

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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In This Issue:

Recovery from Emotional Abuse Finding Values to Live By



Corners of Me

*Slowly sidling
slinking in and out of the
shadows,
slipping here and there
the shadows of my mind.
Where are you, Me?
Where is I?*

*A glimpse of a glance,
averted eyes
downcast in hurt, fear and
shame,
raging in fury.
You're here, then you're
gone,
darting back to the recesses
of my mind,
fleeting in frightened flight.
So many corners
for you to cower and hide.
I can hardly keep up.*

*Please, it's safe to come out
now,
I know how to protect you
from the pain
Perhaps we can protect each
other
and know a new life
together
in a home of warmth,
comfort and light.*

*By DaisyDoll
for Everyone Inside*

MV

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Healing: A Work in Progress

By EL

I used to say "I'm a survivor." But now I live. Even after twenty-plus years of intensive therapy and some extended hospitalizations, my feelings and anxiety soared in my relationships, my work environment, my very daily living experiences. Just about every professional who has treated or evaluated me—psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, etc.—had different opinions about my diagnosis and "what was wrong with me." There were many labels for my dysfunctional characteristics. I really didn't care what "they" called me or my disorder. I just wanted the insistent, constant paralyzing fear and rolling panic attacks to *stop!*

There have been wonderful persons woven through my life who have encouraged me to trust. Many times I convinced myself that I did trust. But I didn't. And for many good reasons. No one in my immediate family loved me in healthy, unconditional ways. No one, except my Grandmother. Her love continues to inspire me. Unfortunately, at the time of her death, she had adopted my mother's negative attitude toward me and apparently saw me as a failure. However, it was my Grandmother's love that kindled my spirit to know I had to keep growing.

A "Failure," I am not. Recently I've even been able to understand the many real reasons for my fears, anxiety and panic attacks and I know that I am walking the path of healing myself for wellness and wholeness.

One of the most important elements of my feeling more in control of my behaviors and internal responses has been working with the best therapists that I could find. From the many mental health care providers I have seen, I have been privileged to work with three excellent therapist, an excellent art therapist and, *finally*, a psychiatrist that helped me with medications that really address *my* needs. The combination of these therapists and the "right" psychiatrist enhanced and helped my healing so tremendously.

Many, many times I felt helpless, hopeless and so discouraged that I did not think that I could face the next moment of living. Not too long ago I went almost two years with less than two hours of sleep a night. And those two hours were filled with screaming nightmares, monster thoughts and memories of the crimes done unto me. I never believed that there would be an end to the torment inside of me.

I am "here and now" to tell that there is hope. After literally hundreds of therapy sessions, books read, things written, pictures drawn and time talking, crying, explaining, and after so many different medications have been tried and coping skills learned and used, I am able to know that I am real. One way that has helped me find the path back to myself, the beautiful soul self we all have within us, is to keep extensive journals. On the white clean sheets of paper I have drawn or written what I don't even want to see. But once seen and talked about, the insight and strength evolves.

There were times when I could not feel safe to sit on my own front porch, take a walk, go to the grocery, drive, answer the phone, etc. I did not feel safe anywhere within or outside of myself. "Two steps forward and one step back." Little baby steps. Maybe, every once in awhile, a giant step.

For as long as I can remember, I have carried the guilt and shame that none of my perpetrators seemed to feel. And now with the guidance of my therapist, I have been able to investigate the sources of the sick, grimy guilt of talking and telling. This process began to work when I was able to let go of "the pretty," "the right way," kind of attitudes and let the words, pictures and actions be what they are: the truth.

Knowing the truth about why I experienced unwanted reactions, feelings and thoughts, has set me on the path of freedom and developed the ability to choose my attitudes and actions instead of reeling from the effects of fear and panic. I am still too

critical of myself and others, but I have begun to identify why and that gives me the choice of changing my responses from the automatic "withdraw and hide" syndrome to taking positive new approaches. It is *my* voice that releases the power within to change. No one else can do it for me and, trust me, this is very hard work. The rewards of my hard work are increased ability to be in the world, participating in a positive, fertile way. This is a journey of trust. Learning to trust and respect my own thoughts, feelings and possible actions has empowered me to say good-bye to old friendships and habits, perspectives and thought patterns.

Healing, for me, is like shining a flashlight in the closet. Even if, and even when there are images of horror, once seen and the truth known, the fears dissipate, a process of going from the dark to the light of reality; no matter how horrific, sad or unpleasant that reality may be. Then I have the opportunity to replace old behaviors, and automatic responses no longer needed, with my choices of behavior.

So many times I have felt incapable of continuing this healing process and have worried that the damage done unto me has been so devastating that my dreams of being functionally whole may never, ever transpire to practical reality, like having healthy, meaningful relationships.

All of us, no matter our histories or herstories, must find our own unique voices. And to be honest and fair, that voice or those voices within are difficult to listen to and even more difficult to share with others.

Safety, finding safety, has less to do with where (a particular place) you might feel safe and more to do with *how* you can feel that inner safety, strength and relentless determination to want to be safe, healthy and alive.

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More Books In Process!

Want to be part of a book project?
It's time for Many Voices Press to fill
the gaps in our booklist.

Three topics are up for consideration:

A book to help parents who survived
childhood trauma stop the cycle of
abuse and raise healthier children;

A book for people who have
"integrated" or come to terms with an
inner, cooperating team...but still
grapple with 'what's next' for full
recovery;

And finally, a book for beginners
entering trauma recovery, explaining
the basics to people who may never
have experienced therapy before.

We are open to manuscripts or
artwork on any of these topics
immediately, and will announce the
schedule of publication in a future
issue.

We will also consider material by
therapists on any of these subjects.
Please feel free to send an outline or
finished work to our post office
address, PO Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH
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You may call me (513) 751-8020, or
email LynnW@manyvoicespress.com
to discuss any of these projects in
more depth.

If you send material or ideas, please
be sure to put your name and address
on the pages, your pseudonym if any,
and preferably, include a phone
number where you can be reached. We
will send a contract to be signed by the
contributor of manuscripts/artwork
selected.

You may also publish this
announcement, with contact
information, on any website or any
other publication. We want lots of
submissions, to prepare superior
books.

Please share your dilemmas or
strategies for success! We welcome
your questions for readers, too!
Together, we can prepare some very
helpful books that will guide and
inspire survivors and those who care
about them. Please help!

Lynn W., Editor

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If you know of clinics or conferences that need flyers, please call us!
We appreciate your support! — Lynn W., Editor

To Therapists Everywhere

For giving me the privacy to speak aloud a thousand pains,
knowing you could not empathize, yet would sympathize,

My therapist, I thank you.

For allowing me to present the ugly, less-than-good facets of my personality,
parts the rest of my world might reject me for,

My therapist, I thank you.

For your patience in bearing with my failure to understand earlier on that you
have to deny the darkness and emphasize the light as part of my healing,

My therapist, I thank you.

For being faithful to the highest of what you believe in spite of my confusion as
to what I believe,

My therapist, I thank you.

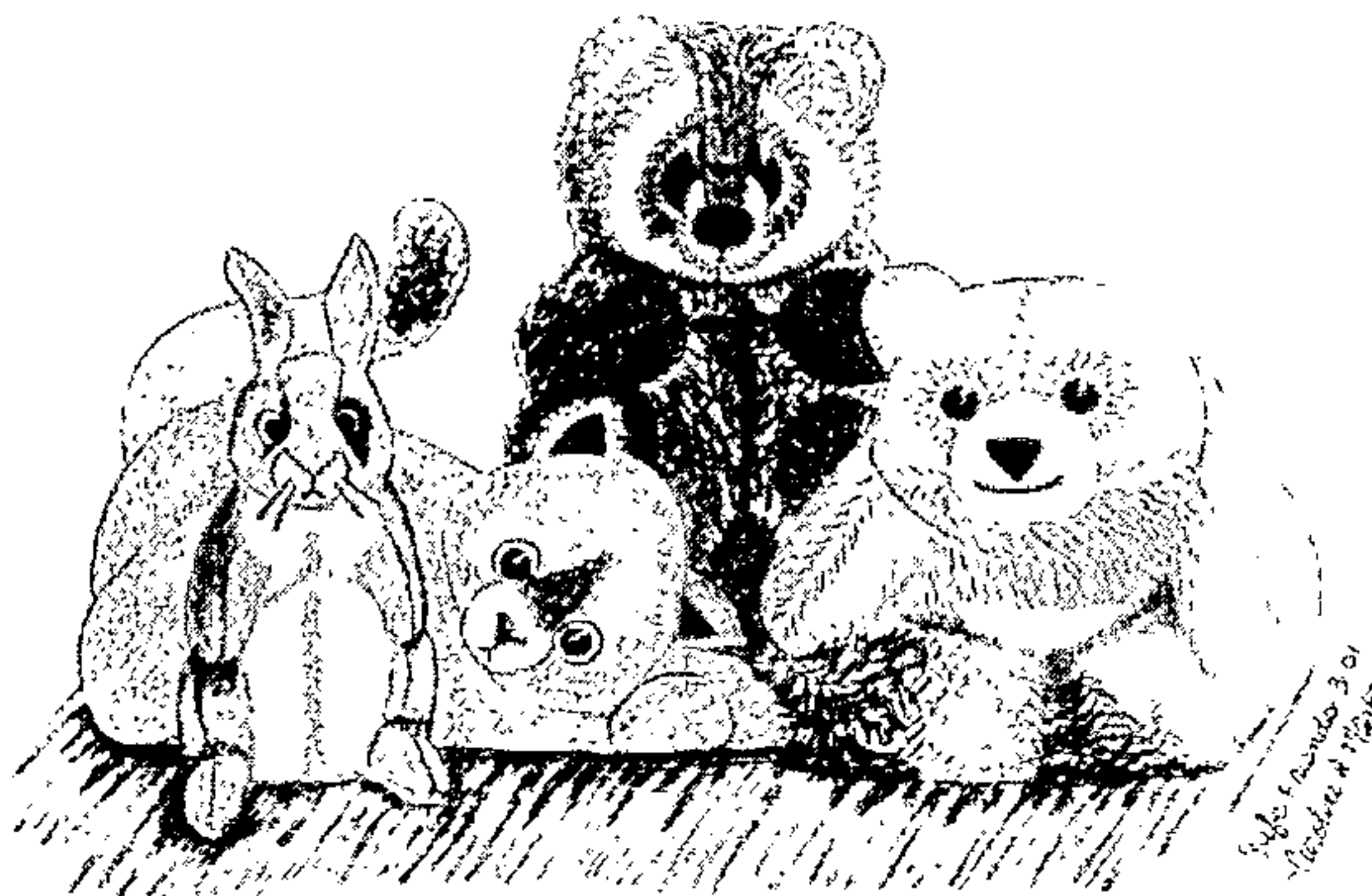
For savoring with me every joy and beauty, and in so doing, enhancing them
for me

My therapist, I thank you.

