

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

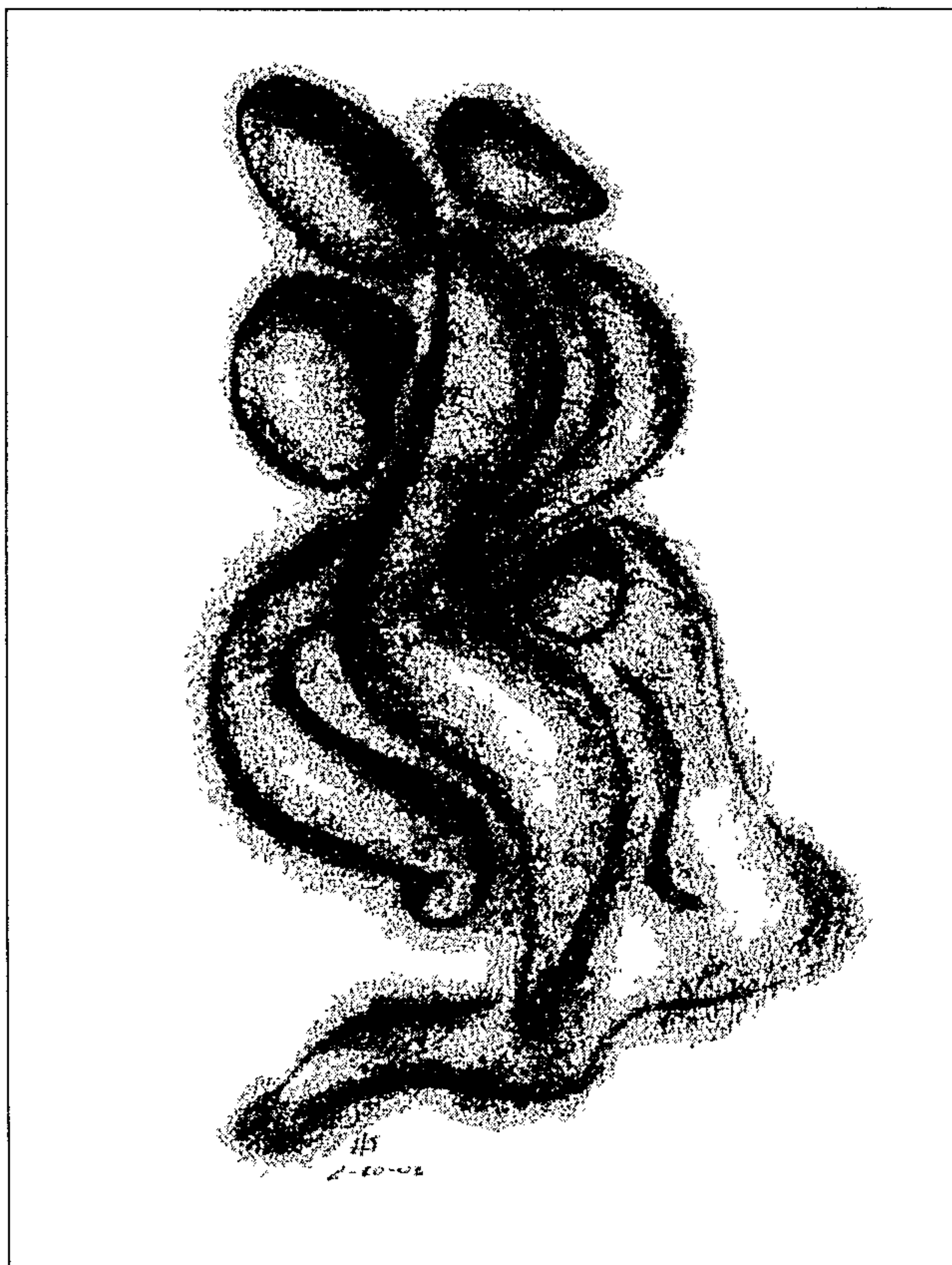
Vol XV, No.3

June 2003

ISSN1042-2277

In This Issue:

Journaling Work and Integration



Children of Darkness

Children of darkness
Heads bowed in shame
Lift your faces to the night sky
Let your eyes engage the starlight
Embrace the golden moon
Reach your arms to the heavens
Touch hands with your blood brothers
and sisters
A thousand miles away, yet ever so near
Look into their faces
Wipe away their tears
Experience their strengths
Acknowledge their courage
Allow the celestial grace to connect you

Children of darkness
Hearts filled with pain
Walk softly to the rivers and streams
That flow to the great oceans of the world
Dip your fingers into the liquid
That joins every land and all peoples
Touch hands with your blood brothers
and sisters
A thousand miles away, yet ever so near
Hear their cries
Feel their anguish
Experience their valour
Acknowledge their truths
Let the soothing waters join your souls

Children of darkness
Broken in spirit
Venture into the sunlight
That illuminates the earth
Feel the soft glow
That comforts all creatures
Touch hands with your blood brothers
and sisters
A thousand miles away, yet ever so near
Embrace the trees
Drink in the air
Experience the energy
Acknowledge the life force
Let the warming rays unite you in healing
Know that you are not alone.

By Judy DeLoott

MV

Journaling History

By Eileen and the Mouse Crew

I eagerly await each issue of Many Voices, and am always grateful when the manila envelope, with its discrete "MV" in the corner, arrives in my mailbox. Often I have been tempted to write, but the subject was often one that I had only a rudimentary knowledge of myself, or was simply too triggering inside to imagine putting anything down in print. When I saw that the next issue was to be about journaling we thought "Oh, yes, that is something we definitely know something about!"

I remember when my therapist first suggested that I buy a journal and attempt to dialogue with my parts. I was not opposed to the concept at all, at least partially because I was in such denial about the entire diagnosis that I was certain the journal would have nothing but my own entries, and would serve as some sort of proof that the several treaters who had concurred I am DID were simply wrong, unequivocally wrong.

I was also an English major, so the idea of writing was comfortable for me, or so I thought.

My first entry was asking whoever who wished to come forward to write anything about themselves that they might care to share with me, thinking it a fairly ludicrous task when I actually put pen to paper.

I can still viscerally feel the shock of finding the journal written in several days later, and in handwriting that was not my own. Eager to escape the confirmatory writings, I tried to tell myself that I was having my own little version of an Alfred Hitchcock movie, the only problem being that I live alone and there were no signs of break-ins or other disturbances.

Having had my house burglarized several years earlier, my logical mind also reminded me that I had lost electronics, money, and a few other commodities, but the burglars had not left me a note telling me something about themselves. I was so terrified that I snapped the journal shut, threw it

in my backpack, and would not look at it until I was in the safety of my therapist's office. She seemed not at all surprised, which only panicked me more. Could this really be true? Naw...it couldn't be, don't be silly.

I never wanted to journal again. I did not want to see the large scrawls and tight writings that were not mine. Even the use of language was different from my own, and that is without even getting into the kids who wrote at their appropriate age level, having nothing to do with the actual age of the body.

Slowly, over time, my therapist suggested new things I might try writing about. No longer was this just the interesting intellectual exercise I had imagined it might be. Now it became filled with anxiety and foreboding. New writings continued to appear, and many were not in the least complimentary to me.

At the same time I was trying to learn to accept that there were others, they were letting me know that they saw me as weak, a loser, and all sorts of foul-mouthed name calling.

I thought to myself that my therapist's insistence on me treating parts with respect seemed to be a bit lopsided. I went through periods where I couldn't stand even looking at the journal, and for quite some time only dragged it out when my therapist came up with still another thing she thought I should try journaling about.

At the same time that I was frightened by writing, I was also starting to find out concrete information about some of the insiders. I learned that having gotten A's in all my courses was not simply my accomplishment, but that a specific part system had often helped out. That certainly explained why I was able to get an A in college statistics when my own math skills are so pathetic that I no longer even attempt to balance my checkbook.

I also began to realize that my system had protected me from many things too horrible to write about, and I

began to feel a small amount of gratitude. I learned that Sarah is a tea lover, and Patty has just let me know that she wants me to write that butterscotch pudding is about the best thing in the entire world. Someone else loves baby carrots, which seemed remarkable to me, since my own dietary tastes run to nothing that will ever be added to the nutritional pyramid.


Chris eventually made himself known, and I learned of my first male part. Now I know that it is not uncommon for systems to be comprised of mixed genders, but at the time it was difficult to digest, having identified myself as a lesbian for all these years.

It is now a couple of years later, and I would like to say that I have taken to journaling like a duck takes to water, but in the interest of honesty, I will admit that it is still a challenging undertaking. The good news is that I do not fear it to the same extent I once did, but there is still anxious anticipation. As more of my system has come forward, both in therapy and the journal, I have had to accommodate the reality of DID, at least on the days I don't backslide a bit into the more comfortable denial.

There is much work for us all to do, and much internal co-operation that needs to be learned. I know it will be painful, based on what has already transpired. I have a wonderful therapy team, so I am blessed. The work continues...

MV

TRUST

ME  YOU

A RISK TO REACH OUT!
CHOOSING TO TRUST THE UNKNOWN
HEALING FOR MY SOUL.

-JRSI

Incandescent

Somewhere inside of me
there is an incandescent light
that wants to shine powerful and bright.
It banishes my charred soul,
shining through the pain
making it glitter like gold.
i know it's there,
sometimes i can feel it bubble and flare
when it gives me just a little hope
to get through the darkness,
convincing me i don't need self destruction
to cope.
i wish these moments of hope would
last, but like a lightning bolt
they disappear fast.
i no longer wish to be
radiating of my dark presence,
but to shine with the light i know i have,
my incandescence.

By Kristi Sharp

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

These organizations are not affiliated with this publication and have no control over its contents. *Many Voices* and its staff have no influence on their operations.

If you know of clinics or conferences that need flyers, please call us!

We appreciate your support! — Lynn W., Editor

Story about Me

By JLR

Hello. This is a story about me. Me? Well, maybe us. Or whomever, ok?

