

# MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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Inside:

## Work & Disability Issues Life After Integration

### Work

Work=Money=Freedom & Safety

Want to do good

Help other kids make it out and through

We'll do that work for money  
And we'll be free and safe.

Work=hard, good, making a difference

Work=fun, angry, okay again

Work=scary, loud, mad

Work—I don't want to go

I have nothing to give

We'll do some other work for money  
And we'll be free and safe.

Work=outdoors, ropes, nature

Work=people, laughter,  
disagreement

Work=new ideas, do it again

Work but no healing, not our calling

We'll go do that work again for money  
And we'll be free and safe

Work of many types and times

Work=different amounts of money

Work=different amounts of freedom

Work always=people.

Work=people=not good enough

Work=scary, hard, too much

I don't want to go to work anymore

We'd much rather go to the mountains

But no work=no money

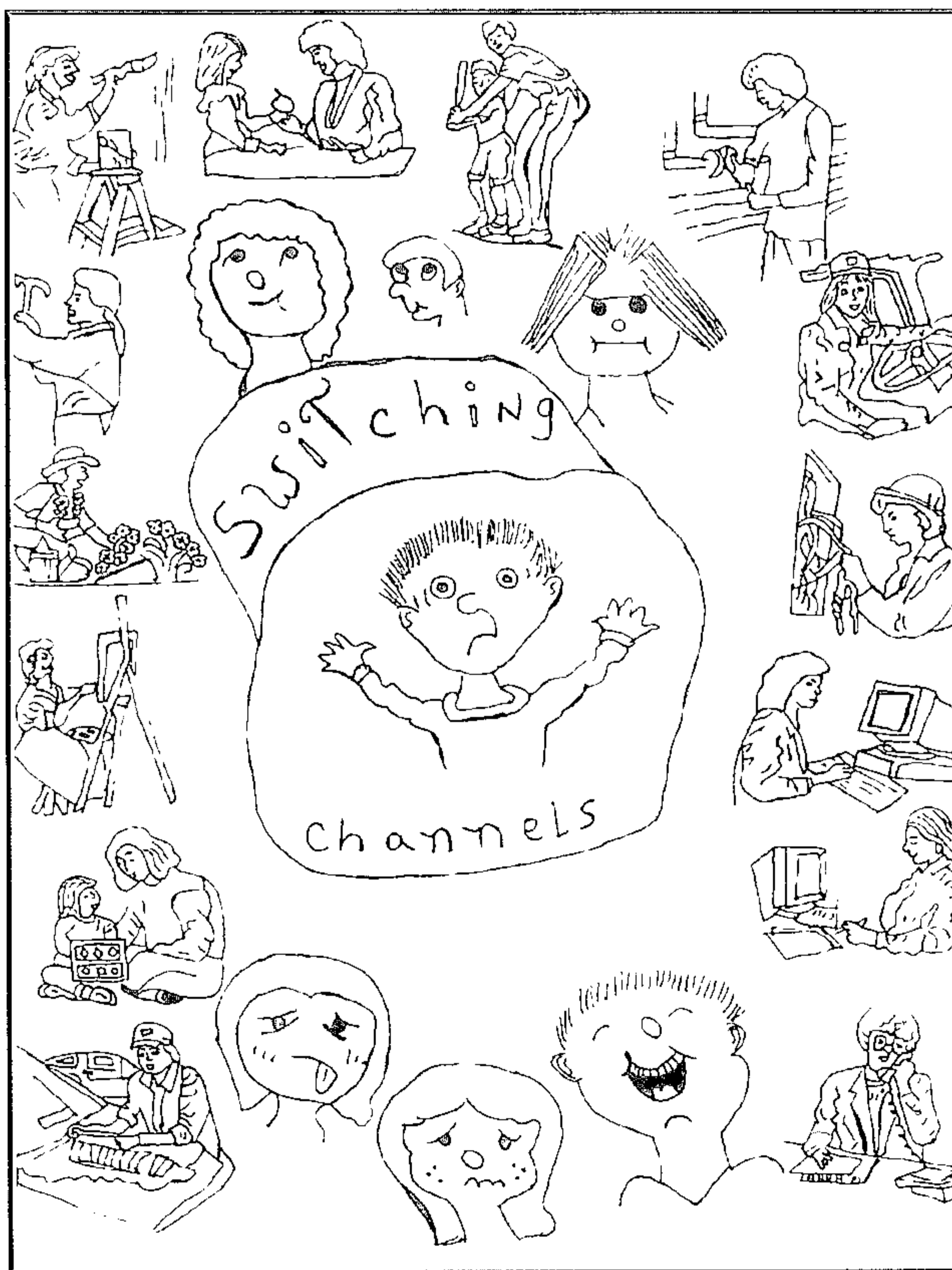
No money=no freedom or safety

No work=no money=no freedom or safety

So we have to go to work

By Terri & Co

MV



# Why Can't We Do This

By The Smart One (on behalf of the whole system)

We need your help! We embarked on a project about a year ago that has completely stalled, and what was accomplished was mediocre at best. Let me explain. We are a 45 year old multiple with eighteen personalities of different ages, each with a different function in the system. I am called "The Smart One," since that is my function. As such, I am a certified English teacher, history teacher, flute teacher, lawyer, a librarian, and, most recently, I have taken over most of the Organizer's functions. The Organizer is 45, female, and was responsible for keeping all the balls we had in the air flying. In addition to our occupations, we have 13 children, two grandchildren, two dastardly ex-husbands, and a wonderful husband.

Unfortunately, in 1997 the whole system suffered a major stroke. The hardest hit by the event was The Organizer, who disappeared completely for several years (we couldn't find her anywhere), and has now come back to us, although she cannot function in her previous capacity. We have been in therapy since 1986, diagnosed as DID in 1993, and have had the benefit of the hard work of several great therapists.

Since I am a very good writer, usually (sorry for tooting my own horn), most people I meet who know who we really are tell us we should write our story for publication because it is unusual and

interesting. Just working as a high powered lawyer while handling the lives of thirteen children on its own would be interesting, let alone adding in the various abuse situations we have encountered, and our DID, they say. Finally we agreed to try, about a year ago. We hit several brick walls.

The primary problem was and is that no single one of us knows the entire history of the system, except The Organizer, who is not able to remember anything for more than ten minutes, much less remember what happened 42 years ago. That left each of us to write our own stories about what we remember happening. Each of us, however, did not necessarily want the others to know what he or she had done, so each insisted on writing his or her parts in isolation, hiding the script from anyone else's view. We have two 3 year olds, and a 4 and a 5 year old, and they could only dictate to Megan, age 8, whose job it is to take care of them, what they could remember and vocalize. Megan also refused to let anyone else inside see her writing.

The net product was an extremely disjointed script going only to age 35, written in close to eighteen different writing styles. None of us is able to look at the whole script and put it together into something readable, much less interesting. I gave the whole script to our therapist, who read it, and is preparing to use it for

abreactive work we have not yet begun. He says the abreactive work will result in all of us knowing what each one of us has done, but that it might take a considerable amount of time, possibly years. I started this writing project with the intent of finishing it, not waiting years to see if we could actually write anything at all.

Has anyone out there experienced this hold up? I am just presuming that if we all know everything about each other, then I or whoever can combine all the events and circumstances into a readable product. Is this true? Or am I just too personally involved in the events being described to be able to write effectively about them, and therefore we will never be able to write our story? I have given up on The Organizer ever recovering enough memory to just tell me what happened. She has made little progress since returning from the stroke, and was also hit by two TIAs we had in 2001, setting back her recovery significantly. She is annoyed that I am telling you all this about her right now, but her state of mind is an integral part of my problem.

I would love to hear your suggestions and theories on how to fix this situation, if you have the time to write them down and send them into MV. Please help us tell our story in a cohesive, understandable way. I am looking forward to hearing from you!

MV

## My Vow

Like many states, my home has four distinct seasons. I learned long ago that Nature has a reason for them.

In early winter we put out the bulbs that need to 'wintr over' (tulips, jonquils, crocus) as it is necessary for good, healthy spring growth. Aside from that, everything dies away, goes dormant. The winter season speaks to dying.

We can hardly wait for those first pussy-willows, then the early bloomers. Can there be a sweeter song than a tiny spring peeper in his own little mudbog? Spring comes on with a rush til it almost overcomes us with its glory and promises.

Summer fills those promises, fills yards and fields and ball parks and beaches with frantic activity. Sometimes it can be too much for us—we have to find a way of escape for awhile. Fall begins to look good with its coole, quieter times.

Can anything surpass the absolute glory of autumn? Riotous colors, abundant crops, pure perfection make us want to

take pictures of everything. It brings out the poet in the "closet author" and flexes fingers seldom used on guitars.

I look back, then, on my life. Mom must have planted many an unseen "winter bulb" in that pregnancy. Does any woman not have hopes for that unborn baby she talks to in the night?

Spring. Dear Lord, I was a dreamer of skyscraper proportions. I was going to be it all. From my seat on Grandpa's shoulders, I could see the world and it was all mine for the taking...as long as I kept absolutely quiet around Daddy. As far as he was concerned, I didn't exist, and I did well not to remind him. Girl kids are no good. Shut up. But that's all right. The rest of the world is wonderful.

The summer of my life was just too much to handle, I guess. I tried so hard to fill those "first son" shoes on horse back or castrating animals or loading hay. Maybe a son could have borne it all, I don't know; maybe no.

But the Autumn of my life which I had promised myself would come would make it worth while! Where did it go?

Now a citizen whose "dear old daddy" is long since gone, I try to desperately to bring back bright spots from spring and summer memories. Surely there is some way to recapture bits of them, pieces, snatches, beauty spots enough that I may create my Autumn before Winter's death.

I must—or life was futile. *I shall have an Autumn.*

By L

MV



## Opinions Wanted!

Because we did not receive as much input on Work as I'd hoped for this issue, I've prepared two discussion-starter articles on the topic.

I want to stress that these are largely personal opinions. They're not "the last word" on the subject. You may disagree strongly with some or all of these ideas—or you may have other examples to offer. If so—please write down your thoughts on the subject of Work and send them in!

The idea of presenting a topic in the first place is to present diverse viewpoints. So don't hold back! The length isn't important. Anything from one paragraph to four double-spaced pages will do – and if you don't have a typewriter or computer, do it in handwriting. As long as I can read it, I'll print it.

& please...include the name you want to appear on your manuscript (not in a separate letter, which could get lost). If you want replies, include your real name & address or email on the mss too. We'll keep that part confidential, but have to know where you are to send replies. Thanks! -

Lynn W., Editor

MV

## Breaking Silence

Breaking my Silence was a very hard thing to do

but it was well worth it.

Had to free myself from all that happened in my past.

Had to find my inner peace that was inside for so long, but I had trouble unlocking the door.

Now I can walk forward in life knowing I did the right thing when I broke my silence.

Now my days are filled with happiness laughter, smiles, and most importantly, Freedom!