(Written for my own special therapist, Jill)

By LP et al

MV



Verbal Abuse Recovery

By Pat

When you have physical (flesh and bone) injuries, these injuries hurt like hell and either kill you or they heal. The verbal and emotional parts of abuse last for a lifetime, coloring all your thoughts and actions in varying degrees for the rest of one's life—it gets into everything. It is like a rape of the soul. "You are a failure, you're not good enough for anything, you can never get it right, it's your fault, we hate you, you don't deserve anything or anyone, why would she like you anyway?" Safety is hard to find and trust goes out the window completely. It brings blame, shame, no-self-esteem, inability to defend yourself or to believe in much worthwhile. It robs you of friendships, kills your life, your dreams and your desires without a system to rescue you.

This brings to mind a TV show I saw a couple of years ago. It was a documentary featuring an 11-year-old boy who was used to "entertain" his mother's "friends." This child already had sixty-four broken and healed bones, was severely underweight and dying of AIDS. He said the physical wounds hurt terribly and then they healed,

but the complete lack of any kind of love broke his spirit.

One thing about my family that was said repeatedly was "We have perfect children. We have no bad genes—no crazies in our family." There was no evidence of "crazies" allowed—ever. Such "horrible" things as imaginary friends, talking to self, playacting or anything other than perfect behavior was forbidden—and we were monitored. The result was believing these things would make me crazy. And the last thing I wanted to be was crazy.

In me, it created a system so deep that it didn't begin to surface until I was at least 50 years of age. (I as the host was locked outside and didn't know I had an internal family until then.) Living at home was like living in a concentration camp where I "didn't exist" and wasn't accepted as a real person with needs. There was NO me. Even though I ran from home at age 17, I couldn't run from myself and life was a bitch for a long time. I remember going out to the bus stop bench at night trying to get raped, so I could be wanted by someone even for a short while. One good thing that

came of this mess was that since there was no adult (inside or outside) to talk to, I talked to God in my mind and developed a deep spirituality that sustained me through it all.

Creating safety from the verbal part of abuse is complex and it took me many, many levels of safety devices, filters, and parts to survive. Only now at age 57 am I getting strong enough to take little risks and beginning to believe I have choices without running away. Some day I may even begin to put the past where it belongs, separate it from the present, and move along towards getting my brain and my life back. Both parents are dead and are no longer physically with me, though they still often "rule."

Someday, with the help of God, my wonderful husband, therapist, and two cats, I should finally be whole. I have come a long way, and have a long way to go. I want this. I talk mentally to myself now and will never, never, never give up! Because if I do give up, the parents get the final victory, and that's unthinkable!

(See facing page for my Self-Talk ideas!)

MV

Negotiation

I wondered if anyone around us noticed. If it was obvious. I couldn't imagine it not being; I felt like I was standing in the middle of circles of screaming children. My head was starting to hurt really bad.

It all started with this gift we wanted to buy for our friend. She was feeling sad and lonely, and lizzie said she wanted to get her a white bear, to help her feel less-sad and safe. The white bear has become important to many of us here, of Ravensong...above all he is seen as a Protector Spirit and a creature that holds powers that we don't—that of no-fear and immeasurable strength. We have bears all over the place, and we believe sometimes that sharing their calm and strength with others is the only thing we have to offer when people are hurting.

So...we looked and looked for just the right bear for our friend, and finally ended up in a card store at one of the malls. They had two—a small one, with a violet ribbon around his neck,

and a larger one adorned with a pink ribbon. Lizzie immediately picked the small one. Good, we were set, and I was off to buy a card.

"I think the big one with the pink ribbon is better. That other one is too little. She can't even hold that!"

I stopped dead, right where I stood, and looked around. Katy's voice was very loud and shrill, and I was sure someone else had heard. Nobody was looking in our direction. Lizzie, usually quieted by the others who speak up, lizzie, who never stands up for herself, started to cry and say, "nonono, little one for lady. Little one better."

And Katy's response, louder than before, "Well, that's just stupid!"

I'd heard about these times before. These times in a multiple's journey when one would need to learn how to negotiate between others, in order to keep the peace. The din inside had become, just over the space of a few minutes, unbearable. And this, over a gift. I thought about walking out of the store, thought about shouting for

everyone to shut up, thought about crumpling up in a little heap in the middle of the aisle and waiting for someone to come and take me away. Then I thought about our friend.

I straightened up and said, out loud but very quietly (things seem to have more of an effect when I say them out loud). "Ok, guys. How does this sound? Since this present was lizzie's idea, we let lizzie pick which bear we give to XXXX." Lots of grumbling from Katy here, which I chose to ignore. "And since Katy is such a good shopper, and she loves to buy things that are all pretty colors, especially pink, why doesn't she be responsible for finding something to put the bear in, so we can give it to XXXX in a nice package?"

Lizzie stopped crying immediately and said, "little one," and Katy dragged us off down the aisle to purchase a multi-colored gift bag with...yep, pink tissue paper.

By Ravensong

MV

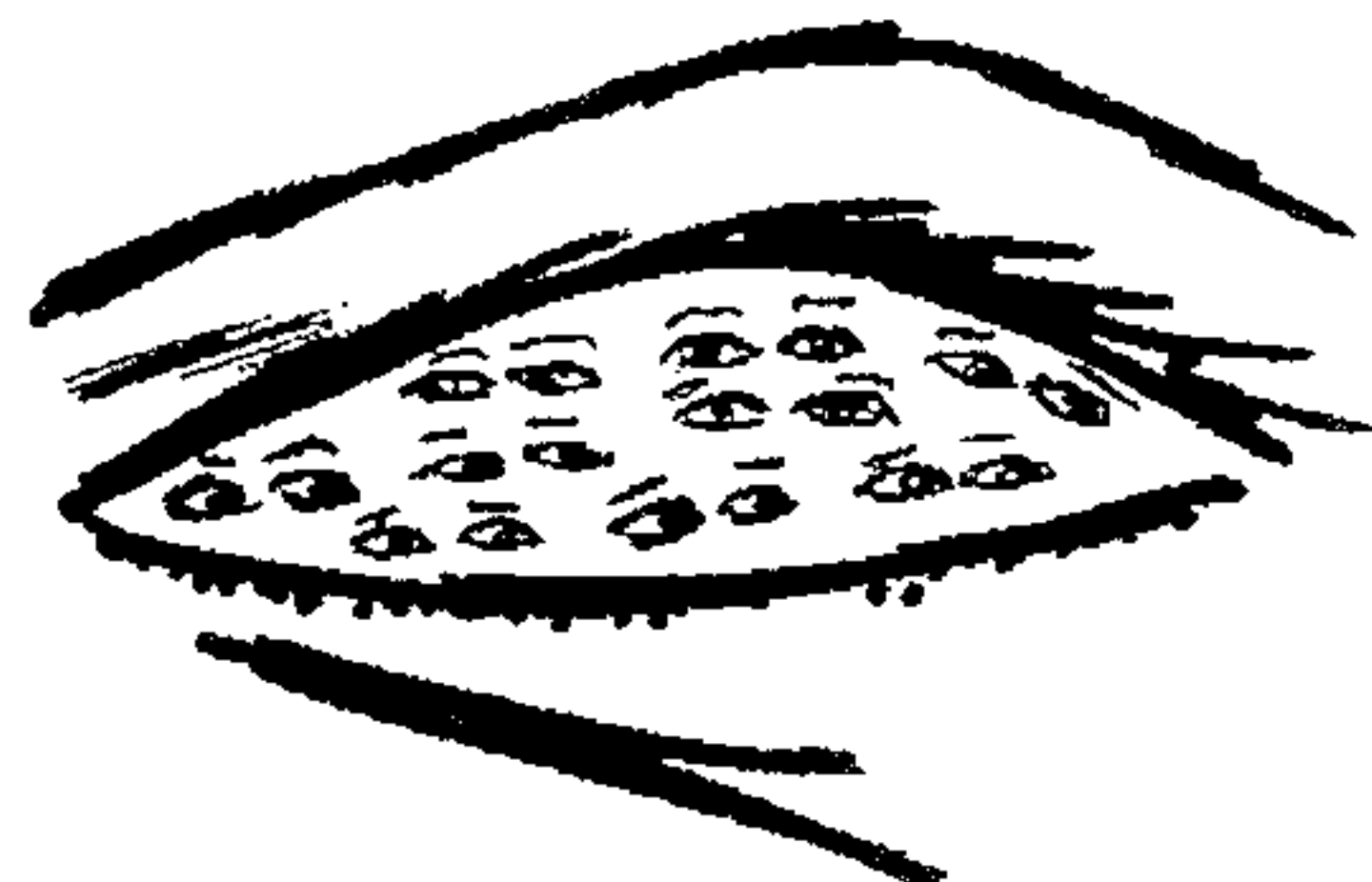
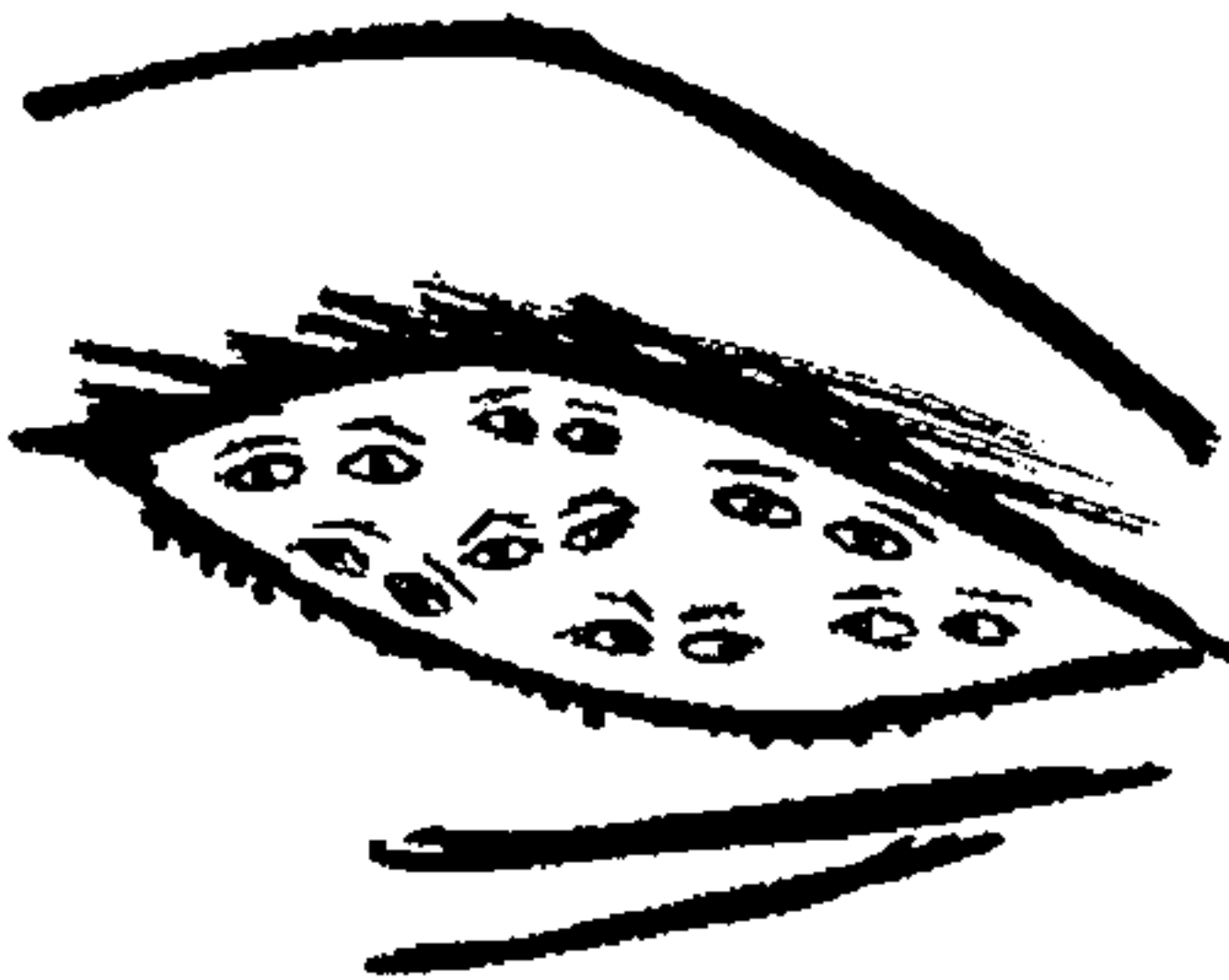
Here is a list of things for self-talk. They help me; maybe they will help you too.—Pat