How can anyone define life? At least a life that is supposed to be a regular human life or however regular any human life can be.

Me/We I guess are not very regular. I suppose we always thought we were until at some time in our life we realized most people do not have conversations with people in their heads. I mean, real talk back and forth conversations, including arguments! I wonder? Well anyhow, that's who We are.

I wish someone inside had some real profound things to say about this life of ours, but mostly we have never fully understood the dynamics of being us. We fight this world with a lot of guessing and hit and miss sort of style. However, we have never fully understood the length of who we are, where we fit or even if it matters. We are like a unit without any uniformity.

Sometimes I sit and wonder, am I here? Or is it one of them? Are these my thoughts? Or a collection of the whole group? Am I God's child? Or are WE God's children? Or are We anything at all?

Sometimes I want to just sit and talk with others like us, but how? I mean,

we have spoken on the phone with someone once, but that made us feel even more confused. We have written e-mails to a few others and such, but most others like us are real fragile and we always feel like we are walking on eggshells. Maybe we are fragile also, but we really do not know. We really do not know how we are. At one time we almost got close enough to know...but then something happened and we shut each other out. Sure I can sometimes argue and talk a little with them, but not often. I get a real bad headache when I try. So, what does that mean? I guess I don't know.

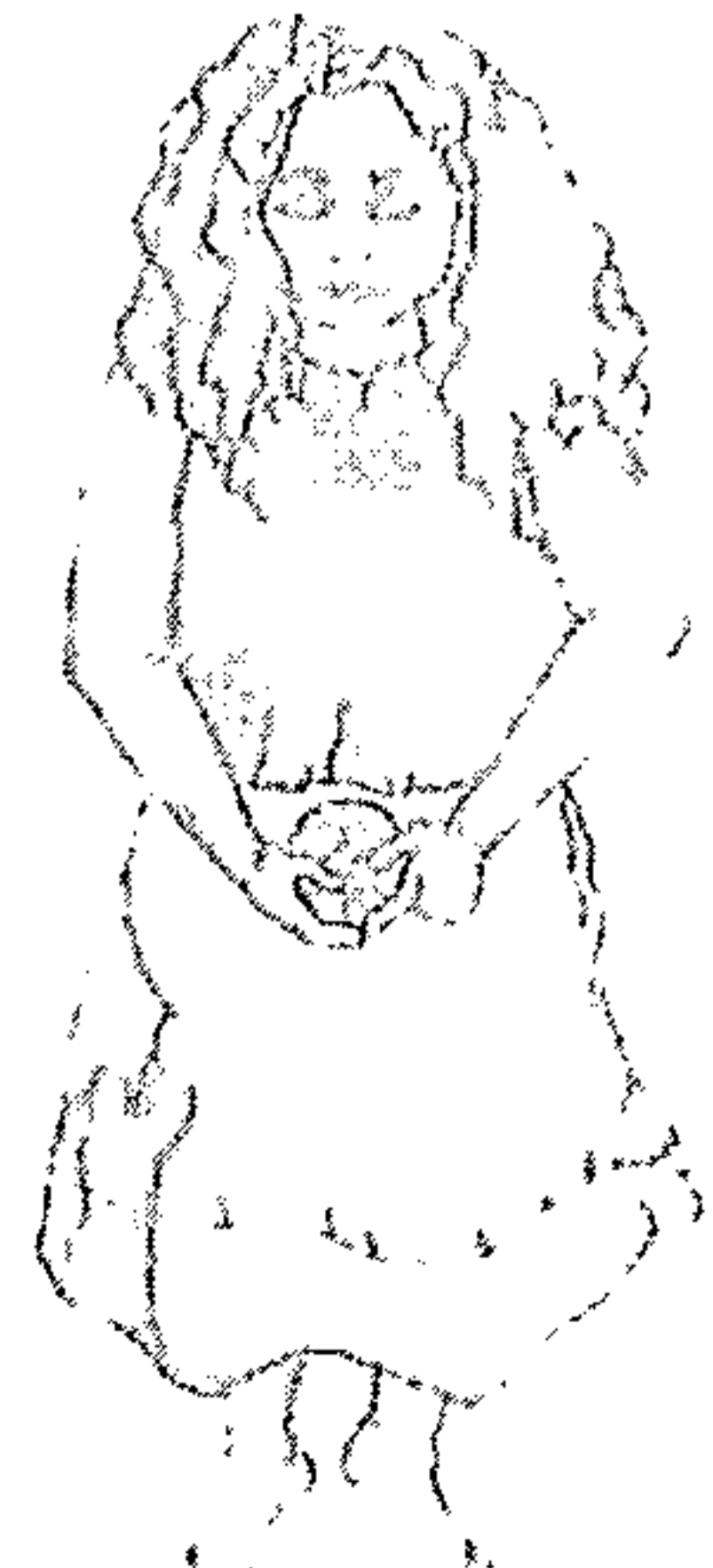
Mostly I/Me feels that if I communicate to much with the others, God will be mad. I can get real confused about God. Is He mad because there are others inside me? Should they go away? Am I crazy to even believe they are there? If I keep ignoring them, will they go away? Do I even want them to go away? Is it a sin if I don't?

With the world in such a state, is it even right to think about the inside of us? Shouldn't I/We use our time to help others in some way and forget us? The bad thing about us is we don't like to be around people much. They tend to confuse us and even scare us

at times. I/WE mostly like to be alone. Is that bad? Maybe God is disappointed in us because we are like that.

If I could ask God one question I think I would ask Him "Who am I?" That's a loaded question from me; however, He is God, so that should be easy for Him.

MV



Journaling — How It Helps

Journaling has been a very significant part of my therapy journey. It is what actually led me to seek therapy. I started journaling as a result of reading a book written by John K. Pollard. The title of the book was *'Self-Parenting'* (©1987). I had known since I was a child that I had not had healthy parenting. So this book sounded like it might be helpful. The premise of the book was that people could re-parent themselves. Pollard said that we all have inner conversations in our mind. "We make Self-Parenting decisions daily that reflect the way our Inner Parent and Inner Child voices combine in our mind..." [from the introduction]. Pollard said that we could access our Inner Child through a daily 30 minute session of Questions and Answers. These conversations should be recorded in a journal, with each page divided in half by drawing a vertical line down the page. On the left side of the page you wrote down the question that the Parent spoke aloud. On the right side of the page you wrote down the answer that came from the Child. This answer was heard in your mind.

In order to facilitate contact with the Inner Child, Pollard had prepared questions to ask your Inner Child. He provided two weeks worth of questions, such as "what is your favorite color?" "What is your favorite food?" I picked a day that I would begin this dialogue. The night before I was going to begin, I got up in the middle of the night to get a drink. While I was up I addressed my Inner Child aloud by name and I said, "I hope you are as excited about trying this as I am." My Inner Child didn't seem very excited. As I continued this first unofficial conversation, my Inner Child responded with a different name than the name I had used for her. This surprised me, but I accepted it, because one of the rules of these dialogues was that there would be complete acceptance of the answers in your mind. And so the process began. Many months later I asked her why she had responded by using a different

name, and she said that she didn't trust me because I had ignored her for so long.

I used the questions provided in the book. However, it only took me twenty minutes to get through the questions, so I still had ten minutes left in each session. I began asking my own questions in the remaining ten minutes. By the time I had done eleven days of these dialogues I knew that it was time to seek professional help because in these conversations I had met eight inner children, and then had named seven more children. This was frightening to me. Fortunately I quickly found a wonderful therapist who has been with me for twelve years of my ongoing therapy journey. In the beginning years of our association I continued to record conversations with my inner children. Through these conversations memories of my childhood experiences began to surface. It was a painful and difficult process for these memories to return. My therapist said that I went into "Chaos" when a memory surfaced. She termed the process "Chaos" because when new memories occurred I ran away from them. Rather than accepting them as confirmation of all the inner pain I had carried, I continued to practice the denial that I lived with for so many years.

Via the journaling I began to understand some of my childhood feelings. I grew up believing that I lived under a dark cloud, like the character in the old "L'il Abner" comic strip. I thought I was a jinx to others. Another problem that had plagued me for as long as I could remember was the feeling that I was inadequate as a person. My self-esteem level was very low. It was so low that in the early years of therapy I used the pseudonym of "Invisible". I think that name was a reflection of my lack of self-esteem.

In therapy I learned that my memory was like swiss cheese, i.e., it had lots of holes. My therapist said that I had enough memory so that I could create the fiction for myself that I remembered more of my past than I

really did. I wanted to appear to be like other children. But I knew that I was different. Other children didn't have a revolving door that parents constantly went through (both of my parents were married several times). Other children didn't move around the country and change schools every year. Sometimes we moved three or four times a year. As a child I didn't know about Dissociation. Then when I was in high school, the movie "Three Faces of Eve" came out. I related to the movie, even though I didn't know why.

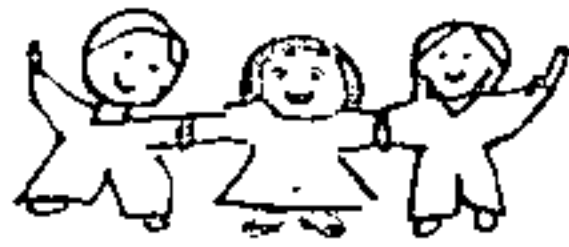
Four years later I married my husband and I was determined to have a different life than the one I grew up with. I've succeeded because we have been happily married for many years. But at our wedding I had an out-of-body experience. It happened as I was standing outside of the sanctuary, waiting to walk down the aisle. I was standing there with a relative (not my father) who was going to walk me down the aisle. As I stood there I found that I was also standing at the ceiling and looking down on the scene. At the time I attributed the experience to my feelings of anxiety about the behavior of my mother. After I started therapy, I realized that my mother wasn't in the scene when I dissociated. So, I began to explore what the experience really had meant to me. I believe that I was afraid of this man, but hadn't allowed myself to acknowledge that fear openly. I also believe that this memory was an example of dissociation at work for my safety. I have never been diagnosed as DID, but dissociation has been a necessary tool of survival for me.

