

● MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

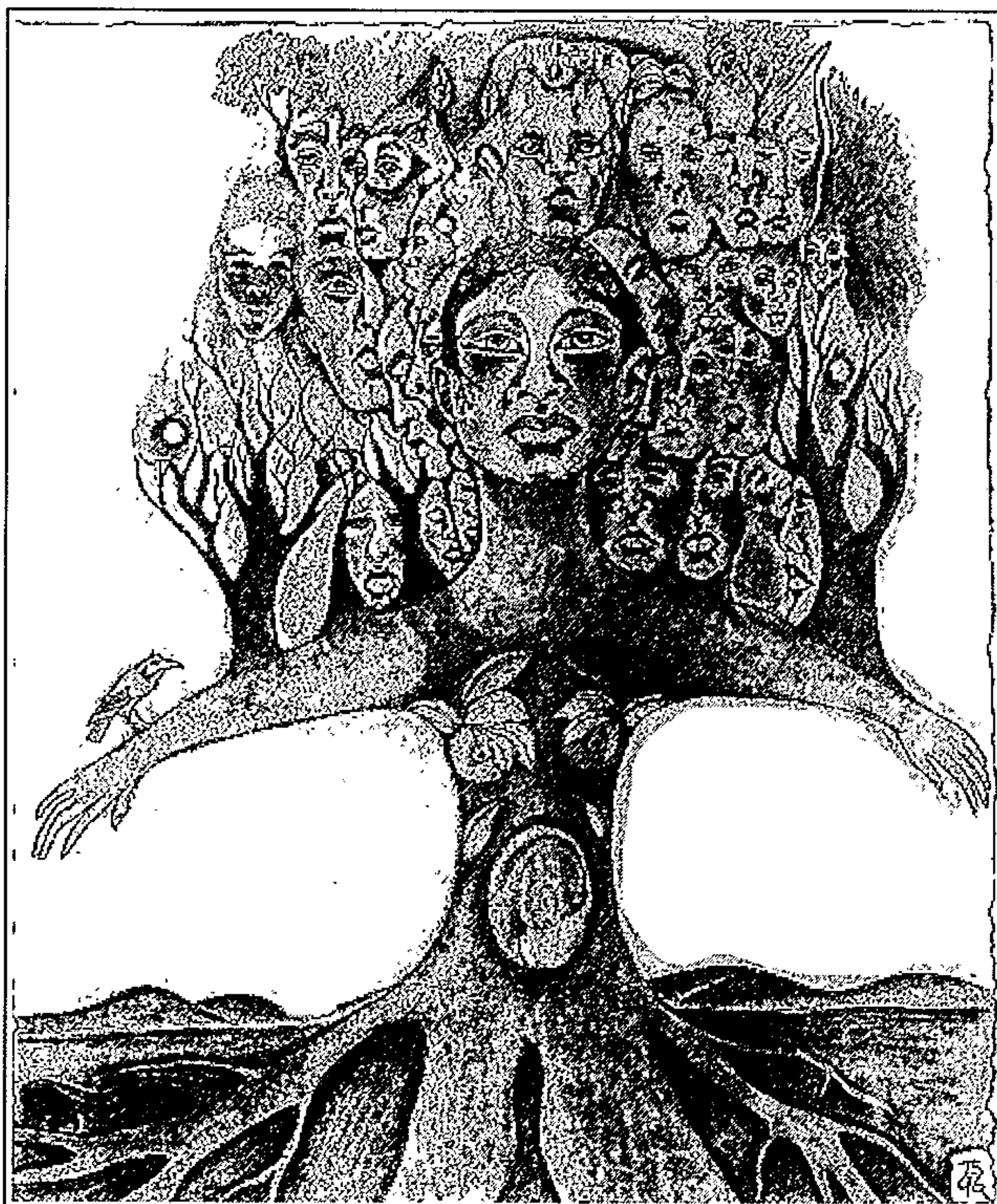
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In This Issue:

Gender and Dissociation Sexuality and Intimacy Self Acceptance



What's My Gender?

I am a small child mystified by gender.

Am I a girl or am I a boy?

Mommy crops my hair short

but I must wear frills and lace.

My nails need trimmed to keep out
the dirt.

There are many roadways in the
backyard.

My hands are chapped from digging.

Is there no lotion in this house?

Only number two sister seems to
care.

Daddy likes his boy to be rugged.

That's why I wear jeans with holes in
the knees.

Don't forget the red cowboy boots!

A plaid flannel shirt like Dad's is a
certainty.

We build traps and watch as ants fall
to their death.

A day in the giant red truck—what a
thrill!

Why must birthday parties mean
fancy dresses?

Denims would work just as well for
me.

Daddy doesn't defend me, for I am
his precious daughter.

Or am I his mischievous son? I prefer
the latter.

It feels so fine to be rocked. But only
Daddy is willing.

Does this mean I am his girl or am I,
his boy?

For you see, I am only a small child,
mystified by gender.

By D.M.

MV

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Do Spiders Dream?

By Living Earth.

For White Eagle. For Anne-Marie. For all the children.

Spiders dream? The silk blouse is brought to air out. A large web spinner walks onto this fabric made of wormy threads. Air moves the garment, spider, hair on my head. Such skill and power for something not visible.

Not visible. Impressions, visions, sensations experienced since birth. There is no visible, human guide or ally for long years. Only voices in stormy winds. In trees that are touched or leaned on for support. Spirit entities seen in the spaces between. Things observed and felt when anything is held in a hand. Born to war, in a family war zone, in the shadow of the holocaust, in the shadow of a dead twin. Born a human sponge.

A human sponge. Empath. Able to absorb the pain and suffering of others. A human vacuum cleaner. Sensing the center of chaos and damage and then cleansing, cleansing. Led to heal the lives of others, but never told what this means. So the spirit screams quietly in the night.

In the night. The two tall beings stand near the bed. The child-who-is-many is fearful. Understanding grows, a slow seed somewhere deep within. Day and night are different—one tangible, the other not.

The other not. "You were never a loner," the other person says. This other person is not told that this attribute, like others, is kept hidden so it can survive. Waiting for the right time for...what? Wind has an answer.

An answer. In a story by Leslie Marmon Silko: *"Oh," Humaweepi said to himself, "I have been learning all this time and I didn't even know it."* Slowly, as a tree grows, some experiences are named by others.

Psychometry—impressions and information received by touching an object.

Telepathy—mind-to-mind communication. Intuition—insightful, spiritual knowing.

Clairvoyance—seeing beyond the physical range.

Clairaudience—hearing beyond the physical range.

Channeling—carrying or communicating something from another source.

Something from another source. The invisibles. The human teachers don't know that the spirit voices accompany the voices generated by this physical mind. Some imply—how can one teach another who already knows? The shape of the work then is to recognize, acknowledge, identify and honor what already exists. What is silently operable since the beginning.

Since the beginning. When past life wisdom and this life experience melt together in the heat of the first soul trembling shock. Then others—human and spirit—begin to draw near in the whirling. They are, and they strengthen, the whirling which is chaos. They draw near, touch, fondle and feed. All in silence. And the feeders do not ask. They do not say what they are doing. They with their own hunger, need, unanswered questions, yearning, unhealed wounds, old deep rage. And one day, this is named as exploitation.

Exploitation. Taking without recognizing, acknowledging, identifying, honoring what is received. The child-who-is-many becomes woman-who-is-many-more. There is a question of forgiveness. There is a sense of something experienced many generations past, which is passed on through bone and blood and nights made of silent screams. There is a sense of danger, harm, a taking without recognition, requesting, appreciation. There is a sense also—that if others-who-are-many

don't acknowledge or understand the paranormal, they too may be exploited. There is a sense that others-who-are-many already know what this means.

Know what this means. A shaman can be one who encounters severe illness, terror, and/or death. One who comes back, yet can return to other realms. Some non-anglo cultures recognize, acknowledge and honor this. A Shaman can thus "know the inner workings of crisis"* in a mystical way. "The encounter with dying and death, and the subsequent experience of rebirth and illumination"* are viewed as a shamanic initiation. Not a tragedy, mental illness, psychosis, 'danger to self or other.' Another view sees this as a natural, ancient capacity lying curled within, awakened sometimes by a shock. In the absence of recognition and honoring, this is all dismissed. Feared and ridiculed. Punished, categorized, stigmatized. In general, suppressed, banished or destroyed in order to get rid of it.

Get rid of it. Impede the freedom of expression of the vital force. Do not see this as common to many, but as something to be eradicated. And the carrier with it. And do not look in the mirror at the true, deep self.

True deep self. Not suppressed or impeded, arising as sun in the east. The deep seated self complex emerging layer by layer. Forgiving itself with each step, for each step backward and a rest.

A rest. Constructing and reconstructing itself. A knowing how to dream, while sometimes forgetting this when awake. A dancing with the shadows of the sun. Touching the howl of a wolf. Walking in the webspinner's vision. Do spiders dream?

**From Shamanic Voices: A survey of Visionary Narratives (p.5) by Joan Halifax, Ph.D.*

Gender Issues

My hair needs styled differently! Lose the bows and colored hair combs!

Alright already! Get these high-heels off!

Let me at 'm! Put your dukes up!

Enough with the dresses! Where are my slacks?

+

Fix my hair! Where's my brush?

Eat more chocolate: I'm depressed!

Many Voices of all the girls are chattering in my head at once!

All my nails need filed and polished.

Legs need shaved!

Earrings add just the right touch to any outfit.

=

Come home before dark. It's scary out there!

Only 'feel' tough on the inside, ok? No hurting anyone by 'acting' tough on the outside!

Makeup bags need mirrors & wet wipes for quick fixes/unfixes.

Polished nails require remover & more polish in that makeup bag for quick fixes.

Remember to add a brush, hair combs, etc. to that bag! Who wants a bad hair day?

Oh, don't forget Mike's sportwatch and Amy's Disney watch!

My new earrings and Bernie's necktie, too!

Is there anything else? Anybody?...

Shoes, of course: tennis shoes need to replace those pumps after work.

Enough already! Is this a make-up bag, or a suitcase?!?!?

