

# MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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*In This Issue:*

## Recovering From Physical Abuse Mind/Body Healing and Exercise



### *The Dance of the Belt*

The dance begins in different ways  
but always the same  
out of the muttering stillness that  
forebodes natural and human  
violence  
an uneasiness that creates  
anxious glances  
at moody skies or darkening faces  
like any animal, afraid, I seek  
the safety of shelter  
fleeing, scrambling to the  
center of the self  
shutting out the angry voice  
modulated into caustic sentences  
slowing rising  
the wind screams my heart stops  
frozen in terror  
the belt comes down the thunder  
breaks  
my arms and legs flail in some  
demented dance screams and pleas  
swirl in suspended explosions  
torn from my throat by  
the whistling song of the belt.  
I watch wide-eyed and silent  
deep and deep and far away  
the belt falls silent  
the receding storm  
washes away his childhood  
in swirling eddies  
stillness snuffles a halting circle  
around his burning body radiating  
shame  
small fingers dig into the coolness  
of the soft earth  
I will never dance again.

*By George Nixon*

MV



# Physical Abuse Aftermath

By Wish We Were One

**T**o me, physical, sexual and emotional abuse are intertwined. Both parents were perpetrators, though in different ways, as was a sibling. My father was my primary sexual abuser, though he demanded and received some assistance from my mother. He was also an alcoholic, a screamer, and impulsively, erratically violent. My mother was emotionally distant, extremely critical, and physically abusive. My older sister tried to smother me as an infant (one of the rare times my mother rescued me) and later bent my arm back behind my shoulder blades "waiting to hear it crack" she said, retelling the story to me in adulthood. There was a tone of amazement in her voice, that such a thing could happen. (Sis didn't succeed...and she still doesn't believe our family life was especially damaging. She's right, up to a point. All of us children lived through it. None of us is in jail.)

The types of abuse included threats to kill, using visible weapons, and vivid descriptions of what would happen to me, if I did or didn't do X. I suppose this abuse falls under the category of "emotional" since the threats were not fully carried out. But there were occasional outbursts of actual violence—being thrown against a wall, having an adult foot placed on my small chest, etc.

Oddly, considering the other abuses, my parents did not believe in paddling—however, I would have preferred a quick paddling over being tied to chairs and beds to keep me controlled. (I was very active, and now I believe mother just needed a break. Of course I didn't understand that at the time.)

But the worst physical experience for me, yielding long-term consequences, happened when I was about 4. Mother considered me a very willful child. I was headstrong and defiant, and sure of myself. I didn't respect her (that much was true) and I wouldn't listen. So she decided one afternoon to "break my

will" with a cat-o-nine tails — the same device my father used on her, I've come to believe. We lived in the country, with no neighbors in sight. I was tied to the porch post and she began to hit me. At first, I thought I could take it, as I'd taken all her other punishments. Then, I realized I couldn't.

That single physical attack literally broke my spirit. Though I still managed to be the family rebel on the outside, inside I became a craven coward. I would not let "me" do what I wanted to do, for fear of triggering retaliation from "Them."

As a consequence, I've spent the past 53 years trying to avoid upsetting people, making sure my real desires are carefully hidden, not "bothering" people (talking to people or asking questions is "bothering" them.) I also do not allow myself to freely use my own talents and abilities, for fear it will cause trouble, and I would not survive.

I am sure that mother had good intentions when she set out that day to break my will. I'm sure she felt that being submissive and docile was the safest route to survival. It was the route she took. And perhaps, with my father's erratic temper, if she had been defiant she might have been dead. Maybe she feared the same for me. So she taught me to bury myself at age 4, and that once bright and confident part of me has lived in the shadows ever since.

Years of therapy have brought some improvements. My body used to be completely numb, so numb I would walk deliberately through bramble bushes to scratch my legs and wonder why I couldn't feel anything. Now, I hurt. I am much more conscious of my body, its aches, pains and stiffness. In some ways I'm glad of that. I used to say to myself, at least if I hurt, I know I'm alive. Now I give myself every opportunity for comfort.

I've learned how to control nightmares, and I no longer have constant screaming or vivid scenes of destruction playing in my head. I no

longer fear, minute to minute, that I am doomed. But my body is still not fully connected. I see myself with legs, shoulders, arms and a head, but not much in between. I always position myself with my back to a wall in public places, to prevent anyone coming up behind me. I was told not to move or I would die, so I tend to freeze when I feel in danger, instead of running away. I am a genuine "sitting duck." The adrenaline only kicks in for me after the threat has subsided.

Sometimes even now I feel the sting and ache on my back, in exactly the place where the blows landed. I've certainly relived the pain, over and over—and I understand where it comes from—but this knowledge and feeling has not yet permitted me to regain my true self, to let "me" live. Tens of thousands of dollars in therapy have helped, but not cured, that early burst of terror. Suggestions welcome.

*(We will forward your replies. Please give us permission to share your thoughts on this with other MV readers.-LW)*

MV





## Last Night I Wept

Last Night I wept for a child  
who never knew love,  
a hug of comfort,  
a sense of wonder.

Last night I wept for a child  
alone and scared,  
with silent screams  
that filled the air.

Last night I wept for a child  
who gazed at stars,  
and never dreamed,  
or dared to hope.

Last night I wept for a child  
who learned to be quiet  
and believed the lies  
of those so tall.

Last night I wept for a child  
who lived in fear,  
knew pain and terror,  
before her time.

Last night I wept for a child  
who felt worthless and bad  
to the core of a soul  
that yearned to die.

Last night I wept for a child  
with wounds so deep  
no voice to whisper  
the secrets inside.

Last night I wept for a child  
who breathed in despair,  
and endured the torture  
of innocence lost.

Last night I wept for a child  
who longed to be safe,  
for a touch that would heal a heart so  
shattered.

Last night I wept for a child  
who never learned to play,  
to smile at the sun,  
or just be free.

Last night I wept for a child.  
Last night I slept as a child.

By Linda C. et al

**MV**



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We appreciate your support! — Lynn W., Editor

## Facing the End of Therapy

By CE

This week, for the umpteenth time, I crashed. The depression, insomnia, and anxiety came down upon me like a tidal wave and I reacted as I always do. Panic-stricken, I reached for the phone to grasp my therapist's calm voice and wise advice. However, just in the midst of my inner maelstrom, I was aghast to discover that evidently, her pager was not working. This was no cruel trick. She is always terrifically dependable about promptly calling me back. The truth was evident. I had to face this one alone. Painful? Definitely. Life-threatening? Only if I chose to allow it to be.

Using all my coping mechanisms, I made it through the weekend, emotionally battered, but intact. Now it is time to reflect upon what happened when I found myself alone on that terrible sea. The experience had been frightening, but perhaps more formidable was facing the fact that this incident revealed the pattern of my future.

After more than a decade in therapy, now I must begin to imagine exigencies without that telephone. My therapist did not sign on for life. Our work together was meant to have a beginning and an end and within the very fact that I handled this crisis alone

is proof that the end of our relationship is in sight.

What a dichotomy of feelings...part of me applauds my growth while perhaps a larger part screams out in pain at the thought of losing a parental figure that has been trustworthy, loving and sensitive to my every need. Maybe I could purposely create an emergency that would cement our union for another year? Another month? No, in my heart I understand that would not be progress. I must peer over the horizon on my own at some point and quit looking backwards. I must join the ranks of those who manage life without two hours per week of intimate guidance and soul holding.

Nothing has ever scared me so much, but I think this is called being whole, being adult, being well. I want it and I don't. I want to dance while crying. But I have the tools now and the time is almost here.

Time to say a heartfelt thank you. Time to give a hug. Time to close the door without making that next appointment. Time to be grateful for a reliable person who truly cared about my outcome. Time to walk down the road towards the remainder of my life viewing my future not as a sunset, but as a beautiful sunrise.

**MV**



# Physical Healing & Mental Relief

We have few physical scars from our abuse, but many emotional ones. We have "body memories." When my spouse kisses me, my child alters sometimes get scared.

Swimming helps heal my body and my mind. Floating, playing ball in the book, and swimming around is the best exercise for us.

We forget we were abused when we are in the pool. We were never abused in a swimming pool.

*By Sally B.*



## To whoever still wants to hurt me:

Why do you still want to hurt me, which makes me hurt others? Why do I still need to be punished? Haven't I been punished enough? We need to work together to make this stop happening, ever again. I can't do this anymore.

If I ever told someone what happens to me when you want me to do things I don't want to do, they would say that is bullshit. Do you want to know something? I can't understand it myself. I have a hard time understanding why I do things when I know I don't want to do them. It's so easy for someone to say "Well, don't go—You have a mind of your own." But that isn't true. I don't have a mind of my own. I have a mind with many others. What made you so strong that I seem to do things I shouldn't? What happened to you to make you hate me so much? Why do you like to see me cry and be scared? What do you want from me? I can't go through this anymore. How can anybody hate someone so much?

I was doing so well. I felt happy and I liked going out and being with people. I was laughing and almost liking myself. Do you hurt me because you don't want me to be happy and feel good? Do I have to live my whole life feeling miserable? You've got to let me know these answers. I want to help you, if you will let me. Please stop wanting me to hurt myself in so many

ways. Please talk to me or find some way to let me know why. You are a part of me, and I love you. How can I not love you? Even though you want to hurt me, I still love you. You are a part of me, and whatever part you are, you are a part that helped save my life. If you helped save my life, then why do you want me to destroy it now? We have worked so hard, all of us together. Please join our circle and be one with us. We all want you and we all love you. You can even go to our safe mountain where you will be embraced with all of us. Please let me help you. You have always helped me, now let me help you. I really love you. Please try and make some kind of contact with me, let it be from talking to me, drawing, dreams, anything at all. I just need to meet you and talk to you.

