

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

Vol XII, No.2

April 2000

ISSN1042-2277

Creating a safe, comfortable life... Alone and with others



By Gwen

Sisters

Into this room enter brave souls,
nomads on a journey to
enlightenment.
Foreigners, yet sisters of pain and
torment.
Brought together by a common
bond—yet all alone.

Turning our backs on our own
existence
to avoid our pursuers,
we come face to face once again
with our own selves
...by facing one another.

With us enters a caravan of infants,
children, adolescents and adults.
Multitudes of personalities
each one separate—yet all together
one.

We wander with a burden of horror
hidden to make the journey safe.
Alone we endured the unendurable.
Together we can face the
unfaceable.

Opened baggage exposes separate
but mutual pasts
woven into a common path.
Together we plot a course that is
shared
—yet uniquely each our own.

Bonded together by our separate
pasts
we choose to be what we never had
Sisters—acknowledging, listening,
caring.

Having come so far alone
we offer to each other an oasis.
Soft shoulders to cry on, warm
hearts to understand
and encouragement for the journey.

By Nita K.

MV

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Believing Lies = Protecting Perpetrators

By Angela D.

Some time ago an MV reader wrote that she might accept her memories if she could learn to stop protecting her perpetrators. I, too, chose to believe the lies rather than accept the truth that the adults in my life were weak, selfish, disturbed and over-all jerks. The lies I chose to believe were more acceptable to me than the truth. But believing the lies almost killed me, as they have all of us in this situation.

Why do you think we have breakdowns? Because we are insisting on believing lies against all the evidence to the contrary. Do you wonder why we are so tired? What sort of lies did I believe? Let me tell you:

- ☒ The abuse I received was my fault
 - ☒ It didn't really happen.
 - ☒ I wanted it
 - ☒ I tricked him into doing it.
 - ☒ I have exaggerated what happened.
 - ☒ Telling about it will hurt me worse.
 - ☒ There are no safe places.
 - ☒ There are no people or things worthy of trust
 - ☒ I have no power
 - ☒ That happened in the past and it doesn't affect me now.
 - ☒ I am bad, evil, lazy, stupid, ignorant and ugly.
 - ☒ I am not worthy of being loved.
 - ☒ Everybody abuses everybody.
 - ☒ I am not allowed to make any mistakes
 - ☒ If I make a mistake, then I am a horrible person and deserve to die.
 - ☒ All men are weak pigs.
 - ☒ All men are lewd and after one thing
 - ☒ All men are child molesters
 - ☒ All females are victims.
 - ☒ And more.
- Yes the lies were acceptable to me; for a time; even against all evidence to

the contrary. Then I had my breakdown. Physically I felt the consequences of my mental gymnastics. I was sick. There were pains all over my body. I knew I was dying of some horrible new disease! But no: the doctor said I was as healthy as a horse.

I have two children. They have never failed to ask me questions through the years. You know the kind of questions I mean. "Mama, why are leaves green?" After you give an answer they want to know 'why?' that is so; and then why the next thing is so; and so on and so on. They want proof that what you say is accurate.

I began to question the why of my beliefs and actions. By asking *why* to every statement I made, my husband, therapist, and eventually even I, challenged the basis for those beliefs. We kept asking for proof that my assertions were so. 'Why' got to be the one word I hated to hear. What happened?

Well, three things actually. One: I found that the basis for a lot of my actions were, in fact, based on convoluted logic and just plain stupid thinking inherited straight from my abusers. Two: I found that I was strong in many areas. Three: I found I had a lot of work to do on my personality; also known as shortcomings. After a little while one and two felt good to know. But guess what I had trouble with? Ah, yes. Those things that were my imperfections.. well, I did not want to even face them. However, that is a vital piece of the restoration, even the primary building, of who I am.

Why is that? Very simply, to ignore my own imperfections, to pretend they did not exist, would be to only trade one set of lies for another; and lies have only made my life miserable. After a while, the ability to accept my own imperfections and shortcomings allowed me freedom. It gave me the freedom to be able to say "I don't know."

That's right! I, who had been looked to by adults for the answers all my life, could now say *I didn't know*. I did not have to come up with all the answers. I could now allow others to be responsible for their own decisions. The weight that dropped from my shoulders and my mind was enormous. Sweet relief.

It also gave me the freedom to say "I'm sorry" and accept blame for what I only had done and let everyone else keep that which was theirs. I was determined that I was not going to make a career out of being dysfunctional. Being abused was not going to define my life, my reason for being. By doing that, my abusers still controlled my life. Their control never did me any good. I wanted to live. I wanted to enjoy my life.

It starts with a question: "Why?" Abuse destroys—and if started very young even prohibits—the building of our personality. Children are victims, truly; but adults are volunteers. Will you keep volunteering to be a victim of your abusers by believing their lies? Decide to volunteer for a better life. Stop believing the lies.

MV



Dearly Beloved

They loved me dearly
 They meant to help
 They took good care of me.
 They held me down
 They laughed as I screamed
 They punctured my eardrum.
 They loved me dearly
 They meant to help.
 They taught me the life rules
 They thought were important.
 They loved me, although
 They showed it quite strangely.
 They loved me dearly.

They, saving my life.
 They, calling me brave.
 They, putting cocaine up my nose.
 They, loving me dearly.
 They giving the best of things
 They stealing the heart of things
 They, wanting the most for me
 They, keeping my name from me
 They meant to help.
 They, teaching the truth to me
 They, telling the lie to me
 They, loving me dearly.
 They were doing the best they could.

I, seeing them as human now
 I, wishing I had known their hugs
 I, needing them, to teach them how
 I, lonely for them
 I, wanting them here
 I, wanting their love
 I, missing them
 I, loving them dearly
 I, doing the best I can.

By Irene F.

MV



BARB M.

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 We appreciate your support! — Lynn W., Editor

Integration

My head is quiet after over 20 years of constant chatter.

How used to it I was, and I didn't even realize it until it was gone. I worked hard and non-stop for a long time to get where I am today, and now my life is changing so fast I can barely blink an eye.

I feel as if I am getting to know myself a little more everyday. I know things that I used to have no clue about. I have a painting that I did when I was sixteen, but when I tried to paint something a short time later, I realized I was the most un-artistic person I knew. How did I paint that mermaid when I can't even mix up the color purple?

Things like that are happening every day. I know that now, if and when I get up the courage to pick up that paint brush, something will appear on that paper.

I have fleeting memories that come from simple triggers...when I was 18 and had landed my first job, I realized I was not receiving regular paychecks, I was missing money. Just recently I remembered sponsoring a child in Africa for a year; I was sending in \$50 a month without even realizing it.

I wish all the stories could be that good, but as all of us know, this disorder can be complicated and at times "we" don't know exactly what to expect. I have no idea if what I am saying is making sense, as sometimes

my thoughts tend to race.

I will be the first to admit that being 'one' is odd. At first I thought that the silence would drive me crazy, but it's not so bad. Day by day I am realizing that the 'we' is still in the 'I'. I am not alone, I am just more open to knowledge and things I have picked up along the way. I am a complete person who no longer has the 'nasty habit' of forgetting conversations or things I have done. I realize that I *did not* miss fifth grade, and that I *do* have the ability to be good at math.

I have a wonderful man who has been by my side through my journey, and I am able to talk to him about all the new changes that come about everyday. He is nothing but supportive, understanding, and he is loving getting to know me as I am getting to know myself.

But sometimes you just have to jot all of this down on paper and send it along to someone who really knows what it's all about. I realize this is the main reason that I am writing.