By Mary G.

MV

## MANY THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS!

**Forest View Hospital - Grand Rapids, MI**

Call Bill van Harken: (616) 942-9610 or (800) 949-8439

**River Oaks Hospital - New Orleans, LA**

Call Martha Bujanda: (504) 734-1740 or (800) 366-1740

**Sheppard Pratt Health System - Baltimore, MD**

Call Kimberly Colbert: (410) 938-5078 or (800) 627-0330 x5078

**Timberlawn Mental Health System - Dallas, TX**

Call Christie Clark: (214) 381-7181 or (800) 426-4944

**Two Rivers Psychiatric Hospital - Kansas City, MO**

Call David Tate: (816) 356-5688 or (800) 225-8577

**Women's Institute for Incorporation Therapy - Hollywood, FL**

Call Larry Spinosa: (800) 437-5478

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

## More Benefits of Integration

By Rachel Downing

In the October issue of Many Voices, I wrote about the benefits of being integrated when facing cancer. As the years since my integration in 1990 progress, I discover more and more benefits to integration in facing life's normal trials. At the end of September, my dog of 13 years (Samantha) died in my arms. Being integrated enabled me to handle her sudden critical illness and death as a normal manageable life event.

Samantha, a gorgeous Keeshond, had been a full partner in my life. I showed her in obedience trials and trained her to be a therapy dog. We had been separated for several months after I moved across country. We were finally reunited and she only lived two weeks. It was rough.

Because I was emotionally stable, grounded and integrated—I was able to be with her at the end. She was critically ill and could only lie quietly on her side when I visited her at the vet's. I sat with her, stroked her fur, and told her she was beautiful and special. On the third day, while I was comforting her, she let go and spontaneously died in my arms. I continued to stroke her and kissed her goodbye.

If I had been dissociative with PTSD, flashbacks and vulnerable to being triggered, I wouldn't have been able to be fully present for her. I would have been too upset to visit her so frequently. I couldn't have been calm and focused on her needs. I would have been freaked to have her die in my arms. I would have been triggered into flashbacks about death-related traumas. I would have become hysterical and inconsolable. I would have gotten angry and blamed the vet for not doing enough. I might have become suicidal and wanted to join her in death.

Instead, I had a normal grief reaction. I allowed myself to cry and not expect myself to handle it better. I accepted support from family and friends. I could focus on being grateful that I was with her—loving her—at the end. I bought a large plant that I call my "Samantha Plant" and stroke the leaves and say goodnight to "Samantha" every night.

I still grieve for her and cried when it snowed and she wasn't here to enjoy it. I am grateful that I was healthy enough to put her needs first, and then after her death respectfully take care of my own needs.

MV

# Work Life: What Do You Do With The Kids?

By Lynn W.

Many chronic dissociators work. MV's recovering subscribers include doctors, nurses, lawyers, stock brokers, business executives, computer programmers, mental health counselors, teachers, retail clerks, truckdrivers, law enforcement and emergency personnel, office workers, factory and government employees, as well as self-employed individuals in a host of different fields.

Everyone who works, whether dissociator or not, needs the ability to learn the job (in school or by exposure to it). They also need sufficient social skills to perform their duties appropriately, interacting with supervisors, fellow employees, customers or clients. There is also the 'consistency' factor, which I'll discuss in a companion article in this issue—the ability to get oneself to work on a regular basis, with routine satisfactory performance. These characteristics are necessary for anyone to have a successful working life.

But along with these requirements, we who dissociate have an extra challenge:

The Kids. When I say The Kids, I mean those split-off, segmented parts of ourselves that view the world from the limited perspective of the time, place and circumstances that caused them to be walled-off in the first place. From needy infants to rebellious adolescents, these capsules of self, frozen in time, can make working in the real world today a very dicey proposition indeed.

From my own experience, and learning from MV subscribers, there seem to be several different strategies for dealing with The Kids in the wonderful world of work. I'll cover three types here. (I hope those reading will contribute other strategies for future issues.)

1. Strong Leadership
2. Controlled Release
3. Cooperative Negotiation

With the Strong Leadership strategy, the dissociative person may not even realize it is a strategy. That's because the Strong Leader (an autocratic part of the self, or a group of parts that is highly functional as a working team) may be so dominant that other parts are blockaded completely from the work environment, and the Leader or Leaders really don't have a clue that other parts may exist.

Though I don't have scientific proof, it's my guess that many dissociators who have demanding professional jobs requiring years of training probably began with the Strong Leader strategy. Many got through school, college and post-graduate studies with flying colors, at least in the academic

realm. The Strong Leadership strategy creates a kind of self-generating concentration that allows the active part of the self to dive into work or learning with nearly all the energy the individual possesses. There are no distractions because the Strong Leader prohibits distractions. Even sensible "distractions" like regular sleep, food, exercise or social interaction that make for a balanced life may be ignored or put on the back burner by a Strong Leader. You could say that Strong Leaders have developed a kind of tunnel vision. They know what to do, they do it, and they are absolutely devoted to 'performance'. (Employers love them! They are the ultimate workaholics.)

In some circumstances, the Strong Leadership strategy may be very helpful. If a person works in a job where focus is utterly required, it's nearly perfect. From my perspective, if a dissociator was an airplane pilot, or an emergency room doctor, or possibly a mental health counselor, I would prefer that person use a Strong Leadership strategy while I was a "customer." I would not want to have to face the consequences of a dissociator's "Kids" intruding into those environments. Nor would I want other personal troubles to surface during performance. I would very much prefer that the person in charge stay in charge, and block off nearly everything for the duration of my contact.

However, Strong Leadership is not necessarily a good deal for the human being who is dissociating. It soon becomes obvious that if a dissociator is skipping meals to work, or ignores the need for sleep or exercise, the body will break down. If the dissociator largely ignores social activity in favor of work life, on-the-job interactions may suffer, as well as the fact that this individual may never be able to pull together a "normal" family life, or even go on dates or have fun of any kind with others. This person may not even be in touch enough with the Whole Self to know what activities are "fun" for him or her. And finally, the Strong Leadership strategy may suffer a cataclysmic breakdown when The Kids make themselves known, before or during therapy. Strong Leaders don't automatically think it's great to discover there is more to themselves than they previously understood. Strong Leaders are the aspects of self that go to therapy and say 'Help me get rid of these 'things'' rather than realizing the less-dominant parts are vital to the Whole Self's wellbeing. Strong Leaders can be dictatorial, punitive, and very demanding and harsh to The Kids. They may imagine that power will

control these upstarts. They are usually wrong.

The second strategy to discuss here is Controlled Release. This more commonly happens after a person has been in therapy for dissociation, or has some realization that The Kids are inside. However, it is possible that some people who dissociate simply gravitate into this method of dealing with segmented selves.

The Controlled Release occurs when the worker chooses a job that allows The Kids to play a substantial or supporting role. Examples could include day care workers, teachers (especially of elementary or kindergarten classes,) toy store workers, demonstrators, or even toy factory employees, or people who work in fields where off-the-wall creativity is desired (graphic artists, advertising agencies, performance arts, etc.) There are many other kinds of careers where a "child-like" view of the world is an asset. Any such job may be a natural fit for the Controlled Release work strategy.

The value of Controlled Release is obvious: The Kids get recognition, rewards, interaction with others. These aspects of self, so often belittled or ignored in real childhood, finally have a chance to shine.

However, though Controlled Release seems a very logical solution to The Kids problem, it is not always easy to implement. For one thing, if The Kids have too much control, it can undermine job seeking behavior. Few employers want to take a chance on hiring a person who sounds or acts like a child. There has to be some developed Adult behavior that participates in the process of being trained, hired, having performance reviews, and interacting in an Adult way with supervisors and fellow employees. While Strong Leadership strategies can go on for quite a long time without role exchange on the job, the Controlled Release method must involve frequent switching from Adult to Child perspectives. To be successful, these switches need to be smooth and virtually imperceptible to employers.

Also, The Kids can't run rampant. Those of us who've been hurt as children don't generally want to hurt others. But as dissociators, we're not always in touch with everything that is going on. Troubled "Kids" could do considerable harm to other outsiders, especially if the outsiders are young children, as in a day care or school setting. The Kids can show their charming, child-like, inquisitive and creative sides on the job—but it is inappropriate to reveal

excessive need, clinginess, tantrums, turning-the-supervisor-into-a-loving (or hating)-parent, and other such behaviors in a work setting. That stuff has to be reserved for therapy, or sometimes in an intimate relationship with a very understanding friend. But it's my opinion that picking that "friend" from your work associates will doom your job in the long run. There may be rare exceptions—but they are very, very rare.

Which brings us to another related question: can The Kids keep their mouths shut when necessary? The job site is rarely the right place to describe details of complex life as a dissociative, or to discuss therapy, or to disclose a dissociative diagnosis. Again, there are exceptions. But I'd strongly suggest having several talks with your therapist to go over all the possible results of workplace disclosure before you—or The Kids—disclose.

So we come to the third work strategy, Cooperative Negotiation. This almost always takes place after a diagnosis of chronic dissociation, and after some internal communication skills are acquired. Typically, it comes into play after some kind of work problem surfaces, where The Kids have become intrusive, or things at work are not smooth, or co-workers are disturbed by the dissociator's unusual behavior, etc. Or perhaps the dissociative person just can't face going to work but doesn't know why.

Therapists often play a big role in assisting clients to practice Cooperative Negotiation. To employ this strategy, the working dissociative (or one who wants to work) sits down, at home or in therapy, and actively requests input from every

single capsulized part of the Whole Self, from the young, completely immature parts to the oldest, best functioning parts. If infants inside can't communicate verbally, perhaps they can scribble pictures, or another part may be able to interpret for them.

The attitude to take when doing the first request is loving acceptance of anything the inner parts want to say. If infant part "A" simply cries nonstop, the response should be "I am sorry you are so sad. We will try to find a way to work that brings you comfort." Then ask if anyone else inside can help interpret the infant's concern. If rebellious adolescent part "B" responds by cursing you up and down and saying "I'm not going to do any of this and you can't make me!" the helpful response is to say something like, "You have a right to do that. But I value your input. Please feel free to respond anytime to what others say. I want to hear your point of view, and what bothers you about this job." (Or whatever.)

As the internal concerns and conflicts surface, get them down on paper where they can be reviewed not just once, but dozens of times. Repeat the internal communication as needed. Sometimes it takes a long, long negotiation to create a job "peace settlement." But eventually you may come to some kind of compromise. Examples might be: The Kids stay home while The Leaders go to work. After work, The Kids get to choose activities. Or, The Kids will stay in the background at work, and will study the job. They will be rewarded for good behavior by a special treat. The possibilities of how to work out Cooperative Negotiation are very individual and frankly, endless. Focus on numerous

options, on new ways to work together in harmony, on experiments to try, on different parts trying leadership roles briefly, etc. I honestly believe most people who dissociate can brainstorm their way to successful work habits, but it is not going to happen overnight. It may take months or years, and you may have to go through a series of different jobs or types of jobs to find the kind of work that fits your complex personality.