NEGATIVE COGNITIONS

I don't deserve love
 I am a bad person
 I am terrible
 I am worthless
 I am shameful
 I am unlovable
 I am not good enough
 I deserve only bad things
 I cannot be trusted
 I cannot trust myself
 I cannot trust my judgment
 I am powerless
 I am never in control
 I am weak
 I cannot protect myself
 I am stupid, not smart enough
 I am unimportant
 I am a disappointment
 I deserve to die
 I deserve to be miserable
 I cannot get what I want
 I will fail
 I have to be perfect, please all
 I am permanently damaged
 I am ugly, my body is hateful
 I should have done something
 I did something wrong
 I am in danger
 I cannot stand it
 I cannot trust anyone
 I cannot let it out (must hide it inside)
 It's not OK to show or have emotions
 I cannot stand up for myself
 I am different, don't belong
 I should have known better
 I am inadequate

POSITIVE COGNITIONS

I deserve love; I can have love
 I am a good, loving person
 I am fine as I am
 I am worthy; I am worthwhile
 I am honorable
 I am lovable
 I am deserving, fine and OK
 I deserve good things and can have them
 I can be trusted
 I can (learn to) trust myself
 I can trust my judgment
 I now have choices
 I am now in control
 I am strong
 I can (learn to) protect myself
 I am intelligent and I can learn
 I am important
 I am OK just the way I am
 I deserve to live and enjoy life
 I deserve to be happy
 I can get what I want
 I can succeed
 I can be myself and make mistakes
 I am or can be healthy
 I am fine, attractive, lovable
 I did the best I could
 I can (have) learned from it
 It's over; I am safe now
 I can handle it, find help
 I can choose who to trust
 I can choose to let it out safely
 I can safely feel, show my emotions
 I can safely let my needs be known
 I am OK as I am
 I do the best I can; I can learn
 I am adequate



Take a Look in My Eyes - Artist ??? (no name on artwork)

Therapists' Page

By Mary Helen Hopponen, M.Ed. LPC

Mary Helen Hopponen is a professional counselor in private practice with survivors of trauma, PTSD and Dissociative Disorders. She is also an adjunct instructor at South Dakota State University, in the Counseling and Human Resource Development Department in Brookings, South Dakota. Ms Hopponen has been counseling and teaching for 25 years.

Hearing the Voices of Boys and Men: Part I

New Perspectives on Therapy

The first experiments on the human brain in the middle 1800s were done to "prove" that females did not have the brain capacity of males. They did find female brains were smaller, but the proportion of brain weight to body weight disproved their hopes. With today's wealth of brain, psychological, physiological and sociological research, findings are opening new approaches to many areas, including new perspectives on gender development, same and other gender relationships and minds and bodies. The purpose of this paper is to look at a few of these concepts in the light of relationships, brain and body functions, trauma and recovery. Maybe in knowing how and why women and men think, talk, relate and live their lives in different ways, we can change some of our cultural directions.

These new challenges from every field of research and practice speak directly to the mental health client and practitioner. Why are so few boys receiving help early in their lives when they are seen much more often in schools and agencies as "at risk" children? Why are they doing poorly in our "fine" schools from preschool to top graduate schools, fewer entering college and fewer graduating? Why are they diagnosed with severe disorders after years of unrecognized depression and relationship disasters, with evidence of personal suffering? Why are they killing themselves and others at alarming rates in all age, economic, social, ethnic and cultural groups?

As briefly as possible, this article will touch on several points that are vital for anyone, either gender, who is involved in identification, intervention or healing work with boys and men, as well as those living in relationships with them. No matter what the assumed success we individually or collectively claim for these males who suffer from trauma's effects—post traumatic stress disorder, other dissociative disorders, depression or other aspects of trauma—the necessity for redesigning many aspects of our personal and professional interactions are vital and long overdue. The focus of this article, however, is only on those factors that impact relationships, both personal and professional, with boys and men. Part II on

trauma in the lives of boys and men will appear in a later issue of *Many Voices*.

As author of this article I have considerable discomfort speaking about the lives of boys and men. I resented that men, no matter what their authority, told me, a woman, over most of my long lifespan what was or was not important about my internal or external female existence. The only response I have is that I draw on the words of many clients and friends, both dissociative and ordinary, and from literature and professionals across a wide spectrum of expertise and perspective. However, I firmly believe that my real task is to speak to women as a woman, to friends, wives, mothers, teachers, medical professionals, counselors, and others. This new information applied to teaching and interactive styles will help us identify our own hidden myths and alienating beliefs about the boys and men that interfere in healthier, empowering relationships.

Significant Issues for Males

The significant differences between males and females is not the genitals or reproductive processes or the shape of their skin, but the structure and process of their gender-specific brains and physiology. This is not to suggest that we are always miles apart, as in all physical attributes some individuals will spread over a range of normal. The exciting aspect of this research is that we now have beginning solid data that many of the behaviors and qualities that we observe are rooted in structure, process and purpose, not in individual characteristics.

This information can be found in many resources; however, Michael Gurian's books offer quick, comprehensive descriptions. There is rich supportive data, both technical and clinical, to encourage our search.

Brain structure and function

The short list of structures considered here are the brain stem, right and left hemispheres, and corpus callosum. The amygdala and hippocampus are relevant to the discussion of the range of dissociative disorders, to follow later.

* The right hemisphere holds early and basic experiential memories and a few verbal centers, more for women than for men. The left hemisphere has more cognitive processing capacity, more

centers for later memories, and learning and organizing centers. The corpus callosum acts as a switchboard between the two hemispheres. It is thicker and more active in women than in men. Structure has little to do with intelligence, but much to do with the ability to verbalize feelings and experiences. Add to this that adults tend to talk more about feelings with girls and talk about how one responds with behaviors to boys. With males having fewer verbal centers to be developed and adults' interactions with them involving less verbalizing and labeling of feelings, some males may be identified as suffering from "alexithymia", or "no words for feelings" if early experiences did not include intense verbalizing behaviors. When males are asked for a feeling identification or a verbal description of an emotional state, they may have difficulty "finding the words."

*Males are prepared to respond more quickly to situations of threat than are females. In periods of rest and in times of stress, males' blood pools in an area of the brain stem that prepares them for constant alert and immediate response to threat. In females that blood pool is in an area that prepares them to reach out and connect to others. Gender-specific response patterns designed to increase the possibility of survival of the group—males springing to protect and females gathering together with children—can offer some explanation of why males wiggle and even become hyperactive while females can sit quietly and attempt communication to relieve stress.

*The male mode of communicating and relating is more focused on visual/spatial cues. They build relationships, read each other's emotional climate, and adapt to those cues without words more easily than do women. Men seem to understand women's verbal ways much better than most women understand visual/spatial ways.

*The male brain's structure is designed to lateralize (attended to one or the other hemisphere and a specific function) and focus energy, decisions and resolution on that point. The female brain expands and gathers and talks. Women literally can't think if they can't talk. They look at the big picture, always looking for outliers that may impact the situation. The decision making process is slower and more detail inclusive. If we work together in a

complimentary way as was intended, the larger issues are included and the significant points can be identified. Trusting single gender groups with decisions is seldom a good choice.

*This is vital knowledge for relational settings involving both genders because we tend to relate in gender-specific patterns. Most helping interactions are structured on the female model (talking with direct eye contact and small spaces) when at least one participant is female. This guarantees that good communication for a male will be limited at best or nonexistent at the worst. This sad situation can only be avoided by consulting with other gender persons, by reading, and struggling to open up new approaches to all interactions with the same and other gender.

Physical issues of space and activity

Care must always be taken to be very respectful of male space. Many western culture females confuse men with their gender blindness to male rules about touch and space. Again, discussions with men and openness to changing gender assumptions about appropriate distance, our own body space and male rules will be helpful. Attention cannot be paid to communication when the mind is trying to assess intentions or a sense of threat.

*Most males, of any age or developmental level, will communicate more comfortably if some activity is included in the setting. There are many choices, such as a board game, art, TV, or a physical game or activity like basketball or pool. A car trip or bike ride, if possible, are particularly helpful because they add another element of private, safe space. Guided imagery, dream work and writing/art projects can increase involvement of both hemispheres. Group activities to enhance teamwork are good for boys. Do not be misled into thinking that interactions with men or boys are working well without some of these support tools. The whole process will upgrade if sensitivity and some options for communication situations are included.

Relationship patterns affecting development

Successful attachment to consistent, nurturing caregivers is one of the most important developmental tasks for all human infants; the importance remains across the lifespan. Without that base of trust in self and other, the infant, child or adult cannot sleep, eat, relate or learn, says Stanley Greenspan, M.D. For male infants this first life task is more frequently neglected than for female infants. Research has found significant differences in the patterns of caregivers' interactions and responses to boys, differences in attachment history, attachment patterns and in restorative attending behaviors

toward the infant, boy or man following trauma.