When I was 23 years old, I was talking a lot to a few integrated persons, and doing vast amounts of reading. I read so much on how scary and horrible integrating was, and I freaked. I didn't want to be alone, and I didn't want silence. But now I have it, and I want others to know it's an amazing and interesting voyage.

By Katrina

MV

Comfort alone and with others

We find that **socialization** is the most important thing for us to do outside of therapy...we need to be with people. So during the day we have social time, and in the evenings we have TV, art, reading, study, and calm rest-to-music time. We need to strike a balance between work, journal, and couch potato. Even TV time is a sort of 'work' pasttime. We usually watch documentaries. At this time we try to play but the little kids get scared because they got attacked during play by brothers. The victimization continues 30 years later. Yet they find simple actions that are almost play. We have the "puddle stomper" (a pet name). We have the honor of letting our kids feed our therapist's fish, at therapy time. We "go on the truck" with my sister and son while they make pick-ups for her redemption center. We have therapy work or home work (i.e., journal) every day, so we don't come to therapy in a black out.

It is intense, yet relaxing. It takes the poison from our soul. It cleans out infected wounds. We sleep easier. It helps to pull it together with a thread of ink, so I can say "Oh yeah, that was fun!"

We explore new things like watching football with our friend or go to women's basketball games at the state college that is about 20 miles from here, tried fishing, terminal snacking, road trips. We play "score" or plays of jokes off of each other. That is a daily fun thing, because I'm with my friend. He and I keep each other sane. He has a dissociative disorder, but not D.I.D. He is very supportive and understands us a lot. He helps to make my day fun, or where we can at least cope. We used to crisis because we used to isolate. I guess in a way this all is play. The hard part is to lay down at night before we sleep and have to listen to pain and validate them, to nurture them, to honor their experiences, their abuse, their pain and hunger (eating disorders). So we need things to think about, like what we did today and will do tomorrow. If we spin too fast, it's

time for TV. Many mornings we wake up with the set on. Thank God for cable! Pain is easier when you can share it with a person, therapist, etc., who really cares about you.

Each day is a day to explore the world. We find if we occupy our mind, we don't crisis. But we also allow time for issue work. We see the 1:45 to 2 hour therapy as the most important aspect of our week, but we have learned not to obsess about it.

We did that once upon a time, but now it's in a balance, like on a scale. Add more fun to outweigh the pain, but never to minimize the issues. Don't ignore them. They come back hard and fast when triggered.

By Stacy



About one year ago I bought a house. It was the greatest act of self-love I have ever experienced. At the time, I was recently divorced and single. The house was just for me and nobody else. It was a life-long dream and brought me more than I expected. I had never felt so safe and comfortable before, and I was the only one with the keys! It was in this house that I was able to write down my bizarre experiences and read them to my therapist which lead to my diagnosis of DDNOS. I had been in therapy off and on for eight years, but had never shared my full experience.

In addition to buying a house, I also began writing with a group of women. It was very helpful to be part of a community of writers, to read aloud what I had written to kind and generous listeners, and to share in their lives. I had been a closet journal writer for eleven years until a friend of mine invited me to come to her writing group even though she didn't know I was already writing.

I continue to journal and find it very helpful. I am able to write myself out of crises and to integrate. When I read

over old journals, I can see the many voices that make up the composite me. The handwriting appears as if many different people have been writing in my journals, even though I am the only one writing. Also, I have found when I seize up and can't speak, I can still write. Now my boyfriend knows to bring me pencil and paper!

By Lee Ann and the girls



A support network has been an essential part of my recovery. I was blessed to have God's help in building my support team. It couldn't have happened without trust, honesty, and openness. Disclosure is always difficult for me and always feels uncomfortable, but I have been fortunate and the results have been positive. What started as therapy to help me understand major hostility to my father, turned into a journey of discovery. We discovered my internal system of alters and many painful, terrifying childhood memories. As I started exploring my childhood, I had a very trustworthy church family that was ready and willing to support me in every way possible. As I grew in awareness about my true self, I made friends who became a stable, consistent, understanding support network. It could never have happened without my being open and honest with the people around me. I chose the people carefully, was honest about my feelings, and found the support I needed. Remember, there are people who understand and know how to help people with our painful past. I hope this will help you on your journey.

By TF



When at home alone, I use a deadbolt lock as well as door locks. Only my partner has a key, and even

she must knock, for I lock the deadbolt.

I call a crisis line three or four times a month. And I have three pen-pals who are multiples, found through ads in MV.

My (our) room is most telling: stuffed animals and toys beside tapes and writing items. Children see their toys as adults write and do art work.

By Sally



Remarkably, after years of chaos, at age 40 we find that we have (don't faint) lived in the same house for 3.5 years, held the same job for 3 years. This is an incredible change for the better. We like working with Alzheimer's patients, so to ease ourselves back in the work-force we started out working only weekends on the graveyard shift. That way the patients were asleep most of the time and we never had to face other employees except in coming and going. Never had to face the boss. (Authority terrifies/angers us.)

Then after about a year of that, we gradually moved to doing a 4pm-12am

shift here and there, to cover for someone, and eased our way slowly into that, part-time, then full-time. Then after burning up 7 out of the 9 Trial Work Period months SSDI gives, we became panicked, which worked out quite well as that was when our boss was cheating us out of wages and we quit. (Yes, later we got the money owed us.)

When we went back, we gra-a-a-dually moved up to dayshift, which is scariest as it means constantly interacting with the boss, administrator, other employees, family members, etc.

After three years of the same job, is our terror lessened? No. When the boss leaves, everyone in our system sighs a huge sigh of relief, and we metamorphose from the petrified robot to more or less ourselves. LOL. We're good with the residents. Knowing they have Alzheimer's helps because they're too out of it to notice if we're a bit 'odd'. Our co-workers notice; they're noticing my lack of memory and they do comment on it, and it's extremely embarrassing. I'm not about to tell them I have MPD, because my job is not the type of environment that would be friendly to that. We did mention a coma we had once (true; eight days

from OD), so that is sufficient (we hope) enough to satisfy their curiosity. If not, oh well. Well, "oh well" on our good days, and on our bad days, we all go running to our therapist positive that everybody on the job is plotting to get rid of us and we're already fired and all that yadda yadda. And he brings us back to Planet Earth, as much as we can be on it.

We have a wonderful therapist; he's not worked with MPD before but is head of the Gender Dysphoria program at the Gay & Lesbian Center, and has had so much experience he is able to figure things out. He's great; after I was sure I'd never trust again, we are opening up amazingly fast to him.

What else? Suicide is no longer an option. Oh, we think about it everyday, but we've come to the agreement that it is *not* an option. Twice we were sitting here contemplating it, and both times our cat came from wherever he was, and started batting at our hair and playing with us until we started laughing. And we realized how cruel we would be to cause him to go into grieving over us. So he's our hero; he's literally saved our life at least twice.

By Anthony Julian

MV

Carried by the Breeze

I asked the breeze to gently blow me in the right direction.

The breeze as old as the beginning of time would certainly be wise enough to lead me.

As the breeze began to gently waft past my body,

I felt the tension in my muscles.

"Why are you so resistant to my force?" the breeze curiously asked.

"Because I'm afraid to move...I'm afraid to change..."

I'm afraid I'll do it wrong," I replied.

"Remember, I am but a gentle breeze, not a harsh wind..."

I will guide you gently."

I faced my fear...challenged my growth... and allowed the breeze to take me.

"Where are we going?" I asked the breeze.

It replied, "Into the unknown, but do not fear; I blow gently."

I asked the breeze to carry me.