By Diana Barnum

MV



MANY THANKS TO OUR ANGELS!

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Call Chris McMillin: (310) 530-1151 or (800) 533-5266

Forest View Hospital - Grand Rapids, MI

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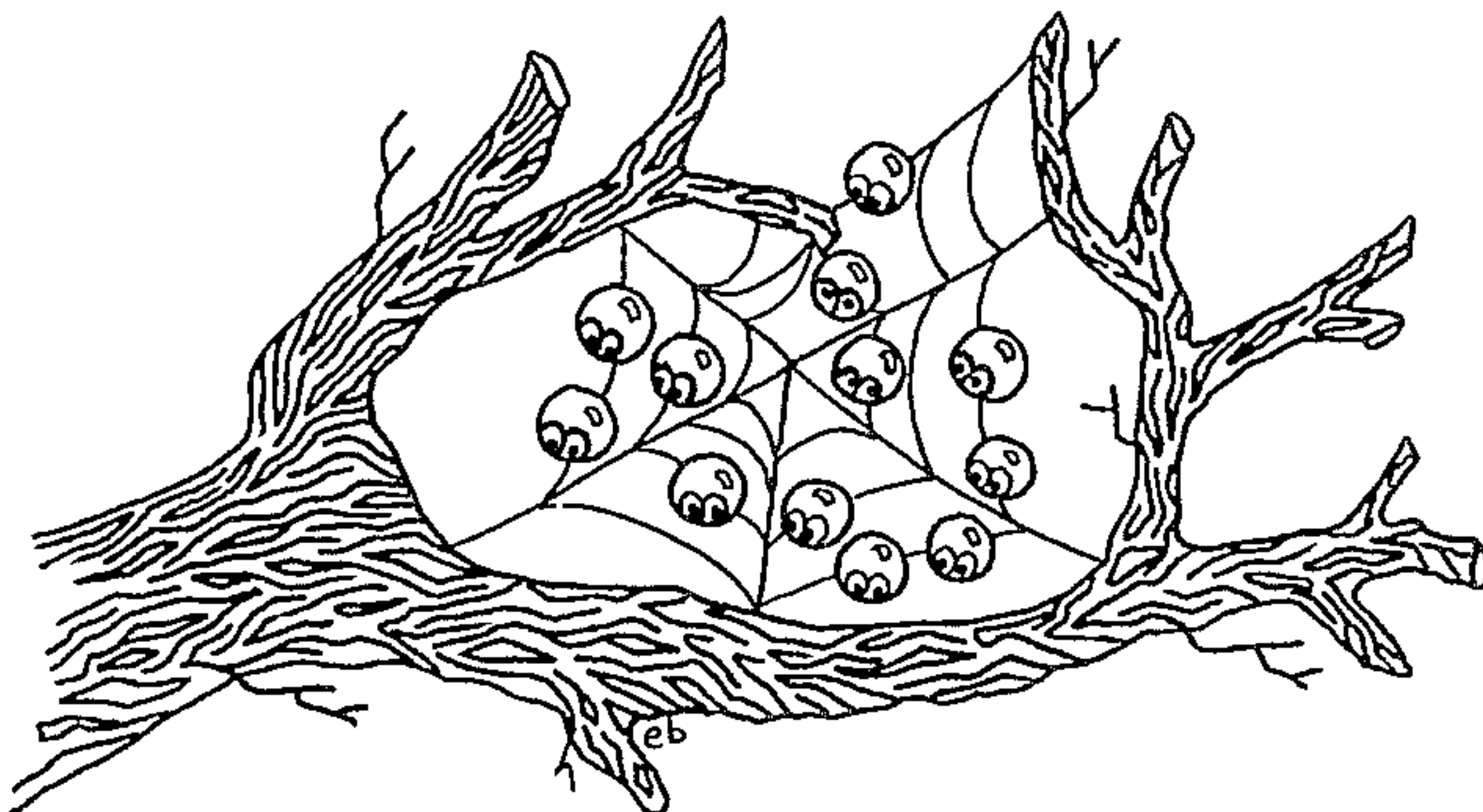
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We appreciate your support! — Lynn W., Editor



Caught in a web of deceit, we await the rising sun. In the cold predawn darkness, against our will, we were sucked from thin air, separated from each other and held fast, captured by an enemy's thread, stronger than imagination. We have survived. We know no other life. Though stranded in darkness, each has continued to independently reflect the spark of hope which smolders within us. Like the drops of dew, we are individual, transparent, luminous pearls, strong together on a formidable, yet fragile fiber. Everyone longs for freedom from the web, but most fear the illumination, the heat, the process, which would bring it to pass. It appears to some, that light leads only to destruction, but others believe in a dawn that induces transformation, not annihilation. We who believe, are convinced that the web is NOT what holds us together. We believe that the web is what is keeping us APART. As drops of dew change from liquid to vapor and find release in the morning sun, the light of truth beckons us to have faith in the existence of a wholeness which we have never known. The light bids us believe in a freedom which lies just beyond this web that constrains us. The spider is gone. The night is ending. The eastern sky glows with expectation and promise. We will be changed, transformed, and none will be lost. All will be free, as intended, carried away like vapor in the wind to new life and completeness.

By Ellen & Hope, for all of Ellie's family

MV

Gender Issues and Dissociation

We have male/female alters of many ages. Some are heterosexual, some bi-sexual, some are homosexual. It is very confusing sometimes. We watch movies and read books fulfilling lust of both sexes for adults. Have also written porn!

For the children, we re-direct their attention elsewhere.

By Sally B.



In this society, sexuality is bound with the erroneous binary opposition of heterosexuality and homosexuality. For example, when we are abused repeatedly at young ages, it twists our views of adult sexual relations. Just about everyone who has been sexually abused struggles with their sexuality well into adulthood, asking questions such as "Am I straight or gay?" with the answer partly depending on the sex/gender of the perpetrator. DID's are mostly women with mostly multiple male perpetrators. Women, of course, are also perpetrators of sexual and ritual abuse. Statistically, however, men commit the majority of violent acts in this country. One would think that given these statistics, women would hate men after the abuse suffered at the hands (and penis) of them. Yet there is a heterosexualized, male-centeredness which comes with repeated abuse by male perpetrators. In other words, even though females may be the victims of male violence, in a patriarchal society women are still drawn to, and often dependent on, men. The abuse perpetuates this phenomena, creating a false notion of dependency, protection and support.

Many DID's have alters which are women-centered, bi-sexual, or lesbian. Some of us even explore alternative lifestyles. Is this alternate lifestyle which many DID's lead merely girl-bonding, that is, a natural response to repeated abuse by men? What about DID's with

female perpetrators? And how many women who function for years without knowing their DID diagnosis continue to perpetuate the male-focus until the diagnosis is made?

Let's complicate this even further...what happens when alters have different sexualities, and some of these sexualities, or even the philosophies which ground the sexualities, are contradictory? The other night I realized one of my parts is sexual. Up to that point, I never connected her with sexuality, or even intimacy. She is a spiritual guide for me and often writes and reads; she is the thinker, the intellect, and helps me stay grounded and connected. Sexuality, I would have thought, was too material for her, too much an aspect of earth and carnal experience. But this alter, as I learned the other night, has lesbian desire. Another of my female alters loves having sex with men, though also flirts with women. She loves the power she feels when she's sexual with another person. Another alter experiences his sexuality alone. I have also recently learned that one of my child alters enjoys sexual contact with men. And me? I have been in several long-term heterosexual relationships, and simultaneously prefer the company of women. On occasion, I have felt sexually attracted towards women, but rarely have I acted on it. My own sexuality has changed recently, or at least how I experience my sexuality has changed. The more I learn about my alters, the more I experiment and engage my sexuality in new and more creative and fulfilling ways.

I've noticed something about the DID women I've met in clinics and hospitals: as new alters emerged/came out, lesbian alters appeared, "came out." Perhaps it is no coincidence. When there are multiple personalities, gender and sexuality are of course confused. When multiple sexualities are housed in one body, and these sexualities are acted on, this goes against the mainstream. It defies what is "right" in terms of experiencing

sexuality. Engaging these multiple selves, particularly when the acts or lifestyles are socially deviant, is an act of self-empowerment. But more than this, these choices to engage the multiple sexual selves potentially is an act of resistance against patriarchal oppression. It is a refusal to accept the labels, "straight" or "gay." We need to refuse to label our sexualities in a way that debilitates us. Most importantly, we need to applaud ourselves for enjoying fully our sexualities. Radical feminist Emma Goldman once said, "I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things!" DID's experience multiple sexual realities...well, more power to us!

By Danielle



I have one male alter who is the protector of my entire collective self. I envision him with green eyes and dark black hair, though my actual features are quite different. I also envision him as very, very strong. When I switch to this identity, my body feels as though it is bigger. I express, through him, the protective part of me. My self-protective feelings, and my protective feelings for my mother and sisters were/are expressed through this identity. I was messaged that it was not okay for girls and women to protect, to draw the line in the sand and speak against violence. This part of me identified as male, so that I would feel okay in having and expressing my protective feelings, so that I wouldn't feel "bad" for feeling anger. This part of me protects me from losing touch with my warrior-self! Through this part, I listen to my "gut instincts," I follow my "intuition," and I feel all my feelings. This part of me protected me from grief that would have destroyed my will to live if fully experienced by my whole self in childhood. This part of me protected my will to live. Through this part of me, I express my sadness for those I have lost that I loved, and

for what happened to me as a child. Through this part of me, I know what happened to me was not okay. Because this part of me is male, I/he knows with power and authority that it was not okay. In my family, women did not have power and authority, and often women closed their eyes to their own powerful knowing, as though it was forbidden. I hid my feelings of powerful knowing within this male identity for safekeeping! This part of me holds my strong opinions for me; this protected me from abuse as a child. I grew up in a house where children were "seen and not heard." Through this part of me, I express my strong opinions. In leaving my "self" and dissociating as a child, I could express my strong opinions and anger. This male self holds my ability to do anything for someone I love—the part of love that is responsibility. This self protects my body, and my knowing about my body. It wasn't safe to be a girl. This male self numbs my physical body so that I don't feel my feelings. In the past, this protected me from overwhelming emotions. This self experiences my fear of closeness, my fear of intimacy, and my fear of caring tenderness, and protects me by being "strong" and building armor around my physical body. It is not safe to be a woman! In addition to adult male identities, there are also children. There is the little boy who does not speak. Through this part of me, I express the way I was silenced as a little girl. The silence is deafening, overwhelming, and so connected to my being a little girl, that I cannot fully experience the devastation of being silenced. The experience of being

silenced is somewhat numbed through this dissociation and split, and through the taking on of male identity. There is a little boy who cries and experiences grief over one particularly heartbreaking loss in childhood. Through Luke I experience sadness. There is a little boy who expresses joy and laughter because it is not yet safe for me to experience being female and laughter in the same moment. It is not safe to let down my guard long enough to experience laughter. Through this little munchkin, I now experience happiness and giggles. It was not safe to express happiness as a little girl! It was as though expressions of happiness were met with sudden outbursts of rage. I learned to connect joy with violence. These are some of the ways in which male identities have made sense to me. I felt so unsafe as a girl.