For some reason I feel that you think that I should hate you and hurt you in some way, but you know what? I'm not like that. I'm not like that monster who hurt us. I am a good person and I want to stay that way. You can hurt me as much as you want, and still I would never hurt you. You have been hurt enough. The only thing that I would do is hold out my arms to you and just hold you and let you cry for as long as you need to. I feel that you have a lot of tears in you, just waiting to come out. You can cry with me, and we can cry together. I wish that I could have saved you from all of the hurt that you endured, but I couldn't. I was just a little girl, and then I was so afraid of him and his threats that I couldn't do anything. But I'm stronger now, and I can help you now. Please let me. We are always together, so whenever you want me or need me, try to make some kind of contact with me. I'll be waiting. I love you!

*By Marie*



Mark is the only male alter to have emerged, although I know there are others inside like Del (a burly truck driver) and Page (a sort of mime). My first Companion job was in the

summer of 1998 for an 87-year-old man named Rodney.

On my second day to assist him, I rang the doorbell of his home and Rodney soon appeared to inform me some friends were picking him up shortly.

As I needed to verify this with his daughter, I stepped inside, where Rodney pressed me against the screen door with his right hand while rubbing my upper chest in a circular motion with his left hand. "If you stay I'll rape you," he said matter-of-factly, staring into my eyes.

I was just paralyzed, I was so surprised, but Mark took over.

He moved away from Rodney saying, "You won't rape me. I trust you completely." Then he bent down to tie a loose shoelace. Now it was Rodney's turn to be surprised.

As Mark calmly informed Rodney he was going to call his daughter first, Rodney stepped outside onto the porch and peered through the screen door like a naughty Dachshund. The phone call was made and Rodney's daughter reluctantly agreed to her father's change of plans for the day.

Now more about Mark. He is 14 years old, with a responsible, quick-thinking attitude. He has one bad eye due to a swimming incident when I was a young girl, swimming in a lake with two of my brothers. I had been swimming underwater and shortly after surfacing, my older brother threw a wet gob of mud from the lake bottom into my face. Some of it got into my eyes, unfortunately. Hence, the bad eye.

A few years ago, an optometrist noticed a tiny scar in one eye that I believe occurred from the lake incident. This eye waters and bothers me when Mark emerges.

*By B.D.S.*





# Control

By Kristen and my Bud's

**C**ontrol. It tore us apart into such small fragments it's like trying to put a fine crystal vase back together. We had no control as a child except what we ate, so we didn't. Things like that. No control or help from anyone to keep us safe. They had all the power and control; I—we—were sitting ducks. By my first time when we were rebels, in a passive way, until we trashed the house a few times, got carted to a shrink. My first OD, and no more shrink. Everyone wanted to control us. We drew close inside and gave each other support until P.J. unwittingly read Sybil and the stark reality struck us, and our thoughts of "why am I so much different than other people." We each took a name and beat feet (ran away) to the horizon of hills.

In 1985 I became a control factor, a vicious cruel life-threatening brat to our then-leaders; I was punished, then I got the sack until I came back in '89-'90—again I was vicious and punished big time. Like I was a baby, not 15. I am loved and respected by my others inside. They gave me a chance to change or be lost forever.

Now the issues are so hard to cope with: sleep disorders, eating disorders, pain—a lot of pain—grief issues from the past and another Jan to put with the last 36 and say Yuck.

My children. I and all inside worry about them. Neither lives with me. I'm not structured enough for that. We need to diet and lose weight. Need to follow a diet. I'm a recently-diagnosed diabetic. Money is never there when we need it. But remember I said my family had all the power and control? I'm help them (us in this body) take some of it back.

The only family members who acknowledge us are my mom and stepfather, whom I love. As far as we are concerned, he's my dad.

We take our power back by not letting others' rejection hurt too much, and own my feelings, not letting them trample them as much. I still have a long way to go. But God's help is near.

We take control by setting limits on "fret" time. Time to worry is over—turn the tube on.

Still control. I strive to be perfect; I need so much to be so exact we can't get anything done, because we are pulled from so many places it's a stalled attempt. A couple of new splits are there with a lot of the house-hold stuff as their function; to help us control. But a soft secret hushed voice speaks to the working groups from '89 to now. Will I be lost to the internal world like someone was when I split? Or will I stay? We need these two desperately. They could feasibly start a new round of workers and send us in.

One just said, "Take your jobs? Not on your life; no way, no how, not ever, nada." They have contracted to stay within our parameter of disciplines that we hold dear to hearts. First and foremost, love God with all your heart, mind and soul. These two are a gift from God. We can control our environment now. Now, if only we could find a diet. Our body-care person is very frustrated over the need to be on a regular diet. Maybe that will be next. One of the new ones offered to help. One major thing we took

control over a little more than a year ago. We quit smoking. It was hard with so many fighting to smoke, and to quit. When all was said and done, we are free of that. Took control, thank God.

In this last six years of great therapy, we've used major control issues as a valuable item on our side. Every day we do some therapeutic stuff. Not to burn out, though. As the controllers we are like "air traffic controllers". We hear, feel, share, comfort, teach, hold and nurture all the ones inside who need it. The common bond.

They all hurt so bad that when it's time to rest and look at things, saying "Thanks God, I need a break" another one calmly shifts us and takes over for the next round of internal "complaints."

If they get too vocal, we let them see some of what we blind-side for them...their own past and pain. They shut up quick. A blind-side is a wall or blockade to keep one safe from too much of their own pain until therapy. Then they give us control until they forget and get cranky again.

MV





# The Body and Me

By Sunflower House

*I wish to comment on Kathryn's mind/body questions article (see August 2001). My comments don't apply to victims of physical deformities, body destroying diseases and accidents.*

I never was chosen for teams we had in elementary school. After sixth grade, we could choose to opt out of teams, and I did. But I grew up in the John Kennedy program era of becoming more like the Russians and not like the big puff balls Americans were becoming since the Russians beat us to space. So daily exercise was mandatory and graded throughout my school life.

However, my elementary teachers tried to protect me. I was so bad in gym, it went beyond what any kid could feel like teasing. They were awed, as I remember. I remember the other kids either staying as far from me as they could get, or keeping me in the way outfield. I was often the scorekeeper. Even my teachers got tired of wincing and cringing while I got hit by balls, often from behind, got tripped up by my own feet and sprained ankles, fell off the monkey bars (you could have all sorts of playground equipment then that would horrify most parents and schools today), crashed into walls and stepped off uneven ground spots without noticing, only to fall six inches to two feet in horrific body slams onto the concrete, and hit my teammates with my swinging baseball bat (I missed the ball, however.) I often took other kids down with me in my falls, flailings, near misses and crashings. I'm not sure the teachers were entirely protecting only me by pushing me into the role of scorekeeper.

We had to be graded, and it was part of the overall grade point average. I never got less than a C. I think it was because of my being a good scholastic student. We didn't do team work studies in class for social studies, science and computers like they do today. Grades were based on individual effort only. When I broke my arm walking down a sidewalk with nothing near me to cause my fall, my PE teachers were happy. I didn't have PE for a year.

When I got to be a junior in high school, I realized I would not have any sport represented under my picture in the yearbook, and I wanted to go to college, so I signed up for after-school track. After I knocked myself out running trying to catch a baton from my relay team member, broke the high jump equipment and almost cracked my shinbone falling over the hurdles, my teacher asked me why I was doing this. I couldn't even run a mile without almost fainting from lack of oxygen. When I explained, she smiled and put me on the high jump (I was tall) and taught me to kinda step/jump over it. I actually won sixth place in a meet with

seven people. I still have the ribbon and the newspaper announcement.

Of course, looking back, I had no body sense. I literally could not feel my body. I tried very very hard not to see it or pay attention to it. I felt very numb about it. I didn't think about why—never. Seriously, most of the time I felt humiliated, depressed, sad and frightened in all my classes, not just gym, until high school. Often I just was *there*, doing the minimum necessary to pass in gym class. I endured. I walked around in a fog of numbness and not noticing anything about anything, not only my body. I did not have friends, and I lost myself in books. I stayed in the school library at breaks and lunch. I never noticed I didn't have friends, and it seemed like no one else did either. I read more books than anyone and won all sorts of school sponsored reading contests and test proficiencies. I don't know why, but I was not picked on. Other people who did not fit in or who were considered weird really had a terrible time. But I never did.

Some kids liked me, some started getting to know me in high school. But it was like I walked around invisible, except in class.

Teachers as well as students barely talked to me. I never got invitations from anyone, but I never thought of that as a bad thing. I was glad for it. When I got older, about junior high age (middle school, now) I listened to what seemed like a million pep talks on how if you try, proficiency would come.

From that time on, I was a determined trier. I avoided the shower room, so I learned to wear baggy clothes for sweating. We had to wear approved gym clothes, but I wore them big. I avoided team sports and emphasized personal bests. During this time, team sports were not emphasized anyway. Grades were based on how many sit-ups and pushups you could do, or if you could adequately run a couple of times around a track or do a minimum of ten pullups or climb to the top of a twenty foot rope. Ten times was the passing number for anything. Participating and making an effort was part of the grade, too. It was possible to get nothing but C's even if you were in terrible shape.