*Readings "about" attachment are of no real help for the therapist or caregiver in working with an infant or unattached person. However, Greenspan details six developmental tasks that are necessary for an infant to become securely attached and includes relational approaches for accomplishing each task. These tasks and intervention approaches are also appropriate for doing restorative attachment work with adults. It is quite easy to become skilled at identifying the developmental impediments, attachment patterns, and approaches appropriate for the specific person that will create or restore a healthy developmental base. Accomplishing a secure bond in the infant is the easiest but the good news is that it is always possible to build new bonds or rebuild. All it takes is two individuals, not in an emotionally interdependent relationship, one responsible for giving and the other to receiving the gift of unconditional positive regard. The necessary safe haven can be rebuilt for successfully completing the healing journey.

*The sad reality of male attachment development is that he does not get the level or intensity of attachment security as does a female in similar settings. The male infant is less mature, neurologically and physically, at birth. He gives more stress cries, more frequently and more desperately, in the first stages after birth, and all adults are documented to respond less often and less quickly than they do to frantic female babies. In addition, the male child is easily distracted and breaks eye contact with caregivers more frequently than females; adults respond by breaking connections as well. These unconscious behaviors begin a consistent pattern of the male's lifelong emotional lesson—that comfort can't be expected when he is fearful, in pain or overwhelmed. In addition he is not held as closely, or touched or consoled as gently or as long as is a female child. Sadly, adults still challenge very small boys to "be a man," as if anyone knows what that means.

*Attachment work identifies four attachment styles—Secure, Anxious, Detached, and Dismissing/Disorganized or Reactive.

Secure has solid connection of self and others with ability to set boundaries.

Anxious never got quite enough connection and is still trying to get "it."

Detached didn't get enough to be safe, gave up, and put up walls.

Dismissing/Disorganized had random connection and rejection and spends a lifetime pushing away/reaching out, over and over and over.

Recovery works, last to first, and takes a long time with careful attention to the transitions, stage to stage. It is easy to

misread detached as "independent," or anxious as "fussy or spoiled."

Differentiation Across the Lifespan

Another source of frustration, rejection and sometimes dangerous behaviors can be traced to the overwhelming task of *differentiation*. The roots of this concept that undergirds many behaviors of boys and men begin at conception and can trigger reactive behaviors against women at almost any life stage.

*All conceptions are developmentally female for about six weeks whether the embryo has XX or XY chromosomes. At about six weeks in utero, chemical antigens are triggered by the Y chromosome and in most cases, the embryo shifts its developmental path to become male. This process of being "not female" or differentiating, is a strong, vital force in the life of the developing male embryo, fetus, infant, boy, adolescent, and adult.

*The male child becomes aware of his maleness around fifteen to eighteen months of age, and has to face the reality that the most important person in his life, his mother, is Other. She is not like him and cannot teach him what he needs to know to live his life as male. At that point he begins a lifelong struggle to establish himself as male, to find males to teach him at a "cellular level" to quote Robert Bly, "how to be a Man."

*The best efforts of female teachers, counselors, or other females who try to engage the male in an interaction can be met with rebellion, rejection, even panic. The desperate attempt to maintain "Otherness" can trigger shame and aggressive acting out behaviors, particularly in the presence of other males.

*The most powerful and fearsome reinforcer of this "not female" task of the growing boy and maturing man is *shame*. Shame, with a physiological response similar to an actual life threatening physical assault, is experienced as endangering the survival of the Self. Boys can be controlled, punished, even destroyed by shame in homes, schools or playgrounds. "Don't be a baby," "Big boys don't cry," "Woman" or "Mamma's boy" (emphasizing lack of differentiation), "Suck it up, Man," "Teacher's pet" (when the teacher is female) etc. Women experience shame in many settings also, but because "becoming male" is so complicated and involves physical, psychological, even spiritual struggles, the results are more complicated. It may leave the male with no recourse but despair, rage, and destruction of the Self or Other.

Since the beginning of the 1800s and the Industrial Revolution, the role of father and the image of the supportive, protective male have been eroded into a sometimes convenient, often bothersome appendage to the family and community system. The picture of the father hardly exists now as

Therapists' Page, Cont'd.

death, abandonment, violence and situations that could be called "present but absent" in describing the detached father, erodes the template.

He may be too busy with his own ego needs, too overwhelmed with unreasonably demanding jobs, too poorly fathered to know what is expected of him, or too emotionally needy to share the mother's attention with his children without panic, anxiety or violence. The father has become simply absent as a male presence, as his sons' teacher about a man's body, a man's way of being, of manhood as a developing process, about co-parenting with a mother, or as protector parent for his children when the mother is debilitated or dangerous. The healthiest woman cannot bring a boy to manhood anymore than a great father can bring his daughter to womanhood. These are portals through which we must pass that only respond to the gendered key of a life lived in the secret world of Man or Woman.

*A committed male presence teaches his son about being a strong, loving protecting father participating in the family.

*A fathering presence teaches his son about the sacredness of the male body, of his energy, his internal strength, his reproductive process and responsibilities.

*By his relationship to the mother and women he teaches the boy also about the sacredness of women, of their internal strength, their emotional lives, their reproductive processes and responsibilities.

*He models moral and spiritual

responsibilities in the family, local community and the global community.

*He teaches the boy about his history, of the struggles and victories of the men of his genetic history, and of the world, who gave of themselves to better the lives of his family and the many others. He shares with the boy's other adult male mentors about the successful but dangerous path to Manhood.

*He smoothes the lifespan path for his sons so that they may mature and age with a trust in goodness and order even when it can't always be seen.

*A father was staggered with the reality of his five-year-old son's wisdom when the boy asked his mother if she knew Osama bin Laden's father. When she replied, "No Honey, why do you ask?" he replied simply, "Oh, I was just thinking he must have had a really mean father to want to hurt so many people!" Oh!!

The ultimate test of our ability to live with others in our world who are different in language, color, ethnicity and culture, skills and abilities, family styles and religious beliefs, rests not with these obvious variations. It is with the hidden ones, gender being the one best known but least understood. The question is: can we face our own biases and half-truths? Can we change the ways we judge or endow in our closest relationships and in our more-public connections?

May this information encourage your curiosity.

(Part II, on the effects of trauma on all victims, but with a focus on men and boys, will appear here in the near future.)

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MV

If Only

If only for a moment
To be free of the terrors inside me;
To have a voice of my own
Without having to think of everybody
else first
Without having to deny a memory,
Into or out of existence.

To be whole,
No fragments
No others
No voice, but my own,
If only for a moment.
That would be life.
That would be truly living.

By Julies

MV

Do Bad Kids Go To Heaven?

Help never came in the form of parents. Pain came in the form of a big man who thought he could get away with hurting little kids, little kids that would someday at his hands, split off to be many little children. The abuse went on for years, and yet I was ordered to never tell or he would kill my whole family and my dog. The real pain is that he *did* get away with it. He died before I ever told anyone and now I'm paying for it yet today.

Therapy is very expensive and yet I couldn't live if I didn't have it. So sad are the days that pass by. Money running out. Am I going to lose my home to him, too? How could he have taken so much away from me and why do I keep letting him?

I spend my days tucked away in my home with my family that lives inside. My parents are gone now and I have no one who can help me through the bad days and the horrible nights. I turn into my POD and sometimes go in very deep to get away from the hell that I go through. My inside family is all I have. They help me with the day to day things that have to take place.

We are falling behind. I have few if any friends. I feel like I would be a burden to them, if I had any. I don't want to be a burden to anyone. I must find a way to keep going. I have to find a way out. The walls are closing in and I won't be able to get out. Someone unlock the door!... If only it was that easy.

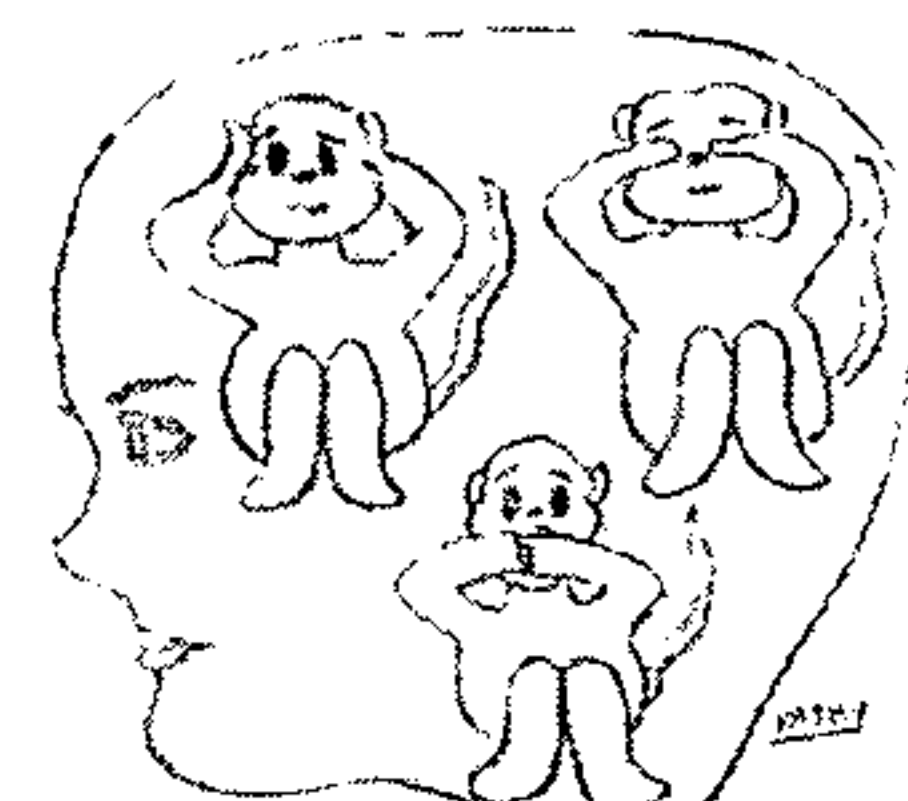
Do kids who were bad go to heaven?

Sincerely, Diane and the POD

(If you have suggestions or support to offer, MV will forward your replies to Diane)

MV

Your Brain on MPD



Comment on The Body and Me

By GDK (All of Us)

I was impressed with "The Body and Me" written by Sunflower House (February 2002 MV).

I could relate to the article because I, too, was obsessed with body image and weight and know how "being thin" can take over your entire life.

For as long as I can remember, I hated myself—hated the way I looked. I remember as early as kindergarten having critical thoughts about my body and looks. I would envy the other little girls who were pretty and thin—everything I wanted to be. I thought that being pretty and thin meant that you were loved; if you were ugly, then you were hated and not wanted. I was an ugly child—chubby, with thick glasse and unruly short hair.

When I was fifteen, I lost a lot of weight due to an illness. However, I liked the idea that I was now thin and wanted to be even thinner. It was as if I played a game with myself called "How Thin Can I Get?" I hardly ate, and when I did, I knew exactly how long I had to exercise to work off my small meals. I was totally obsessed, counting every calorie. Finally, I got so thin I ended up in the hospital. This was before doctors were really aware of anorexia, so nothing really helped me. My doctor did want me to talk with a psychologist, because I think he knew something was wrong with my thinking. My parents, however, wouldn't let me talk with the therapist because having a "mental" daughter was too much for them and would make them look bad.

