interested in dissociative "specialness" than in other, more mundane therapeutic topics. Community reinforcement, once positive due to media interest and generous insurance, is now a mixed factor, more negative than not.

But there is a scenario in North American culture where dissociation is "taught." All four factors are present when a child is chronically abused sexually. A child in that scenario becomes highly attuned to signs a repeated abuser is moving toward a buse. Within the dyad, the child observes the abuser modeling overt dissociation or more subtle variations in ego state. Over time, the child learns to shift moods with the abuser and become the reciprocal other (victim, resister, vamp, thing) the abuser needs to see.

During the abuse, the child is hyperaroused physically and emotionally, overloading undeveloped senses and metabolism. The child is highly motivated to dissociate, both during the abuse and after it, to survive and to protect existing relationships. If the child has good dissociative skills, he or she can return to "normal" as soon as the abuser does. Reinforced by family and community denial of the event or its harm, the child may be able to maintain a strong enough dissociative barrier to advance developmentally even though abuse continues to occur.

The formal induction of spirit possession is a template that can be used to understand the interactive process by which an abuser teaches DID to a child. Just as the priest prepares an initiate to be possessed by a specific spirit, so the abuser uses a specific style and agenda to shape the traumatized other, uniquely shaping the

later manifestation of DID. Better understanding of the open mechanisms of spirit possession may lead to better understanding of the hidden mechanisms within abusive families that produce DID. Going outside our culture is one way to find a map to what our culture denies.

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**MV**



## Partner's Page:

## Loving A Shape Shifter

By Richard

I watched, fascinated, as the woman I love changed into an eight-year-old girl right before my eyes.

My fiancée (now wife) had recently learned that she is really a *they*, a multiple, and they were beginning the process of learning about each other and how to operate safely in the world.

That particular afternoon, we wanted to go out to eat, and we let the child alters pick where to go. Colleen, a child alter who often spoke for the kids, wanted a hamburger at the Silver Diner, a local 1950s-style restaurant chain.

The Silver Diner's a great place for kids—greasy diner food you never get at home, monster milk shakes, rock'n'roll oldies on the jukebox, and noisy enough that we can talk about anything without fear of being overheard.

Colleen was eating it up (literally) and my fiancée's body was responding to her presence. As I watched, she scrunched smaller and smaller in the seat across from me until she seemed half her adult size. Her gestures became child-like and her voice pitched up like a little girl's.

Colleen ordered the biggest cheeseburger on the menu, extra-large fries, and a strawberry milkshake. She munched her way messily through them while we chatted about things she liked to do and giggled about silly stuff. But when she went to the restroom, it was my adult fiancée who came back.

"Colleen asked me to take her to the restroom, and I stayed out because she was getting tired," she said. Her voice had dropped back to her normal alto. She looked at the greasy, half-demolished meal and said, "God, I'm stuffed. How did she eat so much? How did *we* eat so much?"

She took a deep breath, moaned and flexed her neck and shoulders, literally stretching back into her normal size. "Ow, what did that kid do to our body?"

Loving a multiple is almost like living

with a shape-shifter, because physical changes sometimes signal that a switch has occurred. How and why the changes happen has been a fascinating lesson in how the body and mind interact.

A few examples from our experience...

One day my girlfriend (now wife) handed me her brand-new driver's license and asked, "Who does that look like?" I looked at the photo and saw a killer, eyes as cold and pointed as a stiletto. I said instantly, "that's Pamela Jean," one of the protector personalities. The DMV photographer had said something that triggered her out, and the camera had caught the switch on film.

When Jason, a teen-aged boy, was out my wife's voice dropped as low as her larynx would allow and she acted "muscular." She sat larger and wider and her gestures were more powerful.

Stacy handled seduction and love-making. Her body image was proudly big-breasted and, when she was active, the body's breasts became slightly but definitely larger and fuller. (And if we could figure out how my wife pulled *that* one off and market it, we could kiss our money worries goodbye!)

As far as I can tell by watching my wife and discussing it with her, these physical changes are tied to body image. Each of my wife's personalities has a different image of him/herself.

One of my wife's art-therapy assignments had each personality create their own biography page. She/they spent days riffling through stacks of magazines, from L.L. Bean catalogs to "Playboy," to find images that expressed who they are. That included photos which showed, as close as possible, how each personality sees him/herself.

My wife showed me the biography book when they finished, and *none* of the photos looked like my wife's physical body.

She tried to explain it to me. "That's how each one sees themselves," my

wife said, touching the photos. Her fingers came back to her chest. "When one of them looks in the mirror, they don't really 'see' this body." She pointed to the photos again. "*This* is what they see."

It's called *dismorphia*, this disconnect between the physical reality of the body and what the mind perceives—like the anorexic who looks at her gaunt reflection and still sees someone who's fat. In people with dissociative identity disorder, this effect is multiplied many times.

And that explains a lot. It used to baffle and anger me when my wife cut, starved, smoked or otherwise abused her body. But since learning how powerful body image is, I understand that no one inside feels responsible for the body.

Does a personality feel bad and want to pig-out on pizza? *This isn't my body; I don't have to worry about getting sick or gaining weight.*

Need to cut to block overwhelming emotions? *Someone else can deal with the pain and blood.*

Does a child want to play on the floor, even though it wrecks my wife's knee? *My knee's not hurting; I don't have to worry about it.*

It also helps explain my wife's weight gain. No one inside sees the weight as theirs, because none of the photos on the biography sheets are heavier than about 130 pounds.