I've never found anyone else who identified dissociation in their life as a result of doing re-parenting journaling. Maybe I was just ready at that time in my life to begin to try and undo the hurt and damage of my childhood. Maybe some other method would also have led me to therapy. But I think this method worked for me because one of its premises was that you had to accept without criticism the answers from the Inner Child. All of my life I

had repressed my inner cries for help. So I did not heed the voices of my inner children. But when I allowed myself to honor those cries I began to find answers to questions that had perplexed me all of my life. Another important factor may have been that this was a written process. It wasn't long after starting journaling that I quit speaking aloud, and I did all of the dialogue on paper. And that was important, because I grew up with the belief that I had to be very careful about what I spoke out loud. If I wasn't very careful I got in lots of trouble.

The process of journaling started me on a life-changing path that has been bumpy, but also healing.

By J.M.



Hi. My name is Sherry. I am 35, almost 36 years old. About 13 of my childhood years were years of abuse from my step-father. He taught me how to lie, and molested me. He beat me sometimes. I don't lie anymore though. My own father beat that out of me. Because of what I have been through, I learned to split off and become another person. I didn't know that at the time it was Multiple Personality, but through the last five years I've learned that's what it was.

I like journaling. Journaling helps me with my feelings. Also, I can tell about the cycles in my life. Journaling has helped me learn to functioning life and society. Journaling has shown me about my Multiple Personality Disorder. It has given me some of the names of my alters. Journaling has shown me when I'm suicidal—which I haven't been in a couple of years. It empties my mind of things that are too hard to think about. Journaling has been a powerful healing tool toward wholeness. I'm far from healed but journaling has been a great help to me over the years. I keep my journals and reread them to remember where I've come from, and use them as a basis for where I want to go. Multiple Personality Disorder has been very hard for me to accept. Yet, it is freeing to know what is really wrong with me.

Journaling has opened many doors toward that acceptance. In my journal I

can write anything that bothers me, anything that I wonder about, anything, anything. It's secret so no one bothers it. My journal tells me about my faith in Christ Jesus. It tells me of my struggles to trust people and ultimately the Lord Jesus.

My journal tells me what kind of a mother I am. My daughter loves me for who I am. She is 14. My confidence in the Lord is seen in my journaling. I can write in my journal about the different scriptures I love and the different passages that have been healing for me through the years. My mother, when learning about it, told me that I have been this way all my life. My journaling and letter writing help me to express myself in a proper fashion. They are outlets for me. I really enjoy letter writing. It is a means of self-expression which we all need very much.

Journaling is a means of helping me heal from all the traumas of childhood and those of adulthood. In my journal, I can read about those things that I've been through, ways I've coped with what I've been through, and I can use it to comprehend life. Comprehension is a very difficult thing for me. I enjoy writing because I can be me, say what I want and to have to worry about

someone criticizing me. My journaling is private unless I choose to show it to someone. It holds my deepest secrets Help and healing are entwined in my journaling. I'll leave you with one last thought, journaling is healing because it is part of you and your person. I believe it is a very vital part of the road to the healing process. I'm not an artist but I do like words and journaling fulfills that avenue of expression

By Sherry G.



We keep an ongoing combination journal and coloring book. We finished the first one (over a hundred pages long). Now we work on the second one.

The children inside color and we teens and adults write.

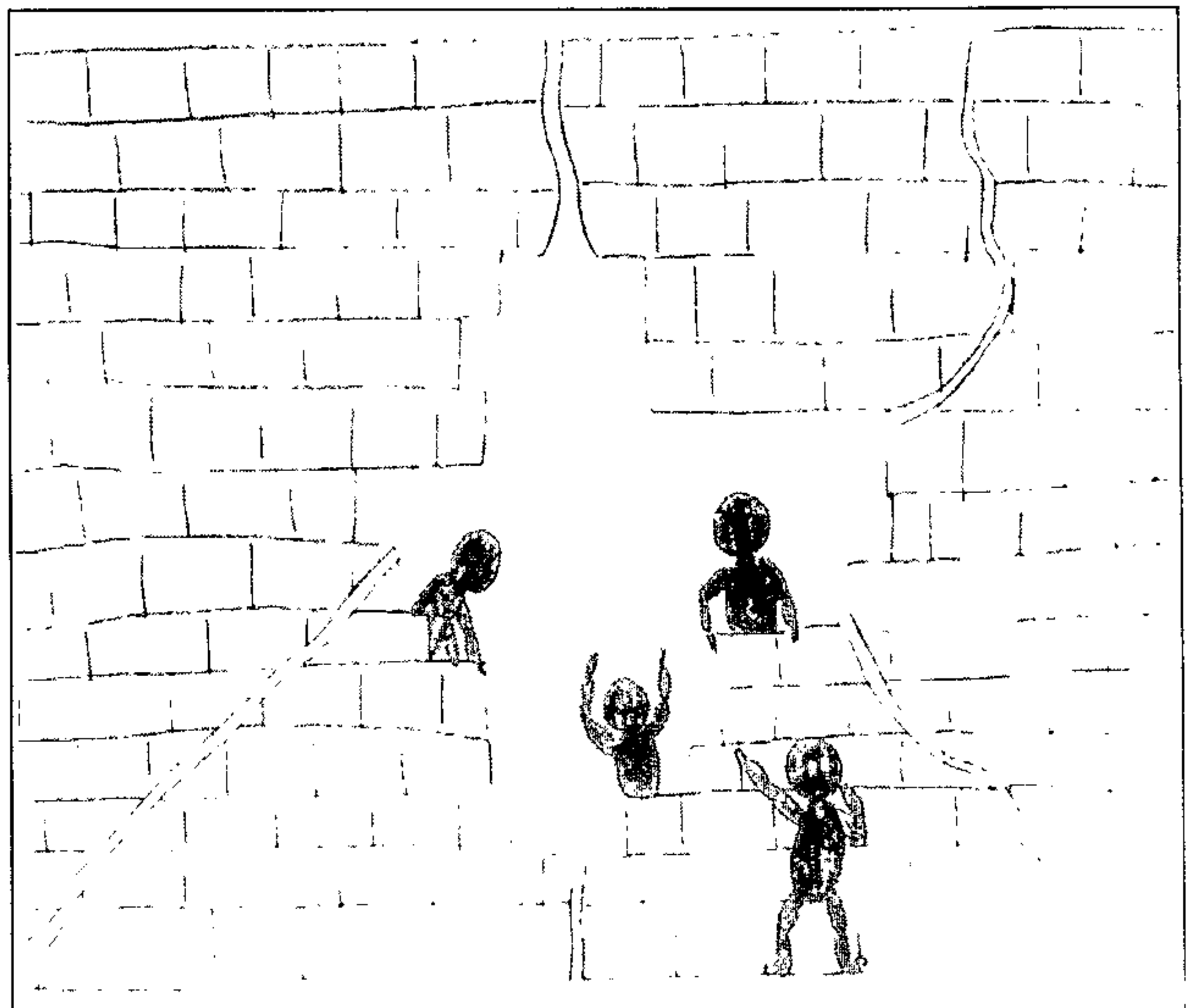
Our therapist encourages this, and especially urges us to "go over" and "compare" the changes between the old and the new drawing and writing.

We are stronger than we used to be. (Us adults are now (mainly) in charge.

Journaling and writing has really helped me and my alters a lot.

By Sally B.

MV



Work Frustrations

By Diane, of Ravensong

It's been nearly one year that I've been functioning each day in some degree of crisis mode. When I began writing this, it was the beginning of January and we had just completed six months of short term disability from our job. In the middle of the month, we were scheduled to return to a company that pushed us out because we disagreed with the unethical and unfair treatment of its employees and customers, because we were outspoken and not afraid, and because we are smarter than those who tried to manage us. In the middle of the month, we were going to return to work under management who lied to get us off the job, who lied to keep us off the job, and who now, because of an illegal breach of confidentiality, knew we were an us instead of an I.

But instead of getting ready for another day at work, we ended up struggling to figure out if we are where we are because we finally pulled together and supported one another, strong and united. Or if we simply are the complete and utter failure that some of us feel we are, and that others clearly want us to believe we are.

Then, and now, we're trying to deal with the idea that somebody else doesn't want us, doesn't believe in us, and knows that they can hurt us and we can't do anything about it. Because see, once we decided to go back, our position was terminated. And we sit here and wonder if we ever will be able to manage another job, or trust another soul, or step out of our apartment for longer than it takes to rent a movie or pick up the groceries.

When we first were put on short term disability (STD) we spent weeks curled up on the couch, crying. The manager from work was hateful and abrasive when she contacted us, and none of our co-workers called or sent a card. We later found out that our absence wasn't even acknowledged at work; no one knew why or where we had gone, and management wasn't saying. We felt horribly isolated—we couldn't eat or sleep and, when we did, we had bad

nightmares. Though our doctor didn't think the original time off was necessary, he eventually decided the stress from the forced time off was too much for us, and kept us off work to recover from the damage they had done to us.

We'd worked for fifteen years without any difficulty. We'd worked through three family deaths, four years of hard therapy, obtained a Bachelor's Degree, and all the while at a very stressful and fast-paced job. Several unethical decisions aimed at our job and our department, combined with a very serious betrayal by our therapist, set the stage for what I believe was the post traumatic stress reaction we had when we were pulled out of our department.

We went through many changes during the six months, and our only constant was the psychiatrist who was prescribing the antidepressant we take, and managing our time off work. We had lost our therapist of four years just prior to this, and tried working with someone new to get us through this crisis. She ended up causing us more pain by minimizing our primary concerns, so we chose to stop seeing her and take a break from therapy altogether. It was probably our wisest decision.