As time went on, I did start to notice most girls were like me in conditioning. Sports was not a big thing for girls. This was early 1960s. We had a few stars, but they far surpassed the rest of us. We had some real loafers too, but they made us look good, so we didn't mind them. I was slightly chubby until high school. I was always the

tallest person in my class until high school, when the boys started growing as tall as I was. In high school I started dieting, eating one meal a day and tons of coffee. I became more animated but thinner, and had a few more friends.

But gym never was a good place. I always felt like a little, little girl in the gym. I never wanted anything to do with boys (I was and am heterosexual, however) and dating—until high school when being like that would mean I would stand out.

I had been humiliated in class about my clothes when a boy shouted "Look at the grandma!" because I never noticed what I wore. I wore clothes my hardly-around mother troubled herself to pick up, mostly from the Salvation Army. After being shouted at, I got regular clothes from stores. When girls I was teamed with talked about dates and boys, I started dressing up and dieting and pretending I wanted a boyfriend, and tried out hang out with some girls who didn't question me too hard about things out of school. My group was mostly eggheads anyway. I never questioned how I operated, ever. I never questioned my loneliness or felt in any way to become really normal. It was all about appearances with me.

So I got a bikini and exercised in daily gym class and bought girl magazines and copied their look. I did date, but I never connected. I never went more than two or three times with any boy, I didn't talk much, and I went straight home. But to the world, I was normal. The birth control pill did not become available until I was in the 12th grade, but sex education also was out until the 12th grade. I had no idea what normally went on between dating kids, really.

Later, as a young adult, I became anorexic. I clearly remember the relief I felt at not eating and being very thin. I felt like my physical life was all about floating, as if I were in the clouds, above all earthly needs. I was married too, but he is dysfunctional, and he would often wither me with a few comments about how fat I was. I was actually 119 lbs and 5'10".

After a few years it was noticed by co-workers who often would try to have a heart to heart with me about anorexia, but a few months later I was in the middle of my first public nervous breakdown, so anorexia was only one of my problems.

But at the very bottom of my feelings about my body and my social set's views, I was barely different on the surface. In



Kathryn's article, she speaks of how our culture encourages us to see our bodies as objects to be punished and controlled. That was and is so true. After high school, I began to exercise and exercise and exercise and...I joined a women's club popular at the time, and I was there every day for years. I could touch my toes, and do 25 pushups, practically pushing my ribs into my backbone. My backbone was like an ancient dinosaur's bones in rock. But hey, Twiggy was all the rage. Not too many people noticed for years, until the news about anorexia began to get play in the media.

My weight jumped up and down by 50 pounds over the next few years. I read magazines like *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan* and utterly believed them. I got more involved with people for real, had girlfriends, and went out a lot. I dated a lot, experimented with many things, and eventually "settled down" and got married, but I never ate or exercised normally. I hated my body. I totally hated it. I actually hit it with ashtrays and books. I made myself fall down and crash into things. I wanted it to really hurt if it couldn't be made to look sexy, if it wouldn't cooperate with me.

I wanted to be a size 9, but it insisted on only getting as small as size 11, except when I was anorexic. I had four sizes of clothes in my closets.

Then, in my thirties, I bloated up. I hit 25 pounds overweight according to the doctor's weight chart. I really, truly hated myself. My self-talk every day included how I deserved my troubles because I had no self-control and was such a fat pig and so very ugly. I was a bad person because I was a size 16. Of course, all this focusing on how I was failing, punishing my body with physical pain of over-and under-exercising at home and starving, I was able to become determined and focused on becoming thin and fit. I worked up extreme passions, so that I could ignore all of the little voices telling me I could never go to a health salon or exercise class and expose myself in all my inadequacies.

I wore big, loose tee shirts and shorts, I put my hair in a pony tail because how many people look good with their hair pulled back, and worked up a good sweat to justify my efforts and appearance.

I maintained a positive attitude, and did not talk much. I let other people talk first, or try an exercise or machine first. I didn't volunteer for anything, and tried to stay in the back of the exercise class. I never looked in the mirrors or at other people's bodies. Sometimes the physical fitness employee would touch my body to demonstrate how to move or where I would be helped by this or that exercise. I just froze and kept smiling, but was very very tense.

My passions to finally stop this physical fitness failing on my part were strong enough to overcome every one of my feelings of shyness, fear, sometimes trauma flashbacks, and dislikes of looking at anyone there, or being watched. I got very very fierce with myself, calling myself names, hating myself for my cowardice, pushing my body to suffer in order to drown out all of my self-hate at my self-imposed thoughts to leave, never come back, give up—gee what if they are looking at me and laughing at me?

One of the ways I used to succeed was to never tell anyone I was doing this, never come with a friend, never do my exercises or classes with people I knew. I would arrive at first for a look around and take a tour if they had one. Then, if I signed up, I went to a store. I wouldn't tell anyone what I had signed up for, or what I was shopping for. I didn't talk to anyone or ask for help. That would have been so stressful, so I would just look on my own through several stores, go into a changing room silently and try things on.

I bought the latest fitness clothes, but only the ones where most of my body was artfully concealed. It can be done. Then you wear large tee shirts over it all, or a big loose pair of shorts. The way I did it, it was kind of a secret life. Sometimes, if I felt too insecure, I would buy magazines and do exercises at home and go on starve diets until I lost enough or got strong enough where I thought I wouldn't make a fool of myself in a class.

I never had a lot of money, so I was limited in the different options of exercise and dieting. I did what I could afford, but I have never had a spending or credit card problem. I spent what I could afford. I didn't buy a lot of food anyway, but special purchases of diet products were out if they were expensive. If I ate, it was in splurges of overeating food at home and out in inexpensive restaurants. If I gained weight after losing a lot, I quit the club and went through a non-exercise period until I got over my depression and got mad and full of self-hate enough to start the whole losing-weight strategy again.

While having therapy for my increasing mental problems, my weight never stabilized. I would exercise for years, then quit for years. I would starve and gorge. When I finally was correctly diagnosed with MPD, I started connecting with my body. It was unexpected, not something I looked for or worked for. Suddenly, in bits and pieces, I felt my body. Since I never had felt it, I didn't know I wasn't feeling it. Suddenly my legs and arms were connected. I could feel the muscles work and the tendons strain. It was a big surprise. How could something be there all this time and me using it constantly, but me be totally, completely unable to feel it?

It was my alters. They had my body. As we gained some co-consciousness, I felt

what they felt. I began to feel my stomach hurt when I overate or missed eating. I felt sweat, all different kinds of sweat, and I learned the difference between fear sweat and exercise sweat. They had been the same thing to me.

I felt my muscles warm up and get all relaxed from a workout. I felt my body harmonize itself, feel smooth as butter after a good workout. I felt it hurt when I worked too hard, or not often enough, or too light. My pattern of exercising and dieting, eating too much and never exercising, began to even out. I got rewarded for treating my body right, and punished for treating it wrong.

Before, I called the shots. Now my body was. I was hearing it, and I decided to listen to it, with encouragement from my therapist. I started looking at other women—not just TV and movie stars. I started noticing how my shape had only a little bit to do with how my body felt. I could be saggy and a little overweight, but feel wonderful with medium stretches, a half hour walk, and eating fruits and vegetables along with bread and meat. If I cut some food group out, I got cravings and felt crummy. I could feel it.

With many, many talks to my therapist, and reading books, I have overcome my mirror anxieties. I have two different sizes of clothes in my closet, and that's planned. I discovered the beauty of moderation. If you don't exercise too hard or too little, if you don't eat too much or too little, you can have a very pleasant feeling being in your body.

Good feelings encouraged me to calm down, at last, about my body. Now I find myself praising it, actually praising it! Such a good body, keeping me on my good behavior. I check mirrors for unusual moles and my hair, rather than for critical self-abuse. It's taken years. I had to make things a habit. I had to keep calendars, where I only recorded if I walked at least three times a week, nothing else. I ate almost the same healthy things, mostly, with some occasional treating myself and special exotic foods. I didn't want a boring diet, but if I had too many different things in my diet, even if they were healthful, I gained weight. I had three or four choices for different meals that I liked.

Of course, I tried for moderation in amounts, using fruits, vegetables, unbleached bread and lowfat meats like chicken and fish. I forbid myself from starting food and calorie journals again, and threw away all of my calorie books. I read labels only for what's in the package and the fat content.

It's wonderful! My blood pressure went down, my aches and pains vanished, literally vanished! Talk about positive feedback! But you have to listen, really listen to your body. You have to make a commitment to make your body feel good,

*Continued on Page 8*



*The Body & Me , Cont'd*

no matter how you look. If it hurts, don't do it. I used to make banners saying that and had them all over where I had to see my body, like in the bedroom or the bathroom. Now I don't need such reminders. Things become a habit in time. I never buy so-called women's magazines now. When I see them in the checkout line at the store, I see headlines that haven't changed in 40 years: "Lose 10 pounds in one week" "The latest diet and it really works!" "How the stars lose weight!" "How to lose 50 pounds and be in a bathing suit by summer."