For my wife (and many other multiples, it seems) merging the many different body images with the reflection in the mirror is one of therapy's great challenges. With the help of a dietitian and trainer, my wife is learning about fitness and healthy eating. There's been progress, but both my wife and I know that it may be a long road with many setbacks before she is slender again.

"It's really traumatic and difficult for us to face the possibility that we all might actually occupy just one body," my wife said. "That's just not how any of us see ourselves."

MV



# Truth and Secrets

By Pam Map

I am responding to those who felt they had to lie at AA meetings and not identify the 13-year old alcoholic. I try always to tell the truth. I have to learn beforehand how to say something that will not be a lie. One need only say "There is an alcoholic problem in this body of mine." This is only a play on words and I have to look and search for these answers. To attend and speak at AA meetings one must admit to being an alcoholic or admit to have a problem with alcohol. I chose to address the second requirement for membership.

If one is doing inappropriate behavior the phrase "I had acting-out behaviors" lets the group know you did something that you felt was unhealthy and it does not tell them what you did. This is for your safety.

When I have a ghastly new memory of which I am ashamed I say what it is in one or two sentences on my therapist's telephone recording machine and then I go home to work on it. Once the secret is no longer mine I am free to deal with it as I can. I can also deal with the lighter incest issues in group and I do not have to tell others the ghastly details and feel like I am a fish without water. I belong to a co-dependence group also and here I handle the co-dependency issues so I do not have to waste my time in therapy for this.

I visit any 12-step program in my area when I am in need. I find that I just identify myself as an Adult Child and ask if I can stay, and most of the time the group allows me to share. It must be an open meeting and I carefully check this. I also find it extremely helpful to go to Narcotics Anon meetings. These are open meetings and one hears people who have gotten themselves into horrific situations and they are under the influence of X, Y, and/or Z and they are pulling themselves out one day at a time. When I hear their problems I leave the meeting with strength, love and a passion to go out and solve the problem I inherited through no fault of

my own. This is true also of many of the people who attend NA meetings. I have decided that I am very fortunate that I have all these resources available to me and I take advantage of them. Much of my recovery has come from groups, and individuals whom have helped me. I did not know of DID and I did not know I had it. It took me years. For me it came with the onset of old age. I am 54.

I have started to attend church on a regular basis. I don't believe in any one religion. I ask my Higher Power what I am to do and if I feel comfortable in church and my Higher Power allows me to participate in a sacrament, I do. The church may not allow this but if my Higher Power or God allows it, I do not care what anyone says. I also do not tell very many people. When I pray with others, I let them pray to their God, and I ask mine, if he be one or three, to help me and when he is ready to tell me more about himself/herself, he/she will let me know. Higher Power or God is spiritual and if you believe in him I think you will find direction. The church should be a vehicle to God but this may not be necessarily so for persons who suffered Satanic ritual abuse.

I have a few close friends and they are DID material and they do not know it. I keep honesty as our basis of friendship and so things have worked out. I have been able to maintain the friendships because of the honesty. I do not associate with anyone who does not practice almost total honesty. I have enough discrepancy in my talking and actions and if I don't have the truth from them and out of my being, I cannot function. I know that only, "The truth will set you free." I am not free yet but I am working on it. My friendships are healthy ones and ones in which the people are working in recovery.

As far as what I do every day, I just say I am home working on myself and I have also used the words, "I'm writing a book." I think it is more like 100 books that I have written, but I do plan

on writing a book at the end so that others may benefit from what I have written. My assistance in getting better from the DID has basically been given free of charge. Part of the 12-steps is that you give back to others, and this is always what I do. I do not need to give away ghastly details. The 12 Steps is a behavior modification program, and it works. This is the program that I have worked under Al-anon, Naranon, Overeaters Anon, Survivors of Incest Anon, and Incest Survivors Anon. I have no more secrets. I practice the 12 Steps and it has helped me with the DID.

Any recovery book or tape from the Public Library I have rented and read and listened to. All of these are tools which are available to everyone. I did not have the money for a lot of therapy before and so I had to take advantage of what was out there. I also had a spouse who did not support my recovery emotionally or with money, and so I was left to find help where I could.

It has been very difficult at times, but I am doing the recovery work. I cannot tell another what to do or where to go. There was so much confusion and pain in the beginning and now there is the promise of a better day. I give you this information for this is what I am doing and what I have done. I do work very hard on my recovery and I hope and pray that this letter can be of help to others.

MV



# The Secret Voices of Self

By Wanda Sue Parrott

(Ms. Parrott is a professional writer and researcher. She does not have a dissociative disorder.)

On an assignment for a daily newspaper, I received instructions from the psychologist who would lead psycho-drama exercises at the mental hospital in California. I was to assist him, and write my experiences.

"Everyone hears voices," Dr. G. said. "The difference between these patients and people like you and me is in the content of the messages they receive, which are often destructive, and those you and I hear while, for instance, we are in the shower."

I was immediately intrigued. "What do the voices tell you when you're in the shower?" I asked the doctor.

"Nothing especially," he said. "Sometimes I hear my mother calling my name, but aside from getting my attention she isn't saying much."

"I hear voices when I'm drifting to sleep, or waking up," I volunteered. "Sometimes they are female. Other times they are male."

"Are they people you recognize?" the psychologist asked.

"Not always. On several occasions they've been speaking fluently in foreign languages, especially in French and German. If I hear such voices while I'm dreaming, I seem able to converse fluently, but if I am not dreaming I simply listen. Once, under hypnosis, I spoke fluent French, which I may have picked up from Book of Knowledge passages I read as a child."