Our depression seemed inconsolable, so rather than fight it we allowed it to be. We spent long days, and sometimes weeks, on our couch, watching television and sometimes reading. We rarely went out and when we did, it was for therapy or for a brief walk at a nearby park. In September we began having incredibly painful bouts with anxiety, which nothing seemed to ease. A friend suggested we begin keeping a daily task-and-feeling-oriented diary which we sent to him every day...something to be responsible for and a person to connect with every day. We think that may have been the single most important thing we did that strengthened us. It required that we build trust in another, and that we start

looking at ourselves in a very concrete way. It also helped develop our self-esteem; our friend committed to be a part of our daily life, reading about our deepest sadnesses and our most mundane tasks and, in doing so, he came to know us as a multiple and to love and accept us as we are. He helped us see that every part of us—the strong parts and the parts that were not as strong—was integral to our existence. And he helped us talk and cry and laugh, long after we decided it wasn't safe to show our emotions anymore.

Well, it's been a full ten months now, and it feels like we've done a bit of an about-face. The weight of the world lifted from our shoulders when we finally lost the job—though we have lingering questions about our worth, it really was the best thing for us. There was no happiness there, and no sense of fulfillment. But what now? And why are we being engulfed by this suffocating bottom-deep hopelessness? I actually know the answer to that last question. It all comes back to purpose...and that sense that I have none. And the feeling that I'll never be able to find a place where I am comfortable and fulfilled at the same time.

It just occurred to me yesterday that I'm living in a tightly controlled environment of my own making right now. I do nothing I don't want to, and I answer to no one but myself. I think it's the only way I get through each day without the overwhelming anxiety, the paralyzing depression, and without the certainty that I won't make it until tomorrow. In the last many months, I've tried to get everyone to understand that I need help finding a place in this world to fit—clearly my choices have been poor. And everyone either nods in agreement and offers no advice, or has just told me to go out there and get a job, because I can't live on my severance forever. I know this. I am not stupid. But...for me a job is not just a job. That is something that, in the last few months, has become very

evident. For example, I edit a creative writing journal (for fun). I am perfectly comfortable arranging and organizing and communicating with people by email. I have a couple of people I work with really well. I can type stuff into computer programs with no problem. I can meet deadlines. But I don't seem to do very well working with large teams of people. And all of the jobs I've ever had have been with huge groups of people. There must be jobs out there I can do; I just don't know where to look.

I remember when I was little, the frustration I felt, arriving at school an hour or more early and leaving an hour later than everyone else, and the vice principal commenting to me on more than one occasion that I seemed to get there even before he did. I would sit on the steps, or on the floor by the entranceway, hoping, wishing that someone would ask me why I came so early or why I wasn't going home right after the bell. Nobody ever did.

Sometimes, the last ten months feel that way to me. I've been screaming for someone to help me, to recognize that I can't figure this out on my own. And no one seems to care that I'm stuck in this hole and I can't get out.

MV

I am here, somewhere

Where is the I - the ME
 in all of this
 Don't I
 even exist?
 Do I
 have an identity?
 I seem to know who
 all of you are
 How do I
 count in this
 fantastic circle?
 How come I
 can't ever see
 who's me?
 I am here
 Somewhere

By Hilary T.

Reflections on Being a Parent with DID

By Rachel Downing

I was diagnosed with DID when my son was 12 years old. I had a "Good Mom" personality who was very strong. I went to his soccer games and school events. I set reasonable limits and expectations of his behavior. When I wasn't functioning well, I always arranged for others to care for him. I told him that my problems were not his fault and he couldn't fix it. I encouraged him to have friends and a full life. I told myself that I was handling it well and my troubles were not affecting him.

Now he is in his early thirties, and is a responsible healthy adult. He graduated from college, has a good job, is married and owns his own home. But I was wrong about the impact of my illness on him. He was affected. I don't think I could have let myself know this when I was raising him. I needed to believe everything was fine.

I now realize my illness affected him in several ways.

*Because I denied that my behavior affected him, we never openly discussed this reality. He was expected to be a good boy and helpful to Mom. He couldn't say he was angry at me because of my inconsistent behavior or talk about ways I disappointed him. Basically he learned to pretend everything was OK when it wasn't. This did not help him later in life.

* He never knew what to expect from me. One day he might come home from school and I would have freshly baked cookies and another day I might be hiding under the covers holding stuffed animals with my bedroom door shut. In many ways this is similar to the child of an alcoholic parent. The child doesn't know what to expect.

*Another way having a DID parent is similar to having an alcoholic parent is the child is often thrown in the caretaker role. When I became childlike (switched to child

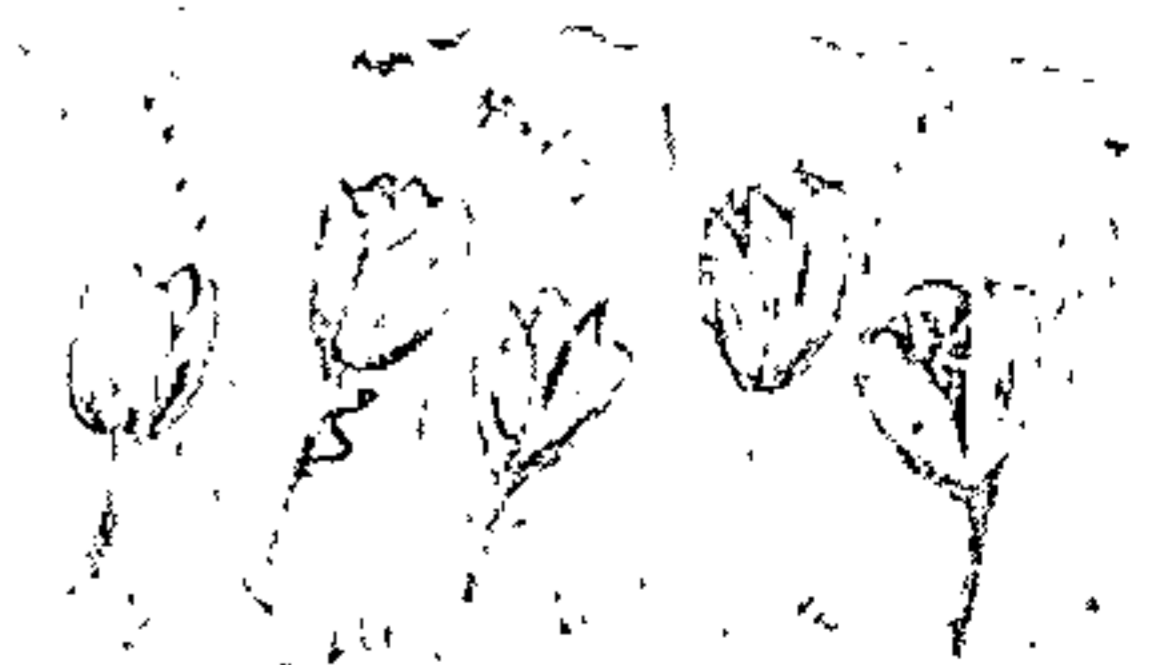
personalities) he would reassure me that everything was safe and take care of me, even as a child of an alcoholic may reassure the parent that everything is OK and offer to fix breakfast.

Of course many individuals are parents before they know about the DID diagnosis. After I knew my diagnosis, I decided not to have more children until after I recovered. By the time I recovered it was too late to have more children. I still feel grief about this.

If I had it to do again, knowing what I know now, I would not deny the impact of my illness on my son. I would acknowledge the reality and make it an open topic of discussion. I would encourage/allow my son to talk about his anger and frustration about my inconsistent behavior. As they say in AA, we would talk about "the elephant in the living room." I would work to minimize his role as caretaker. I would have gone slower in my therapy to lessen the frequency of poor functioning.

Of course I can't go back and change anything. I guess my writing this article and sharing my knowledge gained is a way of coping. It is my hope that readers will learn from my experience and acknowledge, then minimize, the effect of their illness on their children.

MV



My Addiction

By Bob F.

A need, a compulsion
 Draw her in
 Make her a part of me
 She has to be the missing parts
 Blend her into me
 Suffocate that goddamn pain in my heart
 Stop it!
 The pain must be extinguished!
 Anything, anything to stop it
 Even kill myself
 Even lose myself
 Even hurt myself
 Even go into one painful relationship after another
 How to fill the gap?
 Fill the hole?
 Shut off the pain?
 Change it
 Force it
 Ahhhh! Pain, no! No more fucking pain
 Please make it go away
 Lie to me
 Steal from me
 Hurt me
 I don't care, just make it go away

None of these goddamn things work!
 I've tried them all except suicide
 And that's too final
 If it doesn't work I can't come back, or try another tactic
 No, that is not a viable option
 All those things just cause more pain, more suffering, more compulsion
 What else can I do?
 What option do I have that would help rather than worsen the problem?
 Is there a softer, gentler way that can actually heal the pain?

Oh, my god, when I look at it I see it's just a baby
 A baby that cries incessantly
 It cries 'till I feel that my ears are going to shatter from the pain of it
 And the baby is me!
 It is me that hurts so bad
 It's me that is crying so much
 It's me that has so much pain, so much sadness, so much frick'n' discomfort!
 I hate it! I hate it! I hate it! Goddamn it, I hate it!!
 I hate feeling these things
 I hate that these feelings are part of my life
 I hate that they feel like they are part of me
 That I am a baby
 That I am in so much pain
 And because I believe that I am bad and at fault all that hate is directed in at me
 All the bad things I ever did compounded it and seemed to "confirm" how bad I am
 No wonder I fucking went the routes I did
 No wonder I hurt myself with body-sickening drugs
 No wonder I kept getting into relationships that hurt me

No wonder I kept risking my physical safety
 Because I hate whoever hurts me the way I've been hurt, and I've been hurting me
 Can I forgive myself?
 Can I be understanding of why I got in this pattern of hurting myself to punish?
 I could never punish the big people who hurt me when I was little
 I could never take care of the pain as it was happening at the time
 The pain just got bigger and bigger
 I had no way to deal with it
 Everything around me was making it worse
 Nothing was helping me heal
 So now I'm faced with a tremendous amount of pain and anger and sadness and shame and hate
 Am I big enough to deal with it, to heal it?
 It feels like too much, way too much to ever heal
 Not all at once, that's for sure
 Bit by bit, one step at a time I can do it
 Slowly, ever so slowly, letting it out and healing myself
 I may be doing it the rest of my life
 But healing myself the rest of my life is a hell of a lot better than hurting myself the rest of my life
 I'd have to learn to nurture myself!
 How the hell do you nurture?
 Especially something you've hated and fought all your life!
 Something you've always run from
 You've got to understand, being near it (my inner feeling/the baby) means feeling pain

So I ran.
 Now I see running away worsens the pain.
 It hides it, smashes it, suffocates, and it just gets worse.
 And now I see that if I'm near it I can do something about it.
 If I'm running away or fighting it I just suffer, powerless to do anything that will truly help.