*By The Writer
for Janice & Co.*

MV



Therapist's Page

By Richard P. Kluft, M.D.

Richard P. Kluft, M.D. is one of the most prolific and respected writers on the subject of Dissociative Disorders. A fellow in the ISSD, he was a founder and editor of the journal *DISSOCIATION* throughout its 10 year history, and directed the Dissociative Disorders Unit at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital for many years. He is currently in private practice in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania and continues to share his expertise via professional consultation, conference presentations, research and writing. You can email Dr. Kluft at RPKluft@aol.com

Spontaneous Integration

I had spent several months gathering preliminary material for a study on certain types of dysphoric spontaneous integrations when Lynn W., who was not aware of this project, asked me to do an article on spontaneous integration for the Therapist's Page. Struck by the synchronicity of her thoughts with my own, I was glad to agree. For the purposes of this contribution, I will use the definition offered by Lynn W.: "integration that takes place outside the therapist's office."

Over the last 30 years I have treated over 160 DID patients to complete integration, and will draw on this experience for my remarks. If we understand the term "integration" to mean the unification of alters such that they no longer have a sense of subjective separateness and the patient has a sense of subjective unity, we will refer to situations in which alters (while remaining subjectively separate) achieve a smoothly coordinated functioning, even if all but one remain "inside," as a "resolution."

There are six pathways to integration: gradual merger, merger facilitated by suggestion and imagery and techniques, spontaneous integration, decisions to go away or cease being separate, brokered departures, and building upon temporary blendings. As originally described, spontaneous integration referred to situations in which alters, having shared the materials that they encapsulated with another alter or alters, ceased to be separate. This was often associated with abreaction, and usually occurred within sessions.

Virtually all of these pathways can and do reach the point of integration for specific personalities outside of the

therapist's office. Gradual merger is an ongoing process, and its culmination may either occur or be appreciated for the first time between sessions, or even be driven to their culminations by patients who make creative use of their own efforts and autohypnotic capacities. Years ago Ralph Allison reported on a patient who, with relatively little coaching, treated himself by enhancing the communications and relationships among his alters, and achieving their autohypnotic integration. Spontaneous mergers may occur between sessions when work in session on an issue that has been associated with dividedness has been incomplete, but set in motion a movement toward integration that has developed its own momentum, which transcends the bounds of the sessions themselves. This is not common in hypnotically facilitated treatments that make vigorous use of shut-down techniques, but is not uncommon with EMDR-facilitated treatments, in which the process of accelerated information processing may continue once begun, even outside of therapy. In addition, several other processes that are disruptive to equilibrium may lead to spontaneous integrations of a very dysphoric and potentially overwhelming nature. These include situations in which the DID patient is triggered by something to an abreaction of the contents of an alter's memory, and circumstances in which head injury, bipolar illness (especially severe hypomania or mania), or the hormonal perturbations associated with perimenopausal phenomena (or other medical/metabolic difficulties) disrupt longstanding dissociative boundaries.

Decisions to blend or go away are typically made and acted upon

between sessions. Although most are in the service of evasion, and the alters are trying to leave the scene rather than truly blend, occasionally they result in integration. Brokered departures also typically occur between sessions, often driven by alters' wishes to protect particular parts from facing the pain of processing painful material "alone." Once a series of temporary blendings has occurred, a final integration may occur anywhere at any time.

There are some types of alters and situations in which spontaneous integrations are more likely to occur. Alters associated with particular events rather than particular major functions are more likely to integrate spontaneously once the child feels safe and protected. Ad hoc alters, created to address particular situations and issues, typically cease to be separate, even without therapeutic work, once they have served their purposes. There is a natural attrition of the separateness of alters in many DID patients as they age and spend more and more time in a one-alter predominant presentation.

Spontaneous integration outside of session is most likely to occur after some trauma work has been done, and is highly associated with the phase of treatment called "moving toward integration." In this stage, much work has already been done in therapy, and efforts are being made to help the alters increase their collaboration, cooperation, identification and mutual empathy with one another. As this occurs, separateness becomes increasingly irrelevant, and dissociative barriers are frayed and collapse far more readily.

I work from the premise that good definitive DID therapy promotes

integration and may set the stage for spontaneous integration, but should not deliberately promote it until late in treatment lest it prove a burden to the patient. (This does not apply to supportive treatments or treatments being conducted without having integration as a goal.) Having and being treated for DID is usually a rather difficult and demanding experience, and my sense of the Hippocratic axiom, "Firstly, do no harm" convinces me that because spontaneous integrations may cause intense dysphoria as one alter's feelings and memories may flood one or more other alters, I would prefer that my patients be spared this experience out of the safety and structure of a therapeutic setting while painful material remains to be processed.

Once all known trauma work is done with a number of alters, I both will help them process one another's experiences in session, and encourage them to spend time together in the here and now, conversing with one another about non-conflictual matters, learning to be copresent and accepting of one another in various settings, and noting areas of residual difficulty and difference, which we address in session. That is, to the extent that I foster my patients' achieving spontaneous integration, I do so by encouraging the alters to do the work of therapy, repeatedly educating them that they "are all in it together," and promoting their mutual empathy, communication, collaboration, and identification. At times I will help patients develop imagery that facilitates these processes, such as by helping them to create a meeting space. I also teach my patients autohypnotic shut-down techniques to protect themselves from the potential unpleasant and disruptive experience of being flooded by another alter's mental contents.

Once I am informed of a spontaneous integration, my own practice is usually to check out what I have been told by asking the remaining alters if they have any reason to suspect that the allegedly integrated alter remains separate, and/or is in hiding. I may also do a hypnotic exploration. I am eager to find out if the contents and issues of

the alter alleged to have integrated are reflected elsewhere in the alter system or in the integrated individual. At times alters collapse their separateness, but their former contents remain dissociated. That is not true integration, and a relapse or some other negative event is a likely consequence. At times an alter into whom another has integrated is very uncomfortable, and/or dealing with remaining dissociated contents must be completed before the integration can be regarded as genuine. Only after I have explored and addressed these concerns am I likely to congratulate the patient on his or her achievement. To do so before this might be to mislead the patient and the treatment. I always offer congratulations in a very subdued fashion, because it is easy, by celebrating the event, to convey the message to the remaining alters that I am eager to see the end of them, rather than promote the well-being of the total human being by facilitating a process in which the need for separateness is progressively diminished, and in which integration becomes increasingly ego-syntonic. It also runs the risk of conveying to the patient that the pursuit of integration is in the service of the therapist's needs and/or that the patient must integrate

to please the therapist rather than promote the growth and healing of the patient. Such impressions might do damage to my relationships with the alters and weaken the therapeutic alliance.

A curious aspect of supporting the patient after a spontaneous integration is helping the remaining alters to deal with their perceptions of loss, if any, and their reaction to perceived loneliness or change in the alter system. It is very helpful to ask the system if any alters have reactions to the integration that they would like to discuss. If these matters are not addressed respectfully, the patient may dig in his/her heels and oppose further integration. Another issue with spontaneous integrations is that some DID patients come to believe that the integration has taken place via some "stealth" technique administered by the therapist behind the patient's back, as it were. I tend to encourage the patient to understand the integration as a reflection of his or her hard work, and to perceive the actual integration as no more than the acknowledgment of the impact of the effort the patient has invested in the therapy.

MV



Partner's Page:

The Wind Beneath Her Wings

By Richard

Sometimes, it's tough for a support person to define exactly what his or her role should be in a relationship with a multiple partner. For example, recently my wife had pressured me to take a more dynamic leadership role in our marriage. She wanted a strong, take-charge kind of guy.