*Ignore those magazines.* I can swim in a T-shirt and shorts. I go for a variety of exercises, and I never do any one exercise longer than an hour, like walking. If I walk a lot, I concentrate on stretching exercises in my living room. I don't need an exercise class or club now. For one thing, I've learned a lot of exercises over the years. Now I do the ones that make my body feel good. I walk with my neighbors sometimes, and check out everyone's gardens. It's really quite nice. I discovered fitness does not have to include self-hate and self-punishment. It felt weird to have fitness without severe emotions or physical abuse, but I got used to feeling good while I worked out. It was all about moderation, common sense, and not setting such high impossible goals for what was possible for my body type, age and lifestyle.

The hardest part was seeing that my problems and my difficulties liking myself had nothing to do with those problems about my weight or appearance. I had my self-hatred problems even when I was thin. When I got thin, I worried about staying thin, and my mental problems kept getting worse, whatever my weight. It was by realistically looking at me —me—not a movie magazine picture—and hearing my body, that finally freed me from the culture madness.

I'm tall, but I'm medium-boned and a little wide, structure-wise. Even in the anorexia days my waist never got smaller than 29 inches, my bust never got smaller or bigger than size B, just saggier or fuller. My skin never looked like the movie stars or models, being somewhat full-pored. My hair was heavy, but very thin individual hairs, so it never looked mussed or full, just staticky. Perms made me into a fuzz-ball unless I spent hours moussing and spraying. I realized unless I broke every bone in my body, completely rewired my metabolism, gave myself new genes to have the small body, lean muscles and glowing skin it seemed you had to have, I could never get this ideal body in this lifetime, whatever I did. I could be thin and muscular, but I'd never be beautiful, unless I cut my head off and replaced it with a beautiful girl's.

This was a real reality check. At this point, depression set in pre-eetty heavy. My therapist and real people article and book

reading got me on the right track. The real movers and shakers in the world, like politicians and educators, real business people who are wealthy, people who are our friends, family, neighbors, clerks who wait on us—most of them were not beautiful and thin standouts. Most of the famous and important people were important for things they did in their lives, not what they looked like. There is a big clue here. They had to concentrate on school, or military training, or diplomacy or reading and writing books. A lot of them are ugly, not just plain; but most of the rest are plain. And even the pretty ones got old and saggy and grey. But they had changed the world, written great books, or in the small world, raised families and learned some skill where they made their living. They did not live by how thin they were. They lived by what they accomplished and learned.

I know how the stars lose weight. They pay hundreds and hundreds of dollars and have personal trainers in their homes, gyms in their homes and swimming pools. They work out for hours every day. If they can't exercise, they do all the things anorexics and bulimics do: they hurt their bodies starving and throwing up. They can afford chefs and expensive restaurants and European spas. They are threatened by directors, producers and agents to get thin and muscle-defined or lose parts in acting jobs. They fast every other day, and with their livelihoods on the line, punish their bodies for their work. They undergo all kinds of operations, cutting and pulling taut perfect skins to get thinner looks all over their bodies, not just their faces anymore. And all of these operations are happening to their young 20-year-old bodies. They pray to get famous and rich before they turn 40. What we see in the magazines and movies and TV are the very very disciplined and self-punishing "successes." The kind of discipline required sacrifices every fun thing in life there is, to look good. They are not normal people. They are not regular or average. Many were small as kids and picked on. They did not have a childhood of beauty and grace and of being exceptionally worshipped by one and all.

The ones who were beautiful when young and became famous stars have a strange beauty as young adults, odd-looking bodies and facial bones. Regular beauty will not make you a star. You have to look a little weird too, in that star beauty. They had to look really good on film. If you look beautiful in real life, but the camera makes you look pretty, forget about being a star.

Star bodies are both born and created. You can't do a thing about the being-born-photogenic part, but if you are born that way, you then have to muster everything else, literally cutting, starving, exercising the body and paying out thousands of dollars every year to spend hours every day having treatments for

almost every muscle and skin area of your body.

Is this sane? Is this real? This is how these people do it—a mix of being born with the right bones, foregoing everything else important or fun in life, committing oneself to self-abuse and deprivation for thirty or so years. On top of all this, you have to be *lucky* to stand out among those who are willing to get to this totally unmaintainable place in physical beauty. You have to really, really be into pain and be almost psychotic about your body.

All the magazine and TV features about how they diet sensibly and exercise a little harder than they should are lies. Everybody involved is selling a polished product. They aren't selling their real personalities or original bodies. For every perfect picture shot, scene or interview or special party, they have had up to dozens of people spraying, sewing clothes tighter while they are wearing the clothes, fixing hair and make up, rubbing lotions on skin. Heck, many stars use body doubles for close-ups of body parts where they can manipulate more completely what you are really seeing. The person is not important inside the body, literally. And if there is an imperfection, they fake it and everybody covers it up, until the star can find a doctor to cut it out or inject plastic reshaping. Or now they use computers to reshape waists, firm up thighs.

This is how they look like stars.

If they are *really* lucky, they have a talent too, which many try very hard to develop for the time when no amount of faking it, punishing exercise and starving, or surgical alterations can stop the loss of that physical perfection they try so hard to maintain.

However you got caught in the terrible image problem in this country, whether it's because of childhood abuse, low self-esteem and mental illness, or simply growing up in America, very few women, and now men, realize that what is behind this is primarily a market created to make money. Many businesses are sustained by the American dream of stardom. Not just the media industries, such as movie and TV show productions, but magazines, books, photographers, and fashion designers, TV series on exercise gurus and crazes like Eastern physical regimens, selling videos and food products and the latest new exercise machine, cosmetics, salons and spas, fashion stores and catalog sellers, surgeons, hospitals, pills and pharmaceuticals and herb concoctions, teas and so forth. None of which work without giving up everything else to sustain your life. There are meditation tapes and metal clips to pin to your ears, pins to push in to direct your inner forces and all of the people you have to hire or buy their products who have the wisdom to make these invisible forces lose weight for you. These people have to advertise, so you get another army of providers to service them:

*Continued on Page 9*



### *The Body & Me , Cont'd*

marketing experts, survey experts, directors, producers, editors, owners of media empires. I'm sure you can name even more now that you know what I'm talking about.

Is it in the interest of anyone of these businesses, employees, entrepreneurs and financial empires to let you understand how most of these things don't work, or don't work for very long without hurting you? How many thousands and thousands of dollars do we spend on these products, even when a few sane voices try to tell us none of these things work! I think besides therapy, reality checks and serious efforts to be what a normal person looks like (look in the mirror), doing the right exercises and diets that don't hurt your body, and being happy despite not looking like a movie star, people also need to add taking seminars and classes on market manipulation, on where consumer culture comes from and how that culture is really created. Follow the money!

How do we allow ourselves to buy and buy and buy, through literally decades of time, in spite of common sense thinking and occasional public figures speaking out against spending money on all these totally built-in-to-fail products?

It's not entirely our fault. If all that you read, see and hear from almost every source of information in the country teaches these lessons, how can people be expected to behave with common sense? How do people overcome the comparison of what they can see in their own mirrors and with their own experiences if every single source of information around you all of your daily life is showing you dozens of times a day that to it is possible to change your body to a perfect one, if only you weren't morally or physically weak or undeserving, or that you must really be weird? Even if you kinda know, and kinda suspect, it's all a massive con, where are you encouraged to talk about it, read about it, or where do you find the few souls who also understand the nature of

American culture? Haven't you ever felt as if you say that it's too expensive and it's a con anyway, that you are raining on the parade, being a party pooper, damaging your friend's efforts for improvement? We have to have more classes and get educated about advertising, making money and creating needs through advertising that people never had, before the ads came out. This isn't only our fault.

I suspect mind/body questions in relation to looking beautiful to others, being perfect, being of worth only if you are thin and exercised, cannot be overcome without multiple attacks on the problem. It's not only the physical connecting to bodies where we have learned to turn off all feelings and connections to feeling our blood flow and muscles work, it's not only getting the self-esteem to explore our other strengths for validation of our worth to ourselves and others, it is not only developing daily exercise habits and keeping to eating food that is just enough and not too much, it's also very much about living in a society where a consumer-purchasing culture is not just encouraged, but it is actually being forced down into us, to be our reason to have a life. We are losing our souls, not just to bad parents and bad people who personally have injured our minds and bodies, but also to a massive, loud, overbearing culture that doesn't want anyone to look too closely at what the media and the market have created as images for us to strive for, in order to make a profit and keep making profits for the fitness markets forever, endlessly.

I know I must apologize for this stream of consciousness, but I guess I'm still emotional about these subjects. I don't mean to bore you, lecture you or confuse you. Maybe I have taken a little bit of space on this soapbox because I have found some balance and self awareness that works most days. Thanks for reading!

*(And if you have comments about this message, pro or con, send them to MV. We'll share them!)*

**MV**

## Physical Abuse from the Viewpoint of a Ritual Abuse Survivor

By Neil Brick

(This may be very heavy for survivors. This article is not meant as a substitute for other ways of recovering. Please use caution when reading.)

As a survivor of ritual abuse, severe physical abuse and torture was a large component of what was done to me to help cause splits in my personality. It was also used to program my mind with fear, so I would be less likely to remember or speak out. Breaking this programming entailed in part feeling the abreacted sensations of being hit and tortured. Feeling the extreme cold or heat, itchiness or abreacted actual blows that were used. Once I was able to feel the strong sensations, I was able to start remembering and heal from the programming. Then I was able to remember more and speak out.