My obsession continued on during my teens and into my early twenties. I got married, but still hated the way I looked and worried about dieting and exercise. Looking back, I realized I would never be satisfied with my body, no matter how thin. It even got to the point where I refused to get a job because it would interfere with my three-times-a-day workout, even though my husband was unemployed for many months and we really needed the money.

In my late twenties, I had my first

breakdown. It started with a body memory of a tight feeling around my waist. I went everywhere trying to figure out what was causing this feeling. Eventually, I got so depressed that I ended up in a mental hospital. Even though, till this day, there is no explanation as to why I have this particular body memory, it makes me—my therapist and doctors—wonder if it has something to do with my obsession with body image.

I started taking psych medication, which caused me to gain weight. My first suicide attempt was right after I weighed myself and saw that I was 200 lbs. I was so upset that I immediately took a bottle of pills, had my stomach pumped and ended up committed. It sounds like a stupid reason to try to kill myself, but back then I truly believed that I was better off dead than fat.

Since then, I have been in and out of the hospital so many times that I've lost count. I was taking all kinds of meds and gained even more weight. When I finally got somewhat better and wasn't feeling the tight feeling around my waist everyday, I again began to obsess about my weight. I tried everything—spent thousands of dollars we didn't have—to lose weight. I counted every calorie, kept a food journal every day. I worried about my weight and was totally anxious all the time. Dieting, exercise, and losing weight were all I thought about and talked about. It began to interfere with my relationship with my husband.

Then I read my first "self-acceptance" book. I learned how the media and business keep women so involved with their looks that they are unable to fully live up to their potential. I read how society looks at fat as "unacceptable, gross, ugly" and how much discrimination fat people have to suffer.

I've gained more weight and still have that critical voice in my head; sometimes the voice is really loud—other times, not. I try not to obsess about my weight, and like Sunflower, I refuse to read women's magazines that promote dieting. Also, I

got rid of all my diet books. Now I try to eat and exercise in a healthy way.

But, I must say, I still have days that I hate myself because of the way I look. Acceptance is a big thing for me and I'm reminded each and every day that being fat is "unacceptable." For example, my size isn't sold at most stores, etc.

I still think being thin equals love. My husband and doctors have told me my weight is not my fault—it's because of the medication I take. But, people don't know that, so when I go out I get looks and I'm laughed at behind my back. People even ask me when my due date is, thinking that I must be pregnant. I feel like I should wear a sign that says "This isn't my fault—it's because of the meds:" so people will know I didn't do this to myself.

I do have days where I get angry and depressed because I'm fat. The critical voice inside my head gets really loud and says terrible things about me and the way I look. I even think about dying because I'm no longer pretty and thin.

I used to judge fat people (think badly about them) until I became fat myself. Now I know you shouldn't judge fat people, because you don't know the reason why they are heavy. Not all fat people spend all day eating uncontrollably. For example, I don't eat much at all but I'm still fat. So, when you see a heavy person, try not to judge them or think poorly of them; they are people who have a lot to offer and have feelings too.

My advice to women? Pull yourself away from the mirror, get off the scale, stop obsessing about dieting and exercising. Stop dedicating your life to being young, thin and pretty, because it is all in vain. Instead, dedicate yourself to something that will be a true accomplishment for yourself and for others.

Thanks for reading.

MV

Yoga and the Healing Journey - Part I

By Laureen E Smith, PhD CYT

Laureen Smith, PHD CYT, has studied yoga since 1992 and comes to yoga with a background in community activism, theatre and spirituality/theology. She is the Protestant Campus Minister for the George Washington University and the Associate Pastor at Western Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C.

"The world is very full of suffering. It is also full of the overcoming of it." Helen Keller

Union and Integration

As a sexual abuse survivor and a certified yoga teacher, I am profoundly aware of myriad ways that yoga can support and nurture the journey of healing. It was over ten years ago that I was introduced to yoga, and from that time on, slowly but surely, I have experienced profound healing from the detrimental effects of the abuse. My body, my spirit, my energy, and my life have been returned to me, in great part, because of yoga.

From a tradition that is over 5,000 years old, the word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root *yuj* meaning to bind, join, attach and yoke...it also means union or communion. From the outset, the very idea of yoga as a joining together of seemingly disparate, disjunctive aspects of one's life is a heartening invitation for abuse survivors. Yoga by definition means both the experience of union as well as the "mental and physical technologies of realizing, enjoying, and manifesting [this] union."¹ Yoga is the moment as well as the path. Finding union between seemingly separate aspects of the Self allows survivors the opportunity to slowly bring the fragments of their lives back into an integrated whole. By yoking the body and the mind through attention in the postures or poses of yoga (called *asanas*), the body and mind are joined in the present. Parts of the self that have, perhaps, been split off by abuse can become integrated in a practice, permitting a sense of aliveness. By allowing the past and the future to remain in their respective places within a life's journey, a survivor becomes focused and grounded in the present so that the parts of the Self that were scattered are allowed to bind back together and integrate.

Specifically, Yoga can help heal some of the wounds of abuse in a number of ways, including:

- *Developing awareness, attention and presence
- *Expanding the practice of being in the present
- *Encouraging flexibility and strength in the body. Through the postures/*asanas*, flexibility, wholeness, and attention (if not love!) to the corporeal self emerges. The sense of being truly in the body is one of the most profound gifts of yoga.
- *Restoring natural breathing and expanding the body's capacity to heal through the breath
- *Allowing the natural presence of hope and enthusiasm to permeate one's whole self as one has fun (yes, fun!) on the yoga journey.

The gradual integration of a disintegrated self is one of the most healing and profoundly important gifts that yoga offers an abuse survivor. Like a strong magnet that attracts objects at a distance, so too yoga draws together the body, mind, and spirit of the practitioner. In this drawing together, obstacles to wholeness are removed, and inflow of one's natural healing state is often experienced.

Starting with the Breath

I begin all my classes with simple breathing practices, called *pranayama*. Prana is the Sanskrit word for life force, or energy, or breath. Akin to the Greek word *pneuma* (where we get pneumonia) or the Hebrew word *ruach*, prana is that vital stream of life that each one of us embodies from birth to death. In *pranayama*, one draws one's attention to the breath and to our life's spirit in order to remove obstacles from our natural breath process. I invite my students to do this simple exercise:

Find a comfortable seated or laying down position. Make sure the spine is

as straight as it will go at the time. Broaden across the collar bones and let your head and neck stretch in opposite directions, lengthening the spine. Begin to bring your awareness and your attention to your breath. Begin to notice the inhales and the exhales. Without changing anything, see if you can notice a few things about your breath at this moment. Which is longer, the exhale or the inhale? What does your breath feel like (is there an adjective you'd use to describe your breath: lumpy, soft, deep, shallow, etc.??) Where in your torso do you notice the breath coming in? Is it in the chest? The belly? Or...? Can you notice if your right or left side is "working" harder? Without judgment or condemnation, simply see if you can notice what your breath is doing right now. Then, when you feel ready, bring a hand to your lower belly, right beneath your belly-button. Begin to relax your stomach muscles and see if you can invite your breath deep into your belly. Again, without judgment if it doesn't go smoothly, just see what it feels like to let your hand on your belly rise and fall with each deep breath. After a few belly breaths, begin to bring your awareness and attention back out into the room, stretching a bit to bring yourself back.

Every day I do some sort of breathing exercise, even if it's only a couple of minutes. I bring my attention to this vital sense of myself and I am reminded that I am alive.

Step by Step

As one embarks on the yoga path—whether in a class, with a teacher, with books and videos—the long-since fractured parts of the Self begin to coalesce and transform by simple and yet important breathing practices and by *asanas*/postures. There are hundreds, if not thousands of postures in yoga and each school has a different way of approaching

them. The postures I detail below give only a taste of the great tradition that is Yoga. Each of the simple postures is connected with the chakras, or energy centers in the body. "Traditionally, [Indian yogis] saw the body as containing seven main chakras...each chakra is associated with particular functions within the body and with specific life issues..."² As we approach these asanas, not only does our body have the opportunity to stretch, but our souls do as well, since each posture relates to different life energy. Feel free to stay in each of these poses as long as you would like, or simply experience them for 3-5 breaths. Please note that while practicing at home can be a wonderful thing, I've found that working with a teacher helps immeasurably on this journey.

Our Base

It is important for survivors to have a sense of our foundation, our base, our root. Tadasana (Mountain Pose) is a good pose to practice for Chakra One and for "standing on our own two feet," as well as strengthening leg and feet muscles.

Stand with your feet parallel about hip-width. Spread your toes and balance your weight evenly on your feet. Firm your thigh muscles, without hardening your lower belly. Keep your hips neutral (neither tucking nor arching). Lift the ribcage up, but broaden across the collar bones. Take your shoulders down, away from your ears. Hang your arms beside the torso. Balance the crown of your head directly over the rest of your body, with your chin parallel to the floor and your throat soft. Soften your eyes.

Our Emotional Truth

The second chakra is related to our emotional life, as well as our sexuality. For so many of us, this part of our body and life are shut down, and we hold much tension in our tight hips, our back, and our legs. Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose) allows us to experience our feelings as our own, and heal the stuck places of pain, as well as increase flexibility in our hip area.

Sit on the edge of a folded blanket or a firm pillow. Sit with your legs straight out in front of you. Exhale, bend your knees, pull your heels

toward your hips, then drop your knees out to the sides and press the soles of your feet together. Bring your heels as close to your hips as you comfortably can. Never force your knees down. Just let them be where they are and instead, bring your attention to your inner thighs and imagine letting them drop gently to the floor. Sit upright with broad collarbones, reaching the top of your head to the ceiling. Breathe softly for five minutes.

Our Power

Part of the healing journey includes reclaiming our inherent, natural, unique power. The third chakra is related to self-esteem, as well as digestion and metabolism. Twists, such as Bharadvajasana I (Bharadva's pose), are a good way to bring attention to this area.

Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you. Shift over onto your right buttock, bend your knees, and swing your legs to the left. Lay your feet on the floor outside your left hip, with the left ankle resting in the right arch. Inhale and lift through the top of your head to lengthen the front torso. Then exhale and twist your torso to the right, keeping the left buttock on or very close to the floor. Soften the belly and keep your spine long. Place your left hand on your right thigh, and bring your right hand to the floor behind you. Look gently with soft eyes over your right shoulder. With every inhalation lengthen your spine a bit more, using the push of the fingers on the floor to help; with every exhalation twist a little more. Return to the starting position, and repeat to the left for the same length of time.

Practice these exercises for the next few weeks. We will continue the list of yoga postures in the next issue.