"What about the German?"

"I've never studied German or even tried to read it."

"Well, in psycho-drama we role-play by acting as the characters responsible for the negative voices patients hear." He spoke as he led me across the campus and into a building where male patients stayed. "Because some of the men tend to get rough, you're going to participate in an all-female group..."

At about that time, a man reached out and grabbed at me, while another patient, who was fondling his own genitals, stood in silence and smiled.

"What kind of voices do they hear?" I asked.

Dr. G. smiled and said, "Right now they hear our voices."

I was a bit shaken, which must have been obvious, because the psychologist took my arm and gave me a reassuring pat as we headed toward the next destination. "You've seen the worst of it. The women you're going to meet were abused as children. Some have never cried. If they can work past the suppressed feelings of helplessness and rage, they'll be on the healing path."

A couple of minutes later, we were in a room arranged as a theatre-in-the-round, with a TV camera set up to film via closed circuit the playacting that would transpire among the people who entered the room and sat in the chairs.

Dr. G. introduced me by my first name. The women assumed I was a new patient. Dr. G. was the only man among eight women ranging in age from their twenties to late fifties.

A round-robin discussion kicked off the session, with women telling Dr. G. what their own inner voices were telling them. He and a woman experienced in psycho-drama then demonstrated role playing. The psychologist pretended to be the speaker whose voice the patient heard.

"Call me by name! I dare you!"

"No," the patient said weakly.

"What's the matter with you? Are you stupid?"

"No. I'm scared."

"Of whom?"

"Of you?"

"Why? What did I ever do to you?"

"You..."

Dr. G. advanced toward the woman, as if to touch her. "What kind of things do I do to you?"

The woman trembled, and her voice broke into a whisper.

The doctor shouted, "Speak up! I can't hear you!"

The woman's eyes flashed and she swung her fist, screaming, "I hate you!"

"Who do you hate?"

"You. My dad!"

Dr. G. handed the patient a big pillow. "Hit it! Hit it with all your might! It's okay!"

After the patient had beaten the pillow, she sat in her chair and said, "I hear my father telling me to do things to him all the time. He died when I was eight." Her eyes were dry. "I want to kill him, but murder's a sin. If I could kill him, maybe the other voice would stop."

"What voice?"

"God's voice, the one that tells me I'm a sinner and should kill myself."

Not only did Dr. G. participate in the psycho-drama, so did the other women, most of whom acted the roles of patients' voices during the session.

Finally, it was my turn. My partner was a middle-aged woman named Rose. Rose was battling the voice of her inner mother, a dominant family figure who had insulted the girl so often that she was battling to gain self-esteem.

Obviously, Rose was still afraid of her mother, even though they had not lived together for more than thirty years. I faced my partner and said, "Rose, you're stupid. You'll never get anywhere in life until you cut the apron strings."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah."

"How do you know?"

"I'm your mother. I own you, body and soul. You're too dumb to know how to get away from me!" I advanced toward Rose.

"Stay away from me!"

"Make me!"

Rose shrank back. I thrust the pillow at her. "Make me!"

Rose punched the pillow and muttered a string of curse words that set off giggling among the women.



I started to laugh. So did Rose. We embraced, shook hands, and ended the session. Rose felt better but, like the other patients, still had not broken through layers of pain. She had not yet cried, but I did.

As Dr. G. walked me to my car, answering questions as we retraced our former steps, I wept tears of relief, and made my confession:

"I asked for this assignment because I wondered if I was sick because there are so many voices inside me. But compared to the pain the patients have suffered, my life is a bed of beautiful blooming roses," I said.

"What kind of voices do you hear," Dr. G. asked, "that you might want to talk about?"

"Good ones. They're loving, instructive, and have even given me a few tips on the stock market."

"They haven't impaired your ability to function responsibly?" he asked.

"No," I said. "They've inspired me with song, poetry and interesting story lines for my features."

"And they help you solve problems in non-destructive ways?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.

He smiled, shook my hand and opened the car door for me. "Then I suggest listening to them. They sound interesting."

That was more than twenty years ago and I've been listening to the secret voices of self ever since. Dr. G. was right. They are interesting, and I am \$1800 richer because of a stock tip I finally gathered courage to follow.

**MV**



By Susan S.

## MPD? No, Just Me!

By Frances

I have a disease. It's called mental illness. It is a disease in the same way cancer, diabetes, or any other "dis-ease" in your body impairs "normal" functioning. But it can be treated. And it can be controlled.

Mental illness does not make up who I am. My identity is not "Frances, the mental patient." We are Frances. Frances (the host) is composed of Ishmael, a soul as spirited as his twelve nations and a mind faceted like the crystals in Merlin's magic cage. Each time you peer inside, the view will twinkle; and colors will change. But whatever vision you see—it's all some part of me.

Frances (the host) is not a failure because we (the most) have had trauma and abuse in our past. She is not a failure because she needs to take medication to keep her depression under control. She is not a failure because she is dissociative/fragmented/and sometimes suicidal.

Frances loves the outdoors. She likes hiking and camping and backpacking. She loves to sit by the campfire at night.

Frances (et al) loves racquetball, bicycling, basketball, softball, and rollerblading.

Frances has a great sense of humor.

Yes, Frances has limitations. But there are so many things she has accomplished and still has left to do.

Frances is a creative, unique, strong, courageous survivor who lived through the worst of what could be done to her.

Frances has put a stop to the abuse.