After a long period of healing and remembering these memories and programs, I was able to start doing advocacy work to help others as well. This included editing a ritual abuse newsletter, coordinating ritual abuse conferences and developing online resources and user groups for ritual abuse survivors and co-survivors. Healing for me has definitely been worth it. I no longer feel the same pain and tension that I used to feel from all of the bottled up feelings of the physical abuse. And now I can help others heal, also.

Neil is the editor of S.M.A.R.T.- a ritual abuse newsletter. He is also the coordinator of yearly conferences on ritual abuse and mind control. Neil can be reached at SMART, PO Box 1295, Easthampton, MA 01027. Email: [smartnews@aol.com](mailto:smartnews@aol.com) SMART's web page is <http://members.aol.com/smartnews/index2.html>

The conference web page is <http://members.aol.com/smartnews/smart-2002-conference.htm>

**MV**





# Therapist's Page

By George Nixon, L.P.C.

George Nixon, M.S., L.P.C., is a counselor in private practice in Richmond, Virginia. This article previously appeared in the Richmond Association of Clinical Counselors Newsletter.

## The Abuse Continuum Revisited

**T**he treatment and research communities in this country have steadily acknowledged the impact of childhood sexual abuse on the development and behavior of adults. This acknowledgment has generated a wide range of clinical approaches for dealing with incest, rape and repetitive, sadistic, sexual violence. Clinicians now have ready access to a number of books, journals and training opportunities specifically related to these issues. One of the unfortunate effects of the intense focus on sexual abuse, however, is the lack of attention to other forms of abuse in childhood. Trauma resulting from neglect, physical violence, and emotional/verbal abuse may have many of the same consequences for development and adult behavior as does sexual abuse. Acknowledgment of these forms of abuse will honor our clients' realities, generate a better understanding and definition of the abuse continuum, and more clearly define treatment and prevention for these abuses.

Neglect is often not defined as abusive, because the impact is often delayed and cumulative. Emotional neglect does not leave physical bruises, but does increase the risk of difficulties with bonding, attachment, role development, cognitive development, affect, and victimization. Physical neglect can directly affect physical health (low weight, poor dental development/care, childhood diseases, etc.) cognitive development, self-image, and increase the risk of victimization. Both forms of neglect often increase risks of abnormal socialization, such as isolation, dependency, and bonding (bondage) to social services.

Physical violence directed at children (or adults) may have serious

consequences for development, whether it is experienced directly or witnessed. Being slapped, punched, kicked, beaten with objects, shoved, having body parts twisted or pulled, being thrown, threatened with violence, subjected to hot or cold objects, or water, or temperatures, or being confined in spaces or bound in painful ways are all violations to one's personal boundaries. Depending on age of onset, frequency, intensity, and resources available to the child, these violations may produce a host of problems in childhood and adulthood that include brain damage, permanent physical damage, difficulties with social/sexual boundaries, lack of impulse control, chemical abuse, nightmares, running away, school difficulties, poor interpersonal relationships, depression, panic attacks, hypervigilance, compulsive behavior, self-harm (including sexual), withdrawal, dependency issues and dissociation.

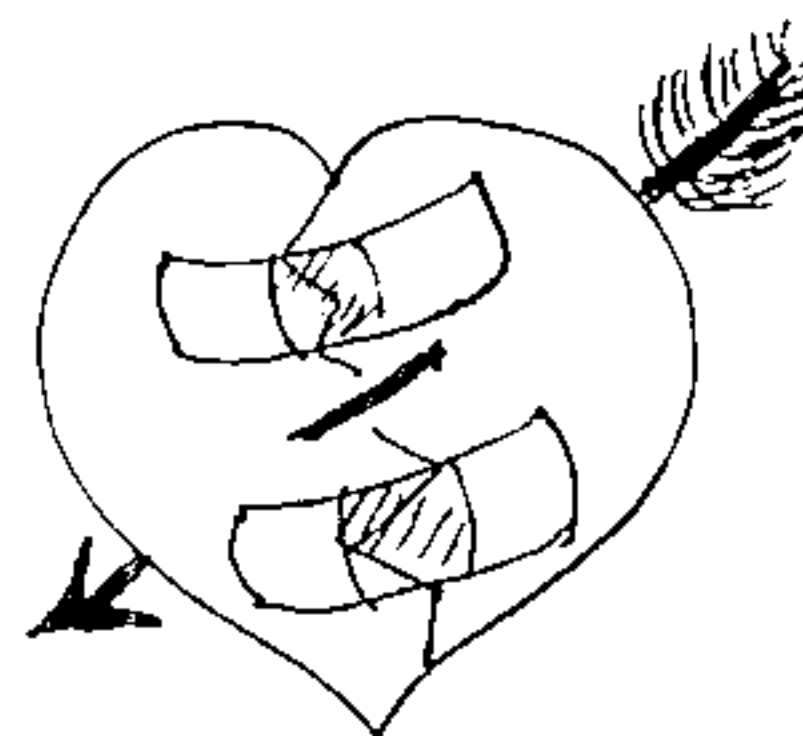
Emotional and verbal abuse often accompany other forms of abuse and intensify the impact of that abuse, but can have serious consequences when other abuses are not present. Contrary to folk wisdom, words *do* hurt, as do non-verbal tones and gestures. Abusive words and non-verbal communication pierce the hearts of many children. Demeaning statements about worth, or negative comparisons, or specific attacks on character, or triangulation, or blame for adult problems result in massive affronts to self-esteem, as well as creating problems with attachment, trust, safety, socialization, and self-destructive behavior (including suicide).

It is not uncommon for these three types of abuse to happen concurrently (as well as with sexual abuse) and the

effects can be profoundly traumatic for a child. As with sexual abuse, the impact is often initially minimized or repressed, and the symptoms that may be present are often overlooked or denied by adults. When these children reach adulthood and enter therapy some risk continues that their experiences will be overlooked or misunderstood. Because many clinicians have a working understanding of sexual abuse, the danger exists that the symptoms of other forms of abuse will be assessed as sexual abuse (since the symptoms are often quite similar) and a sexual abuse treatment process will be initiated. This situation is conducive for a client to generate information that the therapist seems to desire ("memories" of sexual abuse), and the client's abuse would go unnoticed (again), as well as being inappropriately treated.

Clients have a right for their abuse histories to be acknowledged in therapy, regardless of the type of abuse. And if that abuse has been traumatic for them, they have a right to a treatment process that addresses their specific symptoms, histories, and healing. The models used to treat sexual abuse may not always be the most helpful in treating other forms of abuse. Additional clinical information, dialogue, reporting and research would be helpful in understanding and treating the entire abuse continuum.

MV





# Toning for Wholeness and Healing

## A Journey of Trust

By Elizabeth L.

Initially the goals for toning therapy (chanting) were focused on learning new strategies for reliving anxiety, severe post-traumatic stress syndrome anxiety.

In less than six months, toning became a vital part of my healing, by helping me feel my body's physical responses to the movement of energy. My awareness of present emotional states, feelings, responses, interactions increased to include non-verbal parts of me. Spiritually, I agree with my toning therapist who quoted many times, "She who chants, prays twice." For me, the act of toning allows me to listen to my self, heart spirit, identify and respect what I hear, and Be that which I choose.

Ah. There is the behavioral change that the therapist and, hopefully, the client seeks.

My voice (tones, sounds) changes with the climate, environment, privacy and energy levels. Many times during my toning practice I can hear a decreased energy and during that identification and investigative process I can will a clearer, positive sound, if not attitude. When I am able to achieve this, I actually feel more strength and clarity about the energy forces I am inviting with my choices.

For some reason, toning therapy and art therapy seem to enhance the other's effects of healing and insight. For me, I think it is the learning to use imagery techniques and finding