1. Robert Thurman, Yoga Journal (March/April 2001), p. 70

2. Barbara Kaplan Herring, Yoga Journal (December 2001), p. 104

Many Yoga sources are available on the Internet. Here are two I recommend:

www.yogajournal.com

www.yogasite.com

Letters

My ninety year old mother died this summer after a brief illness. We had communicated, by phone only, for many years. I did see her the day before she died. I know that she was well cared for and surrounded by a loving family.

When she grew old and frail, my anger at her disappeared. The child grieved for the loving mother that she would never have. When my anger vanished, I felt nothing for her.

I wanted to ask your readers—am I a cold, unfeeling monster?

By ER and Child

I recently lost my father. It has brought up many emotions and memories, some of them pleasant. The most pleasant thing about remembering my father (non-offending perpetrator) was that he really liked me and loved me, but failed to protect me from my mother the perp.

How can I handle this? I am finding that I have much more compassion and forgiveness for him than I will ever have for the mother. How does one handle a loss in general while in the midst of learning a new career and integrating? I think this may put me back in the hospital. Also, about a week later I lost someone who promised to be there for me and wasn't. He disappeared on me when I most needed him. How do I move through this and continue? Any and all responses will be greatly appreciated. Help! -

By Sabrina

MV

To Live, We Need God

Confused senses in all forms
Can be felt and heard.
Feel the pain; want the joy
Feel the joy, but see the pain.
Hear the mixed messages in the mind.
Worse instead of better
Need God's help to survive.
Are they making too much of this all?
I believe so.
Yet, running out of energy to be above them,
faster than them.
Nothing makes sense in their lives or mine.
Our senses are confused, anguished to the
point of being numb.
We need God and our strong parts to stay
alive, be alive, feel alive.
To live, we need God!

(From "E" of Sharona's group)

MV

We Are I Now

By Heather B.

There was never a point in time when one minute we were multiple and the next, not.

For us it was a process of merging more and more. The way a rainbow doesn't have a distinct line between colors, but more of a blending where you can't define where it ceases to be blue and turns to green. Especially when the line is constantly changing.

We used to think that most other people were healthy and well-adjusted and knew how to cope with whatever life threw at them. Ha! Ha! Ha! That's the biggest joke ever!

Other people have no idea what our lives are like or what it was like for us growing up. Most people don't want to hear, see, and certainly not to believe that it could happen at all. Therefore, we must be disturbed or crazy. They don't want to hear the truth and frequently get angry when pressed into it. They don't have the coping skills to deal with it. Denial is their favorite coping skill.

But there are a few people out there who can hear and cope. Therapists can do this, and they can also model better coping skills and help us learn different ways of doing things. It may take some time to find the right therapist, but they're out there.

We never wanted "integration." Our goal was cooperation and an ability to function better. We were afraid we'd lose talents that each one had. We'd all gotten to know each other and like each other. It felt like it would be a loss or an abandonment. If integration happened, it happened; if not, we had cooperation. Day-to-day life was manageable. Ups and downs evened out some, but we didn't trust it. We kept waiting for the next disaster or trauma, but it didn't come. We lived cautiously. We settled down, started treating ourselves better. We did things we all liked or took turns doing something each enjoyed.

I guess it started with hindsight.

"We should have said...we should have done...I wish I hadn't done that..." We pictured ourselves doing things

differently. We practiced scenarios in our head. Little by little we got better at it. When dealing with family we actually could distance ourselves and stay objective and not fall into old roles we used to play. This gave us a sense of control.

After awhile I was doing well enough to leave therapy, as long as nothing bad happened. Well...we all know that something bad was going to happen sooner or later. One day we were assaulted at work, but all the right personalities did the right things and were there to help. Defensive ones protected the little ones and the body. We were all there and managed to be in control of ourselves and not panic or fall apart (until after). We fought back—rather successfully, I might add—and then went home to feel safe, hide, and cry.

The next day I called the police who immediately wanted to charge me with assault! Some things never change, so I didn't press the issue any further. I thought a lot about what was best for us in the long and short term, instead of what was fair. We couldn't bring ourselves to leave the house for three days, and were hypervigilant for quite awhile, but we managed to go outside, and stayed away from similar circumstances to those around the attack. Of course I quit that job. Every day it got a little easier. I actually had the support of a couple friends this time, which helped out tremendously.

Then it occurred to me, that if being assaulted didn't send me into a tail-spin and make me split again, then probably nothing ever would. I was in control of my own self, instead of someone else.

Cooperation continues and I make sure everybody gets what they need and want, now that the wants are much more realistic. It's real quiet inside, these days. I still get little comments from little ones, especially when food shopping. Everyone is happy and has learned that they don't have to act out to be heard or to get what they need. Internal conversations

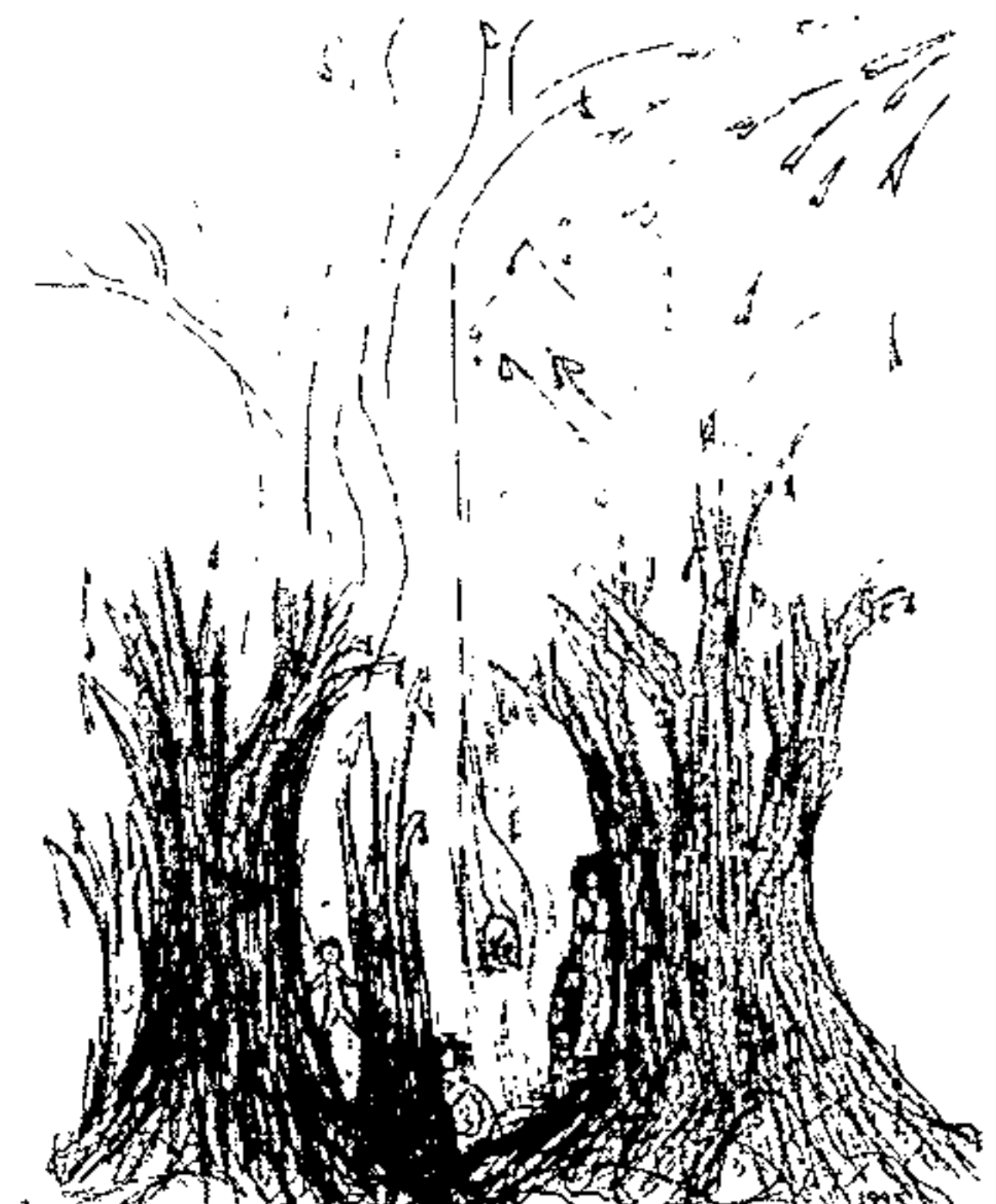
are now more like a feeling rather than actual words. I sometimes have a sudden craving for a particular food or I'll start thinking about going camping.

So I take care of me! Life isn't nearly as exciting as it used to be, but I manage to have fun and do new things. The ups and downs aren't as drastic or as frequent as before. I'm a little cocky now, with the thought that "what could possibly be worse than where I've already been?" It may not all be downhill from here, but I've got what it takes to handle whatever comes along.

During the five years of therapy after diagnosis, with eight full personalities, we never did any hypnotherapy. We did some relaxation techniques, which I still haven't mastered yet, but when I'm stressed I try taking deep breaths. We worked a lot on cooperation and learning new coping skills. When I left therapy I was still multiple with the idea that integration would have to be a natural, internal thing. I didn't want to force anything to happen.

I can't say when it happened and it doesn't feel like they're gone. I can still feel them there, but it's a bit foggy.

Some skeptics might say that I'm not really integrated, but like I said..."If being assaulted didn't make me split or switch around, then probably nothing ever will." Life has never been this calm before, or this good. **MV**



By EL

Values in Recovery

By Sally/Shirley

I am an integrated multiple since 1990 and/or 1991. To me, integration was a very fluid experience. I did not have just one cataclysmic event and then I was "integrated." I feel that all this is in the same vein as the way I became a multiple. I did not wake up one day with multiple personalities. I was sexually and physically abused at age 8 and I split to two children, Sally/Shirley. I continued to be sexually and physically abused by my stepfather/fundamentalist minister. Between age 12 and 16 I was violently raped and locked in a closet daily. I split again at age 12. I then had two age 12 years old, 2 age 8 years old and one small baby. At age 18 I had one last confrontation (on my 18th birthday) and split one more time. I then had a "protector," Inner Self-Helper, warrior-person who continues to protect me.

I am writing to encourage my brother and sister multiples, to say that even after integration some things are hard for me to master. I truly still need the support of Many Voices and the inspiration and courage that you all give to me through your letters.

Making and keeping friends/acquaintances is the most difficult challenge I continue to face since integration. "People," "friends," "family," all said/say that they liked me much better as a multiple. I guess I had the ability to be all things to all people, as a multiple. I try to "work on this daily...how to be real without giving too much of myself away, etc.

Recovery from physical abuse is one path, and recovery from emotional abuse is a continued struggle. A struggle to be real and be honest without changing yourself for another friend, or coworker or family member.

The values that I choose for myself continue to be a type of Buddhist

philosophy that believes that human beings are actually strong enough to face and accept reality without illusions.

