

# MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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I feel abandoned  
I feel betrayed  
I feel lost  
I feel out of place  
I feel unloved  
I feel fake  
I feel loss  
I feel sadness  
I feel worried  
I feel overwhelmed  
I feel the joy from a child  
I feel aches  
I feel pain  
I feel anxious  
All I want is to feel alone  
For feeling alone is safe

However

I deserve to feel needed  
I deserve to feel wanted  
I deserve to feel found  
I deserve to feel in place  
I deserve to feel love  
I deserve to feel real  
I deserve to feel happiness  
I deserve to feel okay  
I deserve to feel calm  
And to tell the truth I am  
WORTH IT!

By Melody 10/27/03

MV



# Coping with Fire

By Stuart Brantley

I am admittedly fairly new to recovery from sexual abuse. I have over come a lot so far, but still have quite a bit to learn. To be perfectly honest, flashbacks are kicking my butt at this time. There are a lot of mixed messages and the fear that comes with them.

I grew up in a home where my father was physically violent as well as sexually abusive. As such, I made the connection that if it didn't physically hurt me, or there was no verbal abuse, that it was okay. I was with couples and many women who never hurt me physically or emotionally, to my way of thinking. They had sex with me. I always was made to feel special to them and I felt comforted by them. They nurtured me, in a way. I realize that this is a strange way to look at their abuse of me, but it is how I lived and coped with it. I didn't believe that their having sex with me was in any way abusive. I enjoyed pleasing them, considering I rarely could please my father. They were gentle with me, so I interpreted it as a good thing.

These flashbacks are not so frightening. It is the ones where terror was a part of the abuse that I have trouble with. I am finding that flashbacks occur more often when I am awake. I've had terrifying flashbacks in public restrooms, during storms, in church and other places. These are all places where abuse occurred. The battle comes in not being swept up in the terror.

I sat in a Wal-Mart restroom stall crying and breathing rapidly. I had to make myself breathe more slowly and to realize where I was at the time. I reminded myself that I am 39 years old and I have nothing to be afraid of now. I repeated this to myself until the sweats, shakes and tears came under control. It was unnerving.

I was recently scared when, during a thunderstorm, I was settling down to sleep; it felt like someone was standing over me beside the bed. I had my back to the door of our room. In an instant I was 4 years old and faced with my father beside my bed. I was terrified. I knew he wanted a blowjob, but that wasn't what scared me the most. I was afraid he was going to hurt me. I was terrified about how long he had been there and had he done anything before I woke up. I lived through it and he never hit me; but the terror was real for me.

It was very real for me the other night too! It was all I could do not to break from my wife's embrace and run screaming from the room. I simply closed my eyes and repeated my mantra, "I am 39 years old and a father of 2 children. I am in my own room with my wife. I am not in that other place. I am safe and have nothing to be scared of at this moment." It takes several minutes, but I can calm down fairly quickly. I then quickly dissociate and go to a safe place.