"You've let me take the lead in our marriage for years because my healing process was so important," she told me.

But you've gotten too good at it. Sometimes I feel like there's nobody there because you never take the lead unless I force you to. And when there's a power vacuum, someone has to step into it, and that's always been me. And I'm getting tired of it.

That hurt. She was being nice about it, but in my mind it all boiled down to one word—*Wimp!*

The problem is, I've never been comfortable with the march-the-troops mode of leadership, which was one reason I left the Army. I knew how to be Rick or Richard. I could even handle being Mister Sinclair. But I never got the hang of being Sergeant Sinclair.

So I wasn't sure I could be the kind of leader my wife wanted.

Almost in desperation, we went to a Christian bookstore and bought *Tender Warrior* by Stu Weber, a recent Bible-based book about masculine identity and roles. After I read the chapter "Under Orders: a Man and His Leadership," I asked my wife to read it and tell me what I was doing right, and where I needed to improve.

A few hours later, she called "Rick, could you come here a minute?" I went to the living room, sat down on the couch across from her, and braced myself for the worst.

She was quiet for a long moment, then said, "I read this chapter carefully, looking for where you've screwed up. Instead, I found where I've screwed up." She turned to the page where Weber writes:

"The key to leadership is serving, not 'lording it over.' So color your headship in soft shades of the tender side (providing, protecting, reaching, caring, guiding, loving, developing, freeing, sacrificing, leading) rather than in the harsh tones of the warrior side (ruling, presiding, directing, determining, bossing, deciding). The essence of the tender tones is servanthood. The mature husband understand servant-leadership."

"You've always done very well at this first list," my wife said. Then she pointed to the second part. "This is what my father did. As much as I've always said that I hated the way my father lorded over our home, and

that I wanted my marriage to be different, I've unconsciously tried to recreate what I grew up with. And I've totally ignored that I already have what I always wanted.

"I'd like for you to try doing a little more of this second list, just for balance, because you're so good at this first list," my wife continued. "But I'll do my best to stop trying to force you to become like my father."

Like about a million other couples, my wife and I included the Bette Midler song "The Wind Beneath My Wings" in our wedding. My wife framed the lyrics and hung them in our living room. She glanced at them and said, "That's the kind of leader I've always wanted, and that's the kind of leader you've always been."

Well, it's nice to know that my instinctive refusal to be forced into a drill sergeant leadership role was a good choice. But it also set me to thinking about a larger issue.

One problem we often deal with in my support group is wondering what our role should be with our multiple partners. After nine years of supporting my wife during her healing, several of those years living under the same roof, Weber's list of gentle leadership attributes finally focused my personal answer. Through the years I've tried to provide for my partner, care for and guide her inner children, reach out to and love all her alters, make the sacrifices to free her to do the work she must do, and so on.

More than anything, it all seems to boil down to leading by example.

"Sometimes I wonder how the hell you do it," my wife once told me. "When you go to work, you don't have to make a big emotional deal out of it. You just get up and go whether you want to or not. When you make a decision, you don't have to negotiate and argue with a head full of voices, you just make a decision. When you want to do something, you don't have to cancel because you're too tired or too triggered or too something; you just do it. You don't need to take half-a-dozen drugs, and write in a journal, and take a nap, and go to a therapist and a psychiatrist, and call a bunch of friends to get through the day. You just get through the day. And sometimes that all just boggles my mind."

I think that modeling a normal life (teaching by example) is one of the best things we can do for our partners. One of the first things I learned from our support group is that Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is a diagnosis of hope. It's just a set of dysfunctional learned behaviors (a very complex and difficult set, to be sure). It is

possible for our partners to heal from DID and learn to have a normal life, if they can just hang in there and do the work.

And that leads to what I believe is the root attribute of us support people, and the most important one for us to model—the ability to endure.

"No matter how hard it's been, I could always count on you being there," my wife told me once. "When your dream of a normal marriage was shattered, you didn't leave me. When my alters were mean to you, you didn't quit. When I cut you off from sex, you didn't run away. You stayed."

That endurance seems to be common among all long-term members of our support group. I don't think it's a coincidence that many in our group are runners or iron-pumpers, or at least have some experience with that kind of exercise. There's something about the personality type which can run one more mile, or push that iron one more rep, that helps us hang in there and love a multiple throughout the healing process.

Years of experience have taught me this—the leadership and strength we must give our partners is that of the plowhorse, not the drill sergeant.

MV

In the Room

(The place inside us where we go to be together)

In the room of
deep purple,
with glowing, golden trim...
I face angels,
dragons,
uncertainty,
indecision.
In the room of
deep purple,
is a warm glow of
recognition,
touching
remembered hope,
and dreams to share.
In the room where
time ceases,
Bathed in rich color,
I am quiet,
listen,
and turn to face
all that I am.

By E with C for the
Coalition for Joy

MV

Another View of Healthy Sexuality

By Teri, Marcia and Toni

I have some concerns about what I viewed as erroneous and perhaps misguided statements that were made in an article by "Danielle" in the February issue on *Different Gendered Alters/What Healthy Sexuality Means to You*.

While sexuality and sexual orientation are interrelated, they are not synonymous. Anyone, Multiple or non, may experience issues centered around sexuality at some point in life, without necessarily feeling unsure of their orientation. Likewise, people who have been sexually abused certainly have complicated issues surrounding sexuality that don't necessarily include confusion about orientation. Because a person has been sexually abused does not automatically predict a struggle in sorting out their orientation.

Furthermore, orientation is absolutely not contingent upon the gender of the perpetrator(s). Such egregious beliefs are rooted in homophobic, patriarchal traditions of psychiatry dating back to the Freudian era and have no foundation in truth. In all my years of research and study on childhood antecedents of sexual orientation, I have yet to find any clinical studies proving a direct correlation between sexual orientation of persons sexually abused and the gender of the perpetrator(s). While the gender of the perpetrator(s) may distort and complicate one's self-perception and self-understanding, I am unaware of any evidence indicating that it changes one's biological orientation. Although some Multiples may have the added complication of sorting out their orientation, a Multiple's orientation is not predicated on the gender of their perpetrator(s).

In addition, repeated abuse by male perpetrators does not "perpetuate the phenomena" of a "heterosexualized male-centeredness" that motivates women to be attracted to males, or seek "dependency, protection and support" from males. If a woman is innately attracted to males it is the result of her biological orientation. Abused women may be more likely to attract abusive men, but being abused by men doesn't make the women heterosexual. The same is true for someone who is homosexual. They are not gay because they were abused by someone of the same gender.

I would suggest some of the dynamics perpetuating abuse, dependency and oppression that prevent women from discovering their own sense of Self separate from men, stem from the compulsive heterosexuality in which this society is rooted. Part of the damage created by the sexual abuse is that we deny

ourselves as women. We learn it's not safe to be a woman, it's not safe to associate with other women, and it's not safe to experience female emotions and characteristics like being tender and nurturing...Emotions that may open us up to being vulnerable and risk being hurt again.

Understandably, it can be quite confusing for Multiples to sort through the myriad of feelings and behaviors that come with having different gendered alters. Everyone, men and women, has both male and female energy. The whole premise of MPD is that our personality has fragmented into many pieces and we're trying to put the pieces together so we can know our whole dynamic self. Why do we automatically assume that a different gendered alter has a sexual connotation, or because a female alter notices women we must be a lesbian?