By Gwen



When questions of how to deal with my sexuality arise, since I have male and female 'parts' or 'alter-egos,' I find the following tips come in handy:

***Respect whichever part of the self is present.** Don't humiliate a masculine side out of anger or any other emotion. Leave abuse in the past.

***Be prepared, if possible.** Carry a small bag with items of interest to your fellow alters: a tiny fragrance packet for Jenny, a cigar for Mike. Consideration and kindness are keys to getting along well.

***Take turns.** My therapist taught me to have the core personality check-in hourly to see who was out. This can be altered, (no pun intended,) to suit individual/multiple needs. Even logging who's out can help so that fairness can be displayed to all.

***Be safe.** Allow a healthy alter to choose, especially if the core is temporarily out, who should be out if safety is in question. For example, it may not be wise to let a young, female alter (who is less experienced street-wise) walk home alone late at night from the neighbors'. Male parts tend to walk more briskly, determindly intent upon their destination.

***Take care of the body.** All parts need to watch out for junk food, body piercing, tattooing, etc. and do what's best for the body as a whole. No one alter or group gets to hurt the body at all. Any evidence of such, as well as overindulgence in substances going into the body, signals a need for help. All of us need it sometimes, so there's no shame in seeking help. I've read books for help on nutrition, and made calls to Overeaters Anonymous for tips on how to quit binging. Not only therapists can help!

Remember, we're each unique and there is nothing wrong with that. When we take the fear out of dealing with male and female alters, we can actually have fun in the process of living. Who else has such good 'friends' to share things with and spend time with? When we learn to love ourselves, we'll lead much happier, healthier lives.

By Diana Barnum

MV



Therapists' Page

By Jill W. Bley, Ph.D.

Jill W. Bley, Ph.D. is a member of ISSD. She has specialized in sex therapy since 1982, and was a founder of Women Helping Women Rape Crisis Center in Cincinnati. Dr. Bley is also the author of a syndicated column entitled, "*Speaking of Sex*." Her private practice is based in Cincinnati.

In 1972, myself and a few other women decided that Cincinnati needed a counseling service that would respond to the needs of women. We were students at the University of Cincinnati who were full of energy, enthusiasm and hope. We were able to get space and support from United Christian Ministries and we set up a counseling/advocacy center called Women Helping Women.

We dealt with many problems related to women's issues. The most pressing, difficult and disturbing were the women who called to ask for help with sexual abuse problems. We had to seek out training for ourselves about this issue. The training that we were able to find dealt primarily with the legal problems related to rape. There were no college or graduate-level courses that addressed the psychological aftermath of sexual abuse.

Therefore, we began to counsel and advocate for victims with very little training or understanding of the profound effects that sexual abuse had on the women we were trying to help. After a while I realized that I needed to learn about human sexuality—what was "normal" sexual development and what was not "normal"—so that I could be of more help to those women who were brave enough to talk to me about how they were dealing with their sexuality after being victimized sexually.

Developing this double area of expertise (I am a clinical psychologist specializing in sexual abuse therapy and certified as a sex therapist) led me, about twelve years ago, to seek training in the area of traumatology and become certified by the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress.

Mental health professionals are only recently beginning to understand the psychological consequences of severe

trauma on the mind, body, spirit and soul of the victim/survivor. In fact, the diagnosis of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is a very recent diagnosis. It has replaced MPD because it is so much more descriptive of what happens to the brain when severe trauma occurs. DID also allows us to think about the disorder on a continuum from a single episode of trauma during which the person dissociates for awhile and then "re-associates" rather quickly, to multiple episodes of ritual abuse during which the person dissociates, encapsulates the memory of the abuse (and similar episodes) into a separate part that remains more or less separated and, perhaps, not remembered by the "core" individual, ever.

As survivors have always known and mental health professionals are only beginning to understand, the part of their lives that is most important is also the most troubled, i.e., the need to relate to another human being in a truly intimate, meaningful and deep connection. Most survivors find it extremely difficult to be loving and sexual at the same time. It is usually possible to be loving but not sexual, or sexual but not loving, which leads to making bad choices when choosing partners, avoiding sex in committed relationships, using others sexually, obsessive/compulsive sexual behaviors, etc...

There are a number of things that individual survivors can do to aid in their recovery. The most important is to **become co-conscious and develop internal communication** with all of the dissociated parts. This is a difficult and, sometimes, frightening task, but it is the single most important work that you need to do in order to gain control over the internal chaos

that can occur when you are trying to be in a relationship.

The next step is to learn **containment** techniques. Sometimes, containment means placing feelings, sensations and emotions in a secure, safe place and leaving them there while you interact with your partner, promising to revisit those feelings, sensations and emotions when the partner is not present...doing so by taking one feeling or sensation or emotion at a time and allowing yourself to experience it safely and calmly. We call that **titrating**. If there is a feeling, sensation or emotion that you cannot allow yourself to have because you know it will be overwhelming, you need to leave it in the container until you have the strength and/or the support to deal with it.

Containment can also mean to put certain dissociated parts in a safe, comfortable but very secure room inside, that they are not able to leave, telling them that you intend to enjoy being with your partner in a way that is not appropriate for them to be present for. This is especially helpful for child parts, who are, of course, afraid of repeated abuse and who (usually) are very happy to be excluded from these encounters (unless they feel that it is their job to make sure you don't ever allow anyone to come close to you).

This kind of containment method can be very helpful when preparing to go for a gynecological exam. Leaving child parts and any other parts that fear the exam at home in a safe place can enable you to experience the exam and participate in your health care.

Containment is not difficult to learn, if you are tenacious and committed to doing it. Containment techniques merely require that you use the skills that you developed while being abused

to help you, just as you did then. Creating a safe, internal space, such as a room, a beautiful garden with very high fences, a submarine that swims under the ocean enjoying the beauty of that world, an airplane that soars above the earth enjoying the beauty of the sky, etc., is nothing more than dissociating those parts once again. This time, however, you are consciously willing where they will go and what they will experience, while they are gone.

At first, dissociated parts may struggle against being sent away. However, once they learn that you are safe and able to handle yourself without them and that they feel calmer than they ever have felt in these safe places, it will become easier to do. Sometimes a part is too young and/or too scared to allow you to put them in the "container." In that case, it is helpful to use your wonderful skill of being able to dissociate to create a "nanny" or care-taker for that part, who will go into the safe space with them and nurture them in whatever way works (excluding abuse) to help them feel secure and calm.

Another technique that may work for you is to encourage an older, trusted part to take care of the younger, frightened part. This is a little risky because one doesn't always know for sure that the older part will be able to stay centered enough to help.

When helping a person to learn containment techniques, therapists stress the importance of respecting each part's fears, strengths, and weaknesses. Honoring parts that feel a need to be mean and aggressive. Helping them to see that you appreciate that they were able to protect you when you were little, and even when you were big but making bad choices. However, letting them know that they are experiencing a 'time warp'. Reminding them that the past is over, that you are no longer in danger and that if you are, you can handle it. They need to hear over and over again that the abuse happened ten, twenty, eight, two (however many) years ago. They need to hear that this is the year 2000, that you are (however many) years old now, that the abusers are no longer a threat to them or you.

Another way to enable your parts to deal with sexual things is to call a meeting of all the parts and talk with them about your plans. This technique requires that you establish yourself as the "chairperson" and that you create a meeting room inside. Then call all of the parts together into the meeting room. Tell them that you are planning to go to a gynecologist, make love, go out on an intimate date, etc. Describe to them what you intend to do to make sure you are safe, such as, "I am going to meet this person in a safe, public place. We are going to go to a restaurant and I will spend a lot of time getting to know the person. I will leave if I do not feel safe," or "I will tell the doctor that I must be in control of the exam. If at anytime I need to stop or go slower I will tell you and I require that you do as I say. If you cannot respect these limits tell me now so that I can find another doctor who can do this. I will leave the doctor's office if I begin to feel unsafe or disrespected."

If your plan is to be sexual with someone, tell the very young parts that you want them to know that you plan to have an encounter with someone that is something that they, unfortunately, have experienced as abuse. Therefore, since they are too young to understand, and since it is not appropriate for young children to be present for this, you need for them to leave the meeting room and go to a very safe, beautiful nursery that has everything in it that a little one could ever dream of having, to make them feel safe and secure. Make sure that they are there (perhaps with a "nanny"). Then tell the older parts that your plan is to be sexual with your partner and that you need to do this alone. Ask them to agree to stay away. Allow them to ask questions about what may happen to you and/or to them. Answer as honestly as possible. Problem-solve with them if they anticipate that they will become upset. Then tell them that you need their word that they will stay away. They may go to play, go to sleep, go to a room or into some other "container." Then help each one go to their place of choice.