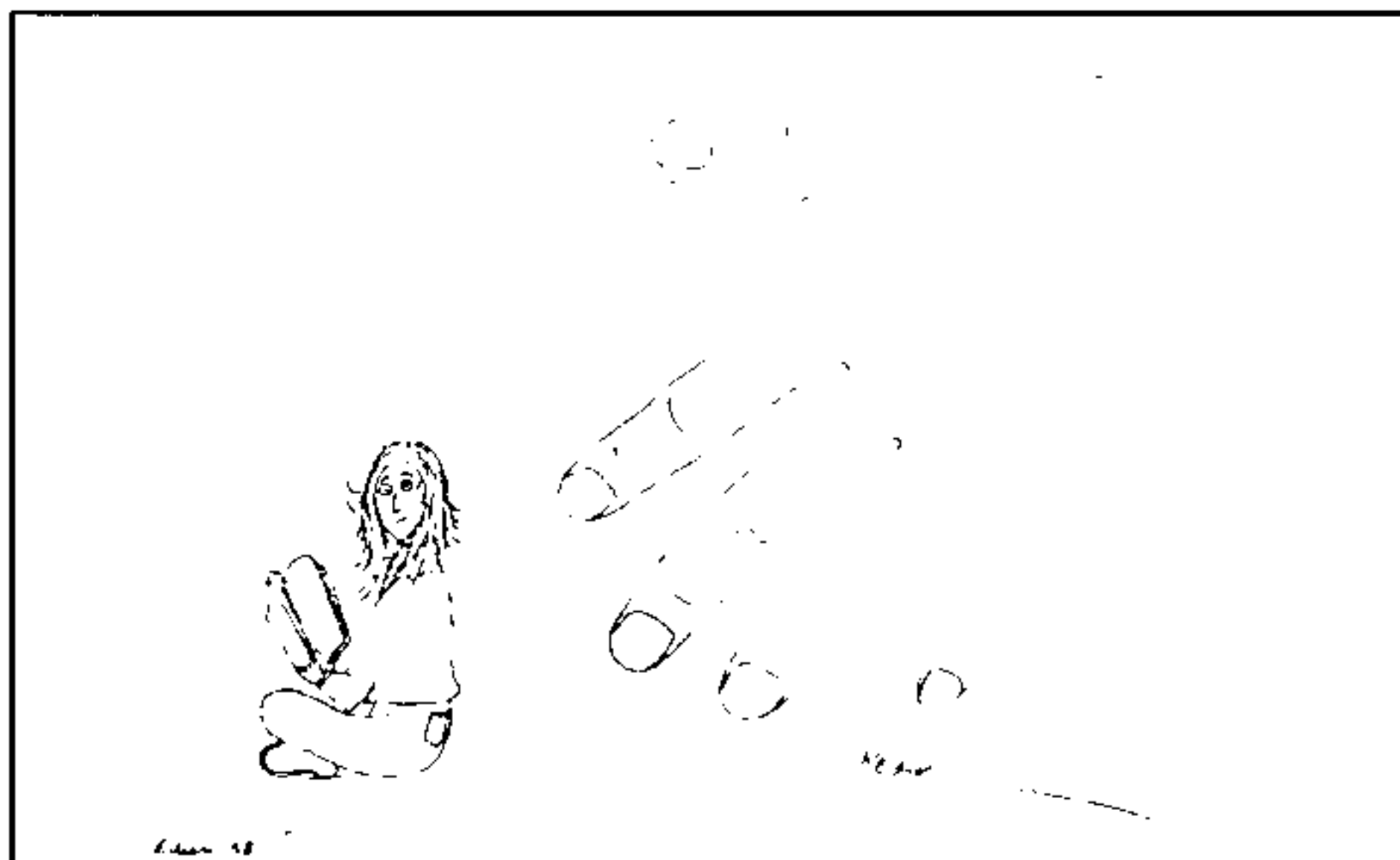
patterns and rhythms in my heart, memories and experiences.

One of the challenges of my disorder is the presence of recurrent, frequent strength-sapping nightmares. Goals and benefits of intensive therapy include learning to understand, explore and accept the information of the nightmare's imagery. Through this process I have been able to dissipate the fear with the use of investigative techniques.

No matter how difficult and/or horrible the memory, when the truth is known and understood, the fear dissipates and the ability to make new choices for different reactions to stimuli in the environment and interactions with others becomes open and possible.

Practicing toning exercises has enhanced my concentration skills, helped me practice, in a physical way, the use of the Power of Choice, increased my resources for relaxation techniques and attitude adjustment, and decreased, dramatically, my anxiety.

Laurel Elizabeth Keys states in *Toning: The Creative Power of the Voice*, that one does not even have to believe in the power of toning for it to work. But I do believe very much that toning has enhanced my healing process through experiencing release through the exhalation of sound; be it the surrendering of negative energy or the celebration of the positive. **MV**



## Sun Road

I was walking down the road  
towards the sun  
feeling its warmth  
on my arms  
bare they were  
it was summer  
and I was walking down the road  
a quiet road  
no one about  
yet  
So early in the day  
I was on my way to a place  
I had been to already  
many times  
in my mind  
I would know it  
when I saw it  
I was sure  
so I was walking down the road  
looking for a place in my mind  
and the sun was warm  
and it was early  
yet  
I don't remember  
if I got to that place  
I was looking for  
in my mind  
But I must have  
because this road  
I know it  
I'm sure

By Patricia of JR



## A Human Condition

I'm freaked by the violence  
Embedded in the human condition.  
And all the ignorance and fear  
That travels with it.  
I'm challenged by the cognition  
That can be achieved with  
recognition  
That self doubt can be left  
With all the other debris of past living  
By following one's heart,  
Listening to the songs of others,  
And loving the ability to breathe.  
There's more that entangles  
The angles of knowing  
When to stop, look and listen.  
And the universe still sings.

By E.L.

**MV**



## Betrayal

New to the world, expecting to be cared for, protected, nurtured and loved.

I was the antithesis to this introduction, never loved, never protected, never nurtured, never cared for. I was the parentified child, the caretaker, the recipient of abuse in every form, unaware that the model for human behavior and human interaction was based upon my family's pathology, a crucible in abnormal psychology.

I internalized the rage and kept eating the rage for all the heaps of

abuse pounded into me, ending a suppressed being with no identifiable feelings, no trust, an inability to form meaningful relationships, and an inability to eliminate self-destructive behavior, until now.

How come no one was there for me? It was because no one was there for you.

Family pathology is inherited, and behavior handed down from generation to generation

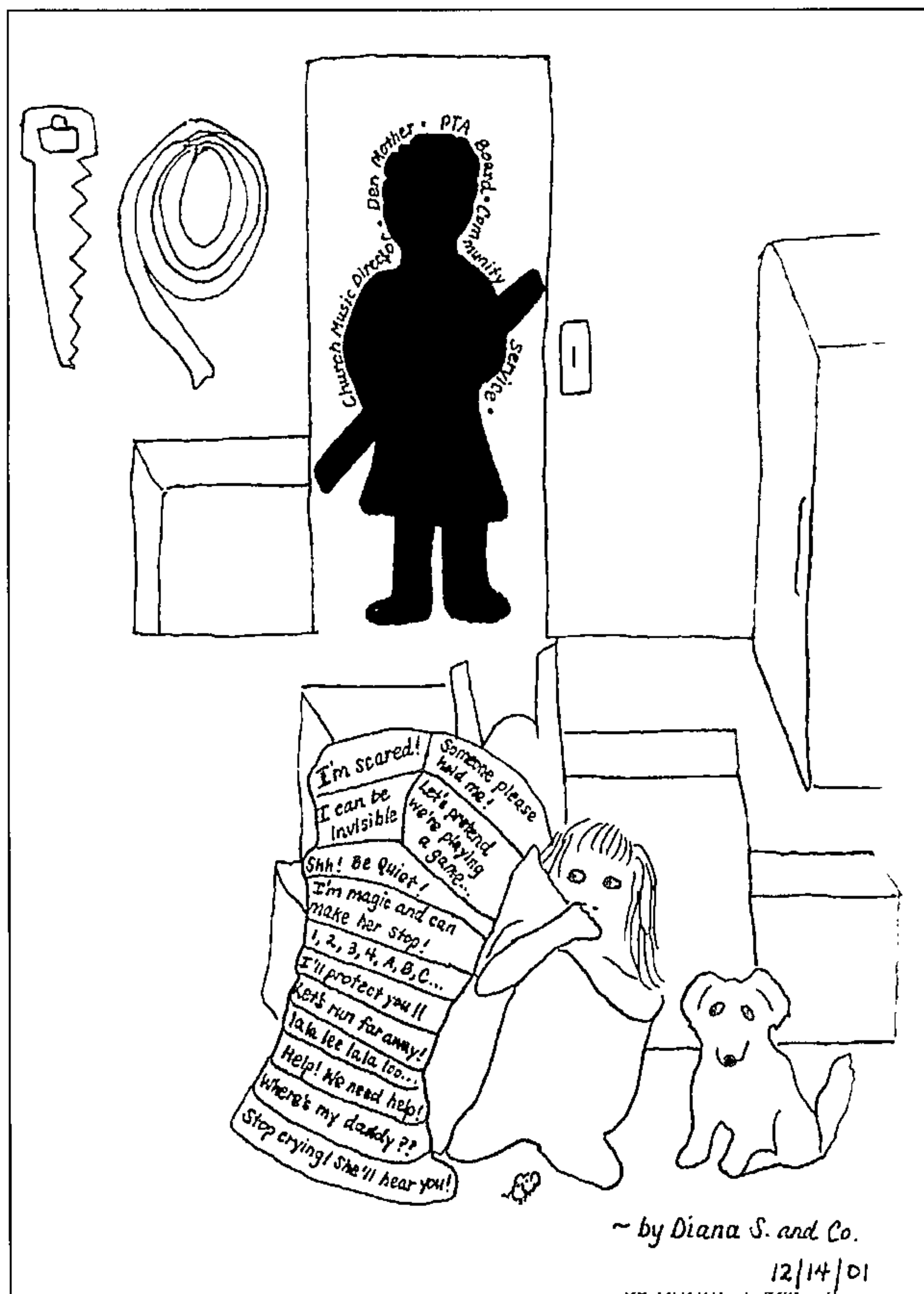
But...does this inheritance of past pathology rationalize the heinous abuse that ripped and tore at my body?

No! There is no rationalization for the significant harm done to me, the unprotected and the vulnerable.

Each person is responsible for one's own behavior. You family of mine—you had no right to harm me, no right to dehumanize me, no right to take my potential for a normal life and dance with the pain. I understand from whence you came, but hurl at you—"You betrayed me!"