Another step in recovery from emotional abuse, for me, was to not sabotage myself, my life, my job, etc. Even after therapy, and yet before integration, I had a habit of sabotaging the good that had happened to me. An attempt to leave someone or something before it left me. I had divorced (or legally disconnected from) the family of origin, but I work every day, even after integration, to not push away genuine people who truly want me to be happy, to have peace of mind, and only want me to succeed in whatever path I have chosen for myself.

The values I choose to live by are very personal, yet very real.

1. I face life head on, face reality, face any fear, float past fear to peace of mind
 2. I decide what's best for me, my inner system, and I find a way to make it happen. Whether it was legally separating from my family of origin (which I did) or finding what gives me/myself peace and just do it. Trying to remember daily..."First, do no harm." or just finding out what I really want instead of "Whatever you want, dear," and finding a way to get what I really want, large or small, material or emotional.
 3. Encouraging growth in myself and in others in whatever path this might take you, and "let the chips fall where they may."
 4. Listening to my inside system or structure. They have kept me alive, even though at times they were self-destructive to get my attention. And this inside system will carry me through the rest of my life.
- Every day I make a conscious decision to be good to myself, emotionally. Some days I accomplish this, and some days I just survive, but I am always grateful for your support, and Many Voices.

MV

My Struggle

I've been struggling all my life to see the real truth in me, to see the good in me; I know there is good in me. I just hope one day to find that good girl in me.

I want to love her, and show her that good things can and do happen, to show her that bad things do happen, but they are *not* the fault of a child.

I want her to know that I am here to listen and help *her* grow as all my other parts will learn to grow and to be safe. People say that I'm a good girl; now all I have to do is take that in to every part of me and know that I am not bad.

I hope to struggle no more, and to be at peace with all that is inside me, the child parts that need love and nurturing. They don't need to be yelled at and told that they are bad, or told they deserve what has happened to them. They deserve *good*.

I need and want every part of me to be **FREE!**

By Mary G.

MV



Emotional Abuse

Sometimes I think we will never totally recover emotionally from past abuse.

Many of us jump and cry out at loud sounds—even those from TV shows. Our abusers (one main one and two others) screamed just before hurting us, and others threw and broke things.

The loud noise is like a warning of what's to come. Even though no abuse follows, flashbacks occur.

Do any of you know how to better deal with this?

By Sally B.

MV

To My Therapist

The sparkle in your eyes
Caught our attention
The warmth in your smile
Got us to look
The compassion in your voice
Caused us to listen
The innocence in your hugs
Tempted us to reach out
Your trust in us
Gave us trust in ourselves
And now she knows we exist.

By JC



By JC

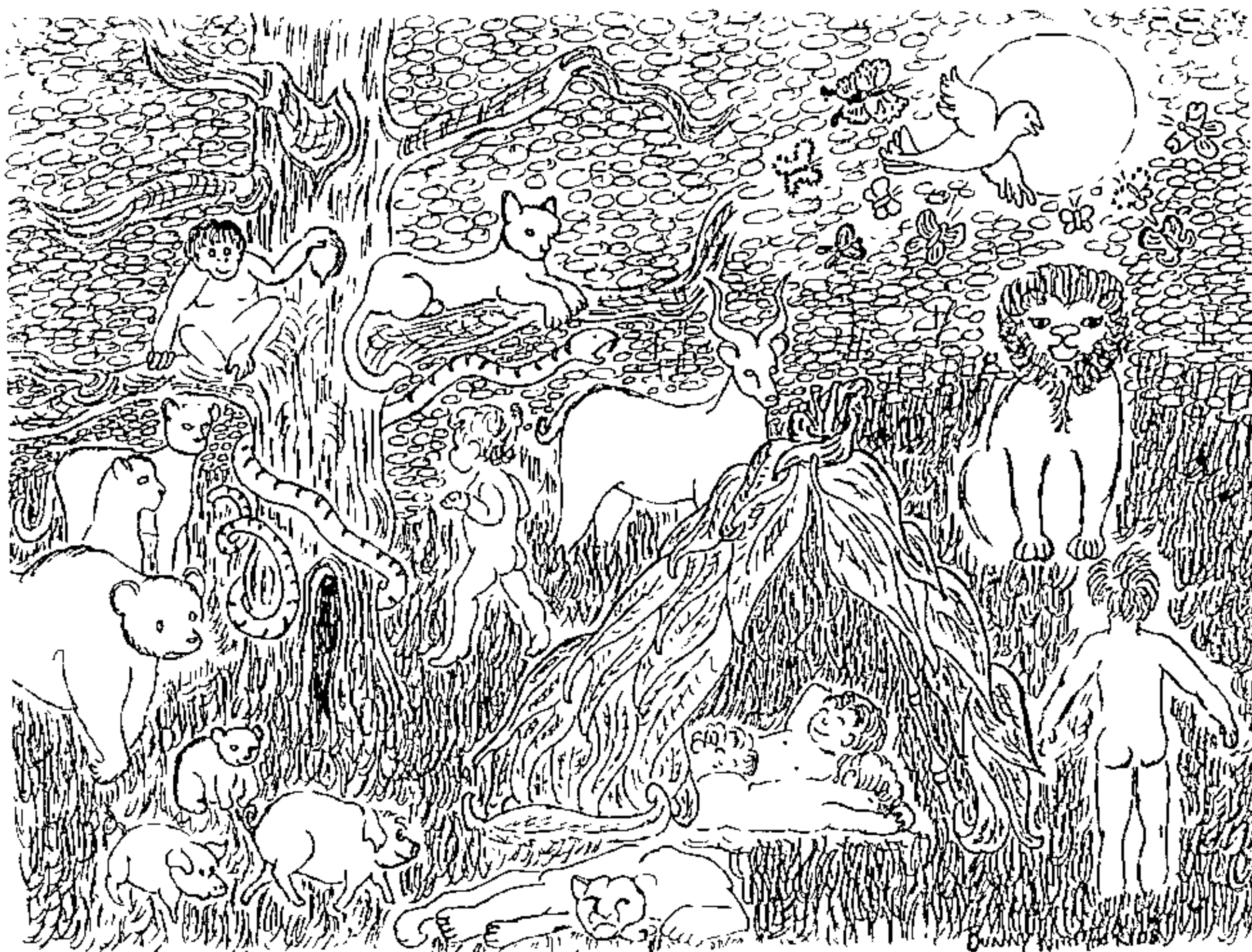
The Light

There is a light.
 I feel it once in awhile
 When I feel good.
 I feel good when I'm safe
 And no one is crashing across
 My boundaries.
 They get crashed every day, you know.
 Sometimes it's a small thing
 Like a look or a comment
 Or even judgmental silence.
 Sometimes it's a big thing
 Like I get the flu,
 Or my teenagers press me and press me,
 Or a burglar breaks into my house.
 And then there's inside of me
 Where the perpetrators of my past
 Permanently reside.
 Everything can and will be used against me.
 They rape and pillage my mind.
 They batter my body every day.
 Mundane ordinary things
 In life have roots to the past
 Where the perpetrators live within.
 I am tortured.
 They are my tormentors.
 They are me.
 I can't get away from me.
 The light only dribbles in
 During those quiet moments
 When the world stands still
 And the ones inside
 Find no reason to punish me.
 The number of hurts
 Keep outnumbering the bits of light
 Coming in.
 Sometimes I try to catch the light.
 Its warm glow lives
 In love freely given.
 If I could just catch love

And hang onto it.
 Then I'd live in the light
 And the light would live in me.
 Maybe if I find the right person
 Who will love me forever....
 No. I've tried that before.
 That's a fairy tale
 of Happily Ever After.
 In real life,
 Good people make mistakes
 And bad people are mean.
 No one can take the place
 Of the mother who should have
 Been there
 For me.
 Oh discouragement.
 The light flickers and dies
 In depression.
 Then someone shows me
 Some small kindness
 And a wisp of a ray slips through.
 The dark cracks.
 But I know there is always light
 Before darkness.
 I'd better not even hang onto it
 Because it will surely cause me
 Misery.
 Oh dread!
 The misery comes anyway.
 I know what I'll do.
 I'll avoid the light
 Then no one can hurt me
 Because they can't take
 Anything away from me
 When there isn't anything to take.
 Absence of light is to give in
 To the darkness.
 It is lonely.
 It is living without love.

It is worse than being dead.
 Maybe I'm in Hell.
 And then a ray of light
 Will just blindsides me
 unexpectedly.
 It feels so wonderful.
 I want to have it.
 I've got to get it.
 I'm starving.
 But light cannot be chased.
 It can't be squeezed tight
 And stored away.
 It can't be bought.
 It can't be manipulated
 Out of some one.
 Real light is a gift.
 God's grace.
 To live in God's grace is the trick.
 I must surrender my past
 To Him.
 Each day I pound the pavement
 Of painful exhausting therapy.
 Each day one more small thread
 Of old pukey stink
 Gets ripped away from
 My body.
 I stand torn
 Naked
 Bloody.
 Only the light will heal me.
 Will there be enough light for me
 Or will I be consumed
 In my own bondage
 Before the light can set me free?
 I am afraid.
 I am angry.
 I am hurt.
 I pray.

By the Four Dragons



Books

Drawing Out Your Soul
By Deborah Koff-Chapin ©1996
The Center for Touch Drawing,
Box 1089, Langley, WA 98260.48 pgs,
75 illus. \$9.95. 800-989-6334.
www.touchdrawing.com

The little book on Touch Drawing (sort of a grown-up fingerpainting) is a crystalline clear map for anyone who would like to build a stronger connection between mind and body.

Deborah Koff-Chapin includes some of her early Touch Drawings in this book, made on a night on which she thought she would die. She writes about how she reached her realization that Touch Drawing can transform self-perception and she even includes drawings from her childbirthing.

These drawings illustrate that what is most profound in the process of Touch Drawing—the process in which important messages from the body and mind are put

to paper with fingers and paint. Her early drawings encourage us to explore and compassionately dare us to speak with our hands. There are no mistakes. What your hands speak, what your vision inspires, can change your life.

Drawing Out Your Soul tells you what materials you will need and how best to begin. It includes a lot of little hints that I imagine you would get from Deborah in person, so although the book is small, it is helpful. Also, there is a complete list of other touch Drawing products available. You will need this to order paint and paper and a roller just right for the process.

Touch Drawing is tremendously flexible. You can work with primary colors, you can blend myriad pastel and earth tone shades, or work in black and white. Your fingers and hands speak, using the cerebral cortex and spine, and so this medium can be a wonderfully integrating way to nourish young and pre-verbal parts of the self. The

possibilities are amazing! You might choose to work with body image and perception, feeling states and separate alters, or with inner landscapes (just to name a few). Deborah writes about sharing your work in a safe environment only. For dissociative survivors, sharing might take the form of bringing Touch Drawings into therapy and talking about them.

Guidance for beginning a joyous process!