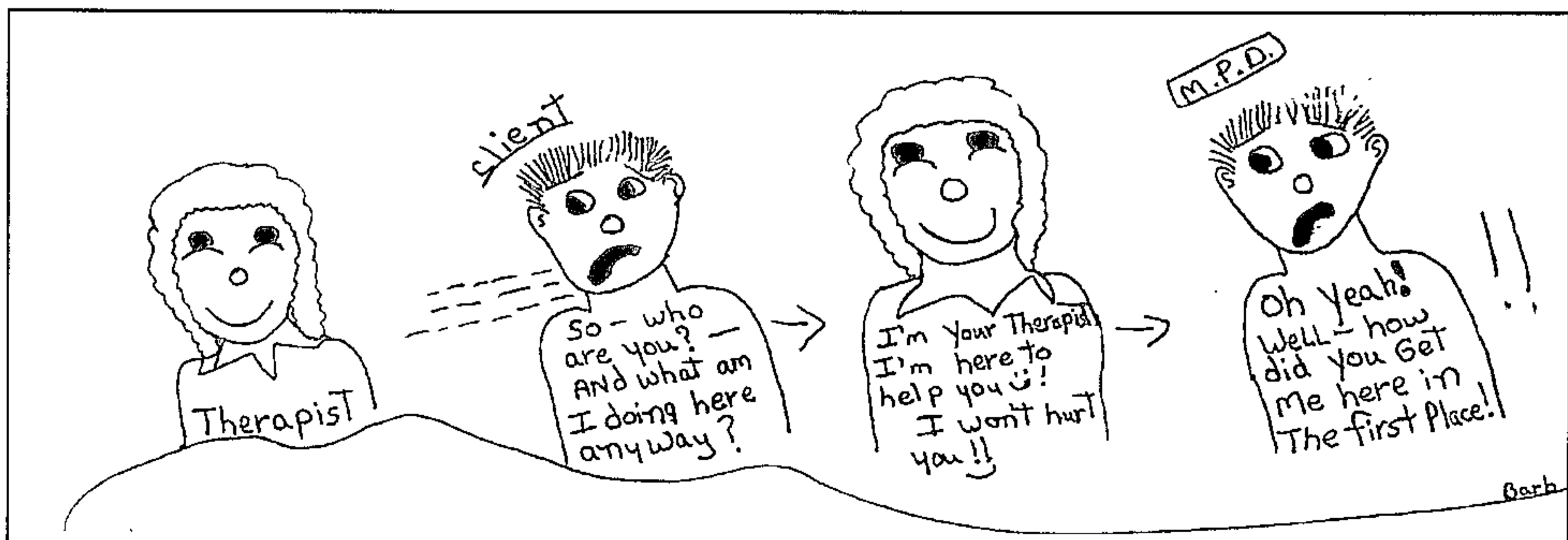
This is where I feel weird, but my mind races to a time when I was being sexual with a woman; all when I was a kid. I can't seem to break that habit. I remain a child, but I am in the arms of some woman, some I know and some I don't, but they are always holding me close to them and stroking my hair. For some reason, I always retreat there and have done so for most of my life.

One part of me feels that this is not healthy either, and tries to imagine some other place. The other part says to leave it alone and go with it. I hope that that does not make me unfaithful in some weird sense. It is a struggle, but I am finding that my old coping mechanisms are working for me.

I still feel alone, in that there are no men who share a similar history to talk to about it. I have some very good male friends and female ones too! They are a Godsend to me, but there is a big part of me who would like to talk to another male survivor who has experienced some of the same things.

I guess the conclusion I draw from this is that if the old coping mechanisms are not harming you and you feel safe there, then it is okay to go with them. The struggle for health and safety continues. I thank God for my ability to dissociate and the gift to be able to come out of the terrifying episodes with some sense of calm.

MV



## *Crowded House*

A crowded house  
This life alone  
Reflections in a looking glass.

So many faces to be seen  
So many voices that are heard  
Shattering the silence of this life  
Alone  
With many.

Tiny hands of children small.  
Tears upon a cheek so soft  
Screams that only I can hear.

The beating of the celtic drums  
That make his soul arise  
Sing out my friend  
Celebrate the life that's yours  
Which only I can share