Is it possible that what appears to be a "lesbian alter" is really a part of the self searching for what it means to be a woman? Maybe those parts are simply trying to teach us about the many aspects of being a woman, and relating to other women in a way that has nothing to do with sexuality. Perhaps we attach sexual meaning to our experience because being sexually abused creates distortions of what is healthy sexuality, and misshapes our perspective so that we sexualize all the wrong things. This propensity is further reinforced in our society where distortions of healthy sexuality are so prevalent that we sexualize everything from beverages to vehicles.

With regard to those parts that have "multiple sexualities," I wonder if it is possible that those parts are more likely serving to distract or numb the pain that exists underneath the behavior just as alcohol and drugs help to distract us from the pain. Perhaps they have nothing to do with sexuality or orientation, but rather are trying to open our awareness to the fullness of our being that includes male and female energy.

Likewise, the child part that "enjoys sexual contact with men" may in fact be re-enacting past abuse as a way to communicate. She is offering an opportunity to see the truth about the past, heal the pain, and in the process learn how to protect ourselves by protecting those child parts. No one protected them the first time they were abused. Now they are looking to us to protect them from being hurt again. It is a necessary part of learning to care for ourselves and provide the safety we never had as a child.

Our inside children deserve to be heard and need us to listen to their message. It is

not empowering when we contribute to or condone unhealthy, abusive behavior within the system. It is no more okay for a child alter to engage in sex with an adult than it is for a literal child. It is self-abusive and if we condone it, we perpetuate the abuse we have already suffered as children. All the different parts have a story to tell. It is our responsibility in the healing process to listen.

I liken being a Multiple to living an allegory; rather than always viewing my alters and their roles as literal. I try to consider what each part represents or symbolizes, what role they play in my life, and what piece of my life story each one is trying to tell me. I think when confusion arises with the presence of different gendered or different orientation alters, rather than act on the confusion and engage in potentially harmful behavior, a healthier choice might be to explore the issues with a therapist, and to dialogue with the different parts. We need to listen and pay attention to what they are trying to teach us about ourselves and our life stories.

Healthy sexuality is based on mutual respect between consenting adults. In a safe, loving, respectful relationship, intimacy and sexuality do not involve power and control. I believe that any relationship we participate in should feel safe, respectful, supportive and empowering, reciprocally. Not only between me and the other person, but throughout my system.

Perpetuating abusive behavior and then justifying it under the guise of having "multiple sexualities," or being renegades against the mainstream, is not empowering. We do not have to engage in self-destructive behavior in order to embrace our individuality, or resist patriarchal oppression. Nor do we need to distort the ideal of healthy sexuality in order to feel entitled to express sexuality. We do not need to create new categories to define ourselves. A more empowering choice is making a commitment to ourselves to participate only in behaviors and relationships that are supportive and life-affirming.

Part of our purpose in life is to discover our true Self and be the person each of us is meant to be. Not so we can know which box to check, but so we can experience life and ourselves fully. It has nothing to do with being heterosexual, homosexual, or really sexual, nor is it something exclusive to Multiples. It's about being human and discovering your true Self, whoever that might be

Creating a safe, comfortable life

By Diana Barnum

Here are some tips to creating a safe, comfortable life:

*** Define your comfort and safety zones.**

Look at life and morally decide rights and wrongs. Child molesters can be comfortable in their environments, but that doesn't make what they do ethically right for society. Choose to be a positive, productive human in society. Some questions to ask that may help in determining these zone boundaries could be:

Am I comfortable with life as it is now? What else would I like to add or delete in my life?

Is what I'm doing hurting anyone else?

Is it hurting me?

Does it cause switching? Make any parts of my being feel uncomfortable? Why?

Do I feel safe? Why or why not?

What would it take to feel more safe? Better door locks, karate classes, deepened faith, no more users in my life, no more abusers...?

And then back to the top question again...

*** Chart, journal or draw to help establish visual guidelines.**

Younger parts of us or alters can learn by pictures, so don't be afraid to design your own system of checking out your environment. Below is an example that works for me sometimes, to clear away clouds of confusion:

Comfort Zone

Questionable element : Writing abusive parents doesn't always leave me happy.

Comfort level factors: low- They don't write or call or visit.

Possible solutions: Focus on writing others who will reciprocate.

Questionable element: Sharing office space at home with significant other not always easy!

Comfort level factors: Mixed. Anxious feelings. Already sharing bedroom. Desire my own space.

Possible solutions: Create work area just for me and no one else! There's a time for sharing and for aloneness.

Questionable element: Going out after dark is scary.

Comfort level factors: Mixed: Some inner parts desire night life.

Possible solutions: Make it as safe as possible: no child parts in charge at night outing. Stay in well-lit areas.

Creating and maintaining comfort and safety in life is a process. As events and time progress, changes occur; adjustments need to be made. Maybe some inner parts will unite and change desires. Comfort levels will need to be reviewed then to make sure the body as a whole feels safe and functions appropriately.

Don't be afraid to use colored pencils, crayons etc. in charts. Cut & paste magazine pictures. Life needs to be fun, creative, interesting. Enjoy exploring boundaries! It's a process.

*** Get feedback.**

Checking with others is one way to test how healthy we are. Develop relationships with others who are concerned with growth, too, and bounce ideas off them. People not concerned with growth tend to stagnate. For the moment these type friends may meet needs, but often you may end up leaving them behind. And that's not bad! Not everyone is willing or able to move ahead in life at the same pace. All of us are unique.

For instance, when a woman has a child, she'll often need to focus more attention to her home life, while you may have grown children or none and seek a more active friend. The first woman with child, isn't a 'bad' choice for a friend...rather, she may not be the choice for a spur-of-the-moment ski outing. So just re-evaluate how your friends and you can interact to maintain healthy relationships without holding each other back in life.

Here are some ideas to develop support people for feedback:

1. Check your local paper for interest group meetings: computer societies, bird watchers, mothers of twins, etc. There are tons!

2. Look in your telephone company's yellow pages under 'associations' or 'organizations' to find groups that appeal to you.

3. At the library, check current flyers on bulletin boards, free newspapers, etc., for classes and groups forming that could be of interest.

4. Ask for referrals from your therapist, minister, neighbor, doctors, etc. Most people have some sort of network.

5. Use the computer. E-mail and the Internet can broaden your search tremendously! Folks from all over the world are on-line. Have a librarian help you get started. Check out books. But use safety—don't give out your address and other personal info.

***Make changes.**

Yes, this can be difficult, but it's necessary. Time does not stand still, so all of us must make the most of it. If someone or something is truly holding us back—for instance, if letter-writing to someone who won't respond for years causes crying spells and 'feeling sorry for yourself' bouts frequently—drop it! You haven't lost that person. You haven't hurt anyone. But inside, you'll be more at ease, not crying and feeling sorry for yourself, and you'll have more productive time down the road—more happy, comfortable time.

Yes, inside some parts may feel uncomfortable with change, but look ahead. No matter what we create in our minds, no matter how many parts or selves, none of us is in reality getting any younger. Think about it: where do you want to be 5-10 years down the road? Still crying over someone who doesn't meet your needs, or interacting with people who do? All of us have choices. Let's go get 'em!

Topsy Turvy

By Jennifer

Doesn't being a multiple just mean going somewhere else in one's mind? Letting one's insides out? So, I go somewhere else in my mind? So what? So, everyone else in the world who isn't a multiple stays in the same old spot in their minds? That doesn't make me 'disordered.' It doesn't make me sick. It doesn't mean that I have something wrong with me. So, why am I treated like a pariah? Why am I cast out? I've noticed in reading the writings of multiples—many, many of us say this sentence: "I wish they would've told me..." or "Was this supposed to happen?" Sometimes the wished information or the grieved event is something that is quite a normal human event. Who is responsible for those random events? No one. There is a tremendous innate sensitivity in multiples.