But with Cooperative Negotiation, The Kids play an integral role in making decisions. The benefit of this is that once you do find a good balance, all parts of the Whole Self are invested in that choice. So you are much less likely to suffer from undermining behavior, or unwelcome surprises that cause job failure. And even if things are running smoothly, it's a good idea to keep those internal communication lines flowing on a regular basis. Because job situations change constantly. A new supervisor shows up. The market you're used to working in dries up. Your favorite co-worker leaves town. The company downsizes or closes completely. Everyone with or without chronic dissociation faces the daily uncertainties of the job market. If we learn how to be thoroughly in touch with all our abilities and our feelings, we can deal with these job uncertainties in a constructive, proactive way. Even if your work requires that The Kids stay home, allow them to contribute ideas and options. Your Whole Self will be stronger and more flexible. And you'll have a better chance to live a comfortable, well-functioning life.

MV

### *My Son, My Heart, It Shouldn't Be*

My son, my heart, it shouldn't be.  
You are grown now, got your Ph.D.  
You live far away. My son, my baby, it  
shouldn't be.

I went to visit you, far away.  
To see the face of my baby, now  
grown.  
My son, my heart, it shouldn't be.

I never knew it happened, so long ago.  
You were a child, in my loving care.  
My son, my baby, it shouldn't be.

Something happened to me, I became  
my abuser.  
And I abused you, I see your little face.  
So scared and crying, my son, my  
heart, it shouldn't be.

It shouldn't be that my mind split up  
into so many parts.  
To go through the abuse heaped on  
my tiny body and mind.

A part of me heaped abuse on your  
little body and mind.

My son, my heart, it shouldn't be.

No wonder you live so far away, all  
grown up.

With so much fear and anger heaped  
within you.

I'm so sorry, my son. My heart. It  
shouldn't be.

I love you so much..

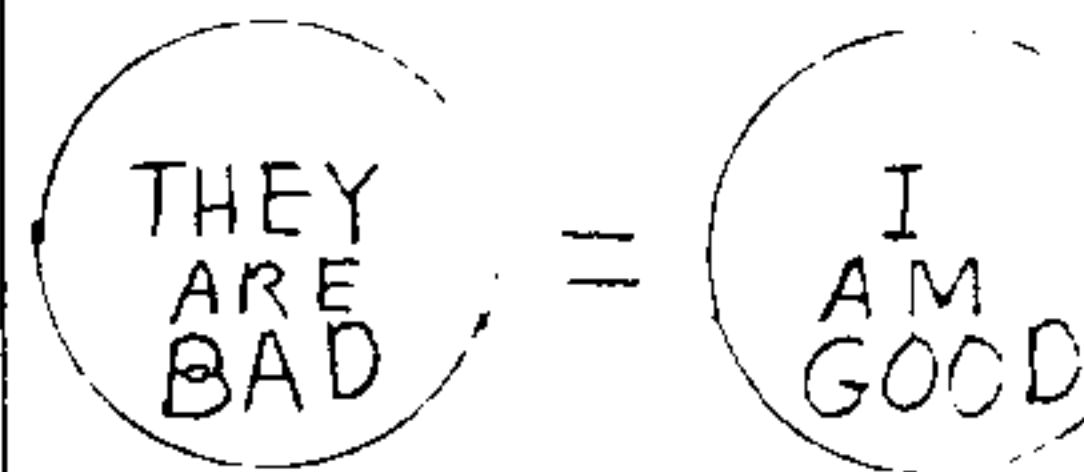
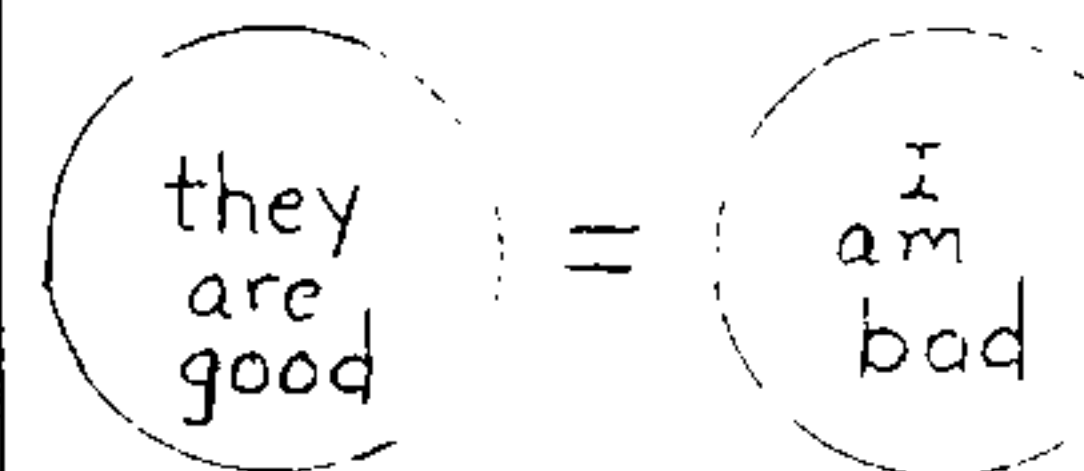
I wish so much I could take away what  
I did to you.

My son, my heart, it shouldn't be.

*By Max, a recovering person with  
dissociative identity disorder*

MV

*A choice to make...  
the other side  
of the coin*



*By Lois Wee One*

# Therapist's Page

By Mary Helen Hopponen, M.Ed., LPC and Mychal Blue, M.Ed.

Mary Helen Hopponen is a professional counselor in private practice with survivors of trauma, PTSD and Dissociative Disorders. She was formerly 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.

Mychal Blue is a mental health counselor and bodyworker, with training in massage, sports injuries and reconstructive exercise.

## HEALING THE WOUNDED MASCULINE: RECOVERY ISSUES before the BEGINNING

**H**e talked to me of his emerging understanding of the gifts of maleness, this amazing male survivor of the worst of the worst, if there is any such thing. He spoke of the magnificence of the male soul and of the essentials in its making. My very fine female feminist brain struggled with the concepts although somehow I knew that he was reminding me of something I knew at a much deeper level. And he spoke to me of healing more than a male mind or body but of returning health to the masculine mind/body/spirit. That is the challenge. Let me try to bring his perspective to this page.

First, the essential aspect of working with males is to understand that you are in new conceptual territory if you are male. If you are female, you probably don't get it at all. If you can accept that, however, there is hope for some fine work. Second, it is also vital to remember that the survivor who comes for help has a survival intelligence that is far superior to the capacity of the ordinary intelligent helper. He has outwitted both physiology and centuries of inherited skill in smashing human beings. Never assume the survivor's resistance is rooted in the need to have power over you, he just knows what is best and safest for his recovery pace. Carl Rogers said, "There are never any resistant clients, only impatient therapists."

In addition to knowing and practicing good basic therapy the helper must educate him or herself in the many concepts and practices of the horrific systems presented by the client.

Books, articles, consults, other recovering survivors can assist in that process. This article only surfaces some of the complicated baselines in the recovery process. The first part speaks briefly of general concepts. The short list at the end requires more detailed attention, maybe at a later time. In all applications adaptation to the style and maturity of both counselor and client is required.

The lateralizing and focusing gifts of the male brain because of the thinner corpus callosum add some unique qualities to the way many men internalize their trauma in dissociative states and posttraumatic stress reactions. There is beginning research in this gender puzzle but it seems that many men are able to encapsulate their experiences more completely than most women are. Some men with horrendous trauma histories hide their experiences in low-level aggressive behaviors and can have some life successes. Others quickly display distress in violence, addictions, and other self-destructive behaviors, becoming another of the many "lost boys" but with no attention to the driving force within.

The other aspect of the male system that interferes in their identification as victims besides their compartmentalizing or dissociation patterns, is the lower rate of coordination between the brain hemispheres, one holding the experiences and emotions, and the other holding more of the words and cognition. This is a major part of posttraumatic stress reaction. Retrieval often seems more difficult, the brain more blocked. The Indian patterns of ritually "telling the story of the

traumatic event" in the community and developing a mythology around the heroes, then dancing the story on many occasions is a perfect approach to reintegrating mind and body and celebrating the survivor's victory over suffering. Contrast our cultural pattern of denial, shame, and humiliation, not only of the survivors but also of those who support them.

Two concepts are profoundly important in the world of the male. The first is Respect, the second is Ritual and Respect is won through Action Ritual, not performance ritual.

The symbols of a male appropriately anointed are colors, banners, flags, caps or hats and the flourishes of form, sight and sound. Place in the hierarchy of men must be easily recognized and respected. The ritual mentor, an older and anointed male, carries the power to teach, challenge, and protect the acolyte. All successful male organizations show this system in action; recovery must include these components if healing is to occur. Consider the presence and importance of these two concepts in all of the highlighted topics that follow.

The male Mode of Being involves the instinctual, the body/mind/soul. In all the eons of human development the male brotherhood has bonded physically and nonverbally, focused on the goal of protection of the community. Competition and aggression, never hostility, were grounded in ritual and natural settings. The football team and fans, the hunting group, males bonded together around a common ritual activity continue this vital masculine experience. Shame, humiliation, and trauma inhibit the creation of this

healing bond. The ritual of recovery must not contain these elements but must provide the deep emotional safety of the male brotherhood.

Abused and wounded boys and men frequently exhibit a fascination with war and all the issues related to it. Heroes, styles of fighting, weapons, reenactment in reality or with literature, toys, or strategies often are hobbies or sources of intellectual or practical activity. An abused boy has been in a war, has fought for his life and identifies with both the heroes and those who are exploited by ineffective leaders. Fascination with the Holocaust and other historical times when torture and terror were a way of life for a particular population can demand extensive attention.

Heroes are a key to the health of a man's inner life. What do you know of a boy or man's inner strength and vision when some of his heroes are Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Abraham Lincoln, Crazy Horse, or Winston Churchill? Or what if they are the local gang leader, the football hero who beats his wife or the hockey star that assaults his opponents?

Attachment to self and others, begun by the mother, extended to the father, and sustained by, first the brotherhood and then by partner and children, is the most basic component of the healthy human psyche. Research is clear that although the male newborn is less mature than the female, the male receives less attention, nurturing, and physical connection. He learns early not to expect help. In addition many mothers have not had healthy loving boys or men in their lives so do not know how or are unable to attach to their male child with unconditional positive regard and with respect for the male brain and body. The young boy is denied consolation for trauma, is encouraged to be a man (even as an infant or toddler), is often shamed for his immaturity that is, in truth, typical boy behavior.