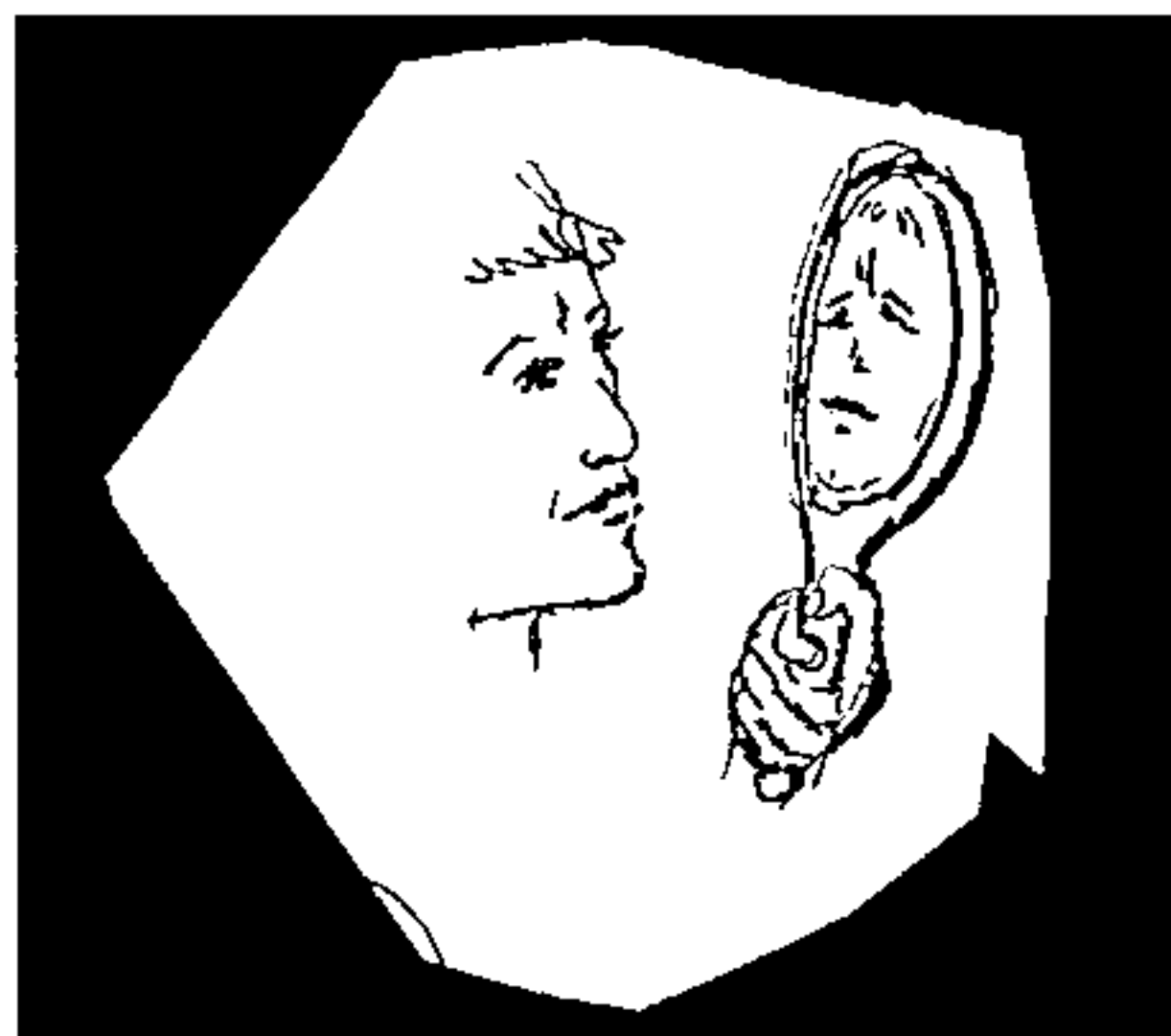
Silent rage  
Fear swells within  
Defend this life that's ours  
Alone

Arise each day  
Hi ho hi ho  
It's off to work you go  
To do the job  
You do so well

This life alone  
A crowded house  
Reflections in a looking glass.

*By Hank & The Boys*

MV



## MANY THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS!

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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**

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

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

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

Call Larry Spinosa: (800) 437-5478

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## *My Parallel Universe*

I walk across the same floor as you do  
Yet I'm in another universe  
To you, the floor is clear and safe  
But when I encounter it, it's bumpy and has many obstacles.  
When you look at me, what do you see?  
Someone who is clean, well-groomed, calm?  
Can't you see how dirty and fat I am?  
How messy and smelly? Can't you hear my screams?  
Does the sun caress you with warmth and light?  
It gives me a chill and floods me with darkness.  
How many colours are in your rainbow?  
Mine has only one—gray, with a pot of sludge at the end.  
Is your glass half-full? Mine is bone dry  
When I try to fill it with cool, clear life-giving  
Water from your world,  
My hand shakes, spilling mud all over me.  
I drop it, where it shatters at my feet.  
In a burst of false bravado, I make an effort  
To leap from my universe into yours,  
But my soles are stuck to the ground  
And I fall hopelessly to my knees.  
How will I make the journey into your world  
Without tumbling into the vast chasm of blackness  
That separates us?  
Will you turn your back on me and slam the door in my face?  
I'm afraid.  
I want it all. The smooth floor, the warm sunlight,  
The life-giving waters, the rainbow and the pot of gold.