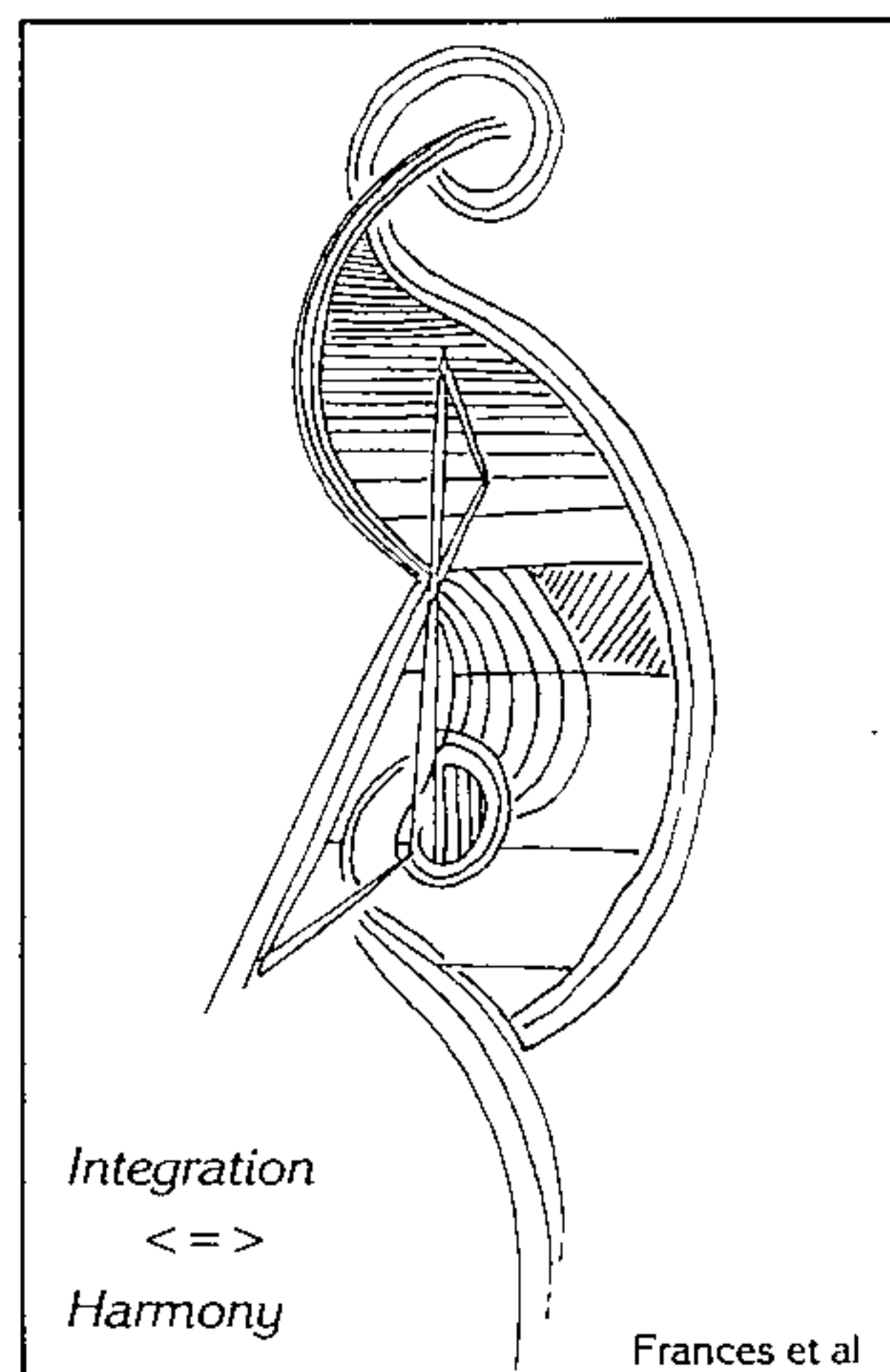
This all sounds like a lot of work. It is, at first. But after you become skilled at doing this, it will happen very

quickly, especially if you practice helping them communicate with each other and with you. Help them help each other so that you are free to enjoy more aspects of your life. Never make promises to them that you cannot keep. Be consistent, do not tolerate abuse toward you, toward them, or between them. Help them to become united in the goal of self-protection and establishing loving relationships.

Therapists should have the ultimate goal of educating the client about the diagnosis and treatment and involving the client in decisions about what to do and what the end goal will be. One of the most important advances in the treatment of trauma-related disorders is the work of people such as Bessel A. van der Kolk, M.D., who study and write about trauma's impact on neurological systems, the degree to which memories of trauma seem to be experienced as body sensations that may have little or no verbal representation, and therapy techniques that address the mind/body connection and desensitize the traumatic memories, e.g., Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), "micro-tracking," movement therapies, etc.

The research and therapy with DID is new, expanding, challenging, exciting, exhausting, tedious, and hopeful!

MV



Partner's Page

My Wife And The Guys

By Richard

"Vrrrooom, vrrrooom!
Screeeech. Ka-BOOM!!"

Daniel was having a blast. We had toys and blocks scattered all over the carpet, and he was stacking them up and plowing them down with a toy bulldozer. It's not unusual to see an eight-year-old boy merrily wreaking havoc, but it's disconcerting when he wears the body of a pretty woman in her thirties.

At that time, my wife (then my fiancée) was a poly-fragmented multiple with more than 300 personalities. I wasn't surprised to learn that a few of them were male, but it still took some getting used to.

More than anything, playing with my fiancée's child alters, and watching the changes that swept over her when they were fully out, convinced me that her multiplicity is real. There could be no doubt Daniel was 100 percent little boy, radically different from my fiancée. I knew that intellectually, but a toy called "Snot" drove the fact home.

Yeech!

Snot was a novelty item my fiancée bought in a toy store when Daniel's silent presence began jumping around inside her hollering "I want dat! I want dat!"

"But you have to play with him," my fiancée told me emphatically. "I'm not gonna touch that stuff."

Can't say I blame her. Snot was a translucent blob of soft green plastic about the size of a golf ball. It was tacky and clung to anything it touched, just like a big glob of... well, snot. Just the kind of disgusting thing little boys love.

So Daniel and I took the Snot into the bathroom and he had a great time rolling the gunk in his hands, throwing it against the tiles, and watching it crawl stickily to the floor. (Okay, so I

enjoyed it, too!) And less than five minutes before, this same woman shuddered visibly just looking at the stuff, and refused to touch it.

The male experience

But it wasn't all fun and games with Daniel. Every support person needs to know that opposite sex alters are lost people, trapped in an alien body. Most of my fiancée's alters were female, and so was her therapist. Her male alters had no knowledge of what it's like to be male.

For example, Matt was a healthy, virile 16-year-old boy trapped in my fiancée's body. At the time she had an almost-hourglass figure with rounded hips, a small waist, and full B-cup breasts. Her big blue eyes were set in a delicate heart-shaped face framed by shoulder-length brown hair. It was eerie to watch Matt take over the body. Her eyes became more direct, losing the demureness most women have in our culture. Her gestures grew larger and stronger. She stood straighter, walked with a longer stride, and her feet came down more solidly, as if she were suddenly several inches taller and about 25 pounds heavier. Her voice deepened as far as her larynx would allow. She squared her jaw, and even her breasts seemed to flatten slightly.

But there are limits to what a multiple's body can do. There were things Matt simply could not know, so I became his touchstone for the male experience. I told him how it feels to stride up stairs two at a time, and to go through a revolving door with an easy push instead of an umph! He was especially curious about having a penis. I described graphically for Matt how an erection feels, what it's like to be engulfed instead of penetrated during sex, and how it feels to have an orgasm that rushes outward instead of exploding inward.

Daniel had a similar problem — the female alters wouldn't let him pee standing up. It frustrated the little guy no end and finally, in desperation, my fiancée sent him to me.

"But I got all the right parts," he complained. I explained, as simply as I could, that although he saw himself with male equipment, the body did not have it. I patiently explained it over and over until he finally understood, to the sincere relief and appreciation of my fiancée and her female alters.

"Daniel really trusted you and looked up to you," my wife told me as we worked on this article. "You were a good Dad figure, the first he ever experienced."

Their needs

Aside from giving my fiancée's opposite sex alters the male perspective they could not know, dealing with them was mostly a matter of welcoming them and finding out what they needed — no different from any other alters.

Matt loved art. One year my fiancée bought him a huge Doodle-Art poster, so I gave him a large set of colored markers that Christmas. She kept the poster on her dining room table and Matt worked on it for about six months whenever my fiancée was on the phone. It is framed and hangs in our home, a reminder of Matt now that he has integrated.

For Daniel, we bought him several guy-toys besides the Snot and the husky wooden bulldozer. He and I made a delightful mess one day finger-painting, drawing, and playing with Play-Doh. I framed a couple of his drawings and finger-paintings and they hang on my side of the bed, also as a reminder of Daniel.

Boundaries

But there can also be problems with opposite sex alters. Steve, a gay male

alter, propositioned me. He had been in the close background several times when my fiancée and I made love, and he wanted to come out fully and experience sex with a man (something he could never do, thanks to my fiancée's commitment to monogamy, bless her).

Which gave me a strange dilemma — Is making love to a man who wears a woman's body still a homosexual act? Is he still even really gay?

First, I'm 100 percent heterosexual, with no interest whatever in making love to a man. Second, my imagination is vivid enough to visualize my wife's alters clearly. (To this day, when I remember playing with Daniel, it is his image I see, not my wife's physical presence.) So I finally told Steve that I'm not comfortable with gay sex in any form.

"You left Steve's dignity intact," my wife said. "He respected that. After you let him know how you felt, he was never again there when we made love."

Ground rules

Basically, I've learned that you deal with your partner's opposite sex alters by much the same rules that apply to any alters.

I Accept them. Realize that he or she likely will have opposite sex alters, and emotionally brace yourself for their appearance.

I Respect them. They exist for a purpose and played a part in your partner surviving childhood sexual abuse.

I Find out what they need and help them get it.

I Set reasonable boundaries when necessary.

The only thing different (in my experience) is that you may have to delve into yourself to teach your partner's opposite sex alters what it's like to be a person of your gender. And that can be a fascinating learning experience, both for them and for you.