Since all embryos are female for about the first six weeks of life before hormones are triggered to differentiate the male brain and body, the male child in single parent households may have to struggle to differentiate from female role models. The need for a strong male physical presence to help

guide and mentor the boy into a man's body and life is just as powerful as his need for a female's unconditional positive regard. The mother, the female teacher, the female therapist can easily trigger resistance when she tries to control the boy or man or affirms feminine values or behaviors as "the way to be." The response will be angry acting out, rejection, or withdrawal as shame for his being floods and damages his brain and body as does physical assault.

The following list touches briefly on specific essentials in recovery work, or for that matter, any connection with boys and men.

- **When some recovery has begun,** connect the male with a bodyworker, someone skilled in deep tissue work, certification would be in sports massage or a similar approach. The work must focus on damage to muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, bones and range of motion injuries. When the client is able, personalized and reasonable exercise regimens must be followed. He must come to own his body.

- **Give regular attention to night dreams;** they can lead therapeutic work. Some men find more believability in dreams than in flashbacks. Explore "The Dream," for it embodies hope and life goals and is sheltered deep within the male psyche.

- **Learn male-based** communication styles if you don't know them. Be comfortable with silence as communication and regularly include activities in sessions. Watching TV, riding or walking, playing a game, working on a project together are examples.

- **Listen to his stories;** they will tell of his struggles, isolation, and alienation. Do not interrupt his flow but follow it, engage in it to find his core truths.

- **Look for mythological themes** in his stories and share them with him.

- **Include humor;** allow occasional breaks in the flow with humor or other distractions.

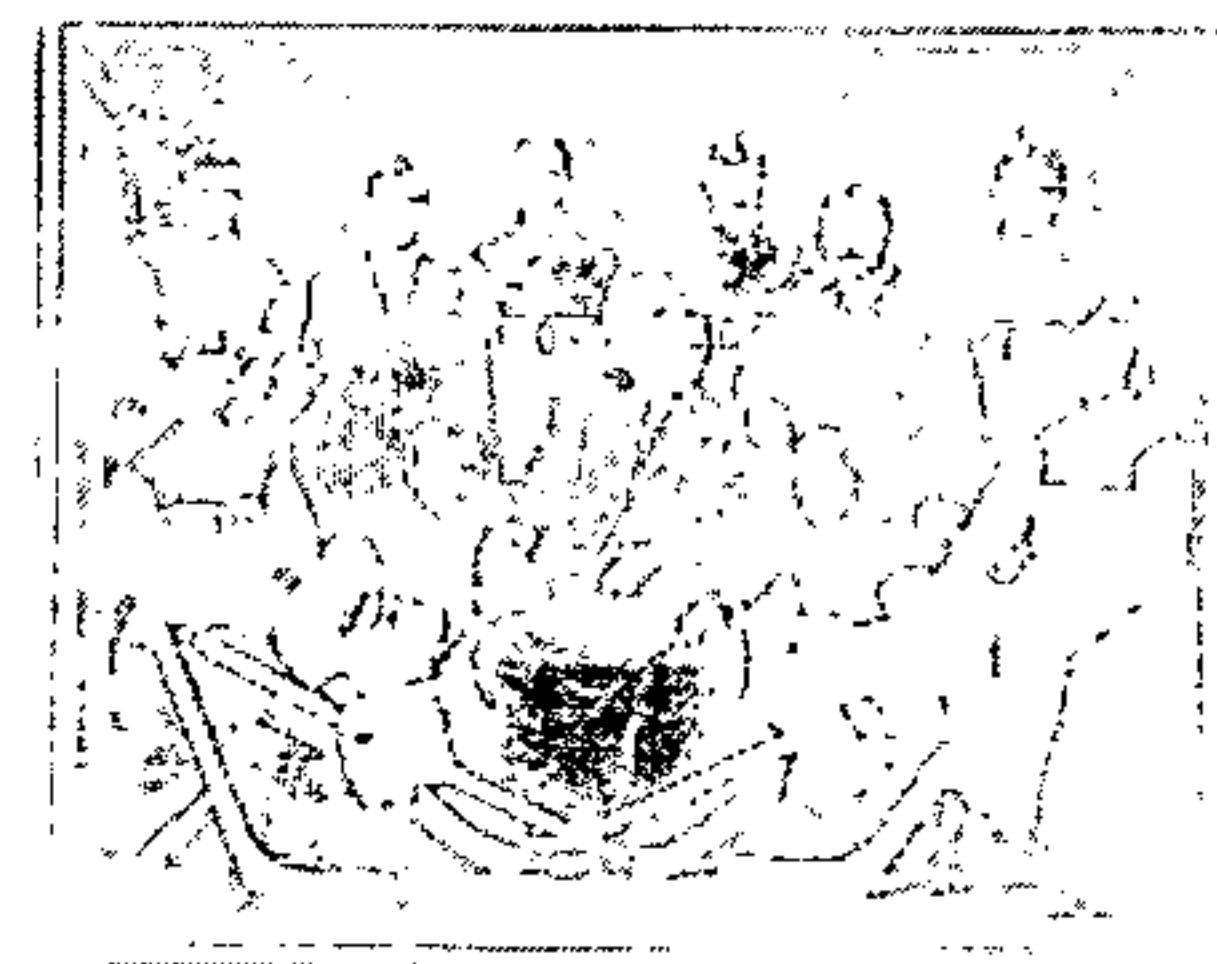
- **Use approaches that encourage contact with both brain hemispheres.** Exercise, hand eye movements, art projects, games, or a new skill learned together would

increase his internal and external connectedness. Have Fun together.

One example of hemispheric connection would be to have him spend some quiet time journaling with his dominant hand about significant concerns or issues. Then after a few minutes of quiet reflection on these same issues, using the non-dominant hand, have him use markers to draw or design with color on a second sheet. The emotional response to the whole brain project can be quite intense. The challenge is always for creativity and flexibility. There are many ways to communicate, many very effective ways to "talk" besides using words. Shared space and activities are the facilitators of male connection.

**Why "RECOVERY ISSUES before the BEGINNING"?** Because a way of thinking about this work, an understanding of the deepest treasures of the male psyche, must be the platform of healing for the man or boy. Therapy was designed by men to reach the healing spirit of the female. No matter the helper's gender, a bias remains from that earlier design. This highlights only a few concepts that are evident in the male world and have relevance to male development. Some men will find a fit with the lost brotherhood or in words lost to the pain of trauma. Others will bring different complex, ancient truths that have awaited discovery. The point of all of this is that healing the wounded masculine will heal all of us, whether we are mainly masculine or mainly feminine. For the truth is that the discounting of either aspect of our wholeness wounds us all.

MV



# The Truth IS Out There...

By Adolescent One

**T**here has been an increasing amount of press lately on the subject of 'recovered memories' and the "suggestibility" of children. In these cases, the writers and "researchers" would have the reader believe that the abuse did not happen, that the child only came to believe that it had through brainwashing and imprinting by the accusing parent. While unquestionably such "brainwashing" sometimes happens, it is far from the norm. Because there have been a few recorded cases of people being struck by lightning from a cloud miles away while standing under a clear blue sky, should we then presume that every time there is a clear blue sky we are likely to be hit by lightning?

In these articles, writers and so-called researchers encourage readers to dismiss a child's allegations of abuse - even though he or she remembers details and exhibits physical evidence or manifestations of the "alleged" abuse. Why? Because, they say, the child only came to believe he or she had been abused because an accusing parent brainwashed them into that belief. Not surprisingly, the parent attempting to protect the child from further abuse often also says she suffered spousal abuse during the marriage.

The "studies" are often performed by individuals who have some tie to the False Memory Syndrome Foundation or allegiance to its cause. These studies are clearly flawed - not only by their patently ludicrous "findings" - which are hauntingly reminiscent of those who claim the Holocaust never happened - but also by their "science." Yet these stories carry the veneer of credibility: their authors have academic credentials, and the stories often come out under the aegis of respectable organizations.

A recent study, described in a December 2002 press release issued disturbingly enough by the American Psychological Association recounted a two-phase study of 50 preschoolers,

conducted to validate a psychological test for suggestibility. Based on the responses of just 25 of the children in the study - those over the age of 4 years (the others were younger), the author says the study confirms this test's "potential utility for lawyers, judges, caseworkers, and psychologists involved with cases of abuse and neglect, child custody, and Persons in Need of Supervision actions. The release goes on to say that "investigators need, say the authors, to identify children who are prone to making erroneous reports following suggestions."

This study consisted of a "sample" of 50 children from a single preschool. Statistics was far from my favorite subject in school, but even I know that a "sample" of only 50 is wholly statistically insignificant (unless the entire population is 75 or fewer - and that is NOT the case with children, particularly abused children!) In one scenario, each of 25 children helped a stranger find her son's stuffed monkey outside the classroom. In the other, each of 25 children helped a stranger carry Play-Doh down the hall to another room, the stranger tripped and hurt her ankle, which was bandaged by a "nurse" who "happened" to pass by. What do these scenarios have to do with childhood abuse, neglect, or other maltreatment? Might it not be a little easier to convince Johnny of the fairly simple and benign scenario that his uncle took him to the circus and bought him cotton candy than that his father sexually abused him, with graphic details far beyond the capacity of a child that age to absorb verbally?

When the average person reads stories like this one, they will tend to give them credence. After all, they are published in mainstream newspapers and magazines, and are often written by credible sounding people. And after all, isn't it prettier to believe that children who allege abuse were made to think that awful things happened through coercion of a parent engaged in a bitter divorce or custody battle

than it is to conceive that a child's parent - someone who pretty much looks like the reader, without an obvious demoniacal gleam in his eye - would perform such atrocious and reprehensible acts upon their own child? We are much more comfortable believing that such things only happen in horror movies or trashy novels than thinking they may be happening just next door - if not in our own homes.

If you're reading this newsletter, chances are you know such things happen, and that the perpetrator is often an otherwise upstanding member of their community - a preacher, a police officer, a teacher, a district attorney. You know that that which is "pretty" to believe is all too often a fantasy, and most importantly perhaps, you know what happened to you. You may not remember each and every detail, you may not even remember each and every horrible event, but you know, better than anyone (save perhaps for the perpetrator or perpetrators) what happened. Even if your memory of the details is distorted to some extent, you have the overall picture of what happened, and certainly know whether or not you were abused.

"Scientific" studies and propaganda belched out by pseudo-legitimate organizations who give the appearance of being well-disguised fronts wishing to legitimize and blind the public to child abuse can say what they will, but saying so does not make it true, no matter how much someone would like to believe it so.

These reprehensible and irresponsible articles and the pseudo-science that inspires them does a disservice to everyone - except abusers. The general public maintains its blissful apathy towards child abuse. Children who have not been abused are at increasingly greater risk for future abuse as those who might victimize them feel emboldened by the pervasive literature "proving" that abuse is grossly overstated and that children are incapable of recognizing

abuse when they experience it or remember it. And those of us who have suffered abuse face the enormous disrespect presented by such nonsense, feel disregarded by "the system" and society, and may even begin to question our own memories. This is nothing but another form of abuse; more insidious than that which we initially experienced, but just as real, only this time it comes with the illusion or respectability, devaluing us and our experiences, and somehow exonerating our abusers.