*By Judy DL.*

MV



# Therapist's Page

By Laura Paxton

Laura Paxton, M.A. Ed.S, is a spiritual teacher and the author of *Borderline and Beyond*, a self-help program of recovery from borderline personality disorder. She is also employed as a psychiatric social worker, assisting the serious and profoundly mentally ill who have substance abuse addictions.

## A Sense of Worthiness: The Critical Spiritual Element of Borderline Recovery

It is very difficult for someone suffering from Borderline Personality Disorder to make a commitment to her recovery, but this is the critical step necessary to facilitate long-term healing. In order to make a commitment to recovery, the borderline must believe that she is worth treatment and a more fulfilling life. There are spiritual factors that influence the sense of worthiness within the client. It is important that therapists be sensitive to these dynamics in helping the client's consciousness to mature to the point where a commitment to the recovery process is possible.

The commitment to self is often dependent on the client's experience of whether their own mother was committed to nurturing her growth. When a baby is born, the baby relies on the mother to act as a mirror for who she is. Babies come into this world radiating love to all they encounter, melting hearts and naturally encouraging caretakers to care for them. Sometimes, no bonding with the mother is possible, and the infant will feel rejected. Is this rejection the mother's fault or the child's? It is neither. Many mothers of borderline children have described their children as very difficult or impossible to bond with. Many borderline children have described their mother as doing her best but something critical was missing in this relationship.

Borderlines often maintain a consciousness that is similar to that of a toddler, or a small child who is 2-3 years old. Within this "child mind," people become either angels or demons. The "child mind" simplifies the world into black and white because it is easiest to cope with and handle. If the child grows up in a

secure environment that can contain and nurture the child's emotional growth, the child eventually moves out of this dialectical world and into a sense of integration. A healthy school-age child begins to see the parents as both good and bad, human. She also sees herself as a mixture of good and bad, human. The experience of being human is contained by a sense of acceptance and forgiveness.

However, in the borderline process of splitting, the world becomes torn into darkness and light. Nothing grey exists. People in the borderline world become divided into "all good" or "all bad." The borderline herself becomes one or the other. Sometimes, she is "all good" in a world of villains. Other times, she feels wretched and horrible as her caregivers become "lily white" and pure.

In the lives of saints, this dynamic has often been operative. Many Catholic saints have lamented their constant fallibility while seeing their spiritual guides, angels and saints that have come before them as "all holy." This type of "splitting" has given the saints fuel to purify themselves and to enter into union with that which seems so distant and unachievable. It appears that the saint may have struggled through this process to maintain the awareness of unconditional love and forgiveness.

In an effort to achieve "transcendence," many Catholic saints also flagellated themselves, a practice similar to self-mutilation by borderlines. When a borderline self-mutilates, she loses herself to find herself. Inundated with internal agony, she externalizes the pain to find release. Through cutting herself, she allows the internal pain to be witnessed. In those moments, she may feel free from the inward driving

to be what she is not. She transcends herself as she dissociates.

The secret to borderline recovery is that transcendence is not the answer. Successful recovery is built on developing a strong enough container to hold the pain and sit with it, rather than seeking to escape it. Cutting, drug and alcohol use and other impulsive self-destructive behavior stem from the client's lack of ability to stay present with the human experience and to love and embrace it, just as it is.

In the traditional Christian religion, if a borderline is able to experience herself as "saved," then she becomes able, at least in that moment, to internalize that "something perfect and good has taken away her bad, or sin." What often occurs with this scenario is that after the salvation experience, the borderline then sees herself as "all good, purified, free from sin, saved," and others become "not as good as" or "bad" because they are not saved. It is difficult for a borderline client to consistently internalize the experience of salvation, because she will slip back and forth into the splitting consciousness. She will not be able to internalize that although she is continually human, she is continually forgiven just as she is. In order to experience the sense of "continual forgiveness," she will need to internalize the construct of an all good source which transcends her that will accept both bad and good within herself.