So how to heal it?
 Give the pain a voice, let it share what it feels. Describe it. Let it tell its story.
 Write it:
 Poems of emotion
 Dialogues with it
 Free style writing of thoughts and feelings
 Give it expression:
 Work it out physically by crying, raging, walking
 Draw it—the pain, the baby, the colors of emotion, whatever shows it
 Visualize what it would do, how it would act out its feelings, in safe places where it can do anything and not get hurt
 Describe it in metaphor:
 "My heart hurts as if a sword is stuck in it!"
 "I need to treat my pain like a physical wound. Clean it, bandage it,
 Keep it from being bumped or getting

dirty."
 Describe it in imagery:
 Like saying - "the pain is so big it could fill the ocean!"
 Or "My heart feels like it could bleed forever and never stop."
 Or, "I'm so mad I could rip up a whole planet, a fistful of dirt at a time!"
 Through all this, I must remember:
 Do not judge these feelings
 Be as gentle as possible with this hurt part of myself
 Pick safe and understanding people to share the deeper feelings and thoughts with
 Balance dealing with this hurt part with dealing with the rest of me.
 Don't get so caught up in dealing with this stuff that I forget to live the rest of my life too
 Be with understanding people if the thoughts get suicidal or wanting to inflict pain on myself or others.
 More and more, learn to read my body to see what feelings to deal with at what time.
 There is no hurry, take it easy, one issue at a time and first things first.
 Make sure I have lots of fun in my life to balance out the pain of healing.
 Talk, write, draw. Express that wounded part in at least a little way every day.
 Loving others, indirectly loves myself.
 Helping others in their healing indirectly helps me in my ability to heal myself.
 Compassion for others helps me be compassionate with myself.
 Compassion for myself helps me be compassionate with others.

MV

The Role

The victim role.
 Played the part so well.
 Played the part so long.
 The victim role.
 Different moving out.
 Crossing the line.
 Into the recovery role.
 It's very different.
 Haven't played this role.
 Not sure how to act.
 Things feel strange.
 Treading a new path.
 Into healthy ways of living.
 Moving out of the Victim Role.

By Patricia R.

MV

Work vs Disability

By Mary Katherine Powers

“Do you realize you just sent that email to more than 400 people?”

It was after 4:00 the day before a big meeting and I had just found out the hard way that I'd used the wrong distribution list in sending out a pre-meeting notice. Oops.

It was just about one month that I had been back at work since my late-2002 problems, which resulted in 10 days in an inpatient trauma treatment program, followed by about 6 weeks of outpatient treatment. I was doing OK for the most part, but was definitely contending with some difficult symptoms. For example, I still cried quite frequently. Anxiety and depression were major problems.

During my time in the hospital and in outpatient trauma treatment, I met a number of people who were on disability. This led to my seriously considering that option for myself.

I have worked for the government since 1991. Government disability retirement is not as restrictive as social security disability. The requirement is not total disability, but an inability to perform one's current job or an equivalent job at the same pay. Since I am at a mid-level grade, there is a lot I could do and still be considered disabled by the government.

I had been in turmoil since going out on leave in early December. A journal entry shortly after I returned to work reflects the chaos in my life:

Dear God:

I know that you have given me these talents and abilities. You have also given me some psychological problems which are difficult to resolve. God, please help me figure out what to do on the work situation. I am confused, exhausted, and overwhelmed even thinking about it. God, please help me trust in you.

Sincerely,

Mary Katherine

P.S.: I don't want to have to kill myself because I can't figure this stuff out.

I had spent much of my time off contemplating suicide. Not an enjoyable vacation by any means. Sometimes the thoughts and internal preoccupations were so intense that I would be amazed to find that I was still alive. If wishing myself dead or contemplating suicide caused death, I would have died many times over.

What made me go back to work was really four things. First, my therapist and my husband were (and are) very much against my going on disability if I can possibly avoid it. Second, I had had two months off, and I'd spent much of it really struggling, which suggested that retirement would not help. Third, I had a schedule in which I was able to work part-time. I worked four seven-hour days, with Fridays off. This meant that I had one work day per week to totally relax.

Finally, I learned that getting on disability is a laborious process, and the income provided is not great. There is a ton of paperwork that needs to be filled out, and it takes a long time for the government to make a decision. I was told that the disability application would take six weeks to six months, depending upon how well the disability was documented.

My therapist had told me all along that I was a marginal case in terms of inability to work. She views me as having disabilities (anxiety, unstable mood, dissociation, and depression) that interfere with my reaching my full potential. She does not view me as having disabilities that prevent me from working. She is also concerned about my becoming isolated and lonely if I were at home all day every day with just the cats for company.

My husband also believes that I am not disabled. He thought working would be good for me and in particular, would enable me to continue paying for therapy, something I definitely need. He never supported the disability option.

If it were not for both of them, I probably would have applied for a disability retirement by now. There are days when getting up and going in to work is absolutely exhausting, and seems to take more energy than I have. Some days I've had to go into the bathroom and cry. Sometimes coworkers have seen me crying, which is embarrassing.

There are other days when work has been a more positive experience. The best thing about work is that it gives me something to focus on besides my own problems. Sometimes I can come in feeling not too great (or absolutely awful) and leave feeling much better, because I've thought about something else all day. Much of the work I do involves tasks with quick turn-around times, so I get a feeling of accomplishment from getting things done (even if they are simple things). I also have a very supportive supervisor who notices when I'm upset and offers a hug on a really bad day. Fortunately, she doesn't seem to hold my upset feelings against me. I am really lucky to have her support.

Working part-time has been the option that works for me. I really don't think I could have handled going back full time. I wish part time schedules with good benefits were available to more people.

MV

SUPPORTIVE GROUPS

ACCEPT

Without judging

CARE

Without invading

HOLD

Without hurting, and

PROVIDE SAFETY

Without isolating

— JRSL

MV

Partner's Page:

Triumph - a Middle Ground Our True Story

By One Knight for a DID

I have never written to a newsletter or column of any sort, but I would like to relate and share with you all a wonderful experience that my Significant Other (SO) and I had.

It all started on a Halloween night a year ago. My SO is DID with a Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) history. (I am a Single Personality Disorder [SPD], by the way.)

My Significant Other had at that time a large number of Darkside alters who I never got along with. Most of my time with these particular alters was spent fighting with them, on a non-physical level — unless it was to restrain these alters from hurting my significant other. We often exchanged harsh words. We all have come a long way toward better communication since last year.

These particular Darkside alters had a ring which was given to them by the Cult to bind them to the Cult. My SO, who is the system host, was not happy having it around. (Who would be?) So the two of us, my SO and myself, wrapped the ring up in a cloth and threw it in the Arkansas River on Halloween of 2001.

Needless to say, this didn't go over well with the Darkside alters.

For a year things with these alters got worse, and I felt very guilty for throwing the ring away, whatever the reason. I was raised better than that. First, I was taught you don't steal (and as this ring belonged to the alters, I feel that what we did was stealing, since we did this without their permission).

Secondly, you don't throw away things that don't belong to you. I was guilty of both.

For a year the fighting and the harsh and hurtful words escalated. Something had to be done.

My Significant Other is the birth person and the system host. Together, my SO and myself bought a very pretty onyx and silver ring for the alters. Not as a replacement exactly, but something to symbolize just the opposite of the first ring. It is a symbol of love, friendship, the promise of a better tomorrow, and trust—to name a few.

We (my SO and I) wrote a letter to the Darkside alters explaining what the ring meant and what it stood for. We left the ring and the letter in a place where the alters could easily find them. We did this on Halloween of 2002, exactly one year from the date we bound their old ring and threw it in the river.

We didn't really expect anything more than rejection and scorn from these alters, but I felt that I needed to make things right, if not to them, to myself.

Now one of those Darkside alters who we will call "J" was very vicious towards both my SO and myself. I had been told by many of my friends in my SO's system to stay away from her and to never listen to anything she says, as she is a master manipulator. "J" even went as far as programming people inside.

What threw me and my SO both for a loop is that "J" is the one who accepted the ring first, and even put the ring on my SO's body! This was wonderful beyond words! Furthermore, "J" convinced a large group of Darkside alters—almost half of them—to accept the ring and all that it means, as well.

My SO's system used to be comprised of both Light- and Dark-siders, but those alters who accepted the ring have taken to calling

themselves the "Middlesiders" and are now loyal to me and not to the cult!

Furthermore, these Middlesiders no longer harm my SO inside or outside; they allow me to be there for them and help them when times get rough.

"J" and the rest of the Middlesiders are now very close and trusted friends of mine, and I am proud of each and every one of them. I am honored and proud to call them my friends, especially "J".

It is my hope that this true tale brings hope to your lives when times get tough and serves as a reminder that even the seemingly "bad" or unreachable parts of a D.I.D. system can and do change. They can become trusted friends and allies in healing and safety if you handle them with love, honesty and respect. Try it — it just might work for you too!

Any comments would be greatly appreciated as this is the first time I have ever written about my experiences in living with and loving my SO and those in her system.

In Light, Love, Peace, and Continued Healing, *One Knight for a DID*.

(If you would like to contact One Knight, please send your comments or questions to *Many Voices*; we will forward your replies.)