Understand that these people are wrong – crafty and evil at worst, and bumbling, inept, and misinformed at best – and that what we experienced will always remain as the truth – even when we do not completely remember or comprehend what happened. Often times we will have somewhat distorted or "composite" memories that may not be precisely accurate but are representative of whatever outrages that took place.

We must overcome the truth of what happened to us – these lies promulgated by those who would allow and even advocate child abuse are something we can knowingly choose to disregard. Lies can never change the reality of truth – and we, more than most, know just what the sordid truth looks like.

Though they tried, we did not let our abusers take from us our dignity, our humanness, our strength, our self-respect, or our resilience. We cannot let them take from us the truth, either.

What might we do to preserve the truth? Battling well-funded organizations like the False Memory Syndrome Foundation and the like is probably beyond the reach of most of us as individuals. Each of us is at a different point in our therapy and recovery, so what we can do will differ from person to person. Knowing you are making a difference in the life of a child who has been through something like what you have experienced can be very rewarding, and can make a remarkable difference in the life of that child. Not only can we break the cycle of abuse in our own lives and family, we might just make the difference to break the cycle in the lives of others.

Perhaps you have some books, some toys, some stuffed animals you are no longer using that you could donate to a shelter or children's hospital. Those items will be received with deep appreciation, and your love and caring will be felt. Conducting or participating in funding raising activities for such organizations will also make a real, positive difference. Each one of us can make a difference in the life of a child, and there may not be anything we can do that will be more important, meaningful and lasting. If doing something like this doesn't feel right for you, there is something else you can do for someone. It is very easy and tempting for us to wallow in self-pity – I know I have – but perhaps the most beneficial thing we can do for ourselves is to do something to help someone else. It is hard to think of anyone more deserving than an abused child, but there are many people out there who can use a helping hand. To have overcome our challenges, we have had to draw upon many, many skills, and these can be put to use helping others. We, in turn, may well benefit most of all.

Let's each do something to honor the truth that we know exists and not let it be taken away – from us, or from those too young and helpless to protect the truth themselves.

MV

## Show Me Your World

Mommy take me with you  
To the place in your mind  
Where we will be safe  
And he cannot follow  
Mommy take me with you  
To where he can't hurt us  
Where he cannot threaten us  
And he cannot rape us  
Mommy take me with you  
To the place you go  
Behind your eyes  
Where there are baby animals  
And lots of sunshine and sand  
Mommy, take me with you  
Where you cannot feel pain,  
And no one has to beg or plead  
Where Daddies don't exist  
And Mommy smiles all the time  
Mommy take me with you  
To the place you can hug me  
Where you can give me kisses  
And tell me everything is all right  
And it will be true this time.

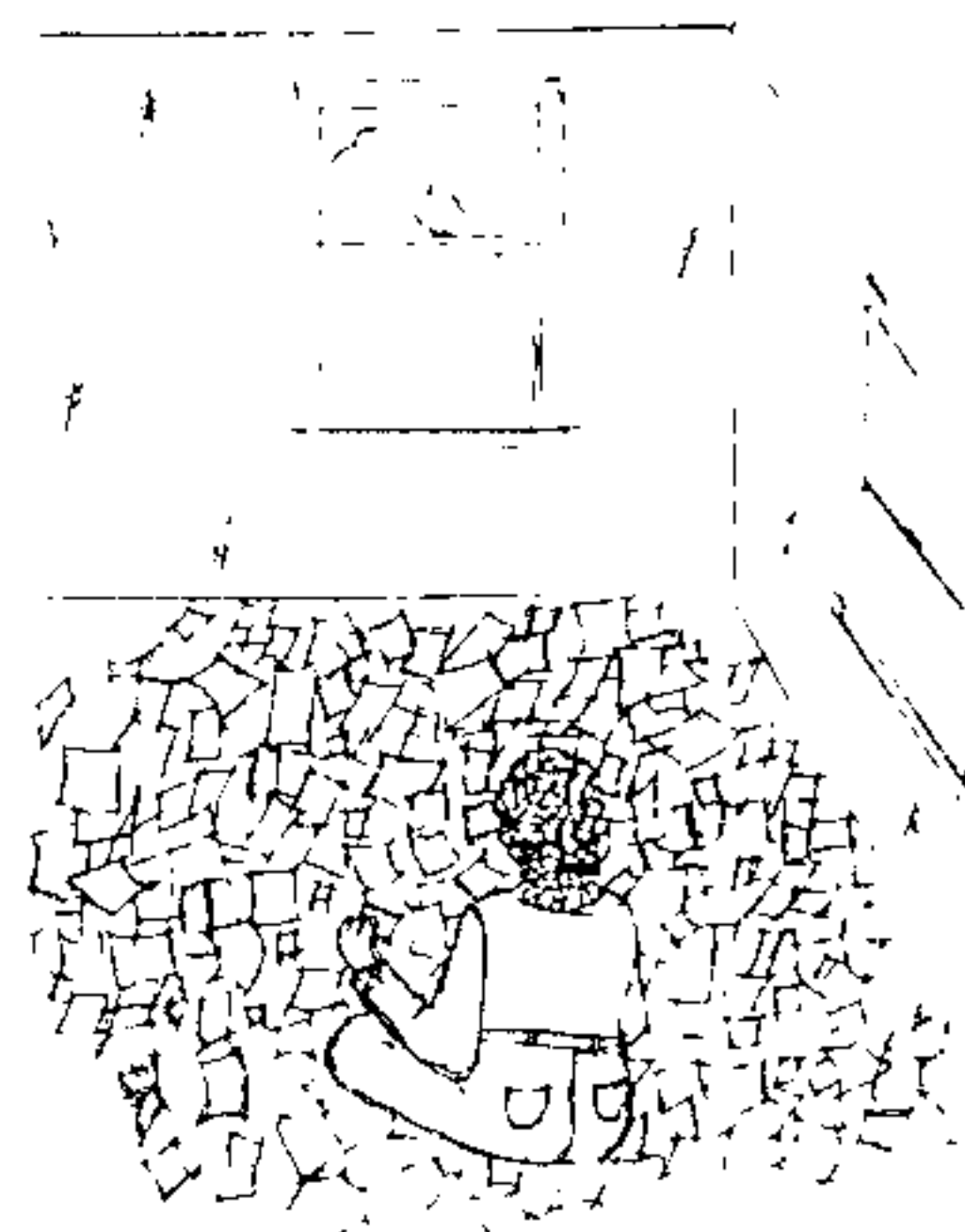
By JC

MV

This is how I visualize my situation in regards to my memories.

I see myself sitting on the floor of a room which has been stripped of its wallpaper. It didn't come off in sheets but in tiny bits and pieces. Thousands of bits and pieces that clutter the floor around me. The wallpaper represents the pictorial memory of my life to this time. As I sit there, the task of reconstruction seems monumental. I wearily lift a piece and hold it to the wall. I don't know if it belongs there or somewhere else. There is no reference point. I am trying to make sense from that which makes no sense. Trying to create a clear picture from abstract fragments. I let go. The piece of paper drifts to the floor and is soon lost again among the detritus of my life.

—By Roberta L



# Thoughts, Ideas, & Experiences on DisAbility

By Katrina of Kat & the girls

**I**n our society, most measure a person's worth/ value by the house you live in, car you drive and the job you have. Many people have their identities tightly entwined in their jobs or careers. One of the first questions a person asks when meeting another is "What do you do?"

Our society is also obsessed with looks. Young girls starve themselves trying to look "perfect". Many people these days have surgery and other procedures to get just the "perfect" face, or body. This all makes a person with a "disAbility" feel inferior to have to admit they don't measure up, and also need help, usually in the area of financial for housing, food, medical, etc.

If you have a physical disAbility that can be seen, maybe you have tried to hide it, or get treated as if you are "less than" a whole person. At times you may have even been given compassion.

If you have an "invisible" disAbility that can't be seen easily, you really get stuck in a catch-22. "Invisible" disAbilities such as diabetes, neuropathy, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, asthma, sleep disorders, DID, depression, etc.

Since you look "normal" you don't get treated as if you are "less than," which has its good points. But usually you are expected to produce a full life like people that have no physical, medical, mental, or emotional disorder. Most of us with DID have become masters at hiding. Then add the ability to disassociate and it can be amazing how much can be hidden. When in a disassociated state quite often it appears as if the person is doing much better than they truly are.

I have been on Social Security Disability since 1989. At that time I had only gotten the diagnosis of "Narcolepsy" - a sleep disorder. I have probably had it since childhood, and was diagnosed back when it wasn't very well known or accepted much like DID is now. So of course I got a lot of ridicule about just not trying hard

enough. Over the years I have continued to collect diagnoses, all the "invisible" kind and I have earned my Master's Degree in hiding all the physical pain I live with 24/7. I also continue to live with the lack of compassion or understanding for what it takes for me to just get through each day.

I never was able to complete college, since I was living on my own at 16. It took me until my mid-twenties to find that one thing in life that gave me that feeling of fulfillment and this is what I am supposed to be doing. I am a Glass Artist, stained, fused and torchwork are my main loves. I worked in a stained glass studio for several years, and was a partner in another studio. I was feeling my physical health slipping away, as well as had gotten into some heavy therapy. I had made a studio in my home to work there, which I did more and more. I finally had to stay home completely. My ability to earn money was slipping away as well.

I was married at the time, and the tension continued to increase with lack of income, and resentment from my husband. Finally I decided I had to go for getting Social Security Disability. At a later time I will write about what I have learned about that process. For now I want to focus on what I feel like is the core of being able to cope with dealing with SSA, other Gov't Agencies, people in your life, and even yourself.

During my SSD process, I realized how society looks at those of us that have to accept assistance from the Gov't and others. Yep, we are back to the "less than" a whole person business. Then those close to us may even question if we try hard enough, especially if our disAbility is based on a "mental illness" [OH MY!] We have the challenge of living in our bodies, dealing with a very noisy head, and lost time, etc. now we also have to DEFEND ourselves!!! (yes I do still have some resentment and anger in this area to work on in therapy)

The one main thing you can do for yourself to enable you to put up with all kinds of inconsiderate judgements, red tape with the Gov't, and noise in your head is to accept yourself and level of functioning. Feel good about whatever you accomplish, even if it is just getting out of bed each day and getting dressed.

I have been dealing with a Public Housing Authority (PHA) and HUD for over 2 years in a struggle for my rights. The treatment I have gotten is very close to Abuse, at least to the level of harassment! It has definitely challenged my feelings of self worth MANY TIMES. (I will also write about this & what I've learned later)

I am lucky and grateful my therapist, social worker/ advocate by default has been with me the whole time. I did research online of my rights, the HUD regulations, etc. giving him the needed info to write the many letters in my behalf. This is another very important aspect if you need to fight for your rights!

**1) Find out what your rights are—** First and foremost learn about "Reasonable Accommodations" is and how you can apply it to your situation!