Although there is no "perfect mother" in this physical reality, object relations theorist Winnicott does refer to the "good enough Mother." The "good enough mother" makes sure that the needs of her child are regularly met, so that the child may build up a sense of trust. The "perfect

mother" that the borderline yearns for never actually exists in this physical reality. She exists only in religious cultures that worship goddesses. In lieu of the "perfect mother," which does not exist in the human form, if a borderline can form a relationship with either an idealized internal mother or a sense of God as father which serves as an internal caretaker, she can begin to heal. The therapist may assist with this process.

Heinz Kohut states that the way that a borderline internalizes and integrates constructs, such as the "good enough" mother is through "transmuting internalization" from the therapist. I believe this process may be strengthened by the therapist encouraging the client to develop an internal relationship with a "perfect parent," as God. The therapist could inform the client that the therapist will never be perfect, because no one else can understand the client as the client herself can. However, the therapist may create a supportive environment and offer the client tools to begin to parent herself.

When the client reels with the deficiencies in the therapist and sees the therapist as "all bad," the therapist may point out that this is an opportunity for the client to strengthen her relationship with her own internalized mother. The "idealized parent" is not something that has to be "built in" to a client's consciousness. This is archetypal. Therefore, the therapist may act as a guide in facilitating the client's access to her own inner strength.

When the commitment to recovery is made, the commitment is made to embrace all experience: good and bad. The simple act of making a commitment to recovery dissolves the "splitting dynamic" because in that moment, the borderline becomes the "good parent" who loves the "inner child" no matter what. The borderline comes to identify with being the source of acceptance, rather than the rejected child within. The borderline then decides, as the "good parent" to do whatever it takes to bring order and harmony to the wounded child's world. This is the moment that recovery begins.

An amalgamation of the third and

seventh step prayers of Alcoholics Anonymous states, "God, I am now willing for you to take all of me, good and bad. Take from me my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help, of your power, your love and your way of life." In this prayer, the "bad" qualities within the client are transformed into positives through the client's ability to internalize a loving container for herself that accepts both good and bad. In the case of borderline recovery, the sixth step often must take place before the first. Within my own 12-step program, "The Twelve Steps to Loving Yourself," steps one through three form the same function as AA's third and seventh step prayers. Moving through this process of recovering a sense of worthiness leads to the ability to make a commitment to recovery.

Once the commitment to recovery is made, the shift within the client is dramatic. The client becomes freed for the first time to make meaningful contracts and agreements regarding safety and no-self harm. She becomes motivated to attend therapy and to take her medications. But prior to this point, a therapist may assist the client most by being sensitive to culturally specific issues of religion and spirituality and understanding their psychological dynamics. A therapist who is skilled at this process will be able to affect critical and long-lasting change through guiding the client through this critical door so recovery can happen.

MV

## Where do you go?

Where do you go when you can't find peace?

*Speak to someone.*

I did.

*Who did you speak to?*

Everyone.

*Everyone?*

Everyone I could find—my Dad, my Mother, my best friend, my closest sister, my favorite aunt and my dearest cousin.

*So what did they say?*

They said nothing and nothing doesn't heal.

*So where did you go?*

I paid doctors.

*Did they discuss it?*

No, they want you confused and easy to handle.

*So who was the person who told you?*

It was the voice in the rooms. Each person gives a little and the collective voice is the power of G-d Almighty.

*Is that what I should do?*

Yes. go to the rooms: OA, AA, SIA, RA, EA,GA,SA, NA, GO, G O.

*By Sara Michael*

MV



By Kristi S



## To My Therapist

I walked into your life a child in a grown up body, carrying my past like a broken doll.

You welcomed me. You believed I could heal.

You saw the possibilities.

At first I didn't trust.

You waited patiently.

Then we began to walk together.

We walked through the darkness and you stayed by my side.

When I thought I couldn't go on, you never stopped believing in me.

When I couldn't stand, you gave me your shoulder.

When I couldn't see, you showed me there was light with just a few more steps.

When I felt all alone, you sat with me, reminding me I wasn't.

When I thought the tears would never stop, you saw the bottom of the well.

When I was afraid, you helped me feel safe.

When I wanted to die, you made me keep on going.

As we walked, I grew.