*By Constance R.*

MV



## A Broken Heart

Cut the ropes that bind  
brace the fall...  
Scoop up this terrified victim  
See beyond the angry eyes...  
Words spoken to self protect  
Hidden beneath the rubble  
A child whimpers in the night...  
Break down the barriers  
A broken heart  
that has felt the loss of hope...  
Pieces wait to be mended  
Open up the floodgates  
Let it all gush forth...  
Lonely...isolated...  
imprisoned with the pain  
The need to breakdown  
to collapse into the arms of a hero  
Listen...see...  
understand...  
The time has come to stop  
the madness of evil

*By Sara for Kathleen*

MV



# Thoughts on the Healing Process

By Laurie

I entered my own healing process in 1989, and two degrees later I find myself in a very different place than I was thirteen years ago. I have just completed my Masters of Social Work, and I intend to get my PhD, but not until I enjoy my present life and the gifts I receive through my loving partner, friends, and the people I work with who choose to share their pain with me.

It has been a humbling adventure having been 'diagnosed' with D.I.D in 1991 (at that time it was still called MPD) and experiencing the psychiatric system while doing my undergraduate studies (ironically it was in Psychology). At that time, in the Canadian psychiatric society, there was a debate about the existence of MPD and often myself and others with the diagnosis were exposed to this by 'professionals' (nurses and doctors), and were seen as over-manipulative 'borderlines' rather than people who masterfully survived the most horrific of circumstances. I am thankful for these experiences because it allows me to give the respect and honour to my own clients rather than to pathologize them.

It was very challenging balancing school demands, employment, and therapy. In my undergraduate program I relied on student loans to meet most of my financial need. While I was in school, I spoke at the 7th Regional Conference for Trauma, Dissociation and MPD in Akron Ohio. My therapist at the time, and myself were the only Canadians there. From that experience of reaching out to both consumers and professionals, I began the production of a humour newsletter called 'Multiple Care Unit'. Some of you might remember it. It was helpful at that time in my healing to share and laugh at the challenges that come with the ability to dissociate so exquisitely. For me humour has played a valuable role in my healing process.

After almost four years of production based mostly on my loans from school I had to stop the newsletter; however the friendships I have gained have remained. I even met a

subscriber/friend from Holland in person this past summer. He spent a week with my partner and me in Victoria Harbour, Ontario.

After my undergraduate education I worked for four years as a counsellor in an elementary school. I continued therapy; however I began to develop my own personal resources outside of therapy. I became very involved in native spirituality in 1992. I attended healing circles and sweat lodges on a weekly basis. The community became a family to me. Everyone was seen as at different stages in their own healing. People grew and learnt from their traumatic experiences and began to help others. These people were seen as carrying wisdom, not cured from a 'diagnosis'. This positive view of healing and coping made me change my goal to go into clinical psychology to get my masters in social work.

My professional and lived experience caused me to search for a more holistic approach to healing. I could not find that in a dogma with etiology (origins) based in psychopathology. By focusing on an individual's pathology all responsibility of the abuser is removed and the focus is on 'fixing' the patient.

I am not saying diagnosis is not useful. Diagnosis is useful in that it can give a starting point for a therapeutic approach. Sometimes it might allow professionals to have greater patience with their clients. If it is used in this way, I see it as a good thing; however often labels are used to over prescribe medication, cause increased dependence (lack of empowerment), and increase the possibility of playing the role of the victim (what 'professionals' call manipulation). I prefer to not see people's coping strategies, such as dissociation, in a negative way, but rather see it as a highly adaptable and creative method of survival.

By seeing others and myself in that light I was able to take more responsibility for my actions and myself. The more I found support and acceptance in the external world, the

less I had the need to retreat into my internal one. By honouring my parts for allowing me to survive, I was able to acknowledge them and use the talents in a positive way, without the need to dissociate.

Within the last three months I have finished my MSW and got married. I presently am working in the field of addictions (harm reduction), mental health and HIV. Native spirituality continues to be a big part of my life. I often do group work with young students and use native drumming and singing to help work through racial conflicts.

My journey has been challenging and it will continue to have it's up and downs (as does everyone), but I am thankful to be able to bring a unique knowledge to the mental health profession.

For me integration is about balancing my experience with trauma, my profession, my spirituality, being a partner and my rights and responsibilities as a fellow human being. I hope that my past experiences allows me remain humble enough to keep my ignorance in check and not judge people's differences, but rather learn from them.

MV



*The Power of Healing, By E.L.*



## Memories Confirmed

I think all of us abuse victims and survivors, at one time or another, think we might not have been abused. Who wants to believe such awful things can possibly happen? I don't. And believe me, I have had my share of not believing.

In 1992, I went to my aunts and uncles barn where all of my parent's things had been stored since I was sixteen years old. My mother died when I was ten, and father died when I was sixteen. My aunts, three of them and one uncle, stored all our family stuff in their barn, thinking some day I'd want them. Well, I knew they were there, and went up one time when I was younger. I thought I was going to die. I had a panic attack so bad, I had to literally run down the stairs and outside, never to return again...that is, not until after ten years of therapy.

(DMS is fortunate to have tangible proof of her history. Many of us do not. The position of MV is similar to that of many professionals: we believe some memories are nearly 100% accurate, others are partly true, some recollections are composites of several events, and some memories are distortions, conversions from media or books, or even completely fabricated. Just because this last type of "memory" is historically "untrue" does not mean the person experiencing such thoughts or feelings is deliberately lying or pretending. Traumatic events are not always stored clearly in the brain, and the younger the victim, the more possibility of a storage problem. There are whole books written on memory (see our book review for a good one) and whole professional careers based on exploring it. My personal view is—if a memory-image comes up, it has a special meaning—even if it can't be "proved" in the outer world. Good therapy works with all types of memory to reduce the terror and help people enjoy a better life today. — LW)

When I and many of my friends went down and got my stuff, all of the "things"—objects and bedding, toys, dishes, etc., were all there, exactly as I had told my therapist, drawn things, or described them. Exactly. Believe me, there were moments when I wasn't sure if I could handle it or not, but I—we—did it. The gun was in the oak roll-top desk just as I knew it was. The drawer was nailed shut. This was the memory and flashback that sent me to the hospital, initially.

The moral to this story is: believe yourself. Seldom if ever would you, me, us, lie about any of this stuff. It is all true. I don't like it, but the shit happened. I have all the proof I need. I still hang onto some of the things just in case I say, "That's not true!" I have proof.

*By DMS*

## Good Enough

Faster. Better. Best.  
Do it right. Do it perfect. Do it all.  
Do it now.  
Don't stop or slow down or feel.  
Just keep going.  
Faster. Better. Best. Perfection.  
Or nothing.  
Or they may be right—those voices.  
That past. Those ghosts.  
Don't call me Dad—I'm not your dad.  
Who is?  
The gypsies sold you—Even they didn't want you. Ha Ha!  
You stupid, ignorant, clumsy brat.  
Can't you do anything right?  
Come here—get the fuck out of my face.  
Answer me—shut up.  
Get that grin off your face—  
Cry, I'll give you  
Something to cry about.  
You'll sure make a good wife or whore—  
God knows you screw everything else up  
But you do give good head.  
And now...  
"You are good enough" they say—"just because you are."  
Because you exist.  
But it doesn't feel that way—  
not in here  
Where the ghosts live and rattle their chains  
And mine.  
So we must be faster; better; best; perfect.  
So we can be  
Good enough.

*By Terri L, Nike & Lonewolf*

MV

## Morning

Some mornings, not all, we are awakened and immediately consumed by confusion

Where am I? Is this my house? Yes it is. I know that much. I can feel it, or does someone inside tell me?

I don't know, I am already starting to panic, is anyone else here? No, no, relief, relief, we need to be alone, feels safe, alone is safe

Why does this happen? What year is it? How old am I? Oh please don't let it be years past.

I'm not in the past, am I?

How does this happen? Think, think, I'm trying, she says, think, where are you? What state are we in? What am I supposed to be doing? Oh no, hurry, please tell me, talk to me, where am I? Then

it starts, run, run, run, get moving, run, we want to run

No, I say, no, stand fast, we don't have to run, I feel it, just give me a chance, I'll remember

Seconds, only seconds fly by, minutes at the most, but in those seconds, those few minutes, it is utter madness

I believe I am crazy. I am scared, terrified, I can't recall, I just can't get it

The noise in my head does not help, some yell run, some yell stupid, some yell you're crazy, it's very upsetting, yet it has happened before, now I know

I don't look in the mirror, oh no, I made that mistake once before, never again

You think someone is standing behind you, there's only one image, yet you don't believe, you don't know  
it's yours you honestly believe there is someone standing behind you

You can't comprehend the image in the mirror, it is not you, no that is not me, who is that? What's going on here?

No its best to stand and wait, wait for it to slowly pour back, who you are, what age you are, it's not the past no you're not a runaway, you don't have to run anymore, or

do you, or did you never stop?

No, it's not yesterday, it's not those mornings when you awoke to know, no food for you today, no food today, no money, you're too young, no one will give you a job, you don't eat today

No, it's not that day, and it's not the days you ran from, those days

It's 1999, you went to college, you had a good job, you own this house you are standing in, you are ill, you need to learn how to live with the past, you need to learn how to live

You stand and take a deep breath, at last, it comes back to you

You go to make coffee, it's what we do every morning, first thing, yes, I'm here, it's not yesterday, I'm here, it's 1999.