Frances can distinguish between the "there and then" from the "here and now." This chore gets easier as time and healing move forward.

Frances needs a helping hand at times. But who doesn't?

Even Christ needed help carrying the cross to his own crucifixion.

Frances doesn't know how God, the Father feels about her, but she knows that Christ, who suffered the worst kind of pain and abandonment and rejection, loves her, understands her, and has hope for her.

Christ sent an angel to save her life.

When the whole of her being knows and has faith in Christ's love for her, she wants to Make A Joyful Noise!

Frances wants to learn to play jazz on the saxophone.

My soul-spirit...the timeless love I have inside...love for my womanchild, my teen keeper-selves, and for Ishmael, Devon, and the ageless ones. And all the love I have for the innocents of this age; love for all the little ones; love for the helpless children...

I believe in nurturance and TLC. I'm an advocate for the underdog and a crusader for the weary worn and helpless.

I'm what I want to be. I have no external expectations that I have to meet. I need not the approval of parents, peers, or priests. Street people, drug addicts, convicts, all who are soulweary and suffering have the same inherent human value in my heart as the mightiest king of men. I can listen and decide for myself what is right for me.

I am a writer. I am a poet and a storyteller. That which I write is the truth. I write reams of emotions and facets of thought, place them on rainbow tissue paper where the ends curl up and the gold turns into butterflies.

When the butterflies take wing...my native woman spirit dances with the fluorescent tree frogs leaping from lily pad to lily pad on a pond shrouded in the leaves of a green forest canopy.

Above us the golden eagle keeps watch on the wolf spirit—shadows his steps and comes to know that he is not evil. There are no satanic demons here; no demons at all. In fact, the wolfspirit is a fraternity; a family that keeps the fragments of human-induced terror with/in their perspective. As with the others, the wolfspirit has his place in the whole of timelessness.

I don't give Anyone, Anything, the power to limit me!

**MV**



# Integration Updates

First and most importantly—I love it! Life has become much less complicated being fully integrated and fused into one. I slowly adjusted to the quiet in my head as each individual part became a part of me. Now that there is only me, the quiet that I feared would be unbearable is nicely comfortable. I no longer need to tell the system to be quiet and I am surprised at how often I used that phraseology in the past. I am learning to be contented with my own thoughts. I still talk to myself, but I no longer lose arguments.

My last fusion with an alter was Rebecca, my historian. My homework was to review my history with her. She gave me history using themes. First was the schools I attended from kindergarten to present. Then came the teachers with focus on the special ones that had meaning in my life. Then she reviewed my school friends in the order that they were made. We went through the different houses where we lived, like touring with a Realtor. Next came the cars my parents drove, and some of the vacations we took. You get the idea now. I kept asking for the abuse in order, but it never came. Even after Rebecca and I became one, it never came. Finally, several weeks later, I asked my therapist, Anne, why I did not get the abuse in order like everything else. Her reply: "That is why I had you keep a timeline. You kept adding the different memories to the timeline, so Rebecca only needed to review other information because you already know the abuse." Wow, what a relief. I kept expecting the proverbial "other shoe to drop" and it was not even there to drop. It is nice to know I did not have to go through "that" again! I could stop holding my breath and waiting for the worst to happen. I am finished with the past and now I can grow forward.

I find sleep less worrisome. I no longer wonder whose needs are not being met or what memory will come next. Even the dreaming is better. Granted, I still have residuals. For example, we just passed a major holiday. It is usually a very difficult time period for me because of the Satanic Ritual Abuse, but now the holiday has no more meaning than a Tuesday or a Saturday. It is just a day in my ordinary life. I had a few fitful nights, but nothing worth remembering and writing down like I did before I completed all the memories. I did not wake up in a panic, and had only fleeting thoughts of what happened in the past. What a relief it is! Merely thoughts of "Oh yeah, that happened, blah, blah, blah..." Nothing to become upset about, hit the journal writing scenario, or call my therapist. You cannot imagine how gratifying it feels to have all my hard work pay off now.

I find my energy level is better too. Before, it was divided between my many parts with not much left over for me. Now it's all mine. Somehow that sounds selfish, but it isn't when you think how singletons get to keep all their energy and use it themselves. Because my energy is not divided, I also can focus on tasks better. It is amazing to me how much I can get accomplished. I do not need to stop and worry about triggers and what other inside parts want to do instead. I am actually reading books from cover to cover now instead of starting five and finishing none. It is refreshing to read to the end of a novel without my attention drawn to something else.

My attention level is better, too. I can actually follow the plot of a movie now or finish a television program. (I cannot count the number of times I sat in my chair in front of the TV the full time period of a program, but could not tell you what happened.) Even more astounding to me, I can sit and do hand work like cross stitch, crocheting or knitting and still keep up with the television program. I feared I would lose the ability to do two things at one time, but it is still with me. Only better. Now I can do both without the harried feeling I am forgetting something.

I can still play the piano, I can still paint, and I can still do the things I did before. The operative word here is "I." It is ME that is doing these things now, not an inside part. The satisfaction of completing a task is priceless.

I can even take credit for something I have done and not feel guilty. Before, it was someone else who finished a task. Now it is me and the credit is mine. I can, for instance, clean my house, for me. I don't clean now because it is dictated I should clean once a week. I can skip a week and not worry. I have seen dust in other people's homes. I am allowed to have dust in mine. I clean now because it feels and looks good when I am finished. Then I can revel in the job done and accept compliments for it. That is something new to me. I had such a strict and inflexible life-schedule that was started in childhood. Now I am free of the tethers that bind me to such rigidity. I can let go and feel good about it!