You taught me the lessons that others didn't bother.

You taught me that some lessons I learned were wrong.

You taught me to fix my doll.

You helped me understand I was worth all the work.

You helped me find my smile again.

You helped me throw out the garbage others gave me and discover who I really am.

You helped me to learn to love me.

Thank you for your vision.

Thank you for your perseverance.

Thank you for helping me know what it is to live.

Thank you for being my Therapist.

J. 2001

MV



## Changing Therapists

I have changed therapists many times, though the one I see now I've been seeing for almost seven years.

Everytime I had to leave a therapist it was terribly painful (except for one who was a real idiot).

Getting used to doing things differently, getting to know the new therapist, was very trying and took a long time.

I hope I never have to change therapists again for the rest of my life.

By Sally B.

MV

## Little Ones, I Am Sorry

I am sorry for all the hurt that was inflicted on you, for not saying NO or Stop!

I am sorry for not being there to draw with you, or just doodle; you needed time and I wasn't there.

I am here now to hold you when you are sad or frightened.

I will try to calm your fears if you let me.

I am trying very hard to get to know all my parts inside, I really am.

I know it will take time.

If you need something from me that I am not giving you, just tug on my shirt.

THIS TIME I WILL LISTEN AND BE THERE!!!

By Mary G.

MV

## Therapists' Page

By Vicki Polin, MA, LCPC, Michael Salamon, Ph.D., FICPP, and Na'ama Yehuda, MSC, SLP, TSHH

### When A Family Member Molests: Reality, Conflict, and The Need For Support (© 2003)

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(contact [vickipolin@theawarenesscenter.org](mailto:vickipolin@theawarenesscenter.org) if you are interested in reprinting this article)

Among the many issues that need to be addressed when discussing Childhood Sexual Abuse, is the rarely discussed topic of family members of alleged/convicted sex offenders. Family members include spouses, children, parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins, as well as close friends.

It's a tough place to be. Think about it—what would you do if you suspected that someone you are related to or are friends with is being sexually inappropriate with a child? Would you talk to him/her about it? Would you tell another family member or friend? Would you share it with your rabbi? Would your rabbi know what to do? Would you seek professional help or advice? Should you keep quiet to protect your family member or sound the whistle to protect other children? How would your community react if they knew someone in your family molested? Would your community's expected reaction influence any decision you'd make? These are just few of the numerous dilemmas and questions regularly posted to The Awareness Center.

One of our advisory board members recently received a call from a parent of a seventeen-year-old boy. The father was concerned that his son might be abusing a six-year old girl. The little girl is the father's granddaughter and the boy's niece. The father wanted to protect his granddaughter but was deeply conflicted—he didn't want to get his son in trouble. Following a lengthy discussion, the father was advised to report the situation to the authorities, but out of fear for his son chose not to, even though he was still afraid for his granddaughter. Fortunately for the

child (and hopefully the teenager boy as well, who also needs help) the father had contacted a professional who is a mandated reporter (an individual who is mandated by law to call a child abuse hotline to report cases of suspected abuse), and a report was made. However, what if this father contacted someone else, someone who was not a mandated reporter, or someone who was a mandated reporter yet decided to overlook their legal obligation and accede to this father's fears for his seventeen-year-old son and his promise to keep the son away from the granddaughter? Granted, the father may be successful in keeping his grandchild safe, but by doing so he would open the door for his son to seek out other victims, let alone prevent his son from getting much needed help.

In another case, years of allegations of sexual misconduct have been brought up against a rabbi from a prominent family. The first allegations were made when he was still a teenager—individuals close to a family member reported that one of the yet-to-be-rabbi younger siblings claimed to have been sexually victimized by him and a group of his friends in a gang rape. The alleged offenders and alleged victim's parents were aware of the situation, yet nothing was done to protect other children from future harm. Given that this case happened years ago, appropriate treatment for the alleged offender(s) may not have been available. However, the parents might have still been able to find ways to help their son stay away from children. They did not, and some years later the same alleged offender, now a rabbi, worked at a school,

putting innocent children at risk, and allegedly continuing to molest. Once again, his parents kept his alleged past offenses quiet, choosing to protect their son and by doing so discrediting his victims. An agreement was reportedly made, where the "alleged sex offending" rabbi was to never be allowed a teaching position again. However, twenty years later the rabbi unilaterally reversed the agreement, and now there are new alleged victims. Did the family members (parents, siblings and close friends) of this alleged offender have a moral obligation to speak out and protect others, given their awareness of his past? Do they have a moral obligation to speak now? Does a family member who knowingly keeps quiet carry part of the responsibility for future victimization by their kin?