Over and over again I see this. I have no protections. Whatever it is, whatever others expect of me, because it is just a given, no one ever seems to realize how unrealistic it is to expect it of me. But it is not because there is something wrong with me. It is because I am more aware. It is because I literally receive more information than other people do. And I am more present.

Does this seem like a contradiction? A multiple who claims to be more present? Because, in fact, multiples leave all the time, leave their bodies and hide away inside or outside, leave their minds, leave their friends who don't know where one has gone and where the other has come from. But I do sincerely believe that these things happen for the very reason that we are more present than other people. We are so present, so feeling, so alive, so inside and all around the event, so there with the loved friend or the feared perpetrator, that is too much. It is all too much. And it is too much to love the friend more than they can know, more than they can ever love back. Too much to see the pain in the one who wants to kill you, to love the

murderer. Too much to stay. Too much to leave. Too much to live and unthinkable to die. How can we contain all these things? It is beyond person, place and time. Multiples write about this event or that, how they were hurt and victimized, and are now healing. But even putting these events into a time-frame, into a history, into a world that makes sense to other people, is almost beyond the capability of one who sees and feels everything without a filter.

I don't feel like a multiple, but I know I have many people inside of me, and I recognize myself in the words of other multiples. I just feel like I exist on another plane. I exist on a plane which surrounds and circles everything. Because of this, no one can see me because everyone in the world exists within that circle. I feel like I vibrate at another frequency which cannot be heard by others. I can hear and see them, but they can't hear or see me. I am very lonely, but I cannot give this up; it is necessary to my survival. People have never made sense in my life. Only recently have I been able to gather enough information about abusers, mind control programmers, and the Underworld, that I can recognize in the daytime world, in the world of common information, anything that I know and experience. Otherwise, the only way I've ever been able to comprehend the contradictions in people around me, or the events which happen to me, is by going into that fast spin, taking myself almost outside of time, where I can see it all.

How can non-multiples comprehend a multiple? It is impossible. But multiples need non-multiples to understand them. I am so tired of being blamed for what I "sound like" because my friend believes that I live in the same world as he, a world where exercise keeps one healthy and happy, where ones' repressed anger at one's mom who didn't pay enough attention when one was young, can be sublimated and transferred into a healthy occupation, such as making

that touchdown, closing that deal, where one isn't terrorized in one's dreams and through one's days by unknown forces, and haunted by shadows one can't either grasp or shake off. Does it matter what I sound like?

I am tired of waiting for friends who cannot take the time to be with me the way I can be with them, who don't make the effort to understand me the way I do to understand them, who don't open their hearts to me the way I do mine to them, who believe that I owe them something because they spent time with me, who'd prefer to 'save the best for last,' who, in fact, cannot admit that they are scared of me, who don't want to let me go, but don't want me near, either, who justify the simple immorality of intending to keep me living in a perpetual state of suspended animation for their purposes, so that someday, when they are ready—that is, long after we're both dead—they can love me the way they believe I should be loved. But in the meantime, I am the most worthwhile person who is supposed to live on nothing. The everything who is the nothing.

I refuse to be a victim. If this means I have no friends, I can't change that. I've had people tell me that I should stop 'doing this' (stop being a multiple) if I want friends. I should stop suffering, stop seeing and feeling, stop learning things, stop alienating people. I am appalled. Who are they to judge me? Because they are part of the masses of people whose brains function narrowly and linearly, they can judge me, whose brain houses every variation of human life known to exist? It is a topsy turvy world.

MV



Crystal's Story

It's like changing channels. Only you forget what was just on the last one. That's what alters can do to you. Sometimes it can work towards your favor. Other times it causes problems. If you can switch back to the other channel when you need to, it works out okay. But sometimes the screen is just gray and you can't retrace where you were a few seconds ago. I've caught myself doing it. I haven't always been able to zoom back in.

If you are escaping an unbearable situation, that can save you. However, it's automatic. Being out of control can cause problems—the kind you have with amnesia. Sometimes the channels go by so quickly, it's almost like looking at lots of screens at one time. Which one gets you tuned in the most? That is the person you are at the moment. That is the one you connect with, who makes the decisions you are facing at the time.

Being in therapy has taught me to be able to zero in on more channels at a time: usually I can find the one I want. Sometimes it is still impossible, but it usually happens after awhile if I really try. I know that ultimately getting well will mean finding the channels I need when I need them and being able to tune into all of the information when I need it. I'm not quite there. I can't even say how far I've come. All I know is tuning in is a lot less difficult than it used to be. Who can say how far I will go, or where it will take me.

I wish all of the people with MPD could get the kind of help that I have gotten. I wish they could all find the answers locked up in their past—the ones they missed when the channels were turned. Even old horror flicks can teach you something—maybe just the fact that they only place they are playing now is in your head. To visualize that difference and to know that they aren't on the screen anymore (in other words, in the present tense) is the key to overcoming the walls.

Walls can keep you from seeing the reality of the present—made up of bricks from your past. You're locked in, like in a maze, and sometimes you can't find your way out. You feel

helpless. You become an infant or a small child, unable to control your own destiny. You can't even make a move because you can't see the way out—only more twists and turns—and you become exhausted. There just doesn't seem to be any escape. You can give up or keep trying. Giving up means dying or feeling dead for awhile—you don't even know for how long. You're screaming, but all that's out there are ghosts and monsters, and they aren't going to help you at all.

MPD. There is an escape. Recovery. Being able to see beyond the walls into the present. Away from the horror and the helplessness. HOPE. Finding reality. Tuning in. A lost skill from the time the horror films were real.

Sometimes I feel like a mutant. My grandmother didn't recover from her illness. My mother survived but never got help. That made me the way I am. MPD. An illness I needed in order to survive. It crippled me. Many times. Can I recover to lead a normal life? Only time will tell. So far, I have made great strides. But there is still a lot of work to do.

It haunts me in my dreams. I am driving along in a semi with a full load when the road becomes twisty and hilly. The hills get steeper and climb higher and higher. They are expressways reaching up into the sky. Then they begin looping. I am driving along with my son beside me in the passenger seat. We are going fast. We are doing a loop. He is not worried. I am terrified. I am in charge of this rig. If it should go out of control, we will perish. There are more and more loops in the road ahead. They are multiplying before my eyes. I am getting very dizzy and I want to get off of this expressway with all of its loops and turns and hills. Where does it end? I wake up. The nightmare is over. I turn off the set. Reality. It was only a dream. I get lots of them. Some are too scary to forget. Like the memories.

How do you balance it out—make sense of it? They say when you understand the meaning of a dream, you will stop having it. Before I got into therapy, the dreams were reoccurring,

telling me to look at them. Telling me I needed help. I was lucky. Ten years of therapy. There are those who will never get help and will probably live in their nightmares all of their life. Maybe they won't be able to tune them out. Maybe they won't ever see their way out of the maze.

You have to walk back before you can go ahead. You have to do lots of loops and make sure you can stay on the road. It's scary. If you don't have help, it can be dangerous to you and those who depend on you. My grandmother died at age 60 in a sanitarium. My mother was nine years old when her mother was taken away. My mother survives now, at age 75. She has MPD and passed it on to me. She doesn't know when the channels are changing, but everyone else can tell, and sometimes they don't know which mother is 'real'. (I never knew, but I hope it is the nice one—some of the others can be unbearable.) It's at those times I really have to keep track of my own channels.