**2) Find Support and Advocates**

**3) Expect- to have to reply again,** and again.... many times to really stupid questions.

**4) DON'T GIVE UP!** The system is set up to tire you and they are hoping you'll give up! Even when you are asking for something that is your legal right! Thus the reason for #2! SUPPORT!! Don't listen to the negative voices that say you will never win. They are NOT SUPPORT or your friends!

**5) Celebrate any and ALL victories!**

**6) Learn to ADVOCATE** for yourself and other disAbleD persons. Especially with all the changes going on in the system these days. No One else is going to advocate for us!

**7) Find your sense of humor!** Keep it! Never let them steal that, it will help you through some very difficult times.

With Armin's help I got my 2 bedroom status back on the request of a "Reasonable Accommodation," that Art work at therapy is a legitimate outlet for feelings, a way to enhance self-esteem and self-worth, basically for my mental health. Also to provide quarters for a "sleep in" person to be with me at any time when an emotional or physical emergency would indicate the need, especially to avoid a hospital stay or shorten one.

Everyone told us I'd never get it! Well finally after a long battle I now have it!

Check Bazelon website at: <http://www.bazelon.org/> EXCELLENT for lots of this kind of suggestions in using Reasonable Accommodation. Such as: your landlord's policy is "No Pets". If your doctor or therapist says you "need your companion pet for emotional support" they can't refuse you. This site has a sample letter to request this. They cover so much more, all current issues for people with Mental Illness issues for housing, insurance, dealing with Medicare, Medicaid, and more.

I also recommend the book: "Living with Chronic Illness" by Cheri Register. It isn't a new book, in fact I found it in the Public Library many years ago. Have my own copy with yellowed & dog-eared pages. Cheri deals with all levels of disAbility, from childhood, to later in life. Being a parent with a disAbility, the importance of friendship, support of friends, acceptance of your healthy limits, find & focus on you Abilities, what you enjoy~ can share with others. It's value isn't measured if it earns money, but in how it makes you feel. One of my favorite chapters is called "A Place of Usefulness." I highly recommend this book.

Over 2 years ago, I met a very special lady online. She died a few weeks ago, my sadness is still heavy. However I learned so much from her. Judy O. was such a great advocate for the disAbled. She was a social worker, slowed down but not stopped by MS & PD (Parkinson's) and it was cancer that took her life.

Judy O. gave me such a level of acceptance, encouragement, praise for how I coped with so much that I grew in my own feelings of self-respect.

I will end with some words Judy made in a post to the disAbility online support group she started and I was her loyal side-kick. I miss her tremendously. These words show her amazing compassion, and insight. It made a major difference in how I perceive my own "Mental Illness." I hope it does the same for you:

"Tonight I can't use the "dis" word because I basically do not like that word. I was outside today doing some thinking. I have PD, Parkinson's (yes in addition to MS).

"Does any one know what that is? If you guessed it is a movement disorder from lack of dopamine production in the brain, good for you. Cells die off and no longer produce enough dopamine. It is a slow ride down hill....People feel sad for those individuals that have PD."

"Guess what the opposite end of the dopamine spectrum is? Too much dopamine. That my friends is schizophrenia. Surprised, when I first read about it I was. Point is PD considered physical illness."

"Schizophrenia is considered a mental illness. It does not bring out the same feelings of compassion in people. Was thinking about that today." —Judy O, Advocate

MV

## "Daddy Is He a Monster"

A child caught sight of me on a bus  
propped up on his seat  
safe within his father's fold  
he said,  
"is he a monster?"

My head  
poking out of a protective shell of  
newspaper

a suspicious crab  
peering at a threatening predator  
my blood shot eyes squinting  
behind a shield of dark glass.

The top of my head  
void of hair  
shining under an aura of artificial  
light

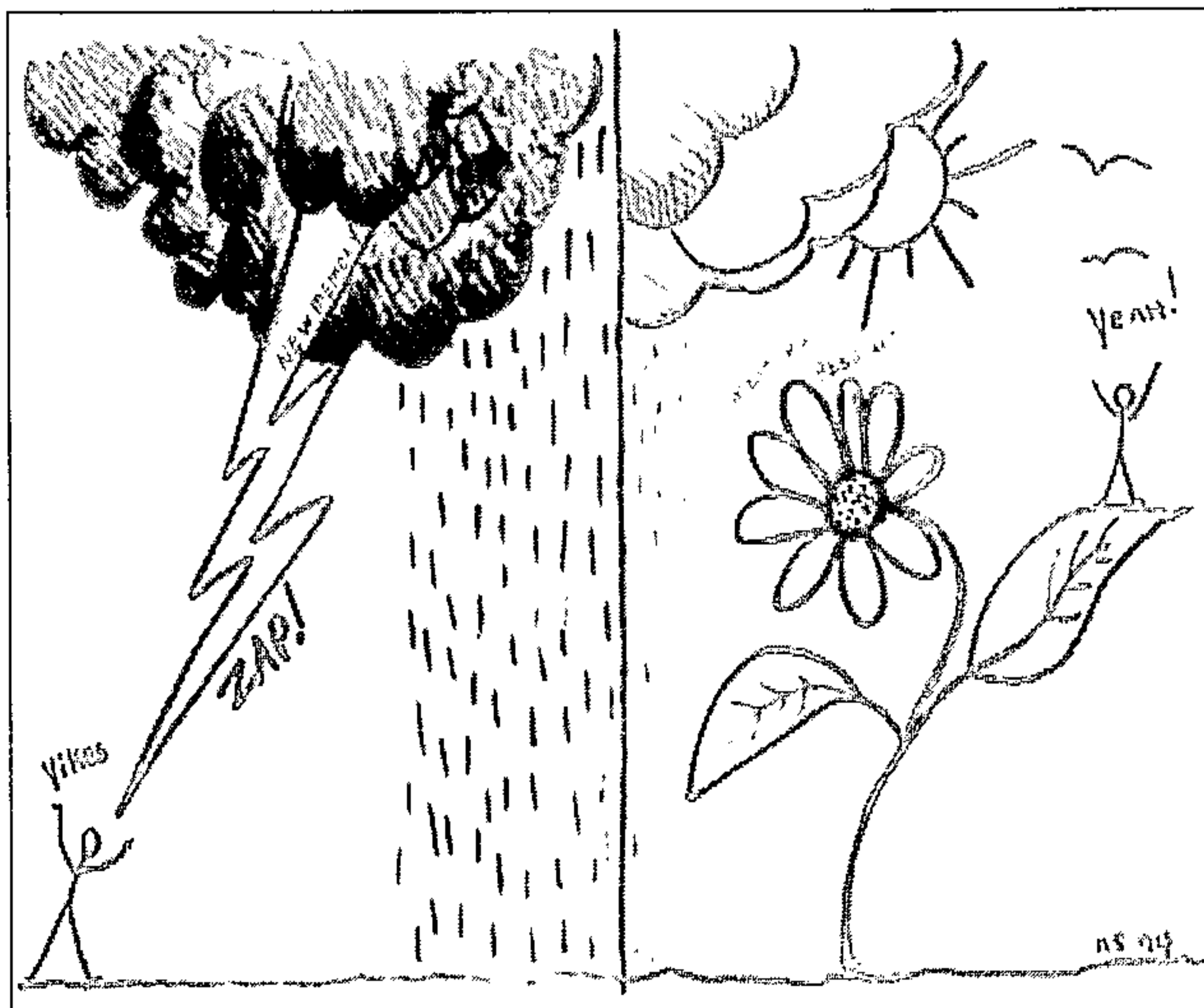
from the vehicle.  
An unruly beard  
sprouted with gray  
from my flushed cheeks.

I forced a smile  
the child screamed  
and disappeared behind his seat.

*By Doug Holder*

(This poem previously appeared in the chapbook, Poems of Boston and Just Beyond: From the Back Bay to the Back Ward, published by Ibbetson Press, 617 628 2313. Reprinted with permission.)

MV



# How Did I Get Here? A Survivor's Quest

By Stuart Brantley

Admittedly I never thought I'd be writing anything, let alone something like this. I am no angel, nor am I a demon, I am simply a human being. My hope is that if someone reading this is a survivor as well, they might find comfort or understanding through it, or realize that they are not alone.

I am alone or so it seems. I am a survivor of child prostitution, child pornography and physical violence in my home, daycare and church. There were many perpetrators. It seems that much of my early childhood was spent having sex or running from physical violence. Somehow I survived all of that and still have, what I hope is, a strong faith. After all, I view this as a faith statement for myself. There doesn't seem to be too many people in my position. I have searched the internet, articles and books, but nothing on people, men in particular, who survived this kind of abuse and have some faith in a higher power that helped them survive the trials.

My journey began, as many who have forgotten their childhood often report, with a major crisis. I let another woman come into my life and marriage. I am not proud of this nor did I set out to do this to myself consciously. I simply did what I have done for as long as I can remember. I self-destructed. I have always been suspicious of good fortune. When things are really going my way and I feel on top of the world, I always sabotage it by screwing up. This time was no different except for the fact that I have a wonderful wife and two wonderful children. My screw up was affecting more than me now and I could not react the way I always had in the past: run and hide. I would not abandon the wife and children I wanted so much. So, I stayed here.

I worked with my wife and our marriage and re-building trust with her. It has not been easy, but we are doing just fine.

It is at this point that I should explain, I repressed my memories of my childhood. I used to look at my pictures from those days from birth to 12 or 13 and feel nothing. I discovered my lack of memories when my wife and I were going through old pictures for our wedding video. I was amazed at my wife's recollections of her youth and what her pictures reminded her of in her life. When I looked at mine, I felt numb. They did not conjure up happy memories. In fact, they conjured up a whole lot of nothing. It was as if my life began at 14 years of age. I have flashes of memories from my childhood, but not much. I felt less than whole. I felt like I was missing a major part of who I am. I had no

explanations either. It had gnawed at me ever since that time.

Ironically, I have gone over the "Incest Survivor's Checklist" to many clients in my practice as a counselor. I never thought to take it myself. It was my Bride who encouraged me to take it myself, as did my sister and other friends. I resisted for a long time, stating, "I am a survivor of physical abuse only!! I have read many articles and books on sexual abuse and have never felt anything, other than major compassion for those who have lived through it. It couldn't have happened to me." Out of frustration and fear, I took the "damn" test to prove to them I was not a victim of this aspect of abuse. I finally took the quiz and when I realized that I had more things checked than not, I became scared. My mind was racing and my heart beat a lot faster. I cried in my wife's presence. That was unheard of, because she can count on one hand how often that has occurred in our 10+ year marriage.

Thankfully a friend of ours is a licensed, Christian, Hypno-therapist. I went to her not intending to find some horrible sexual abuse, but to simply locate why I had no memories of my early life. She and I discussed my huge hatred and mistrust of men. I told her about the time, when I was 16, that I told my Counselor "the only good man is one flat on his back with a knife in his head and one in his chest. You can't trust one that breathes." Suffice it to say, my love of men did not exist. I was repeatedly told as a youth that my anger was out of proportion to the abuse I reported. I figured that they just didn't understand the horror and were incapable of such a task.