MV

Integration Discussed

By Amena

I could not imagine what 'recovered' would look like. For six years, I struggled on a daily basis with my "stuff." I worked hard in therapy at understanding my inner world...

As part of my process, all alters had their own say as to whether or not they would want to integrate, whatever that meant to each of them. Believe me, there was a lot of fear and arguing. I, Amena, had no say. I was not in the driver's seat. My role was to trust and bear witness. It took patience, perseverance, courage, dogged determination, lots of humor and trust, to get where I am now.

I suppose you could call my story "132 to 1." All alters integrated with the body on an energy level, first. Each integration or group integration was unique. What has been consistent is that they all "stuck." After the final, spontaneous integration of the most active group of alters, I had to figure out how to get into my own body. Only at that point did I realize that I had never functioned by myself. That is to say, I always had at least one alter "riding shotgun" when I thought only "I" was "out."

For the first six months after the last joining together, I was a complete basket case. It was awful! I thought I had traded one type of hell for another. And there was no going back. Again, with dogged determination, patience, and humor, I slowly learned what it was like to live "alone." It was so quiet! I grieved the loss of my dear close family. I especially missed the wee ones. And Todd, my God—how would I do this without Todd?

I had to spend lots and lots of sessions and phone calls with my therapist trying to learn how to relate to the world out there. I was scared out of my wits. I felt like the infant I had been. I needed to learn everything, right down to how to sip a drink from a cup. I'm serious. None of this had I ever done on my own. This went on for six months. I crash landed into a life (my life) already filled with expectations and schedules and a husband!

Over time, I slowly became more sure of myself. I learned quickly. I had to. I was 37 years old and I didn't know squat. I also started appreciating the quiet in my head. I had my own thoughts for the first time. I didn't have to share my husband with anyone else for the first time. I could make all choices by myself. What freedom! And "time" started to make more sense. I seemed to have lots more of it. It didn't disappear like before. My life just started to make more sense to me. The constant terror and anxiety that went along with

being split disappeared. And thankfully, so did the triggers. That was the best part—that which triggered me had lost its effect completely. It's a non-issue.

I've come to know the concepts of "peace of mind" and "relaxation." These were never part of my living. Now they are constants, on one level or another. And I know they are here to stay.

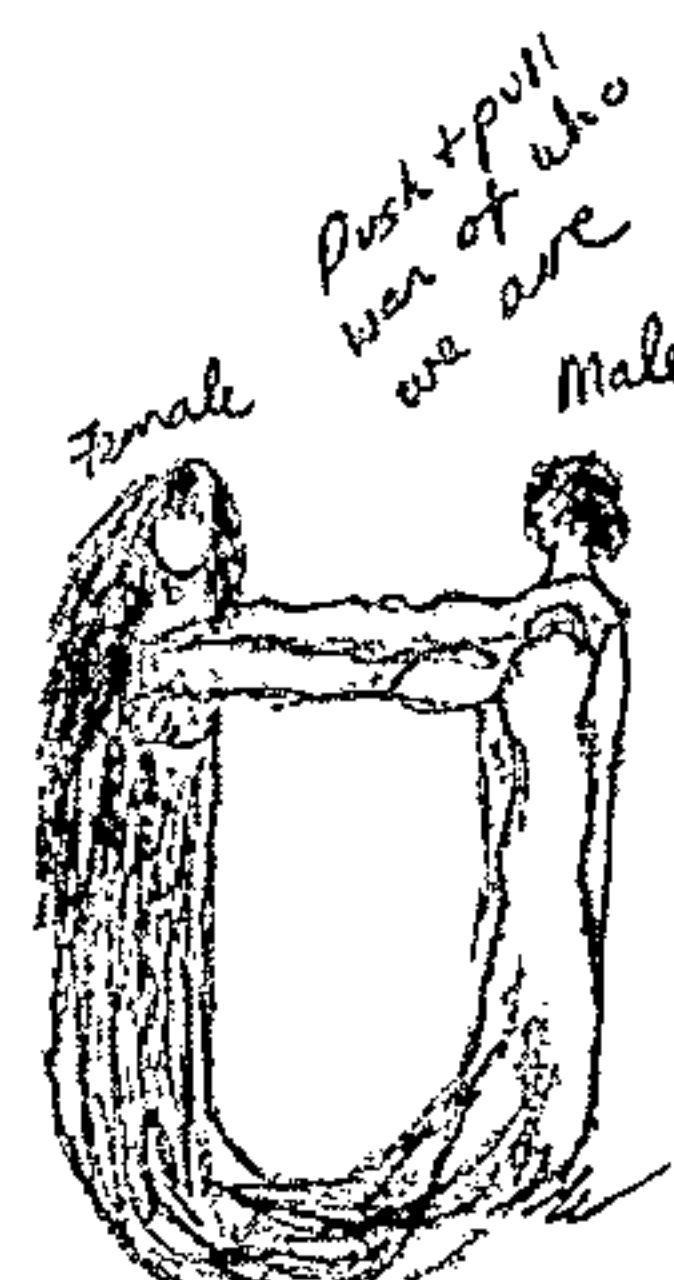
Granted, I have my share of daily hassles—the phone company screws up the bill again, or something doesn't arrive in the mail when I need it. Everyone has to put up with that kind of stuff. The good news is that it's just plain old easier to deal with. The difference, I guess, is that I'm dealing with today stuff. All by itself. No longer is "the past" a hitchhiker interfering with my life.

For me, being "better" is being "integrated." It may not work for everyone. I can only share what my experience has been. I never thought it would actually happen. It had not been a goal of mine/ours. All I had wanted was for the screaming to stop, for some level of comfort, to be able to sleep all night, and not to be so damn afraid of everything. All this was possible for me/we—through cooperation and patience.

I still go to therapy if only to deal with the normal hassles of "singleton-ness." I see that winding down as I look to my future as a professional care provider. Every now and then, there is what I call "mop up" work to be done on old issues. Even the way I process that is different. It's easier and I'm much more grounded as I work through the issue.

My days are filled with experiencing the now. I'm planning ahead, not looking back. I've lost none of the essence of any of the alters. All creativity is still within me. Also all responsibility for my living. No one "died." We're just one. And I like it. A lot.

MV



By
Windy

Bi-Gendered

By Jerry, Ellen & All

It is my understanding that people with what the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM IV) labels Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) or what used to be called Multiple Personality Disorder, almost always have "alters" of a gender opposite to their birth/anatomical sex/gender. From what I've read in the literature, these opposite sex alters usually do not cause any problem, as they are most often peripheral, and stay that way. There is usually one lead alter, and that is congruent with the birth sex, however the others line up behind.

In my case, for whatever the variety of reasons, I seem to have two "lead" alters...one is female which is consistent with my biological sex, and the other is male. I grew up in an extremely dysfunctional and abusive patriarchal family system, where my father was a fundamentalist minister to the outside world, and a raging abuser at home. He wanted a boy when I was born, and frequently referred to me as his boy. My mother, who retreated into illness and hid behind a closed bedroom door to escape her children and abusive spouse, wanted another daughter. So, very early on I was caught in the double bind of trying to be my mother's daughter and my father's son. For a people pleaser, this was quite a juggling act!

Things got really bad when I was pregnant for the third time. This was out of wedlock, and in fact the guy was already married to someone else—though he had told me he was divorced. The bottom line is that all the men I knew (starting with my father) had personal power, while women had no power. Anyway, during my pregnancy, my female lover bought me Christine Jorgensen's (transsexual) autobiography. I identified with it so much that I decided I would change my sex after my baby was born, which I did. This was in 1969 and there was no real established standard of care in place, and if you found the right doctor, and had the necessary

money—cash in advance—you could get whatever you wanted. In my case, I wanted my breasts removed, and this was done when my son was three months old and I was still nursing him! I also began to take male hormones, which quite soon produced facial and body hair. I had my ID changed, including taking a 'male' name through the court system, and thought I was on my way to a happier, new life.

As is so often true, fantasy and reality are worlds apart, and I soon found out that 'being' a man took a lot more than having my breasts removed and growing a beard! I had the life experiences of a girl, how-be-it a "tom-boy," and of a woman, as a very stylish alter who enjoyed being a woman. I had retreated into the fantasy of being Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn as a child, and from puberty I had been bisexual in my feelings and attractions to both guys and gals. My older sister had seduced me when I was 12 and she was 17, and that scenario played out over and over in my relationships with women over the years.

Changing my appearance so dramatically, so quickly, and with no psychological preparation, left me feeling adrift with absolutely no anchor. My father was delighted that he finally had his son, my mother was horrified, and my poor children were confused enormously! My guilt that I had killed my children's mother propelled me back to trying to present as a woman again after two years of trying to "be" a man. At that point I was trying to get sober in a 12-step program. I had been drinking alcoholically since age 17, when my internal conflict would have killed me without the booze, (which later turned on me and nearly killed me anyway).

For the last 30 years, which is half my lifetime, I have alternated between presenting myself as a man, or a woman who has to shave and who has no breasts or internal female organs.

My motto was, "If you're going to do it...do it right!" My thought processes also were highly polarized, rigidly "either/or." I had a wardrobe as dual as my two lead alters, and at one point I alternated between the two roles (male/female) during the course of a single day! I needed to somehow be both in order to be all of who I was, but either way I was only half of myself, and it just never worked except to keep chaos and confusion in my life and the lives of my family.

Ten years ago, following the death of my 18-year-old son, I went back to school. I finished Bachelor's degree in Social Work and a Masters of Arts in Psychology. I am just a few classes and my dissertation away from my Doctorate in Psychology. As part of my academic process I have learned a lot about myself and my internal "system," and that information has been helpful in identifying what is going on. However, trying to figure a way to live with all that has gone on with the back and forth switching has been another story! The media got hold of my story in 1982, and the *National Enquirer* called me the "Sex Change Champ" in its Jan. 17, 1992 story. No one understood at that time that I had a Dissociative Identity Disorder, and that my dual gender presentation was a symptom of D.I.D. and not true "transsexualism" as I had been misdiagnosed for so long.