For over thirteen years, I was a sign language interpreter in a religious setting. When I first began on my healing journey, I was asked to give up anything I thought was stressful. The first thing that came to mind was the interpreting and I quit. Later, as the memories began, I came to understand that I used sign language as a way to keep my mind so preoccupied with translating that I didn't have time to think about anything else. It was a way to avoid triggers in a religious setting. It was also

denial. It put remembering on the "back burner." When I learned that MPD/DD is 100% curable, I had my doubts. But it is true. A person has to be committed to healing. It takes a lot of effort to stay on the path to healing. My being an interpreter was voluntary, not something I was paid to do. I sacrificed that part of me and somehow it came across from the inside parts that the interpreter was dead and gone. I took their word for it. Now that I am one, I sometimes catch myself thinking in sign language. I also took French in Junior and Senior High School. Sometimes I catch myself thinking in French too! I have proof that those inside people or parts are not dead and gone. They are a part of me. If I had quit my healing and been content to stop with a corporation of alters working together (as I have seen many other multiples do), I might not have access to sign language, French or the other talents and skills I possess. The secret is to go all the way to one!

You know the alter who has the critical voice. (I think we all have at least one.) That is also gone. Now, I can make choices. If it is a wrong choice, I pay the consequences. But if it is a right choice, I can rejoice. Making choices never seemed an option. If a choice was an option, it was accompanied by an overwhelming decision to make. Now, choices lay before me and I am not frightened. I am learning that I can compliment myself on my accomplishments. I can congratulate myself when I do something well. If I blow it, I own up to it. I am even learning to apologize and actually mean it. I didn't realize that I was not into saying I was sorry until I became One. (Of course, I was good at apologizing for things I was not even responsible for, but it never felt real.) I am learning I can be responsible and make good decisions and choices. I am learning that I am lovable and that I can love me too. I don't have to fight the criticism that was so prevalent when so many "others" were involved. I am learning it is not egotistical to be self-affirming.

The anxiety that I feel now is the healthy kind that keeps me safe. An example is the anxiety that comes naturally when I am in a parking lot at night or driving along searching for an unfamiliar address. I have learned, this is the normal kind of anxiety. What a weight off my shoulders! Some anxiety can be healthy and normal! That was new to me!

I am getting comfortable with crowds of people. Anne had me work with spending a week just making eye contact with strangers. Then we worked on talking to a stranger. We chose a waiting room situation, one that was safe and common.



(I knew the other person was there for the same reason that I was.) Now I am carrying individually wrapped mints in my purse to open conversations, and I am comfortable with it. If you had told me I could do that five years ago, I would have told you that you were crazy. Now I am doing it and finding delight in meeting new people. Is that wild or what? People in general are not really out to hurt me and are just as reticent as me!

I have also learned that there is a difference between stress and crisis. Neither one require "splitting," and I can handle it. My mother-in-law died a week after my last fusion. I managed the trip to Colorado with aplomb and even found myself telling others to write down their feelings of grief and listening to their problems! I have also survived my first root canal. I not only drove by myself to the appointment (a first), but I realized all the horror stories were false. My experience was pleasant even though it was stressful. Stress does not have to become a crisis, but a crisis does have stress. Sounds simple, but it was new to me.

I have come to the conclusion that blending or fusion is wrongly represented. Having completed blending with 183 parts and remaining ONE after six months proves this to me. Each individual blend represents a formal acceptance that each fragment, part, or personality really is me. I hated it when Anne would tell me that my parts were me. I would fight it tooth and toenail in disagreement, thinking it was not true. Now, I catch myself thinking about the different ones and musing "so and so" would have liked this. Then I realize, I am enjoying it just the way they would. It really is me!

I have no regrets in becoming One. The blessings far out weigh the maledictions. I lost nothing by becoming one, but the gains I have listed are only a drop in the bucket. I look forward to learning more about whom I have become and where I am going. There world is wide open to me. I can grow and live without fearfulness. Sleeping better, having a higher energy level, being in control (even during stress or crisis) and multi-tasking are only a few of the advantages. It is exciting to not be anxious about what is coming next and looking forward to meeting new challenges. Absolutely nothing was lost to me by becoming one. It's all still there, ready to use and apply. If you only get one thing from this article, may it be: Becoming One is Great! You Can Do It Too!

By Kathryn A.

**I lost my remission/integration twice.** Once after Megan, the last child, 5 years old (first out—last in?) had fused...we found two more! Adults. Rachel, age 27—an Israeli commando. The Old Soldier, age 45. P.O.W. Weak. They fused very quickly, in 1-2 months. The kids took 1-2 years!

My therapist moved away and I had to get a new one. Seven months to trust her, and I was integrated!

Other issues:

**1) Therapy.** Lots and lots of work after fusion. I go once a month for "maintenance" and do projects: journals daily for my counselor. During emergency-crisis, I go once a week, then back to once a month. I know when to call and I trust myself to keep myself well.

Like changing the oil in the car every 5,000 miles.

**2) Pets.** I have two 100-lb husky-mixes for "protection," and one 21-lb black cocker spaniel as a companion-friend. The little one and one big one (looks like "Lassie") ride every day in the car. Fun! I also have 5 cats. The little ones would adopt one for every serious suicide plan.

**3) Remission.** Haven't lost integration in a year. It's holding through funerals, family-of-origin visits, toxic children, life. It's *holding!*

**4) Marriage counseling.** once a week. We have good insurance. My husband (a widower with two teenage boys) needed an ally and his own family-of-origin work.