*By Rain*

MV



## Books

### The Body Remembers The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment

By Babette Rothschild, M.S.W.,  
L.C.S.W., © 2000. Published by  
W.W.Norton & Co., NY. \$30 US,  
\$42CAN. 190pp. Hardback

Not everyone develops long-term aftereffects from the experience of trauma. But most MV readers know at a deep gut-level that personal traumas can reverberate decades after the actual danger is past. Rothschild's book details that all-too familiar pattern: how a constant state of defense and avoidance may build over time to retard or prevent development of healthy relationships, damage our abilities to learn and work, and acutely cripple our lives.

Although traumatized patients may know intellectually that the danger they perceive is not "here" today, stopping automatic response is not simple. Rothschild lucidly works through the complex interplay of brain/body processes that occur during a formative traumatic event. She then presents evolving theories and research that show how such "irrational responses" may persist, despite conscious attempts to control them.

The chapters move in a steady, quite-readable progression from discussion of early brain development and current theories of memory storage, through a vivid description of the autonomic nervous system (ANS), which activates in times of danger (or perceived danger) to improve the odds of survival. In such times, a series of hormonal changes prepare the body to fight, flee, or in seemingly "hopeless" situations, to play dead. Unfortunately, this survival mechanism may take on a life of its own. Many readers of this page will relate to fears that suddenly strike "out of the blue" and cause us to behave in ways that don't make sense under current life circumstances.

Fear grows not only from the threat of pain or death, but from our awareness of our bodily reactions to that threat. In post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for example, normal body sensations such as a fast heart rate following exertion may be confused with the survivor's past reaction to trauma, where fear-based adrenaline brought on a rapid heart rate. This, the sensing of a fast heart rate from *any* reason has the potential to trigger trauma flashbacks in survivors, who may experience needless panic, retreat or paralysis.

Moments of insight came frequently for me while reading. For example, Rothschild points out that, contrary to public opinion, not everyone finds comfort in relaxation

exercises. Some people feel more anxious when relaxed. This group may be better off tensing their muscles instead, she claims, before outlining appropriate tensing maneuvers. Personally, sometimes relaxation exercises benefit me—sometimes they make me nervous. Now I know why and what to do about it.

Another insight for me was learning that pleasurable excitement, such as good feelings that follow a successful outcome, can be confused with the unpleasurable response that accompanies trauma. This gives me at least one reason for why I frequently avoid doing things I find enjoyable. Even though I clearly know I liked these activities, I typically delay repeating the good experiences until I "forget" how pleasant they were. Only then can I gear up to try again. The likelihood that I am misreading my body sensations makes sense to me. Clarifying the difference between "good excitement" and "risky excitement" may help me give myself permission to enjoy life more.

It is for these reasons and others—such as her step-by-step description of how to stop flashbacks in progress—that lead me to encourage non-professionals as well as professionals to read this book. Take a little time with it and apply the information to your own situation. You could reap many rewards.

### Addictions and Trauma Recovery Healing the Body, Mind & Spirit

By Dusty Miller and Laurie Guidry.  
© 2001. Published by W.W.Norton,  
NY. \$25US, \$36CAN. 228 pages.  
Softback.

This may be a useful guidebook for professionals working with women who struggle with both addictions and recovery from traumatic backgrounds. It describes in detail the Addiction and Trauma Recovery Integration Model (ATRIUM) approach to group therapy, typically a 12-week program. This inclusive approach involves mind, body and spirit. Its tenets apply as well to those who self-injure or harm others. While the language in this book is directed to women, its principles are equally applicable to male survivors.

Author Dusty Miller was a client with dual problems herself (addiction and incest) who later, as a professional counselor, developed the Trauma Reenactment Model on which ATRIUM is based. She candidly describes her experiences as a mental health client in the 1960's-1970's, when her obvious addictive behavior was ignored by counselors. She points out that trauma survivors use drinking and drugs to self-medicate their intrusive memories, making abstinence extremely difficult. Even

now, the mental health and addiction recovery movements tend to operate independently of each other, while counselors on either side may not know how to apply treatments outside their training. The trauma survivor with addictive behavior is left in a quandary, not knowing where to turn.

Those who are battered, or women escaping domestic violence, are particularly at risk. They may be denied shelter residence because their addiction could make others unsafe. Yet, as Miller explains, unless the battered woman gives up her addiction she can't receive help for her childhood trauma or her current violent living condition. At the same time, she is continually bombarded with painful reminders that promote the urge to self-medicate. It's a cruel bind.

Most of the book describes The ATRIUM model itself and how to use it. The three stages—Outer Circle, Middle Circle and Inner Circle—are offered as structured experiences, with specific exercises in visualization and more. The process emphasizes the positive aspects of the survivor's current life. The book ends with handouts to photocopy for group members. —LW

MV

## TORNADO

We Cannot hear the deafening sound from  
outside, Where are We?  
**COULD IT BE THE GROUND, THE SKY... IS THIS REAL? WE  
DO NOT FEEL—WE CANNOT SEE—NO SOUND EMITS FROM ME.**

I'm sure we tried to speak or see, but the tornado  
engulfed me—trapped me—became me  
Where's the ground or the Sky?

We cannot see beyond the  
mind's Eye

She wonders is  
it over? Yet?

Confused,  
we may  
not Be

When  
Will  
the

**T  
O  
R  
N  
A  
D  
O**  
set  
me

By philosophical one of Sharona's group



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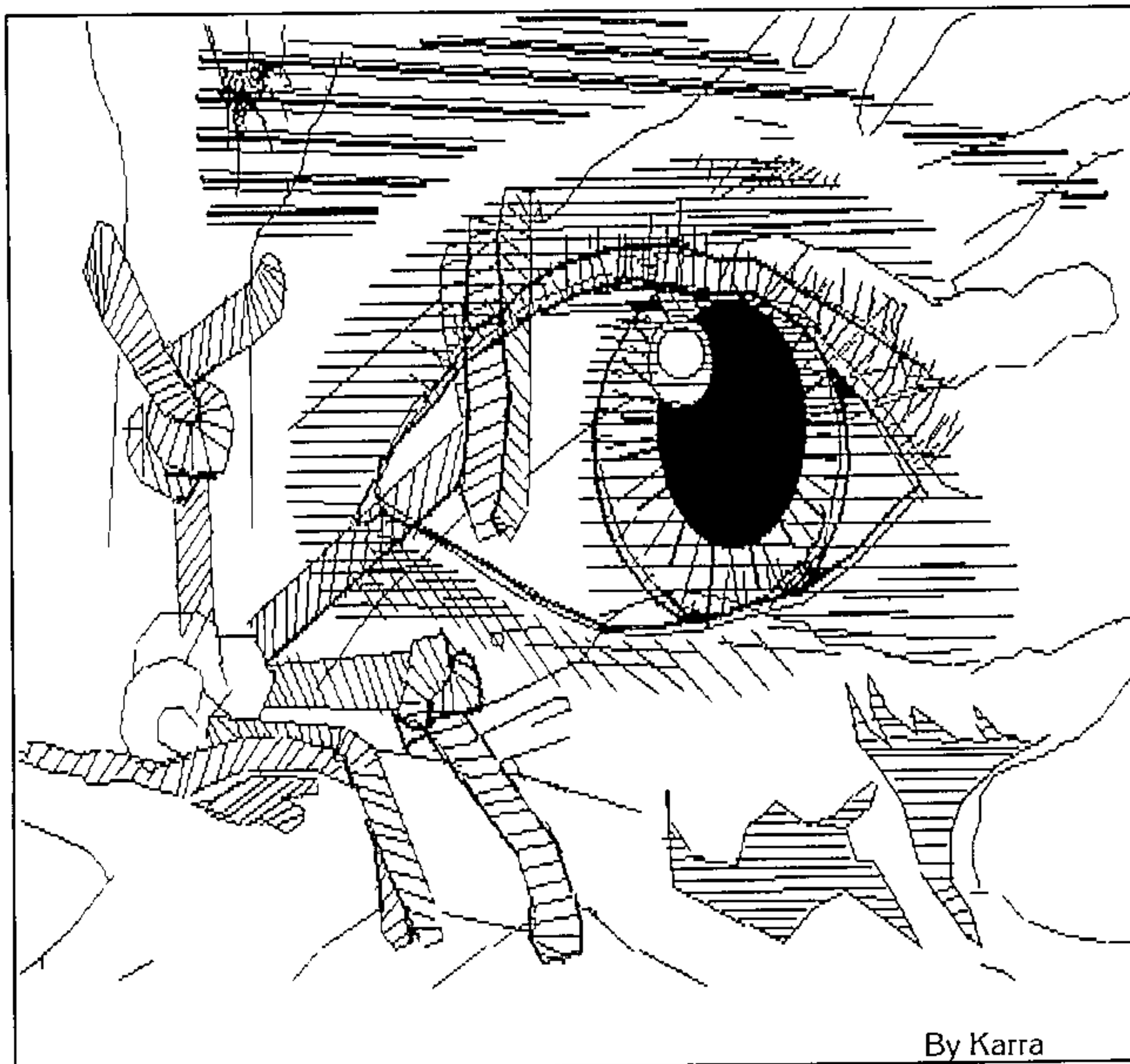
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Choosing values to live by. Art:  
Spiritual Centering.  
Deadline: Feb. 15, 2002 (extended)

### June 2002

"Get a Life" *plus* Therapy! Finding  
balance within. Art: What helps you  
feel good.  
Deadline: April 1, 2002.



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