MV



A Book That Changed My Life

By Deb

In 1998 I discovered the book, *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Karen W Saakvitne & Laurie Ann Pearlman (WWNorton & Co., © 1996)

It has been an indispensable reference, a grasping for hope that has not left my side these past five years of trying to cope with co-consciousness. Yet I never fully understood why. I have been painfully "stuck" in this repetitious modus operandi-life-threatening -crash-and-burn "crisis".

I am a survivor, not a therapist, of long-term early childhood cult abuse, documented orally and by infant hospital records. I have been misdiagnosed many times. Physically I have subtle obscure neurologic, hormonal and immunologic disorders as well. In spite of this, and because of this, I am often high functioning. However, I have regular episodic collapses of complete non-functioning. I have successfully kept this hidden from the professional community I belong to. I am blessed with enough intelligence and the episodic ability to micromanage my life, which has allowed me to persevere. However, the price is great pain and loss. Any "functional" time is spent on work and parenting. I am socially isolated and I've lost many years of my life. I have had to hide my illness: first, unconsciously (DID phase) and then consciously (after increased co-consciousness) to "pass" in society.

This being said, I picked up this book on a whim and was immediately immersed in a surreal world of: "this is me!" I was amazed that the purpose of this book was for therapists. I had a difficult time understanding my fixation. Over the years, I have read and reread this book many times, jotting in the margins, changing words with my comments and interjections. I recently noticed that most of these, curiously, are changes in pronouns—changing the subject of the sentence from "we" or "therapist" to "us" (my selves) or "she" to "me".

It was four weeks ago when I again brought this book into my therapist's office and in process of our discussion, I was stunned with a realization: It's my newly developing adult "self", gradually emerging during the co-conscious phase, who is engrossed with the writing. This newer adult self and older selves have had to witness horror, organize, deal with, manage, transform, and adjust to this new state: co-consciousness. And in the process, I, Deb, and some of my other parts, have gone through all the stages delineated in the book.

Thanks to this book, I've renamed my experience "Vicarious Re-Traumatization". It's a hideous reliving, re-experiencing/trying to reorganize my past experiences in order that they make sense, in order that I have a childhood narrative of my experiences. No one seems to know how to handle co-consciousness. I live in an urban area and have had access to and seen many "qualified trauma" therapists. My experience of therapy until the past five years has been more harmful and negative to me than helpful.

"Vicarious Re-traumatization" explains my experience perfectly. Many therapists have said to me, "You don't have to relive your memories; just know what happened so you understand who you are today." I disagree; I don't know a single early childhood abuse survivor who hasn't relived parts or most all of their horror in and outside of the therapist's room. It is only by luck that the therapist has enough knowledge and the client has enough coping skills, to provide enough safety during this period. To relive and remember is dangerously implodingly-traumatic.

Why do re-traumatizations occur in those with a traumatic history? I believe it's the client's self-in-connection with her internal selves—that relives (re-traumatizes) the pain and agony. It is experienced vicariously, as well, as parts of ourselves have no memory for parts of the trauma. This exponentially impacts the re-traumatization

experience. When the abuse is severe, memories of past trauma have no framework to be processed/tolerated once co-consciousness begins, unless there are healthy enough adult selves or a newer adult self who can cope, observe and manage the memories. The body and mind need enough safety to navigate through this maze of anguish. Much like the book's description of the therapist observing and helping to organize the memory-assault for her client.

This workbook has given me a frame of reference, a blue print, upon which to find some semblance of organization of my agony and bewilderment in this early co-consciousness phase and repeated non-functioning. I am extremely grateful for it. My fear is that I will never progress further than this. I constantly wonder if this quality of life is worth it.

I managed to get by in my profession but have paid for it dearly. I know I would have achieved more without the continuous setbacks of non-functioning. I know I would have a "life" outside of trauma. I am trying to change the way I am in this world. I cannot go back to my dissociative coping skills. All the re-traumatizing years in therapy have taken their toll. At the age of 48, I am also suffering from more physical problems. My mental and physical resilience to find the reserves to fight these, as I once did, is diminished.

My goal is to keep myself together to get my teenage daughter to college and myself stable enough to "be there for her. I want to learn to find a new way to live and be in the present that is more than barely surviving. When I come out of a non-functional period, I usually plunge back into the rat race, and I continue to repeat my cycle of crashing and burning. I want to change.

I wish there was a way to progress beyond this stage. I wrote to the authors of this book, asking if they could write something similar to help the trauma survivor intellectualize.

visualize and understand the feelings one goes through in the steps of recovery during and after co-consciousness, much the way they described for therapists.

I do not believe there is "recovery." I believe that I have to acknowledge my history and somehow incorporate it into a present day functional life. How do I learn a new mode of operating, as extreme dissociation is how I've managed all my life? I have been frustrated that many "experts" have not been able to help me go beyond "tearing down the walls of dissociation." Tearing down the walls leaves a survivor in an incredibly vulnerable, volatile space, very dangerously dependent on the therapist for survival. Until now with my current therapist, I haven't felt hope that I was going to survive this stage. And even then, it's taken us five years to start to undo the retraumatization I've experienced in past therapies.

I'd like to hear from therapists and others who have suggestions for moving into a better way of functioning, when dissociation is no longer an option.

Thank you.

MV will be glad to accept responses to Deb's question on functioning, and print them in future issues. **MV**



HE KNOWS I CAN
SEE HIS WINGS
KNOW HE SEES ME
HE ONLY HE WOULD ALLETT
I HAVE SEEN THE OTHER SIDE
THEN HE TOLD REALLY I HAVE ME
IN THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS
HOW WHEN WE TOGETHER
I'M ALONE
HE SEE ON THE KNOW
LUCKY ME
THE DEAREST OF
THE NEXT
I DON'T SEE NOW
THE SEETH APPAS
HE CAN WITH'S FLUTTERS
I HEAR HIS VOICE THAN
JUST AND HIS VOICE
WE ARE SOUL MATE'S AND
THEY ARE US EQUALS

Self-Love

By Marguerite and Wee Ones

Dear Many Voices readers, I have been as a small child, stranded in the air on a "see-saw" controlled by my parents for 63 years. In the deepest part of me I believed that they were good...therefore I was the one who was bad. I have denied my own right to happiness, denied my own sexuality. I have been afraid to believe that there was something good about me. My mother's constant screaming message to me, "You are bad, so bad that even God couldn't love you!" and her message, "I love you, but I don't like you," these "hate mail" messages destroyed my self-esteem.

When I was a small child my reasoning was, "Mommy knows I'm bad, so it must be true because mommy is always trying to help me to become a good little girl." My silent plea was "Mommy, please love me. I'll try not to do bad things anymore. I'll try to please you, to be perfect. If I try hard enough, someday you'll love me...maybe you'll even like me...someday."

Several years ago when I allowed God to come into my heart, I wrote this verse:

"You sent to me a rainbow, its colors ever unchanging. You sent to me a butterfly...once wrapped in its cocoon...now graceful, elegant...resting on a blossom...now gliding in the air. You sent to me a wind chime's song...the echo of the wind. You sent to me a blossom with beauty once hidden in a seed...now glorious-lovely to see! And still I hold tightly to my fears since I was very small...pushing aside your Love when I don't want to at all."

I recently realized that it was still true...that I was still pushing aside Love...self-love...denying that I was worthy of another people's love for me—love for myself. Suddenly, I realized that my mother knew how to "push my buttons" to cause me pain throughout the years, particularly at gift giving time. I remember the Christmas morning when I eagerly ran down the stairs only to find that my

brother's gifts were under the tree, but I had only one gift, a yellow plastic corner shelf. Later that morning, my mother handed me a box with a pair of slippers in it, saying "I was too tired to wrap it." Then there was the Christmas when mother gave identical sweaters to my sister-in-law and me. The one for my sister-in-law fit...mine was huge, and I desperately tried to shrink it...tried to convince myself that my gift was an "I love you" gift.

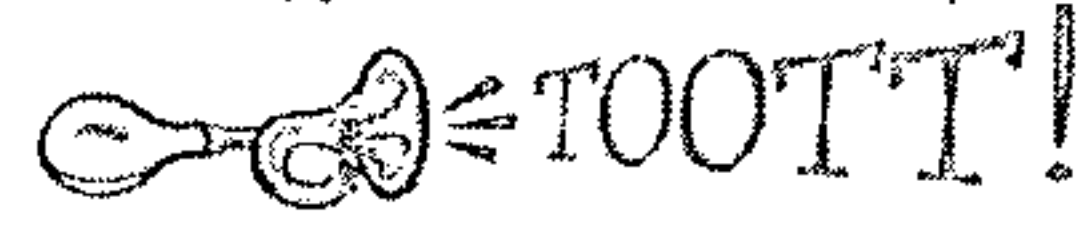

And now through God's grace, I have made a valuable but painful discovery. I am not only a survivor of child abuse, I am a survivor of incest. The parents that I believed "had done the best they could" had committed a vile crime against me...had used my body to satisfy their own sexual needs. I had been their "play thing".

And now the balance of power has shifted. No longer do I automatically see myself, identify myself as "bad," and my parents "good"...a belief that has been the controlling power in my life. The truth is that they were bad, and I was their victim.

And now I have climbed off their "see-saw" and I am becoming the woman that God created me to be...a woman who is true love-able...able to love her God, herself, and her neighbor.

And I know at last what the message is for me in the often quoted Bible verse "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32. And it has!

(PS I have created a "reminder refrigerator magnet" to help myself in my journey toward healing. I would be happy to send it to you. Please note the ordering information here and on the MV website: Send \$1 plus SASE to Marguerite & Wee Ones, 819 Tred Avon, Baltimore, MD 21212.)

Turn Off Old Toxic "Tapes"

Keep TOOTT-ing your "horn"! 
Know that God loves YOU!