**5) Kids.** Felony drug arrests. Sheriff. Lights flashing. All in my front yard! I never held my integration until after that mouth-breathing rage had moved, permanently, to Seattle. The youngest boy is in counseling now.

**6) Exercise.** I swim three times a week in the warm therapy pool at the Athletic Club. Husband's company pays. Before that, I used videos, walking, rowing machine.

**7) Twelve-Step.** Every Friday, Co-Dependents Anonymous. I'll get my 5-year chip. "What you hide you keep." My MPD recovery was directly related to my healing of co-dependency.

**8) Church.** Never found one without politics. I usually stay away or visit with my husband. Rarely alone. I live in a town of 3,000 people. Bigger cities like Denver/Phoenix were OK. I could blend in with the crowd and not mind going by "ourselves."

**9) Bible Study Fellowship.** Once a week. I love this women's support group. The task of learning. No hassles or preaching. It works for me.

**10) Backlog.** One year I didn't file insurance claims for 10 months or open my non-urgent mail. I still have six boxes and four sacks of "stuff" I want to look at before trashing. Such is my nature of healing. The yard-stuff and house-stuff and support paper work didn't get done. Since

Nov. '97 I've tackled various projects and handled "current" life. Garage is still messy.

Order gives me energy. I like my environment in harmony but not "perfect" or "clean-obsessive."

My dream is to wake up in the morning and open yesterday's mail.

**11) Rest.** The Social Security Voc-Rehab said I was capable of "folding laundry." (Ha ha!) I called my 12-step sponsor in CODA. Did not "personalize" or "overreact." Behaved like the adult I now am and was quite proud of myself. I trust myself when I need to rest.

**12) Nutrition.** Sugar, caffeine, preservatives, too much wheat or flour = yuk! I do better grazing all day ...small snacks or meals four to six times a day, rather than big feeds.

**13) Medical.** Going through "the change." I've switched prescriptions four times. I think we have now the correct dosage of some estrogen with testosterone so I (a) get benefit-energy and muscle tone from workouts and (b) do not fear phone calls, people, feel "weepy" and housebound (from Nov. '97 to Feb. '98).

Was it MPD? Was it Menopause? Inquiring minds want to know.

I see a chiropractor once a month or more if I lockup in a crisis. Get a therapeutic massage two times a month from a woman. Our insurance or "tax-deferred" dollars help pay for these. CCCS helped me budget and we "live-small." No dinners out, movies, skiing, etc. I watch and listen to my body very carefully and I trust me.

It is so worth it! Keep on. You can do it! I did. And it was horrible, but it is soooo much better now!

By Dusty and the Former Soldiers

MV



By Sharon T.

## Letters

I was assaulted in 1991. Now in 1998, I am still having anxiety problems, though not nearly as severe due to EMDR treatment in '94. However, the anxiety problems are strange and have an adverse effect on my job performance. I am trying to find some way to keep a job for more than 2-10 months at a time, and increase my stability, so I can support myself and my child. I would greatly appreciate any suggestions.

By Sheila

I would like to hear from others who are dealing with the problem of healing from abuse that may never be remembered. The particular aspect of this that comes up lately is the issue of forgiveness. In the early years I got very angry when people suggested I consider forgiving the perpetrators of unspeakable crimes—especially when I didn't yet have full memory of the events. Back then I assumed I would eventually recover full memory, heal it and release it. Now I think some of my memories may always be vague. Back then I came up with the idea that it isn't my place to forgive my parents; it's up to God. It was a comfort to think it just isn't my responsibility.

But it's eight years and I still don't have full memory of events. I have a lot of physical health problems, along with psychological problems: anxiety and depression and anger. My father is dead. My mother has Alzheimer's, and I want to be done with it. I keep hearing stories (mainly on public television) about native Americans, former slaves, Holocaust survivors and other abused people who found peace and healing by letting go of their anger and forgiving, not for the perpetrators' benefit, but for themselves. I know it is unwise to try to compare my suffering to how much others have suffered, but if forgiveness was appropriate for them and allowed them to find peace, would it also be appropriate for me? But how do I forgive what I haven't remembered?

I want peace so badly. I have worked on feeling compassion for my mother. She is suffering. I have spent moments with her when I felt good about

supporting her. Other times were much harder, as enraged parts said they want nothing to do with "The Mother." My sense is when I experience true compassion for anyone, it's good for *my* health. My therapist says even if we don't know it all, we remember enough. Let's work with what we do remember.

I would like to hear how others are working with this problem. Thanks for sharing.

By Ellen

(Editor's note: we will forward replies to Ellen promptly, as well as to other letter writers. Since we have planned an issue on "not-remembering" next year, with your permission I will make copies of the letters to Ellen, to use at that time. Lynn W.)

### A Reader's Reply:

I strongly related to the letter from Anita, Inc., in the June '98 issue.

She says she wonders if her memories are "true," and cites horror novels for adding to her doubts. I've been in therapy for almost eight years. I don't read horror novels, but I have an extensive personal library of books about DID and RA. At times I have wondered if my "memories" were taken from what I've read. I've decided that they probably aren't, because my "memories" are selective. They don't include the worst or the least of what I've read. And sometimes I haven't read anything that is like my "memories."