A neighbor of a seventeen-year old girl contacted The Awareness Center. The neighbor was haunted by an experience that happened a few years ago. The girl, whom we'll call "Marcy," used to baby-sit for the neighbor's two younger children on a regular basis from the time she was twelve to about fifteen. The neighbor told us that she had suspected the girl was depressed for some time, but couldn't quite put her finger on what was wrong. She'd tried talking to Marcy many times, yet Marcy never disclosed anything. One evening, Marcy came banging on that neighbor's backdoor, begging to be let in. Marcy was barefoot (there was snow on the ground), and was squinting and couldn't see (she usually wore either glasses or contacts, but didn't have either on that night). The neighbor let her in. Marcy ran to the windowless

*Continued on Page 8*



*Con't from Page 7*

basement, stating again and again, "My father's after me," "he's going to kill me." "I don't know what to do or where to go!" Marcy went on to tell the neighbor about her father's violent temper and disclosed that her father took her shoes, glasses, and contact lenses, and sent her to her room. She said that her father had been hitting her and that she was afraid he'd come back to her bedroom to continue. The neighbor told us that she'd felt in a bind—wanting to help Marcy, but not knowing what to do. It was obvious to her that the girl was terrorized and needed a respite.

About ten minutes later, Marcy's father came knocking on the door. The neighbor answered the door, but lied and told the father that she was unaware of Marcy's whereabouts, and that she'd tell him if Marcy should come by. The father left and the neighbor asked Marcy if she had a relative who would help her. Marcy called her aunt and uncle, who came to get her.

A few years later, this neighbor heard rumors that the seventeen-year-old girl had attempted suicide. She also learned that there were allegations of childhood sexual abuse. The neighbor felt guilty for not making a report to the child abuse hotline in her state the night Marcy came seeking refuge in her house. She wonders if making the call would have gotten Marcy the help she needed, stopped the abuse, and prevented Marcy from getting so desperate that she tried to end her life.

A fourth case comes to mind: a rabbi pled guilty to attempted child endangerment charges after being caught in a police Internet sex sting operation. Authorities said that this rabbi struck up a conversation with a police detective posing as a 13-year-old girl after entering an on-line chat room called "I Love Older Men." The rabbi was arrested and is currently in therapy, having pled guilty as part of a plea deal to avoid a prison sentence of up to four years. He is slated to be sentenced this month (October, 2003) to five years probation with treatment and registration as a sex offender. This rabbi is married and has a young

child. What support system is in place to help his wife and child? If the rabbi was ready to have sex with a 13-year-old child, is his own child safe in his home? The convicted rabbi isn't in prison—where does he stay? Do his neighbors know about his criminal behavior? Are the children in that community safe? What protocols had been put in place to ensure that these important issues are being addressed? What should be his standing as a member of the community, as part of a Minyan?

It is interesting that family members are usually not mandated to report a relative whom they suspect is a sex offender. Professionals who are mandated reporters have a clear requirement: the law states that if there is any reasonable cause to suspect abuse, the mandated reporter must report. When it comes to family members, the conflict of interest is easy to understand, but the question still remains—even without a legal obligation, isn't there a moral obligation to protect children from being victimized?

Dealing with sex offenders and their family members presents complex ethical issues. What can be harder than being the mother or the father of a sex offender? Denial is clearly the first line of defense, because who in their right mind wants to believe that their offspring, someone they love and care for, could hurt a child? How can a parent even think of supposedly relinquishing their instinct to protect their child by reporting him or her to the authorities? It is a terrible dilemma. Could you as a parent turn your child over to the police? Could you force an adult child of yours into sex offender treatment? And what would friends and other family members think if they learned that you were the parent of a sexual predator? A similar situation—between a rock and a hard place—is the reality for people who are married to sex offenders. If your spouse molests children outside the home, could he/she be molesting yours, too? What about the stigma and shame if anyone learned your secret, learned that you married, live with and/or bed such a person? And what about the

children of a sex offender—how would you feel if you were one? How would you face your friends, schoolmates, or co-workers once your parent's criminal behavior was made public? Would you still be allowed in your friends' homes? Would you still have friends? Would you and your siblings face shunning and stigma come marriage age?