My Hypno-therapist and I went through and located events and times. I remembered when I first experienced anger. It too was centered around my Father. Then as we progressed, I stopped her and I saw a room that was vaguely familiar. I reported that my day care worker, who provided this in her own home, began coaching me on how to give oral sex. It went from there. I reported one event after another throughout my childhood where I was with both men and women I did not know. I remembered events with church people I recognized, but could not remember names. I did recognize my then Assistant Pastor. Most of the people I saw, were friends of my family's, or somehow knew us.

The memories came like a waterfall. There were episodes with multiple partners. I saw cameras in the rooms. I heard the voices and the sounds they all made. To

me it was only horrible with the men. There is one episode that will haunt me for a long time and that was with several men enjoying humiliating me sexually. I didn't have any feelings of discomfort, fear or insecurity with the females that I remember. When I asked about this, my other Counselor stated that compared to going home with my Dad and getting a beating, this abuse didn't hurt. I had to agree. I will spare you any more of the gory details, but suffice it to say I have had multiple partners and been in many situations that no one should have to live through, especially as a child.

I am reliving the nightmare that was my childhood. While I would love to deny it and call it false memories, they simply answer too many questions for me. One that I remember vividly, is realizing that at the age of 13 or 14, when I was having what I thought was my first sexual experience, I already knew what to do and how. My partner, who was older than me by a year or so, did not have to coach me at all. I always thought that it was strange, but never questioned it. After all, I am a guy and this is what guys dream of doing.

Every relationship I had from that time in my life onward, I somehow got rid of, or hurt them in some way. I was never violent with anyone, I just would emotionally hurt the people closest to me. I never realized I was doing it, but then people didn't really matter much to me when I was in Jr. High. Only a select few could ever get somewhat close to me. I still have those friends today.

The question that Counselors and friends alike have asked me is "How did you survive?" My response has always been the same. "I don't know. It has to be God's work! I do not believe that I would be alive today without God's help." I believe it to be true. I have no other answer. Many people who have known me for a while have commented that since I made this discovery, I no longer shake my leg a lot. I no longer appear as nervous as I had previously. My wife noticed this in me immediately. I used to drive people around me crazy by constantly shaking my leg or rocking my legs. I used to smoke cigarettes, thinking this would calm me down, but it did not. By the time I had a two pack a day habit, I quit.

As I said earlier, I have a "normal" family and family life. My wife is a Pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA). I, however, look and act like anything but normal; in my own mind. Most folks upon seeing me for the first time think I am a "Hell's Angel" kind of person. Apparently I am looked

upon as intimidating and some people find me frightening. Those who actually look beyond my clothes and facial expression will find that I am quite gentle. In fact my sister enjoys taunting me with "You're just a Pooh Bear."

There are many in this denomination that are glad I am no longer a Pastor myself. I am a humiliation and an abomination to them. I do not fit into their mold of what a Pastor should look like and behave like. I can be rough with my language, but never with my family. Ask anyone who has ever done treatment with me and they'll tell you that I do not always follow the straight and narrow. I have been blessed with having some folks I've worked with in treatment, come up to me 6 months or more down the road and thank me for my help, and they share their stories of sobriety and recovery. It makes my heart dance to know this and I am grateful to them for letting me know that I've helped them in some way.

I laugh too loud and I smile too much. I am always singing to myself. I guess that many think I am crazy. I am. I remind people that there are folks out in the church that we do not wish to see. There are many folks who do not know how to accept me. There are many people out there that like me and are friendly with me. There are some out there, maybe, that out-right hate me and have judged me as an evil person. That is their prerogative. I've done good and bad things in my time. I do not believe that I am better or less than anyone else. I am grateful for these detractors. They are the catalyst that started me back on the journey to life. They helped me create the crisis that brought me back to God and my family. I take full

responsibility for all of my actions, but I now understand why I have made some of the bad decisions that I have made.

I give thanks daily to my Mother for saving me. I give thanks daily for my wife who has coached me through this nightmare thus far. She has shown me what grace and forgiveness is all about. I have hurt her and yet she defends me and nurtures me and pushes me to move forward. I am grateful to my children for always loving me. They keep me real. I am grateful to friends and family that I have met in many places, through treatment, counseling and the church. This is quite a painful journey and not one I enjoy, but it is a necessary journey in discovering the truth about who I am and how I got here.

I have learned many things, but one that stands out for me is that I should never get too cocky. It is when we get too arrogant and believe we do not need God that we fall. Popularity and fame rob us of the reality, which is that we are always in need of God's help. I am trying to be grateful for the nightmare that this is for me. However, I do feel quite alone in the world. It is hard to have discussions about this kind of abuse with my family or friends, because they are too close. I have no friends, that I am aware of, that have lived through this same thing and have faith in Jesus Christ. I submit this testimony to the power of God and Jesus Christ to overcome hell. I have lived in hell, walked through it and have the scars to show for my battles, but I also have a deeper faith and understanding of God's reality.

If you have been through this yourself, and feel alone; you are not. I hope my coming forward has given you the answers you need in order to move through it

yourself. With God's help all things are possible. We are survivors and we hope to be thrivers one day. I believe that I will be on that path soon. May God bless your scary but hopeful journey. You are in my prayers, for whatever that is worth to you. It is my fervent prayer that we are all able to turn these negative experiences into positive strengths for ourselves.

I hope you notice something in this writing. I have purposefully refrained from naming people and places. That would detract from the real reason that I came forward at all. That is that my life, in many ways, is evidence, at least to myself and my friends, that God is real and is active in our lives. I do not always appreciate this knowledge, and sometimes I feel downright abandoned, but I also am always shown along the hellish paths, that there is hope. We must not be silent any longer. We must not point fingers and cry out in anger for too long. It is too easy to get lost in the mire of anger and drown in it. There is a place and time for all things as the writer of Proverbs knows so well.

I should also note that I have been asked if I am angry or rageful concerning this new knowledge. I answer no. I am not. I spent my entire teen years full of rage and my early twenties calming the storm in my heart and mind. Today I am sad. I feel very sad and sometimes ashamed. I am also grateful that I have somehow managed to escape that hell for a good life with my family. I have avoided many of the pitfalls that happen to folks like me. I give thanks daily for my Mother, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins and my Maternal Grandparents. Without you all, I would not be here today. I thank God for you. I love you. Thanks for helping me live.

MV

## *There is a Corner You Can Turn*

Where do you go?  
Where do you go,  
when the pain is too great,  
the pressure too much,  
the eyes of the world are upon you,  
pleading,  
demanding,  
judging,  
and you will be found wanting,  
as you were so many times before  
and they look upon your hands,  
which you have washed,  
and scrubbed,  
and rinsed,  
time and again,  
and they see the dirt that hides  
between the nails and the cuticle  
between the flesh and the bone,  
that cannot be scrubbed away,  
where do you go?

Where do you go?  
Where do you go,  
when the pain is too great,  
the pressure too much,

the eyes of the world are upon you,  
weighing,  
measuring,  
evaluating,  
and your flesh will be silent,  
your nerves will be mute,  
when they look upon your legs

The ciphers of your bones and nerves  
may not speak to the doctors,  
and the learned men and women may not  
see the  
meaning in the runes inscribed thereon,  
for these runes owe nothing to the world of  
me,  
of doctors and of lawyers,  
but every time you raise your hand,  
or press your foot,  
or turn your head, just so,  
each rune sings out its name,  
and I can see the futhark writ in fire,  
across the dark, dark walls of my room, at  
night

And where do you go,  
Where do you go?  
Where do you go,  
when the pain is too great,  
and the dirt cannot be scrubbed away,  
and the eyes of the world are upon you?

There is a corner you can turn,  
just inside the surface of your mind,  
a tight-shuttered window,  
through which you can slip,  
a hatchway you can't see,  
but find most effortlessly,  
from long years' practice,  
and as you move carefully  
through the ink-dark cavern,  
do you brush the sleeve of one moving  
at cross-purpose to yourself?  
As you enter into a quiet warren,  
and settle into a warm hollow,  
do you find a spot, seeming just your size,  
was left for you to fill,  
by the one who left its warmth  
to take your place?

*By a member of the Bear Clan*

MV

# Practicing Consistency

By Lynn W.

"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds" said Ralph Waldo Emerson. Well, Emerson is entitled to his opinion, but as one who has struggled with dissociative tendencies most of my life, learning to be consistent is a major accomplishment and I'm proud of it. To me, consistency—or learning to be predictable with myself and others—is the opposite of foolish behavior. I believe consistency is an absolute necessity for ongoing productive work. The development of consistency skills can also improve relationships and bring personal peace of mind.

Consistency is a big deal for people who dissociate because our lives tend to be so completely unpredictable. 'Normals' rarely comprehend the personal disorientation that accompanies rapid switching from one aspect of personality to the next, for example. When switching is not under control or managed by the executive parts, with full internal awareness, daily life can be like riding in the last car of a roller coaster, whipping around the curves. There is the constant fear of flying right off the track into thin air. It's amusing to think how much trouble 'Normals' seem to have, being spontaneous, when people like me spend enormous energy trying to rein in overly spontaneous or impulsive behavior.

I have not, of course, completely eliminated my ability to be spontaneous. I still do somewhat irrational things from time to time. But I have been able to train myself, over a period of many years, to choose my behavior at any given moment. I can now decide if I'll let things be spontaneous, or if I'll impose a structure or pattern on my behavior.

Considering that I spent most of my first twenty years being utterly 'spontaneous' (read, 'impulsive') and the next ten being what my sister once described as 'rigid as a stick,' how did I manage to change my ways?

The change began when I finally realized that uncontrolled impulsive behavior caused me trouble, and disturbed the people around me. This was years and years before I knew anything about 'dissociation.' But it was very clear that cycling emotions or changing my mind and focused activity six times in an hour was not good for my homelife and (outside) children. I had grown up in a chaotic environment among erratic people. I didn't want to raise my children that way. So I had a strong motivation for change. From observing people who seemed to live orderly lives, I decided what kind of person I wanted to be. Then I set out to try to modify myself.

Here are a few tactics I employed to

gradually (and I do mean gradually) get a grip on my life activities and become a person other people could rely on.

1. At the beginning, I couldn't stop the impulsivity. But I could see it just after it happened. I paid close attention to what I was doing or had just done. As time went on, I was able to catch the impulsive act in progress. And after lots of practice and concentration, I learned to inhibit impulsive behavior, and substitute a constructive act I preferred. It took a long time to figure out what behavior was best for me in the long run. Sometimes I made poor judgments. But at least I learned what didn't work, information that can be very useful.