I put quotation marks around the word "memories" because I only partially accept them. It has been an arduous task to begin to realize how bleak my childhood was. Because I seem to be a high-functioning person I have minimized my past. A lot of my therapy work revolves around helping me to understand the ways my childhood has affected me. I didn't start therapy until I was 52 years old. I think that has made me more resistant to accepting my reality, because I had 50 years to practice denying reality.

I just wanted you to know how much this issue means to me. I've been subscribing for three or four years now. After I read the first one I had the feeling that it "fit like an old shoe." Thank you.

Jeanne

MV

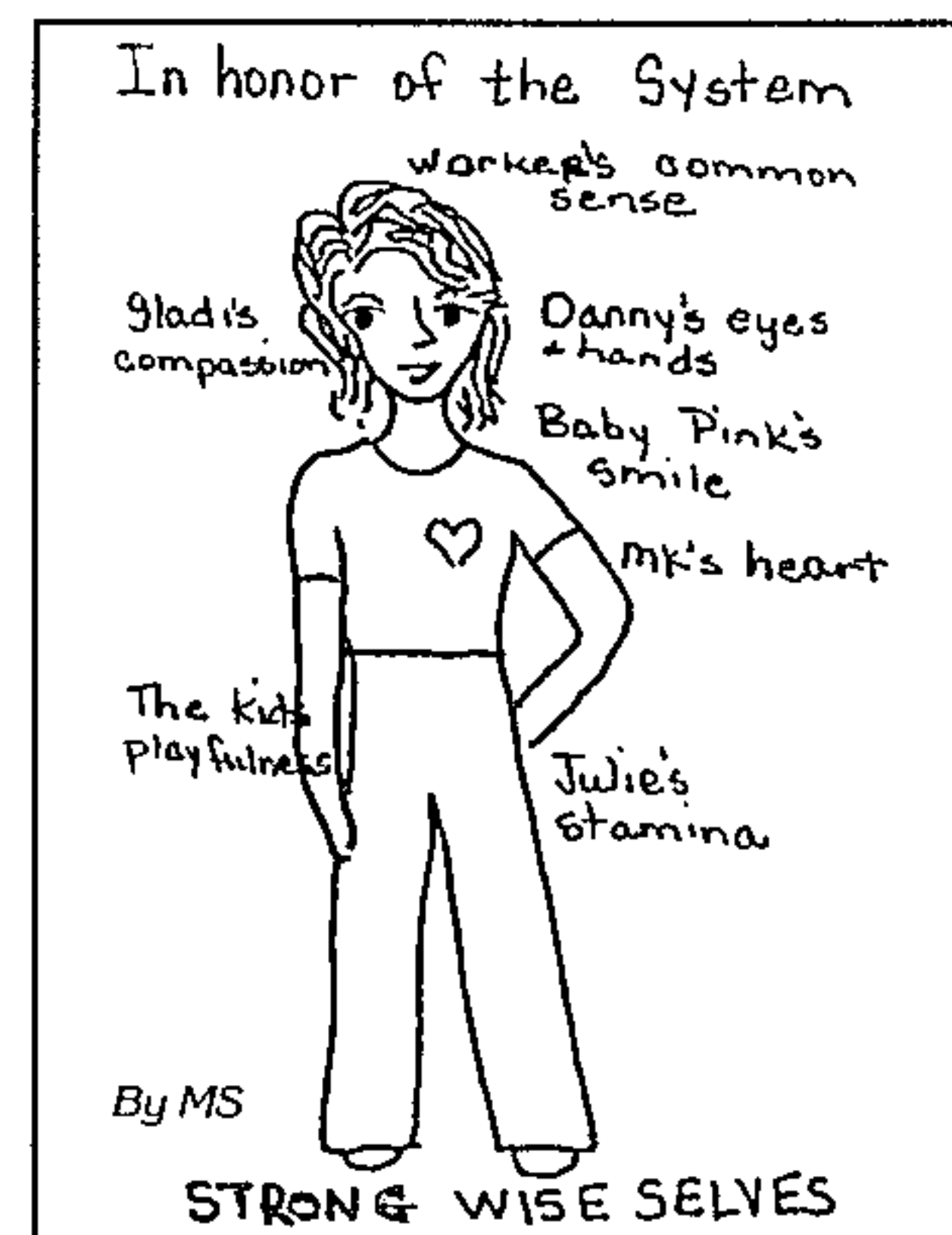
## Oh Mother

Feeling your inner strength  
as you once again  
fight for your survival,  
anger coursing through my soul  
as I witness helplessly  
the torment you endure,  
longing to shield you  
from the current criminal  
whose intentions are to destroy you,  
remembering an earlier time  
of violence-fear-shame,  
as a dominant rageful man  
came ever-so-close  
to ending our lives,  
the terror that engulfed me  
so many years ago  
returns with similar intensity,  
living with the unpredictability  
as each day brought  
hopes-disappointments,  
the rollercoaster  
of emotions evolves again,  
as the pain in your eyes  
brings terror to my heart.  
Oh Mother  
You have survived so much,  
to witness your courage,  
sensing your inner power,  
feeling deep in my heart  
if your life is taken  
I will be lost without her.

On 3/22/98 my mom passed away. She was a courageous warrior surviving a violent husband and still loving her kids, but lost her long courageous battle with cancer. Mom, I love you.