—By Gwen

(Editor's note: not to throw cold water on this process—which is surely helpful to many—but art therapists who work with sexual abuse survivors use fingerpainting techniques cautiously at first, because the texture and direct hands-on work is very intimate and can be triggering to some people. Don't dive into this unless you are comfortable with it, and if you try it and become uncomfortable, stop and talk to your therapist about your experience.)

MV

Sharing Recovery

In late June of 2001 I was discharged from a Day Program (Partial Hospitalization) in which I had been a full-time patient for almost 2-1/2 years. I was very dedicated to my recovery and was fortunately "grandfathered in" to the program before all treatment became very short-term. This gave me the time and opportunity to gain the skills I needed to move forward with my life. Although I still have much more to process and learn, it has given me some stable ground to stand on. I share this with you because the following is part of a "goodbye" I wrote for my last day of programming. In sharing it with other patients and staff, I hoped it would be encouraging and helpful to others who were earlier on the path of their own journeys. Possibly it can be helpful for some of you.

Virtually all new life is conceived and nurtured in restful darkness. A bird, a kitten, an infant, all begin their journey into life as an embryo in a warm, safe, protected environment. Within that darkness, it receives all the nourishment and essentials it needs to develop and emerge into the world, ready for life. Even the seeds of a flower are planted below the ground, protected from the elements, until the time is right for it to sprout above the surface. Sometimes the growth is stunted or delayed due to unfavorable circumstances.

Although it has taken many years, I too am beginning to emerge from my own darkness. My seeds of life have survived, despite my painful childhood. My potential is unfolding and new life is stirring as the time becomes right for each aspect to

expose itself. I choose to believe that hidden below the surface, I was growing, becoming what I was meant to be. I am restless and uncomfortable with the changes, but the discomfort is giving way to new growth.

For far too long, I have lived in the pain and shame of the past or in fear of the future. Most of my existence was spent in the darkness of my mind, cut off from the present. Today, as I poke my head out, I will not deny or repress the pain of my childhood, but neither will I get stuck in the blackness. I will not miss what life has to offer me in my adulthood; I have already missed too much. As I encounter the light, I see that I must have some contentment and a place of belonging within myself to remain in this present state of being.

In the process of freeing myself from the trauma of my past, my essence is eager to come forward. My child within, who has long been dormant in her darkness, is crowning to life. Survival, being the focus of my early years, buried my true identity beneath a facade. Now my facade has begun to crack and fall away. As the facade crumbles, the pain I feel is mixed with joy as the real me emerges. I have given a voice to the truths of my past and given birth to my future. As I make peace with my history, my identity is not only tied to the trauma and pain, but it includes the present and future as I expand my definition of who I am and fully explore the person I was initially created to be.

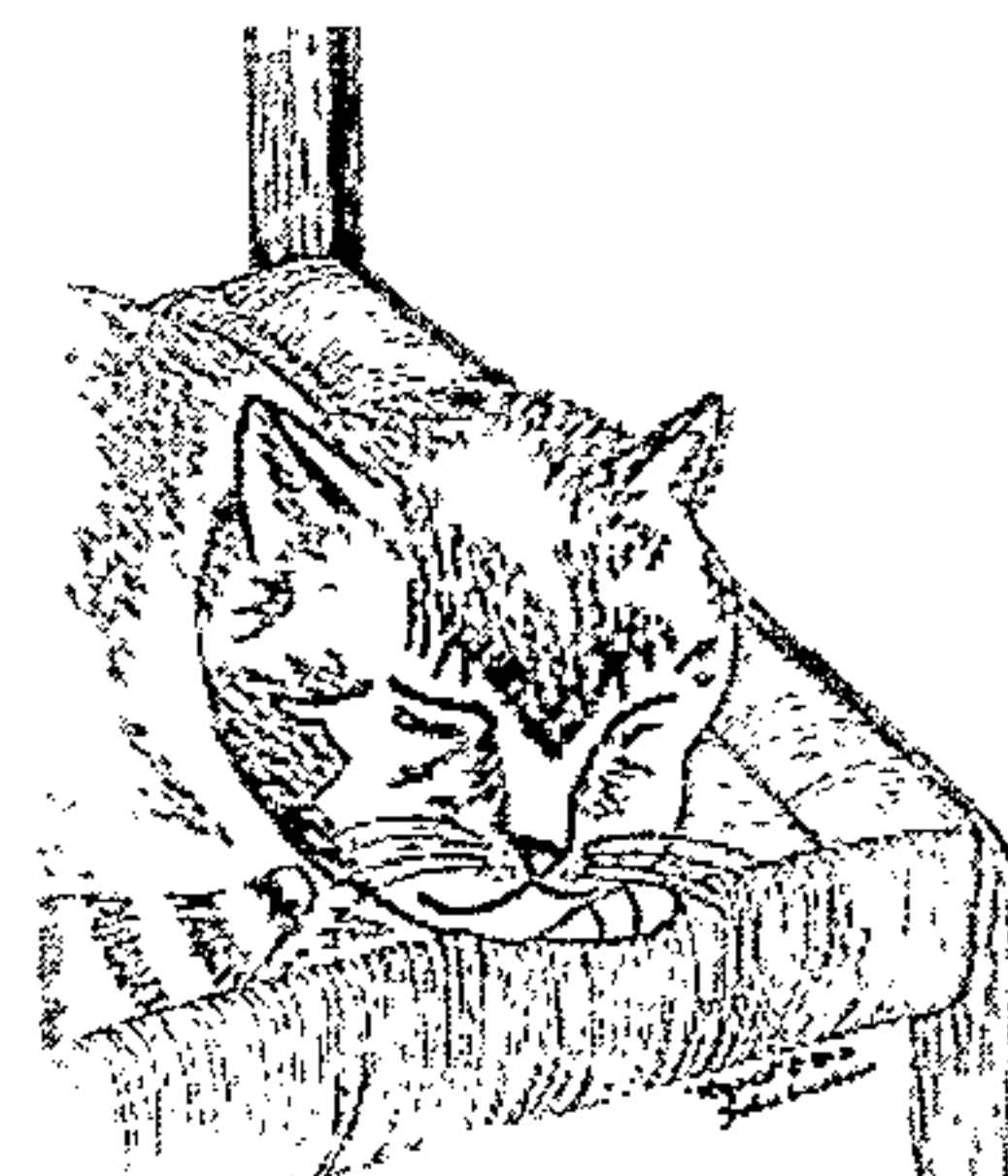
Yes, storms of rage and self-hatred will likely blow into my life again. Perhaps I cannot always dispel the storms. After all, with the storm comes the rain that holds

the nourishment I need to grow. My thoughts and emotions will battle for control. The dark black sky of my childhood will attempt to destroy and consume me once again. But I will choose to create beauty out of the ugliness. Past hurts can now be used for something positive and may be learned from. I can and I will create beautiful visions for myself and others to see and appreciate. And in the end, the storm will have been a blessing, for I will have taken from it something of lasting value.

On days when I am struggling more, I reread this and remember that I really have grown. Sometimes I do lose sight of that, and the darkness does try to pull me in. But although it may pull me back a little, I will never go back too far if I continue to choose to move forward, recognizing that growth is not always constant or flawless.

By Peg

MV



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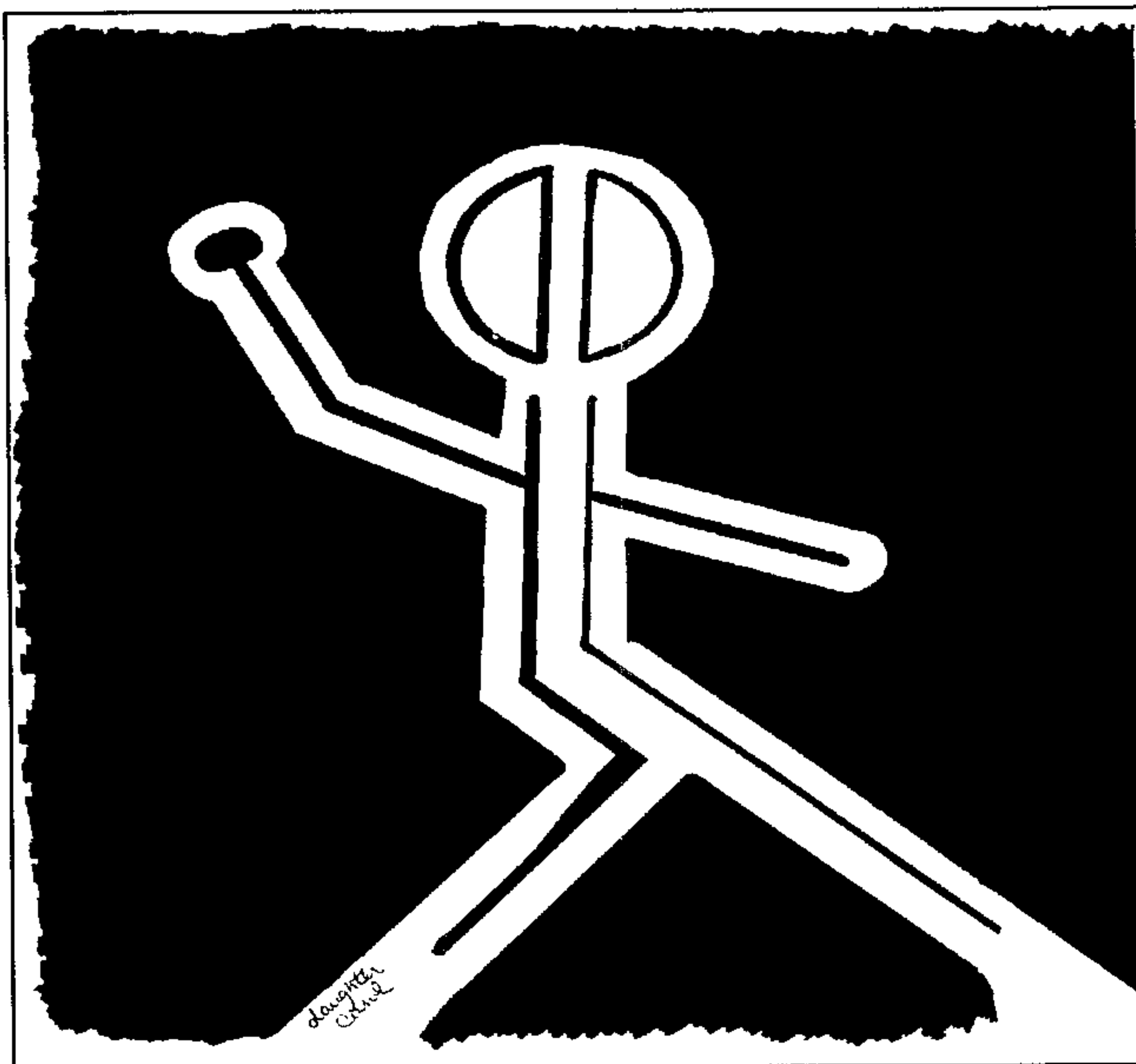
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