I feel like a mutant. A survivor of an illness that can't be seen—only experienced. Until I was diagnosed, I was confused most of the time. I couldn't sort it out and I blamed myself—sometimes even thought I was crazy. I'm multiple—for all the times when I had to survive the unbearable and felt dead and couldn't go on. If I didn't have MPD, I wouldn't be here. I wish it were as easy as changing channels, but it isn't. When you have MPD, you can't find the one you need—not until you get help and work at it very hard. Some people never find themselves and nothing is ever clear.

I am Crystal. I have been broken. I am being mended. A long time ago, I came from a distant star. This is a strange place where I have never fit in. I was too small to remember when it first happened. The channels are helping me to see what I missed. Sometimes it all seems like a distant dream. No, it was real, existing in someone's memory. Someone inside carried the burden so we could survive. I have come back from my distant star to be with them all.

A Toxic Relationship with a Therapist

Joy was the best of times, and she was the worst of times. She was my "perfect" therapist for a year and a half, then she became my highly conflicted and emotionally abusive lover. After 9 years of the emotional rollercoaster ride of my life, I finally said *enough* and stuck with it! She is not a part of my life any more.

This former therapist began seducing me artfully 11 years ago, when I was extremely vulnerable following the death of my son followed several months later by my Mother's death. Joy was seemingly so caring, nurturing and supportive, helping me through the blackest night of the soul I had ever experienced. So I told myself that the lingering, full-body hugs when the session ended were ok, her pressing herself into me was enticing and exciting in ways I had forgotten about, and those little purring sounds she made while she rocked back and forth with me in this embrace, while pressing her face against mine, was all more than okay—it was the stuff heady fantasies are made of.

Never mind that she was my therapist, we were in her office, and she was married to a man, whom I found out years later had also been her client! But at the time I felt soooo special, my existence was validated, and what I felt and said was important enough to be listened to and taken seriously. This was a new experience for me, not at all like the abusive, chaotic, unpredictable family system I had been raised in, where I got slugged and/or pushed away, yelled at and banished to my room for any and everything, based on the whim of either biological parent.

Joy became the nurturing, caring, mirroring parent I never had, and I clung to her for life itself. For nearly a year and a half, she was all of this and more, seeing me sometimes 2-3 times a week, for a couple hours at a time, and if I brought in lunch, the therapy session lasted longer and so did the hug. She taught me behavior modification techniques for challenging my highly polarized thinking...the either/or type stuff which was an intricate part of how I was raised, and she pointed out to me for the first time I could remember that I didn't have to see things that way, that life happened more in shades of grey...not in the black and white absolutes. I got the first inkling that I might have some choices I had never known about, let alone considered.

I blossomed! She encouraged me to return to college, which I'd done periodically over the years, but never with any consistency. There was always some reason to abort the academic process. But with Joy's encouraging me, telling me that I could do anything I wanted to do, like my maternal grandmother had said. (Grandma was the only person in my whole early

existence who loved me and believed in me.) So one day following a session and the wonderfully stimulating embrace, I left Joy's office and went straight to City College where I enrolled in three classes, and the march through academia began. She was soooo proud of me and helped me stay focused on going through the difficult times at school, and when the semester ended I had a 4.0 GPA! What happened was I had split-off big time, going back to my masculine personae, which Joy related to so differently. In my obsessive fantasy, it was the two of us, together forever, and I had to be a man for that. ...Over time, Joy went from being the warm, caring, nurturing, predictable, safe therapist I had known, to become a highly conflicted, emotionally unpredictable, nontrustworthy, volatile, and too often verbally abusive person in the body of my idealized, former therapist. I kept believing the "good" Joy would return, and everything would be okay if I just stayed in the escalating craziness long enough. I was hooked on an emotional roller coaster ride without equal. The highs were sheer ecstasy, and the lows catapulted me into suicidal ideation and depression.

The only predictable constant in this whole chaotic mess was school, and in graduate school in 1993 I took the class "Professional Ethics and the Law." A state of California Consumer Protection Department-published booklet, entitled "Professional Therapy Never Includes Sex," was discussed in class, and we were all given a copy. Oh, I had known at times, when reality hit for the moment, that Joy had ethically been way out of line, but she told me it was because I was "so special," and I needed to believe that.

But finally, after more than eight years, I really had enough. I was so emotionally, financially, spiritually and physically drained, depleted and worn out that I had a colon bleed and lost an estimated 3 pints of blood in the emergency room. With the loss of the blood came the real loss of the illusion. Reality finally got through all my denial systems throughout my elaborate internal structure of personas. I had to face that I had been used and abused by my therapist.

The state-issued booklet I referred to earlier states, "Therapists who encourage, ask for, or permit sexual involvement with their clients are exploiting them...All therapists are trained and educated to know that this kind of behavior is unethical, against the law, and can be harmful to the client...once sexual involvement begins, therapy for the client ends. The original issues that brought the client to therapy are postponed, neglected, and sometimes lost." It goes on to say that "Many people who are victims

of this kind of abusive behavior by therapists suffer harmful long-lasting emotional and psychological effects. Family life and friendships are often disrupted, sometimes ruined." One last quote from the booklet which was so very important to me, once I finally read it and got it. *six years* after I took the graduate class: "Please remember: it does not matter if you, the client, started or wanted the sexual involvement with the therapist. Therapists should never use the therapy relationship for their own sexual gain. This is sexual exploitation and it is illegal."

Common feelings following this type of exploitation are: we feel guilty and responsible. Like "home sweet home" where it was all our fault that things were so crazy and they "had" to abuse us! There are mixed feelings about the therapist, including wanting to protect them, and being angry and feeling betrayed, also. There may even be feelings of love along with extreme emptiness, numbness, depression, and quite likely suicidal thoughts. I have experienced all the above since getting out of the toxicity associated with her.

I have also found a very ethical therapist to help me sort out what I need to do for myself, and it's the plurality in me that is the most difficult issue to work with! We give our power away, because we don't even know we have it, most of the time. Feeling empowered is not a part of our early experiences and training.

We felt powerless and split-off in so many different directions, that pulling ourselves together seems impossible. So we are extremely vulnerable to therapists like Joy. While statistically only about 10% of the total professional therapists' population do what she did, of that estimated 10%, a whopping 80% do it more than once!

Alas, we aren't the only "special" ones in these people's lives. This is not how really to be "special" anyway...it is only an illusion. It is not real, nor is it lasting, though the subsequent damage can be, unless ethical professional help is gotten to work it through and we are able to slowly find the willingness and ability to gradually trust again.

Trust is totally destroyed in the betrayal involved with a therapist seducing us, even if we want them to. And we do have options! We don't have to stay stuck in any toxic relationship. We deserve better, and with help we can take charge of our lives enough to get out, however difficult it may be! What doesn't kill us really will strengthen us if we get the help we need to go through the detoxification process. We all deserve a happy, fulfilling life. It's our birthright!

By Jerry, Ellen and all

Letters

Send replies to MV. We'll forward them.

I desperately need help from your readers. I was diagnosed with MPD/DID in 1994 and have done a lot of healing. I have integrated all my alters and now am working on living life as a 'single.'

But I am desperately afraid of being healthy, of getting well. My therapist (who has lots of experience with trauma survivors) has never seen anyone as afraid of getting well as me.

As a child I was hospitalized many times for physical ailments, and these were the only "safe" times of my life. When I got well and was discharged from Children's Hospital, it was back home and back to the abuse again.

And now I cannot seem to break the connection in my mind that getting well is dangerous. I am so very frightened.