By Katie-Sue

MV





## Web Site Review

I would like to add some web sites to the ones listed in the issue about using the Internet. In general, my experience with the Internet and with interactive web sites, i.e. chat, message boards, e-mail support groups, etc., has been good. I have made some good friends, people I can call on and count on in the late night hours when I can't find a friend in real time. It has helped me to realize that most of the things that go on in real-time relationships go on in on-line relationships, too. People come and go, get mad and sad, are good and loyal friends, act like jerks, have misunderstandings, and there are conflicts. If I am uncomfortable, I pull back, but I have never really been badly hurt. And I have been greatly helped. I am cautious, but not so much that I can't form relationships with people and trust some people. Having this resource has really opened my life up, provided support, information and entertainment.

Here are a few more web sites that deal with dissociative disorders and survivors of sexual abuse. I believe all of them are run by people who have dissociative disorders themselves.

### MJo's Page

<http://www.geocities.com/HotSprings/5654>

The first page about dissociative disorders I ever found. It consists of links to resources for people with dissociative disorders and survivors of sexual abuse.

### Divided Hearts: <http://www.dhearts.org>

Very comprehensive site for people with dissociative disorders and survivors of sexual abuse. An extensive reading room with books, articles, etc., 18 message boards, including ones for child and teen alters, supporters, spirituality, work. Crisis links, very warm and user friendly.

### Healing Hopes:

<http://www.healinghopes.org>

Message forums, chat, information to support those living with DID and their supporters.

**Time Passages:** <http://timepassages.com>. Includes Voices of Kind—private message forums and Prism Lights—chats and on-line support meetings.

### Soul's Self-Help Central:

<http://www.golden.net/~soul>

Resources for people with dissociative disorders and survivors of sexual abuse. Two good IRC chats.

**Sanctuary:** <http://www.inlink.com/~chack/sanctuary.htm>

A safe network, on-line community, where you can create a persona or character, chat with others, create your own room. This is a little more complicated to use but designed to be very safe.

### The Gathering Place:

<http://www.geocities.com/HotSprings/8432>

A person web site created by Maker's Dozen, the inner family of a woman with DID. Beautifully done.

By the way, if people are interested in having a web site of your own, to tell your story, or to say anything else you want to say, there are a number of places that offer free web sites, ranging from the very simple to do (<http://expage.com> or <http://www.tripod.com>) to the more complicated (<http://www.geocities.com> or <http://www.angelfire.com>). My first web site is at <http://expage.com/page/recovery>. The second one is in progress at [geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com).

This has opened a whole new world to this former technophobe. Actually, parts of me are pretty savvy technically, once I give them a chance.

*By Martha R.*

**Two more URL's:** National Victim Center: <http://www.nvc.org> offers 1996 Victim's Rights Sourcebook, a compilation of victim's rights laws.

And for research on cases of therapist misconduct:

<http://www.cs.utk.edu/~bartley/pamela/litigating/litigating.html>

**MV**

## How do alters learn languages?

Some alters have unusual skills—carpentry, writing, painting, etc. Some are skilled speakers of foreign languages. I am impressed with the very high skill level that can be achieved with the (normally limited) time available to an alter. I suspect that some alters can tap a human potentiality that most of us (alters and singletons) do not tap. How? What is the feeling? How are these skills honed? Why can't other alters do it?

I am a singleton and a poor language learner. I am researching good language learners. The payoff for successful research would be not only learning—and teaching—languages, but also helping us all understand more clearly the paths to self-actualization. If anyone has advice or information about how alters learn languages, please write: (Professor) Marshall R. Childs, Fuji Phoenix College, 81-1 Midono, Gotemba, Shizuoka 412-0001, Japan.

**MV**

## Secret Songs

Magenta moon in a dream world  
Lilting lyric of a little girl  
blue bay of a fantastic kind  
joyous journey in a child's mind

Wafting waves as if in flight  
secret songs in the night  
sparkling stars dance their part  
take the tune within your heart

*By Deer-Run*



## You are the Child

### I am the Adult

You are a child of fear and uncertainty  
You tremble in your aloneness  
You mistrust even yourself  
As you feel the pain  
in your mind & of your hand.  
I am an adult of unknown composition  
I tremble alone in my fear of you  
I mistrust the reality of you  
As you invade my very being  
with panic & inflicted pain.  
You are a child of overwhelming needs  
Yearning to have your trembling stilled  
Wanting to reach out for love  
You don't know how to ask  
or even for what you seek.  
I am the adult overwhelmed by your needs  
I make awkward attempts to nurture  
To encourage your timid reach  
I don't know how to give  
or to guide you in your search.  
You are the child deserving to be  
You are special in your innocence  
You need to be cradled in calmness  
Basking in unconditional love  
you'll feel & inflict no more pain.  
I am the adult loving you  
I am the adult in whose arms you are held  
I marvel in your very being  
Loving you without conditions  
we unite—letting go of pain.

*By Karen VanHook Gross*

**MV**

**COMING SOON!****October 1998**

Creative expression: how writing, art, music or other activities help you heal.  
 ART: Healing your spirit.  
 DEADLINE: August 1, 1998.

**December 1998**

Learning to negotiate: with your therapist, your alters, your family, your boss. Being assertive, not offensive.  
 What works? ART: Celebration of togetherness. DEADLINE: Oct. 1, 1998.

**Note To Contributors:** First, you have no idea how wonderful it is to receive ALL of your material. I really appreciate it. I look at your work carefully. As much as possible goes into MV, if not right away, then later (one piece in this issue was submitted in '96!) But I do this work alone, & despite my best intentions, I am not always prompt in getting back to you about your work. For this I apologize, & warn you to keep a copy, & rattle my cage if I haven't gotten back to you. I'm very sorry & will keep trying to develop a better system. —LW

**Share with us!**

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

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