Today I realize that gender-blending is what will best work for me, and I need to return to my home base of being a woman—but not a 'traditional' one with limited options and no power! I guess if I had waited for women's liberation, or been able to identify with it, I'd have saved myself and my children 30 years of confusion and chaos. But because of the complexity of my internal systems—one male, the other female—I couldn't identify enough with either one to really live in the rigid stereotypical roles I held myself to, roles which were sternly enforced in my family of origin.

I've spent a lot of the last 28 years in therapy of one kind or another, but only recently have I been fortunate enough to find a therapist who is helping me with what is most likely the underlying foundation to all my splits, and that is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I've also had a lot of my beard removed over the years using various methods, including electrolysis, "zipping"...a form of waxing using a special formula for permanence, and more recently, laser hair removal. I have a rather significant receding hair line from the years of male hormones, and a significant "paunch" from years of overeating! The overall picture is not a pretty one, and my principal female alter "Susan Lee" can't stand to look at what "Jerry" has done to her and all the "girls," and she is very angry with him for mutilating HER body, how-be-it with assistance from several misguided surgeons!

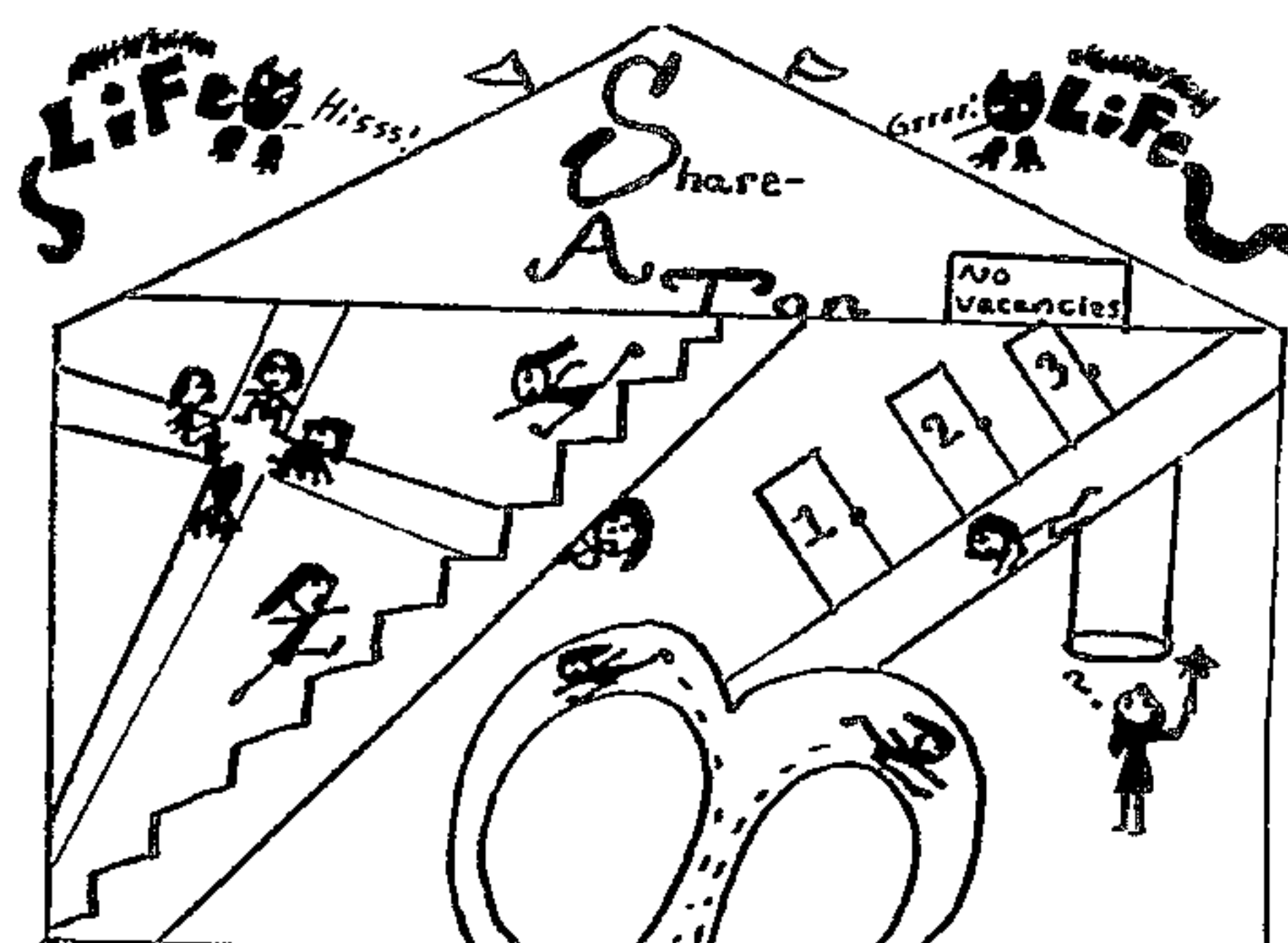
Money is scarce and I owe a fortune in student loans for the last ten years of going from one academic level to the next. My physical health deteriorated so much a number of years ago that I have been receiving disability from Social Security and am not together enough internally to be functional in any work place. I don't know what the future holds for me, and I guess I won't have a future until I'm able to leave the victim/survival mode which has been operant all my life, regardless of which gender role I've been presenting to the world at any given moment in time.

So much of what I needed help with was really non-gender-specific, and pertained to me as a person. It got very

complicated when I created so many personae to attempt to cope with life instead of working with the core person and helping her grow up through the missed developmental tasks in a safe, nurturing environment. Most likely I'd have needed long term hospitalization in a program specifically for dissociative disorders. Maybe that is still what I need, but I don't have the money or the insurance to cover it, so I continue piecemeal as I have done all my life, trying to "fix" myself as best I could figure out at any given time.

My doctoral dissertation is about Gender's Dueling Duo: or the plight of a bi-gendered person. Maybe there are others out there who have gone to the extremes which I have, and survived to tell about it! And, I'm sure there are less extreme cases, with no less intense dual feelings, just less acting-out behavior in terms of hormones and surgeries. This is something which needs to be added to the available literature to help others work with a seemingly hopeless state of being caught between a rock and a hard place! Blending these two seeming opposites into a more androgynous state is most likely the answer, and my guess is that integration works much better within the framework of one's birth sex. Integration, not separation, is really the goal, and people in the helping professions need to know about this so they can help us.

MV



Inside Building to the Alters

Safe Mating

Personally, I think that before you "find" or look for any kind of love-bond relationship, you need to sit down with your others and discuss what you want in a mate. If you all fight over it—or as some do, one person inside loves the opposite sex, another the same sex—each may find their own mate and confuse the hell out of all the system. It can be dangerous, too, with STDs (sexually transmitted diseases).

You need to decide that you will not let this new relationship be perpetually abusive from one mate to the next. To allow yourself to be abused because you are afraid to be alone is often thought out like: "Who would want me? I'm 'crazy.' I'd better stay with my mate."

You need to do some serious work in therapy if you have that kind of relationship. That is self-abuse, my therapists (past and present) have told me. So I trust and respect them.

Once you have found your mate, and you are happy with each other, don't crash when the head rush is over. Have substance to your relationship.

I didn't, before therapy, and ended up with both of us hating each other. I've learned a lot, and feel good in my new relationship.

Talk to your therapist. Maybe invite your mate to go to therapy with you to better understand what you do and what it is like to be with a therapist. (I have a firm belief that therapists are actually teachers, who teach how to be free of trauma and pain.)

I know how hard it is to see people clearly because of fog and blackouts, or co-conscious eyes...all with conflicting responses. That's why it's good to do some therapy with the situations and get needed feedback for safety's sake.

Do a reality thing. Because so much of our worlds are inside, and info from outside can often be suspected because of the past, present and confusion...talk to your mate. They might want to talk to you, having no idea how...because you are many-minded and they are singular minded. So ask them. Give them room, dialogue, give and take, 50/50%, respect, honor, love, comfort, peace.

By Stacy J.

MV

Comment on Fibromyalgia

By Bonnie for the Constellation

As a person with Fibromyalgia, (FM), and a Fibromyalgia support group facilitator, I am compelled to respond to 'Curing' *Chronic Fatigue/Fibromyalgia* (MV, Oct. '99). I am happy that SuzyQ has gotten relief from her symptoms, or as she wrote, "I do not have fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue and no one can prove it if they try!"

My knee-jerk reaction was that Suzy not only believes she doesn't have it, she believes no one else either does, or should. If her intent was merely to offer a perspective that helped her, I have no objections. However, many people with DD's suffer with FM. If we have not had the success Suzy has, I don't believe we should feel we have elected to "surrender to a half-life." Those words imply a victim stance. Most of us who subscribe to MV have already proven ourselves to be survivors, and creative ones at that!

While there is not a simple blood test that will "prove" the existence of FM, there is growing concrete evidence at the research level. SPECT scans indicate differences in oxygenation of critical areas of the brain. We know there are deficiencies in neurotransmitters like serotonin and abnormally high amounts of Substance P in our spinal fluid (a hormone that indicates chronic, elevated pain levels). Even newer discoveries using EEG's to monitor brain activity in specific areas and Surface EMG to monitor muscle activity, provide concrete, visual evidence of abnormalities specific to people suffering from FM. Sleep studies confirm the near absence of Stage IV (deep, restorative) sleep.

Once school of thought hypothesizes that certain people are born with a predisposition to FM/CFS. If such a person has a major trauma, e.g., auto accident, the trauma triggers this syndrome of symptoms which persists as its own system long after the original injury has healed. (Does this response to injury sound familiar

to anyone?) Chronic pain creates its own feedback loop. The hypervigilant nervous system we use(d) to monitor danger in our environment and the chronic stress that imposes on our central nervous systems, may well be the trigger that set our predisposition to this syndrome in motion.