Has anyone else experienced this? Does anyone have any suggestions? Please write back to me c/o MV. Thanks

—Jan

RE: safe support... I have no one at all, other than my psychologist, that I can talk to—at all—about my problems. My parents are both dead, but they were the main source of abuse. My seven siblings don't understand MPD, and avoid me like the plague. Three of my sisters even go out of their way to tell people that I am crazy, and not to have anything to do with me. I have no friends, and no support system other than my psychologist. Even he isn't that helpful, because it is his professional opinion that MPD exists because a person is full of evil spirits. I have been seeing him for 13 years, and he doesn't want me to come to see him unless I feel "in control" on the days I do see him. He doesn't want anything to do with any of "the others." Can anyone help with friendship or advice? - Thank you very much.

—JM of Texas

I have an issue that has come up for me. Due to recent surgery and not being able to function as I normally

would, I want to know where was God during/while the abuse was going on? I live in a small town, and have found little information on the topic.

The flashbacks have been so bad that to try to talk about them is just too hard on my therapist and myself. Some of the flashbacks are so bad I cannot put them into words.

I realize this is a broad topic. But how can I or anyone adjust to God/Religion being used to justify abuse: sexual, verbal, emotional, physical? If you have any ideas on this, or information, please send it c/o Many Voices. I don't have a computer right now. Thank you.

—Martha G.

We are writing to share with others about a perception problem we have been working on for years, and to ask if others have experienced this, or have solutions.

In our 'perception problem', some one or more of our alters will perceive something about an outside person or situation which turns out to be inaccurate.

Example: Our 6-year old Katie "perceived" that her friend Kenny didn't care about her anymore, and the relationship was going to be over. The truth is that Kenny was just very involved in another project. But no matter how much reassurance we give ourselves or receive from the other person, that feeling of rejection and unworthiness just sits and sits inside, causing all kinds of anxiety and eventually a real crazy spell.

Our therapist explained that since Katie is 6 she has the mental functioning of a child that age. We have no children of our own, so we went on the Internet and searched for 'normal' growth of children. We were very surprised at what we found:

"Intuitive Phase: 4-7 years. Speech becomes more social, less egocentric. The child has an intuitive grasp of logical concepts in some areas. However, there is still a tendency to focus attention on one aspect of an object while ignoring others.

Concepts formed are crude and irreversible. Easy to believe in magical increase, decrease, disappearance. Reality not firm. Perceptions dominate judgement."

Once our perception has been created, it is like a cement wall. No one seems to be able to change it, from myself to the outside person involved....The panic, depression and just feeling totally worthless in a heightened state of alertness...it just becomes so intense. Does anyone have suggestions? Thanks-

—Beverly and the Girls

I am very closed right now and have a hard time talking to my husband or therapist about what I feel. I don't want to go into the hospital. I have to push myself to do stuff, but if I push too much then I get in trouble with my 'others'. We are struggling a lot but it doesn't show much to the outside world. I'd love to hear from others who know what I mean. —Linda

MV

Loneliness

Loneliness is a sad thing.

Loneliness is like the number 1.

Being lonely is not having anyone to hold,

Or being able to get close to someone.

Loneliness is always being by yourself even when you're with someone.

Being lonely is missing something in your life.

Loneliness is a sad thing.

Loneliness makes a person always hoping for something else.

Being lonely is like being happy, but on the inside you're still alone.

Being lonely is always being sad, even when someone tries to make you happy.

Being lonely makes a person unhappy.

Being lonely makes a person pretend to be happy all the time.

Loneliness is a sad thing.

By Paul & Crew

MV



"Normal" is more than half good

Coming out on the other side has not been like a fairy tale. I am not like a Cinderella at the ball. Neither am I a Superwoman. I have had to put dreams of endless sunshine and rainbows, and diamonds falling from the sky, on the shelf. The "happily ever after" is being placed alongside the black clouds and lightning. Alongside the monsters, blood and fire. Alongside all that made up the "traumatically long before." I am hanging up my costumes and organizing my shelves. What is left to me? "Average." "Normal." A cloud. The sun. Bare feet in the grass. A garden in the yard. Fruit for my labors. Small things. "Normal" things. Isn't this what I've always wanted anyway? A "normal" life? How many gazillion times have I said that, over the years? Superwoman tights cut off the circulation, and ball gowns are gaudy and scratchy. These are the facts. The even-better facts, are that most monsters stay on the shelf these days. Even when one escapes and begins roaming around, I am better-equipped to tackle him and put him in his place. I am also finding out that a little rain is palatable and even good for the tomato plants. This "other side" is turning out to be "not half bad"...which translates to be "more than half good!" Wow! What a deal! I survived. I am surviving. So far, so good.

By ellen b. who is and was always, Ellie's family

MV

Books

Forgiveness: Theory, Research and Practice.

Edited by Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, Carl E. Thoresen. Published by The Guilford Press, www.guilford.com or 72 Spring St., NY, NY 10012. (800) 365-7006. Hardback, 334 pgs. \$35.

Does forgiving one's perpetrators help one heal? How likely is it that those who injure others will admit their deeds and apologize later on? How do various religions apply forgiveness in their theology? Is there a broad social benefit to forgiving and repentance?

Here's a book for professionals that attempts to address those questions and more. The writing itself is fairly complex, with broad sections covering Conceptual and Measurement Issues, Basic Psychological Research, and Applications in Counseling, Psychotherapy and Health.

According to the writers (some 34 individuals contributed) there are positive and negative aspects to the process of forgiving...and a similar spectrum to the

expressions of repentance that those who feel victimized long to hear.

Sincere expressions of forgiveness and repentance are likely to have positive effects on relationships, the authors say. However, sometimes superficial communications are offered to gain power or self-protection...and may succeed at least in the short term. There is quite a discussion on the differing perceptions of "victims" and "perpetrators"...since frequently those who commit violent acts see themselves as victims, and so have little interest in repenting.

The writers explain a useful distinction between guilt and shame: guilt refers to a specific action (or failure to act)...but shame refers to a perception of the self as bad, and of being exposed, coupled with a wish to hide. Some people are more likely to feel guilt, while others are shame-based. The easily shamed or humiliated may be less likely to ask forgiveness.

There are pluses and minuses on the victim's side, too. The person actively "forgiving" may feel less stressed-out and more comfortable within. But sometimes,

forgiving occurs out of a sense of personal weakness or vulnerability. The victim who forgives may stay in a dangerous situation, when leaving is the wiser course of action. For others, there are benefits to being a "victim" that may be eroded by forgiving. Some victims allow themselves to get back at or take revenge on their perpetrator; they like the feeling of power that anger induces, they also may lose support and sympathy from others if they forgive.

There are no easy answers here about how to forgive, or even why to forgive. Opinions range widely, and the book is most fairly depicted as an exploration or study of the forgiveness process...not at all 'self-help' or 'how-to'. The various writers also lay the groundwork for future research in this area, and outline some studies that may help clarify practical applications of forgiving and repentance in the future.

—Lynn W

A Spanish-language edition of *COURAGE TO HEAL* is now available. *El Coraje De Sanar* is \$25. (315) 474-1132 or email scw@syrculturalworkers.org

MV

**WE NEED ART! WE
NEED WRITING! We need
lots more of everything!**

See our early-stage webpage:
<http://hometown.aol.com/mvwebnews>
Tell us what you'd like to see on it!

And thanks SO MUCH to
those who help us help
others! —Lynn W.

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June 2000

Medications & DID: 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

August 2000

Been there—Done that! Share what you have vowed to *never* do again! What you will do *instead* of "that thing"! How you changed your behavior. ART: Your proudest accomplishment
DEADLINE: June 1, 2000.



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