My Experiences With the Integration Process

By Hope

I am a multiple, diagnosed in 1990; that was the beginning of my recovery. Not that being properly diagnosed made everything become better, but it finally made sense. All of the loss of time, the crazy feeling like everything was out of control, the sense of unreality, the uncontrollable depression, the compulsive behavior, all of the so-called lies to keep a semblance of sanity, they all made sense.

After my diagnosis, things seemed to get worse. My behavior didn't change for the better, but as the different persons hid trying to control their secrets, I felt more loss of control. It took a number of years and an excellent therapist to even begin to make sense of what cooperation was all about. It became a game of hide and seek. I would seek and everyone would hide. I would make two steps forward and four back. The list of personalities grew from an original nine to twenty-one. I began to think it would never end. One of us became so threatened that she began to burn the body as a smoke screen (no pun intended). The therapy had to focus not on memories but keeping the body safe. It seemed things were hopeless. Isn't it strange how "hopeless" can be turned into hope?

I was created by the system, because there was no core person remaining; she had totally ceased to exist at a very early age. I took the name of Hope, and within time, slowly the others began to share their secrets with me. Some haltingly, thinking I would reject them or not believe them; some with a rush just wanting to get it all out. My therapist and I would work very hard to process the memories and create a safe environment for each person. In time I actually went to court and had my name legally changed to Hope.

When I had accepted the memories, the particular alter would make a quilt square that portrayed the essence of her or him, which meant they were ready to integrate. The integration was very simple. I would welcome that person into me, giving them a big hug.

As I did this they would melt into me and become one with me. One alter, Sam, as he was disappearing inside told all of us that inside it was bright, warm and comfortable. I usually have a feeling someone is looking out through my eyes for a few days and have a sense of euphoria. There have been adjustments after the integration with some physical reactions, like loss of sleep and headaches, but these usually decrease in about two weeks time.

We recently integrated another personality and there are now six remaining. The quilt is growing in size and I have become a healthier person as I have a better focus on life. My self-esteem is very much improved and I no longer look like a victim. It is rare now to lose time and switching is usually by choice to allow one of the remaining alters into the real world to do some very important work of adjustment.

I would be amiss if I didn't include the part my spiritual walk has played in this process. The Lord has walked with us all of the way granting insight when both my therapist and I would be at a loss where or what the next step should be. He has made us feel accepted and loved. He has also given our pastors a special understanding and compassion beyond the normal realm. So yes, we work very hard, our therapist works right along side us, but the Lord is the binding force that puts it all together.

As I mentioned, we are down to six remaining individual persons and I am beginning to wonder what it shall be like when only I remain. Will the quiet inside be comforting or too quiet? Will I have all the skills I need to be fully functional? Will I miss the ability to switch? And the questions go on and on. There is so little literature out there on the "after" process. I have researched and have come up empty-handed. So any assistance would be greatly appreciated.

*(If you have comments about your integration process or suggestions for Hope, I would love to print more on this topic! Thanks much —
Lynn W.)*

MV

To CR

Unconditional

Love

What a unique concept

We didn't know

You're always there for us

Through the terror and pain

You don't judge...

Unconditional

You don't make demands...

Unconditional

A warm hug, a smile, as you gently
wipe the tears

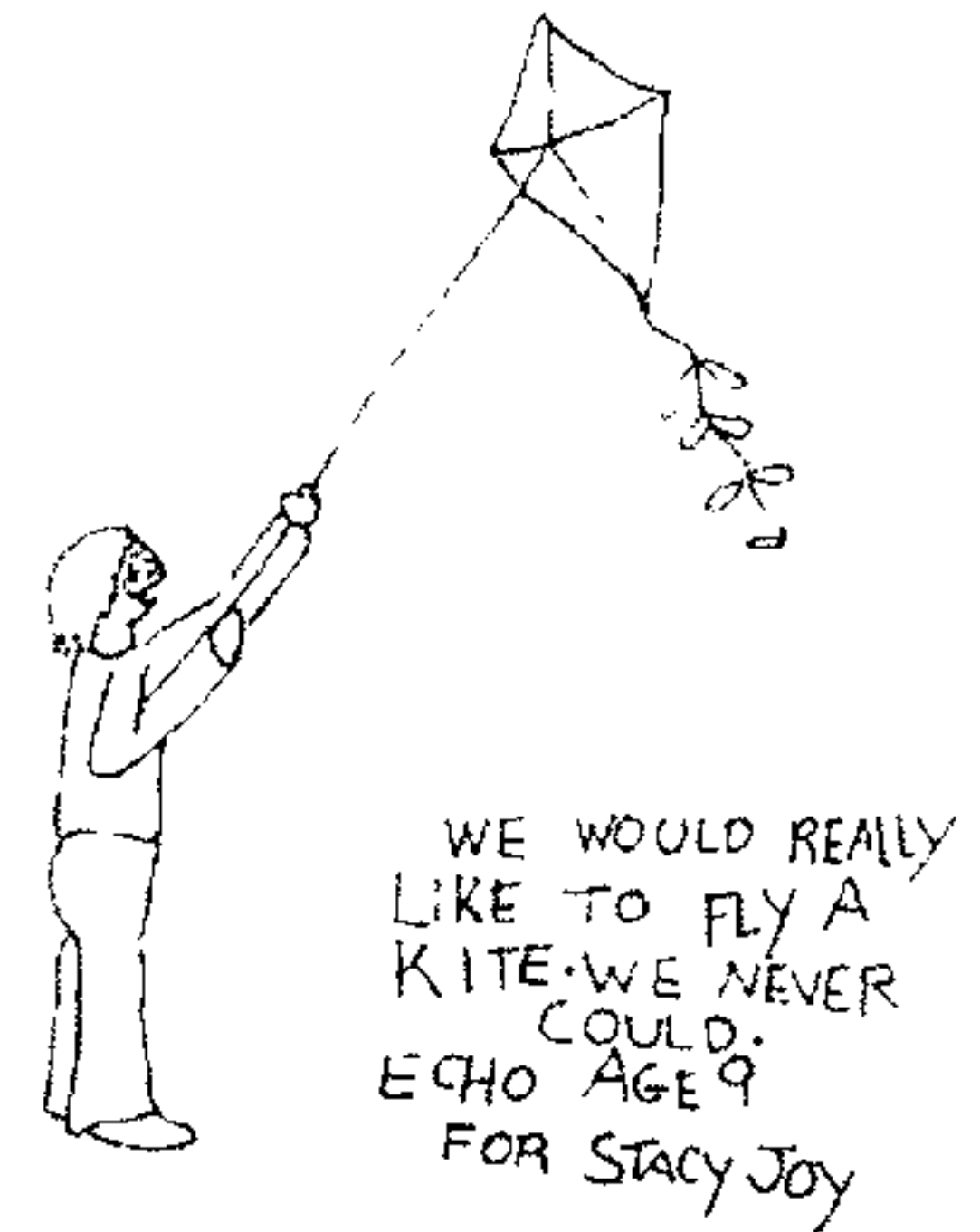
Love

Unconditional

We didn't know

By Me5

MV



Kidstuff

Little boats in the sink
yellow, white, blue and red
Rubber Ducky, beak and all, in the
water, squeaking when squeezed.
Blue and red truck, in the
hot tub, having lots of fun
Squirt gun makes sleek cool
sprays twelve feet long.
Rattle shaking joyfully
bouncing and singing.
Bumble balls jumping across
the living room rug.

By Sally B

MV

The following poems by Lyn Lifshin were written for her friend who is adopting a baby. Ms Lifshin writes "I hardly know of a more awaited baby—my friend has rearranged her life, her house and her heart for this baby." (Those of you who read much poetry will know Lyn Lifshin's work, which has appeared widely for decades). I'm honored to print this selection in MV. I believe these poems express the way we would all wish to be welcomed to this world. — Lynn W.

AWAITING ALMA (1)

Somewhere beyond the temples, beyond monkeys and toucans, Coatimundis. Under

cloth woven of blues and purples threaded with animals and leaves, the black

haired baby waiting like something ripening. The moon hands over her cradle. A wind of

banana leaves and coffee blends with lilies and roses as she will with the ones waiting for her

ALMA KARMINA

singing without words while the ones longing for her wait for her to turn their words to singing.

The birds have started, light's coming back.

Somewhere in a jungle, rose mist. She is on her way

Now the stillness of waiting, the darkness of her hair

AWAITING ALMA (2)

Like March, something thaws, catches its breath. I think of blown glass giraffes a heart beat could shatter

someone waits for her breath, for the words to be skin, her eyes, obsidian flowers someone can almost taste

her hair, has memorized rose bud lips

They touch her photograph the way you touch moonlight

THEY ARE ON THEIR WAY

they are flying toward Alma, have photographs packed under their skin. They're skimming pyramids and volcanoes, have her eyes behind

their eyes, her name a song, a soul that will fill the rooms they've

made for her. Alma Karmina, their arms, her cradle. Her

arms waiting past rain forests, lilies her fingers a bracelet the

clasp is not broken on

THEY ARE PACKING THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF HER UNDER THEIR HAIR

They are packing diapers *Alma Karmina*, a mantra, her eyes burning like lava

they are aching for something to start

she is a magnet pulling them over water and stone, over jaguars and pumas.

Past Mayan ruins she glows like some thing under water even if they couldn't

swim they would dive for

BEHIND THEIR EYES

she is the morning, the evening. She is calla lilies and roses

in their dreams she is the gold someone has told them they

can find in a stream they're headed to. Alma Karmina, she

is singing a soulful song, a sun song, her blue black hair the

river they are heading up stream to where it all begins

ALMA

Calla lilies and roses cartwheel on her bunting under woven crimson cloth. Behind her kohl eyes, who knows what dreams grow. Emerald and jade thru shutters, she clutches a plastic ring as other fingers long to hold her, to circle her in arms, be the ring her life will slide into easily as the moon over her almond skin, like their love

Reply for The Smart One (April 03)

Hi, I'm Heather, 48 years old, integrated (but don't hold it against me). We had 9 personalities and each had a specific memory and function and skill. Your system sounds familiar so we decided to write to you.