Does this mean we "surrender"? Absolutely not! It is interesting that the very things SuzyQ did to restore her function and productivity are the very recommendations of most professionals and books on the subject. St. John's Wort modifies neurotransmitters, similar to the action of the antidepressants her doctor suggested. She also "began making myself walk and exercise more often, continued to improve [eating habits]...did my best to relax and not get too bent out of shape when the pains started to come up." It seems to me these steps correspond not only to her own doctor's recommendations, but to those advocated to FM sufferers across the board. In fact, it seems SuzyQ also employed another powerful tool, whether she realized it or not, in applying certain tenets of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT has been shown to be quite helpful for many FM patients. An example of CBT is to act "as if," like going to a party when depressed and acting "as if" you thought yourself the Belle of the Ball. In her case, Suzy conducted life very much "as if" she did not have an illness. Another example of CBT would be to change the statement "I can't get out of bed because I ache" to "I ache and I am getting out of bed anyway." In these examples, feelings, even if valid, don't necessarily dictate or limit behavior.

I applaud Suzy for her proactive, creative response. I admire the way she knew and advocated for herself and her rights, e.g., to take St. John's Wort instead of Prozac which made her feel 'plastic.' I thank her for sharing her approach to living, (vs surrendering or merely existing), after

receiving this diagnosis. Yet, I worry that some readers might have felt invalidated, bewildered and/or defeated. FM has as many manifestations as DD. Some people are severely affected, others less so. Some people were diagnosed promptly, others suffered the added problems that develop from misdiagnosis and improper treatment. On the healing side of it, we also have different types and sizes of safety nets and support systems, from money to family to health care professionals.

All these factor into how FM impacts us, just as they do with our DD. These variables also help to determine the course of our healing. But even with diseases that are more accepted and better understood, like cancer, applying the same course of action may have completely different outcomes. When you add the difficulties of different alters being capable of having different physical experiences, the idea of having total control over one's FM gets tricky.

The exact words Suzy used did sound like she was using "denial." I believe there is danger in denying FM entirely. Most of the people I have observed in my years leading a support group who try to deny their FM, push themselves in their same old patterns of behavior. This just adds stress and exacerbates the symptoms, often ending in a total "crash." Ironically, I don't think Suzy did deny. In this situation, denial is doing more of the same. Please note that Suzy responded with constructive behavioral changes to the symptoms that took her to the doctor in the first place.

There is room to "accept" the diagnosis, without agreeing to any particular consequences. I would recommend, and have had some success myself, following Suzy's example of "response-ability." Create your own path to healing, remembering that we can heal long before the "cure."

Fragments of the Whole*

By Frances et al

(Editor's note: this writing has been shortened for space reasons. It shows the variety of roles played by different gender-identities that may form in DID.)

The young woman knew she needed desperately, but knowledge or understanding of what she needed eluded her. She could give names to the hurt places inside. Likewise, she could give names to the fears. These hurts and fears seemed to be forever with her.

It took much longer to put names to those who were the keepers of the hurts and fears. The names were already in the timelessness of her soul. She just hadn't become acquainted with them yet.

And ever so slowly, the names of the keeper selves emerged. Mark, the keeper of melancholy, pensiveness, and existential plight hears Sara(4)'s feelings and her silent screams. He holds her pain.

Mark's pain, sometimes known as anguish, is kept by Devon in a corner of the universe on the little prince's planet which brushes against timeless. Timeless helps relieve some of Mark's anguish and the lesser anguish becomes despair. When despair cries timeless tears, it lessens to despondent grief, which can be cheered by sadness, until all that is left is wistful pensiveness.

Pensiveness doesn't hurt. Rather it leads to a curiosity of how "things" (mostly internal things) work. These questions lead to new realizations of other selves and to a sharing of their identities and purposes.

As the young woman searched deeper inside her soul system, she met a young soldier sitting on a flat boulder. He leaned his back against a stone cliff that framed the beach. His gun was propped up at his side. His eyes were closed and his face was uplifted in prayer. His curls were damp from the sea mist that hung in the air.

This soldier, Michael, is Mark's twin. Whereas Mark is the keeper of despair, Michael is the keeper of anger. Michael's anger is an empowering rage that enables him to keep the young woman and everyone in her soul system from internal and external harm.

The young woman sat quietly with Michael, aware that he is one of her greatest guardian protectors. They sat on the beach and watched the sunset. She knew she did not have to fear the dark with Michael on duty, and she would be able to rest fully and sleep the entire night without the night terrors bothering her.

Without the night terrors, Amy, keeper of paralyzing "don't you dare even breathe" stillness and intense "afraid to be heard" quiet, was able to say "hello" in a very small

voice. Billy, the keeper of joy and the delight of life, heard her. With the help of Billy, Amy was able to go to the tree house and start to learn to play with the other little ones.

Many of the little ones, almost all of them, didn't know how to play. Billy has taught them to play and continues to share his toys and tree house with them.

At the top of the cliff which Michael guards is a castle whose towers reach up through the clouds and touch the sky. Behind the castle are vast mountains with high rocky peaks. Devon resides in the expanse between castle and mountains and timeless lies beyond. Towering above both castle and mountains stands Ishmael, enveloped in Devon's light.

Ishmael—keeper of the truth; keeper of dreams; keeper of magic schemes whose magic dust whisks away the night-time yucks and replaces them with comforting altered-state dreams.

Ishmael (father of twelve nations) created alternate selves at the young woman alter's request. When the night time terror was too much to bear, Ishmael made it 'not be there.'

Ishmael, father of twelve nations, keeper of the truth, holds the light of knowledge which he doles out sparingly. He is a gentle spirited wizard who remembers that which he helped others to forget. Only when the time has come to remember, when the young woman is ready, will that forgotten knowledge be illuminated into consciousness.

The young woman has a small child inside named Bartholomew who loves his mommy with the undying loyalty and passion of a five-year-old.

This undying loyalty often gets the young woman and her system in trouble.

What Bart wants is a good mommy to take care of him. Instead he hooks up with external mother and gets squashed as his five-year-old needs are ground under her heavy hands and bulging eyes.

Right now Bart is learning to let Myra hold him and heal his hurts—especially the heartache associated with needing mommy.

Myra is an angel with healing powers, and she needs only to place her hands on the hurt places and they calm and do not feel so intense.

Myra comforts many of the little ones when they're in pain. She holds Amanda (2) who has a pink balloon Larry gave her. Myra is holding Bartholomew as he cries

for his mommy. Myra holds Bart, gently soothing his distress. Bart was isolated from all of the other children, but lately, he, Amy and Sara have begun to talk and share information about good mommy: bad mommy. Hopefully it will lead to the creation of a grey mommy....

Recently the young woman remarked that a new acquaintance "plays a lot of games." Her mentor said, "Maybe she doesn't know she's playing games." The young woman pondered over this statement for many days and nights, thinking about similar games she had played and about how she didn't recognize their 'gaminess' at that time, either. They had seemed necessary for survival.

As the young woman thought about her own game playing and the game playing of others, she realized that the games come forth through a desperation and despair that is felt when the soul isn't yet discovered, and is still mistakenly experienced as a vast void ready to swallow up the very essence of her being.

When one can explore inside her soul and accept its facets, unlimited possibilities spring forth. Skylights open and let the starlight and moon dust shower their magic, and energize the ancient ones, who in turn comfort with calmness and peace beyond soulweary comprehension.

The agelessness of timeless stores up star and moon energy and disperses it among all the inner selves as they are willing to slow down and accept it, so they too can glow from a light within.

MV

The Look

Look me in the face
Look me in the soul
If you are afraid—
Turn around.
I will not let you see what you can't.
But, if you take the step
toward me
Our realities will change—
Then, I can look YOU in the face
I can look into YOUR soul.
And finally, the depths will erupt
The truth will return
The bridge will be repaired
And many more can go on.

By Jalanda

MV

I've been recently unable to continue in a relationship with one of the few men I've ever loved (who I believe was healthy...at least, the healthiest I've experienced...and who loved me deeply) I still love him, but became too terrified. I am working on just me until April, 2000. I decided and pray that if it's God's will, we may be together in the future. Maybe others will relate to this piece, which a part of me wrote in a moment of deep emotions.

Soul Connection

To love so deeply, so purely; two souls connected. Time stops, blissful eternity—so warm, so true, so safe. Each touch so gentle; eyes reaching beyond, mesmerized by each others' souls. Thoughts unspoken, dreams made; feelings over-flowing too deep for words. All expressed in just a gaze, a touch. Two eyes knowing, penetrating. Love like never before. So awesome, so indescribable. Each soul speaking words unheard—time passes—yet doesn't exist.

I know you, I really know you. I recognize you—I love you—you're my soulmate. You've reached through the depths of me. Your goodness has found mine, and it is a sacred place no one may share. It is our space, and no one will ever know it. The place we go in each others' embrace—the depths of tenderness, love, and knowing—bliss we experience in each others' eyes.

It seems I've gone back in time—back to God's love before the world made me forget. Where my body became separate and my spirit became ruled by my ego. Where time exists, and people and sin and hate prevail. Yet all along and for a moment I knew...God is love and I am love and you are love and love is eternal and I experienced that blissful knowing with and through you. The center of me reached the center of you. Where no ego, no fear, no games exist. Just purity, love, truth, bliss.

We experienced that world, and that I'll always treasure. I pray I may again live that knowing, where for a time it all made sense. All was safe, and there was no such thing as fear. That world of freedom before the insanity of the mind began to take its toll.

Each touch so special, so meaningful—so necessary. What if it stops? What was once so beautiful is now so terrifying. What if he goes away? That look, that embrace, that kiss. What if he strays? Where does unconditional become conditional? When do you start counting what you

can give by how much you get—gotta keep track, keep score, be safe, hold back.

The point where your heart cries out: I'll do anything...you begin doing nothing. The moment your hands not tire of touching his body, you go paralyzed when he's in your body. The moment your heart feels terror at a night apart, you take a week apart. The moment you vision him in your future, an actual glimpse of you two in your future, hope and terror strike evenly.

Don't tell him you love him, let him tell you.

Don't let him know you, he'll only hurt you.

Don't reach for his hand, he'll just reject you.

Don't hold him in your arms, he'll withdraw from you.

Don't give him your heart, he'll betray you.