2. On the advice of a counselor, I started adding more structure to my life. At that time it was so free-form I didn't know from one minute or hour to the next what I'd be doing. I had too many options. I needed to narrow things down to manageable proportions. My first self-imposed structure element was to breeze through the newspaper first thing in the morning. I also built in some habits, like making my bed the minute I got out of it, and getting dressed promptly for the day.

3. When I worked for others, I made myself a promise that I'd follow through no matter what. My upbringing emphasized the importance of doing things for others (not for myself), so this was pretty easy. But when I worked "for myself" I had a problem—still not completely resolved. I had to learn to follow through on projects which brought benefits primarily to me, not to others. One way I worked around the internal prohibition about doing things for my own benefit was to key the task into a benefit for some other person or persons, as well. More recently I've been paying attention to the fact that other people feel ok doing things for their own personal benefit. And I'm beginning to say to myself, "If they are allowed to put their interests first, I can too." So I am improving on being consistent with myself.

4. I've had to learn that there's a difference between being consistent and being excessively rigid. When I first set out to stop my impulsive behavior, I went too far. I controlled everything I did to the nth degree. Sometimes I came across as artificial, or inflexible in response to others. Self-vigilance was helpful in some ways, but I became overly self-conscious, always being watched (by myself). This brought on interesting complexities of rebellion and retribution, all acted out internally. Learning to trust myself to find a natural balance between being impulsive and controlled has taken a long, long time. I'm still working on this.

5. I keep talking about "working on" things. For me, that means daily, sometimes many times daily, evaluating what I've done, what I'm doing, and what I hope to do. By now, I've got this observation/evaluation technique so thoroughly embedded, it's easy and usually takes just a few minutes. But typically at the beginning or end of the day, I go over my experiences in my journal and decide what I need to do next. Periodically, in a crisis or if I'm feeling especially stressed, I pull out the journal and spend a few hours outlining what is going on and getting input from "all sides."

6. Deadlines and schedules are part of being consistent. In my particular case, I'm great about deadlines and schedules that will directly impact others. This kind of consistency is vital for successful work life. I show up on time for appointments. I turn in projects on time. Back in 1989 when I started MV, I decided what day of the month I wanted to have the issue ready for the printer, and what day I wanted it to go out in the mail. In 15 years, I've missed those target dates only a handful of times, and then by no more than a day or two. It is important to me to be consistent to people who are depending on what I produce.

On the other hand, schedules and commitments to myself, for my own personal projects, remain problematic. This is where I still tend to "rebel" and vacillate from this to that to the other thing...with the end result of no results, if you know what I mean. I continue to struggle with this and am gradually improving. But it is not easy to make oneself over from scratch. I've finally decided not to be excessively upset about it. I just do the best I can.

So—what has all this emphasis on building a consistent personality done for me? Well, in one way or another I have been able to eat regularly and keep a roof over my head all these years. I've managed to create and maintain friendships, because I work hard at being consistent and reliable with my friends. Regular activities and a loose, flexible structure to my life keep me from unbounded chaos. I plan fun things to do in my life, and try to keep those appointments for pleasure as consistent as the appointments I make for work. And as I gradually gain trust in myself and my ability to behave in a rational way, I have acquired much more peace of mind and harmony inside.

Practicing consistency has definitely paid off for me. I hope each of you finds a method to create the level of consistency you need, to work and live in comfort.

## Finances

Finances are difficult for us. Different alters sometimes order things the rest of us know nothing about.

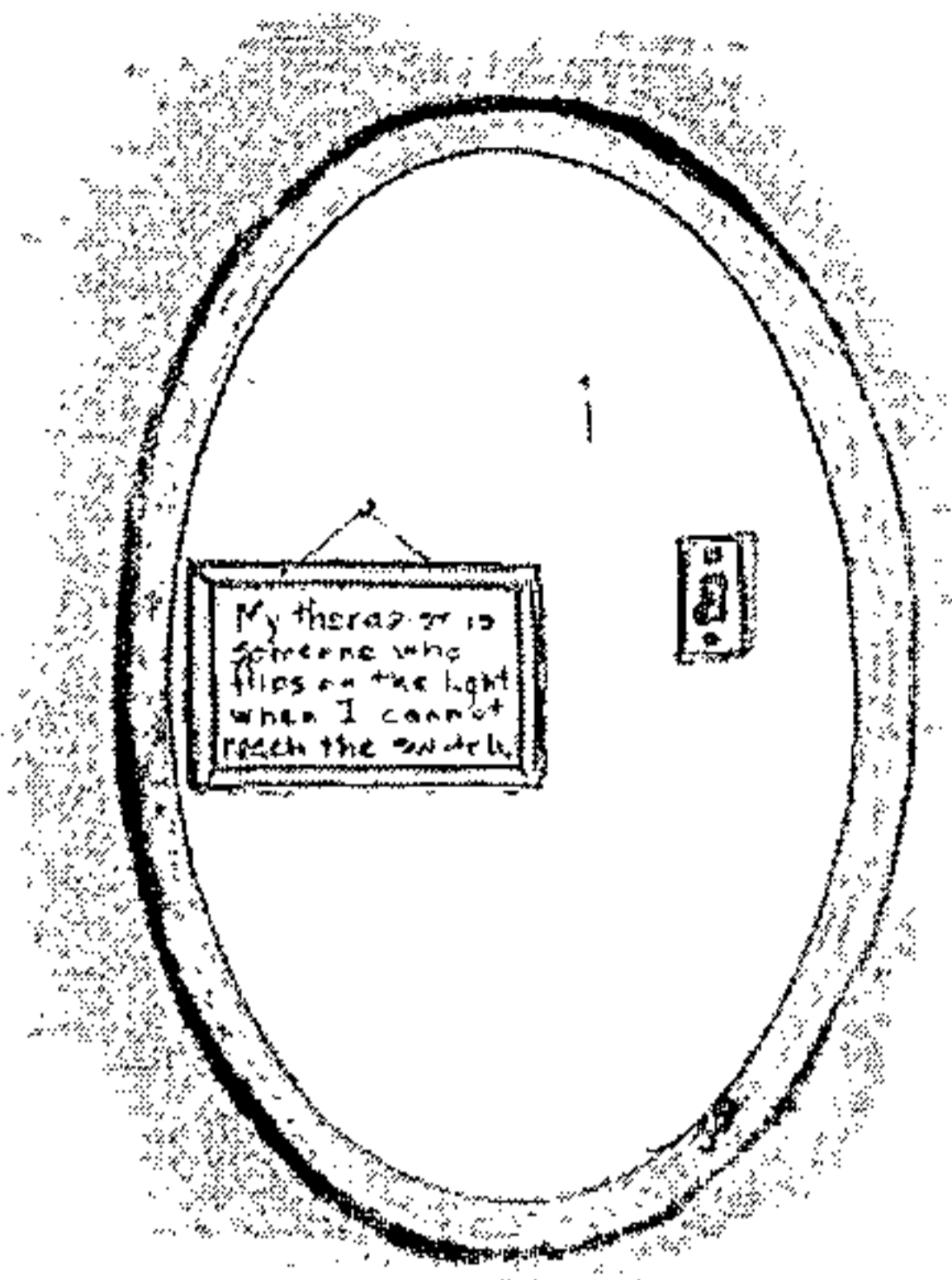
They do not subtract it from our bank balance, and then we are hard up for money.

We do work—doing crafts and writing, making gospel and healing tapes. We invented two games that we patented. We pray and hope for sales.

Someday we hope to be able to work more. We also hope to get the "spending" alters to work with us so we do not have to borrow or ask others to help us financially.

*By Sally B.*

MV



By JRSL

## Disability

I think being a sexual abuse survivor made living with MS a breeze. Of course you know as well as I do it is no breeze. I have to take chemo because my type of MS is primary progressive, which only 10% of MS'rs have [Lucky, aren't I?] The chemo is horrid but it buys me time on earth.

Life as a child was harder than this. This is a breeze. I am safe in my own home. I am full of food daily. I am warm, no one raped me today. I am safe, happy and I can go on. This is the spirit you and I carry daily. We can do it, because we know how hard it CAN be. But isn't. We are survivors. We can weather storms.

*Love, Becky C. and Fritz*

MV

## Books

### Traumatic Experience and the Brain: A Handbook for Understanding and Treating Those Traumatized as Children

By Dave Ziegler, Ph.D. © 2002. Published by Acacia Publishing, Inc., Phoenix, AZ [www.acaciapublishing.com](http://www.acaciapublishing.com) \$19.95. 172 pgs Paperback

This is a book about brain function by a clinician who treats traumatized children on a daily basis. Dr. Zeigler has been a family therapist for 30 years and spent the past 20 years in a residential treatment setting for seriously disturbed children. His goal in this book is to make brain research related to trauma experience more accessible and understandable to therapists. At the same time he describes the treatment of traumatized children in a vivid and empathic way. He covers memory issues and why memories of traumatized people may be idealized or otherwise distorted. The good news he shares is that the brain keeps developing through life, so change is possible. Each chapter ends with treatment implications and examples of what to look for, what questions a therapist might ask, given certain circumstances. Neglect has been found to be the most pervasive trauma, leaving negative effects on the entire developing neurological system.

Traumatized children may be stuck in "Survival Mode" due to changes in the developing brain. They may also deliberately attempt to "seek abuse" in non-abusive situations, by provocative behavior. Abuse is familiar, kindness is unfamiliar, and they would rather feel in control of the abuse they are sure will happen than to let it spring on them unawares. This means therapists must exercise a great deal of self control to avoid giving the child "what he's asking for." Dr. Zeigler presents capsule examples of children who participated in his program throughout the book, and ends with four case histories which show the extent healing can come from patient retraining of the child essentially "from scratch." There is a tinge of sadness to the story though, as he acknowledges that the extended trauma treatment required to bring these children from almost certain disaster to near-normal lives is rarely permitted in today's "short term therapy" environment. This is an excellent book for therapists working with children, and also for formerly-abused adults who may want to see where the gaps may lie in their own development history. I think it might be especially useful for dissociative people who want to be better parents. — Lynn W.

### Just Between You and Me, God - A Potpourri...

By Marguerite Stucki. Self-published 8x10 75 pages, 4-color illustrated Paperback. \$20 plus \$3.95 postage (MD residents add \$1 tax) to Marguerite Stucki, 810 Tred Avon Rd., Baltimore, MD 21212

This book is prepared by a survivor of child abuse who takes her Christianity seriously—but with good humor as well. It is a mixture of inspirational words and gentle fun, illustrated mostly by photos of beautiful dolls (perhaps part of the author's collection) trinkets and feminine designs. Marguerite's subject matter is varied—from the frustrations of housekeeping, to the dread of annual obgyn visits, to empathy for flat chests and puffy tummies. Each page is printed on just one side, leaving the other side open for the reader's own expression in words or art. This is an attractive and uplifting example of what a survivor can do to celebrate her faith in God, in her loving family, and in herself.

—Lynn W.

MV

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*THANKS!—Lynn W.*

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