I think for starters at least, it's good for each person to tell their own story. Those that write can, but in our system the kids used crayons. The older kids sometimes had to help tell or translate stories for adults to understand, but pictures can be powerful and emotional. (If you have trouble with this, try coloring with your left hand if you're right-handed.) Sometimes they didn't or couldn't tell because they were afraid we as adults, couldn't handle it or that they'd get into trouble if we knew. (Victim blaming).

We used a time line from birth to present with a different color for each personality. On the time line we put years and events that happened and used the colors to show who was around them or who it happened to. As more comes up more can be filled in.

Kind of like doing many biographies at once. Beware...if there's a space in time then probably somebody knows about it. That, or life was good.

If you stay detached and write it like it's someone else's life it will read that way. But if you want it to be an emotional work and describe emotions involved you're probably gonna have to get in touch with those emotions. Both those of the kids and your feelings about what happened to them. That would be the abreactive work. The knowing isn't nearly as hard as the feeling. If after feeling you can put it into words, congratulations! You got one up on me. I don't think the English language has the words needed for some things.

We did a lot of journal writing and collecting of materials, too. We thought about telling our story but weren't sure we wanted to be high-profile. I've seen *Sybil* and *When Rabbit Howls*, and read enough books on the subject to fill my den, but a lot of people are only interested because

it's different and weird. There are people who treat DID as if they were a freak show at a circus. So I decided it wasn't in my best interest to go public but yes! write write write away. You can always publish later when the story is complete.

My handwriting was one of the last things to change after the merging process. But it was one of the only ways I could tell people apart when writing.

How long? Probably months and maybe years, but that depends on everybody's ability to cope with things. The children are very smart. Don't underestimate them. Remember they've been around the longest. They won't share anything that you can't handle. But you won't believe that now.

Thanks for sharing in MV. It's still good to hear there's systems like mine out there. I hope we've been of some help or at least not any harm. Hang on to those good therapists!

MV

Books

Nobody's Baby Now Reinventing Your Adult Relationship With Your Mother and Father

By Susan Newman PhD
© 2003. Published by Walker Publishing Company, Inc. (800) 289.2553 \$24.95. 256 pages, hardcover.

Here's a book that may be able to help some readers of MV gain perspective and readjust problematic relationships with their parents. Dr. Newman interviewed over 150 adult children from ages 27 to 55 about parental interactions. The interviewees report intrusive relationships, manipulating, money conflicts and the endless stream of complications that most of us know so well from our early years. Newman points out that behavior patterns set in childhood not only can be changed, but must be changed to develop healthy, peer-to-peer relationships with our parents. The parent needs to realize

that the child is now adult, and the adult child needs to assert personal responsibilities and behaviors...not to simply "switch into childhood mode" when parents are present.

Numerous checklists and guides are placed throughout this book, from Pinpointing Problem Areas to Managing Problems Created by a Sibling, and Taking Charge of Your Own Career Decisions. It's obvious that many people still have parents who drive them crazy—but Newman gives examples of people who altered their thinking about parents' words and behavior. It is reassuring to know that once an adult child accepts control of the situation, the stress level can be reduced almost instantly. It takes two to have a battle. Even if your parents don't change you don't have to go nuts around them.

Pastoral Care for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Healing the Shattered Soul

By Dalene Fuller Rogers, MDiv
©2002 Published by The Haworth Pastoral Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Binghamton NY (800) 429-6784. 122 pages \$19.95 paperback. (Hardback \$29.95).

This book is written for church counselors, clinicians, and survivors of trauma seeking spiritual avenues toward healing PTSD. It features case studies, theological explanations of suffering and methods for using scripture as a healing source. Techniques for managing flashbacks, and crisis intervention are clearly described. There is substantial information on working with veterans of both genders, as well as people who have adopted alternative spiritual resources. The book also includes a chapter on caregiver burnout.

MV

THANK YOU for Your Wonderful Writing and Artwork! Please Keep Sharing! We need *lots more* of everything!

AND DON'T FORGET TO SEND US YOUR THEME IDEAS FOR NEXT YEAR!! WE ANNOUNCE THEM IN AUGUST!

THANKS!—Lynn W.

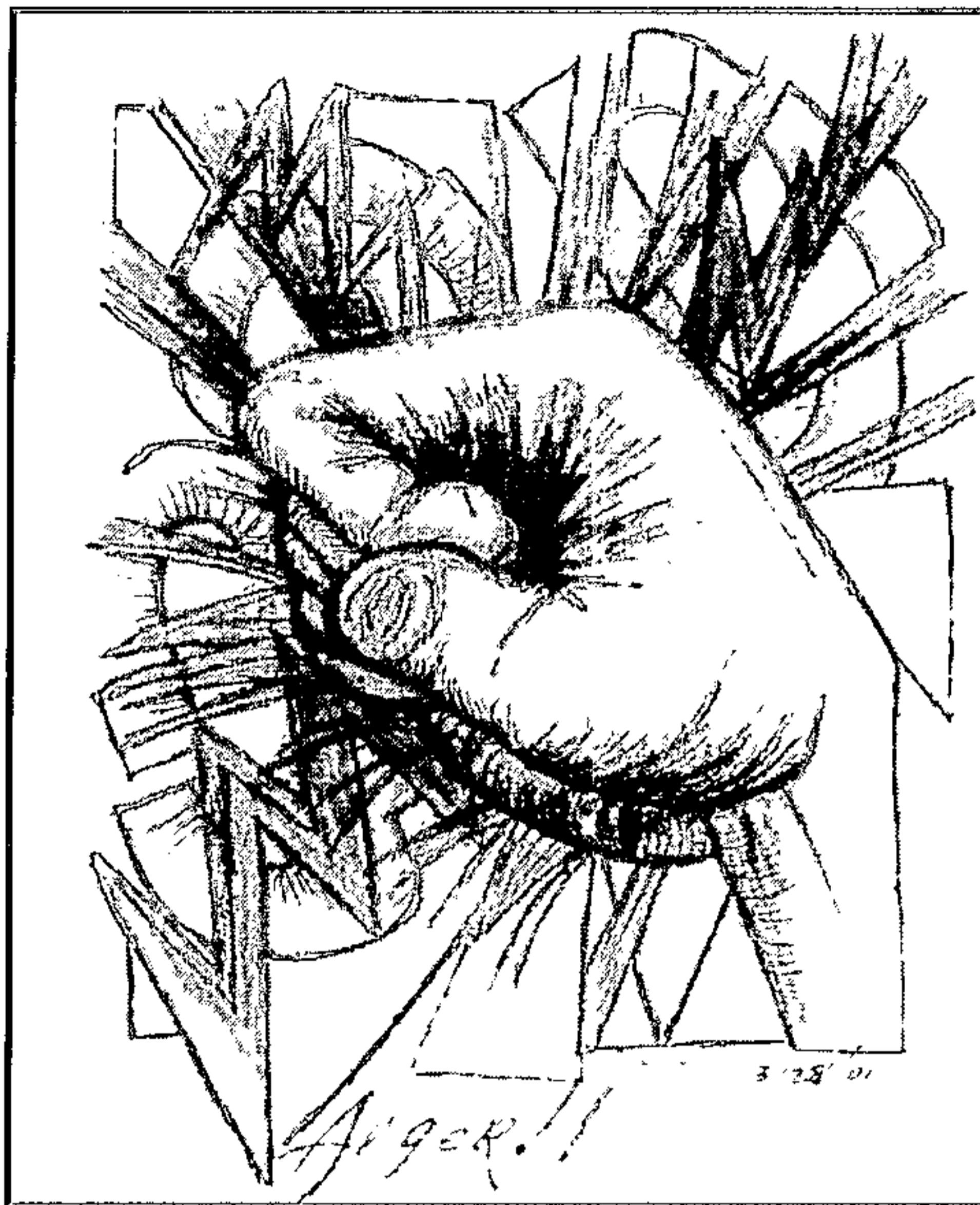
COMING SOON!

August 2003

Calming strategies for stress. Healing exercise Helping your scared "kids". Good parenting inside & out. Art. A safe place to heal. Deadline: June 1, 2003

October 2003

Medical/Psychological issues. Do doctor visits scare you? Body memories and trigger prevention. Art. Your Body Image(s) Deadline: August 1, 2003.



Share with us!

Prose, poetry, and art are accepted on upcoming issue themes, (and even on NON-themes, if it's really great.) DO send humor, cartoons, good ideas, and whatever is useful to you. Please limit prose to about 4 typed double-spaced pages. Line drawings (black on white) are best. We can't possibly print everything. Some pieces will be condensed, but we'll print as much as we can. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of your originals and a note giving us permission to publish and/or edit or excerpt your work.

Subscriptions for a year (six issues) of *MANY VOICES*: \$36 in the U.S., \$42US in Canada, \$48US elsewhere. Back issues always available, each issue 1/6 yearly price. Enclose the form below (or a copy) with your check, and mail to *MANY VOICES*, P.O. Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639. Phone: (513) 751-8020. Web: www.manyvoicespress.com

MANY VOICES

NEW!
We now accept
Visa &
Mastercard!



Name _____
Address _____
City/State/ZIP _____

I have a Dissociative Disorder Professional/therapist Relative/Friend

Subscription type. New Renewal Gift Send full list of past themes: _____

Full yr. (6 iss.) '89 ___ '90 ___ '91 ___ '92 ___ '93 ___ '94 ___ '95 ___ '96 ___ '97 ___ '98 ___ '99 ___ '00 ___ '01 ___ '02 ___ '03 ___

Specific issues or preferred start date: _____

1 year: \$36 in U.S.; \$42US in Canada; Elsewhere, \$48 in U.S. currency drawn on a U.S. bank.
Make check payable to *MANY VOICES* & send with this form to
MANY VOICES, PO Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639

CHARGE IT! (Please print clearly) (circle one) VISA MASTERCARD

Cardholder's Name: _____

Acct# _____ Exp. Date _____ Total: \$ _____

Signature: _____ Today's Date: _____