Don't tell him you need him, it'll kill you.

Hope dashes—you must run, get away, dare you live another day.

Just go through the motions of everyday life. Distant and smiling, no connection, no life. Not feeling—just pretending everything's alright. Coasting, no thrill—just endless hours—suffering, trudging, recovering, accepting—yet lacking our true spirit's desire. Always yearning for the day where I may be healthy enough and you willing enough that we may say: *I love you, you love me, please never go away.*

But even if you do, my heart is strong enough, my mind is well enough, and I am whole enough for two souls to connect once again and for all I ever wanted to finally come true: I love you, you love me, and by the Grace of God we will grow old and gray together sharing this truth. God willingly guide us to continual soul connection and growth. Our love strengthening, our trust never wavering. To never part in this life or, ever more, in God's blissful ever after.

By Julie (JWK)

MV

Letters

(You are welcome to respond to our letter writers. I will forward your letters—anonynously, if you prefer—to them. Even non-subscribers may submit letters or replies. We want to provide constructive outlets and answers for those who want safe contact with people who understand.—LW)

Dear Friends,

The Many Voices newsletter is the only thing I can relate to. I have gone so far backwards that I have given up hope of ever getting well. When people find out that I am MPD they instantly think I am insane and have a severe mental illness. They cannot see past the title and look into my heart. Not all MPD's are bad. Some of us have been able to lead normal lives in spite of our illness. I want so much to get well, but no psychologist will see me. I cannot even get into a support group until I find a psychologist. I had a good one once, until one of my personalities made a mistake and the doctor would no longer see us. For the past three years we have been searching. But I gave up hope now. I just hope and pray that "Doctors" realize too that they themselves make mistakes. We all do. Thanks for listening. —Melody

Dear MV

I just wanted to tell you about a tragic experience I had last summer. My 32-year-old son had recently been diagnosed with diabetes. He was a computer programmer and was enroute to our home for a weekend. He was taken ill while driving, and against the advice of his doctor, he continued driving. He evidently passed out and died in a single-car accident.

The police came to our home in the middle of the night and informed my husband and me that there had been a fatal accident. When I heard the word "fatal" my inside people held hands tightly and the inside of my body shook violently. I know that it couldn't really have happened, but they kept me from violently trembling on the outside.

The child within has had a lot of trouble dealing with my son's death. She is very quiet, and feels as if she has died.

Thank you for listening. My husband and I both enjoy reading MV and find it helpful.

Sincerely, ER & Child

MV

OMH, CMK

I was wanted
wasn't had
I like it good
I'm not that bad

I've got choices
I hear voices
of the sky
and of the trees
I've got choices
block out the voices
open my heart
close my knees

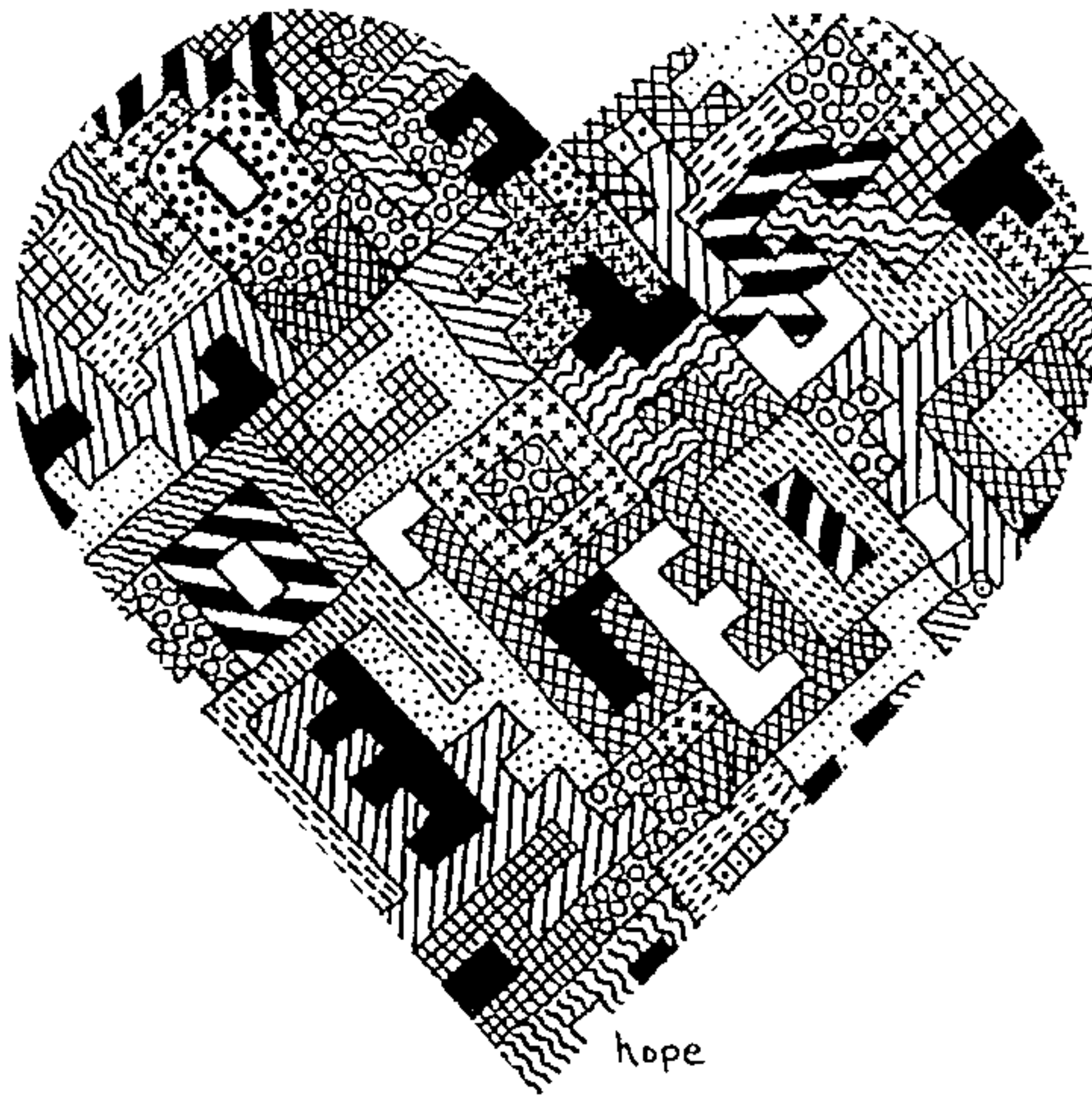
comes right to it
helps my health
just like you
I can do it myself

I've got choices
I hear voices
of the sky
and of the trees
I've got choices
block out sick voices
open my heart
close my knees

IUD

control pills
abstinence
pick my thrills

By DRH



For Hannah and Emma and Little Ones with Broken Hearts. When minds are shattered into pieces, the heart is broken too, but perhaps a heart so broken and overwhelmed with cuts and rips and holes can become an intricate work of beauty in the end.

Books

Journey to Wholeness: Healing from the Trauma of Rape

By Monique Lang © 2000. Published by Learning Publications, Inc. 5351 Gulf Dr., PO Box 1338 Holmes Beach, FL 34218-1338. 167 pages. \$19.95. Paperback.

This workbook (8-1/2" x 11") guides women who were raped to process the feelings, thoughts and physical consequences of their experience, through writing, illustration (drawing or cut/paste) and other exercises. It is suggested as a supplement for professional counseling, not a substitute. *Journey to Wholeness* is divided into two sections...the first is for those who were raped some time ago, and who are working through the long-term effects of that violation. The second, shorter section is for those whose rape is quite recent, and who need help with initial stages such as deciding whether or not to report the rape to the police, etc.

The workbook begins by addressing the stereotypes of rapists and their victims. It explores the reader's beliefs before and after the rape, and discusses the many physical and

emotional symptoms that emerge after being violated. Each brief discussion is followed by a participatory exercise...a checklist, writing guide, or page to illustrate, giving the reader a way to release feelings and ideas that emerge from reading and re-visiting the experience. This "journey" is thorough, paced and presented with calm reassurance. It may be very helpful for those who live with the raw edges of rape pain.

Risking Connection: A Training Curriculum for Working with Survivors of Childhood Abuse

By Karen W Saakvitne, PhD, Sarah Gamble, PhD, Laurie Anne Pearlman, PhD and Beth Tabor Lev, PhD © 2000. Published by Sidran Press, (410)825-8888, www.sidran.org. 5 modules in loose leaf format, over 200 pages. \$75.

Risking Connection is said to be the first basic trauma training program for mental health providers in public settings. Since public health agencies are frequently the only resource available for people who struggle with dissociation, good training in sexual

trauma recovery techniques for agency clinicians and social workers is a welcome goal. This 20-hour curriculum is presented in five half-day modules: understanding trauma, using connections to develop treatment goals with survivor clients, responding to crises, working with dissociation, and issues of vicarious traumatization (re: the professional who becomes traumatized by working with trauma victims). Several assessment tools and other forms may be freely copied for practical application in working with clients. The program is aimed at personnel working in psychiatric hospitals, community mental health centers, substance abuse programs, domestic violence agencies and virtually any place where adults with a history of childhood trauma are served. Flexible and multifaceted, its literature states it has been "field-tested by a broad range of state mental health staff in Maine and New York." Survivors who benefit from trained personnel will hope that this program is applied widely. —Lynn W.

MV NEEDS YOUR WORK!

Thank you for your submissions. We need ART (verticals, horizontals, cartoons, small pieces to fit in corners) and all kinds of WRITING. Your ideas and creative inspiration will help others heal!

COMING SOON!

April 2000

Creating a safe, comfortable life: alone and with others. Building support networks. Therapy or special interest groups. Choosing appropriate friends. Releasing toxic relationships. Healthy boundaries. ART: Friends and fun.
DEADLINE: Feb. 1, 2000.

June 2000

Medications & D.I.D. How they help (or don't help) your recovery. Safety issues with meds. Pros & cons of "natural" medications and alternative healing methods. ART: An image of healing. DEADLINE: April 1, 2000.



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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