The dilemma isn't limited to blood relatives. What if it's a close friend who was charged with sex offences? A business associate? Or even your rabbi? What is one to do?

These heartbreaking and complicated issues are real, and need to be addressed. We need to address them as a community. Every sex offender has parents, family, friends and colleagues—people who are close to him/her and are faced with this reality, often unprepared, and in many ways, also victimized, hurt, confused, disillusioned, and ashamed.

Do you know of a family member or friend of an alleged or convicted sex offender? It is critical that you don't turn your backs on them. They need your support. Put yourself in their place. If you were one, what would you need?

The spouse of an alleged and/or convicted sex offender may need financial support while the offender is in prison and or treatment. If there are children in the home, the non-abusive spouse may have to keep them away from the offender to keep them safe. Can you imagine the feelings of anger, shame, guilt, and fear that the non-offending parent will need to deal with?

Every member of a family of alleged and/or convicted sex offenders will need the community's emotional, financial, and spiritual support. And what a difference such support can make in the healing process of non-offending family members; versus them being shunned for their "association" with a sexual predator and/or for helping to stop the abuse... If support is offered more cases would be reported and subsequently more children will be kept safe and those who have already been victimized will get the help they need.

There is no doubt that we all have



a moral obligation to help stop abuse so that offenders cease to victimize and the victims receive the healing they deserve. It is our obligation to report abuse and protect the children. Whether we know the offender or not, hiding, denying and covering up his or her actions make us accomplices to the crime. At the same time, the pain of having a family member or friend who is a sex offender has to be

one of the hardest pains to bear. How can one be expected to report an abusive family member and not only lose their previous image of this person, but also their place in the community? It is also our moral obligation, as a community, to offer a holding environment (not shunning and shame) for all families torn by abuse—those of the victims, and that of the offender.

MV

The Awareness Center offers a networking E-mail self-help group for family members of convicted/alleged sex offenders. If you or someone you know would be interested in being a part of this network, send a email to our volunteer moderators: tova@theawarenesscenter.org or naamayehuda@theawarenesscenter.org

## The Enigma of Trust

Within our system, trust began with very small, tiny disclosures of information on our part (sort of like measured tests to see what it would take) and a huge amount of non-reactions, reassurances and continued support on our therapists part.

Ellie, (our therapist) needed to work really hard at letting us ALL know that she wasn't going to become disgusted with us and turn us away. We actually thought that if she really knew just how awful and gross that we were, she would surely send us away. Ellie made it very clear, that she won't quit us. The rest was left up to us...taking those risky steps of trust.

We still work on that everyday and because there is 'all of us' and not just me, it's been a bit harder to do.

Trust—it's a gradual sort of thing that kind of grows on you when your not looking until one day you come to realize that you trust your therapist way more than you ever thought Trust could go.

*Hilary's System 19*

MV

## Name Tags

By diane, of Ravensong

Squirell. I didn't get it. How was it possible for anyone to be such a perfectly bad speller? I asked my best (and I might add, most patient) friend this, while I replied via AOL's instant messenger that he ought to know this word was spelled s-q-u-i-r-r-e-l. He sent me a smilie, and asked how often a person really needed to spell that word—and this began our dance, and my spiraling into a world both warmly familiar and terrifyingly strange.

It wasn't until that very moment that I started to realize that I process the world in a very different way than do other people. I'd always been unimaginably impatient with others who misspelled words, because my environment provides no excuse for it. When I see an object or hear an idea, it comes with a label attached. The bus passing me on the street is accompanied by its own sign beneath it that reads "b-u-s" and, as people talk, their conversations come to me as words and sentences in a book.

If I see an object or hear something in a conversation that whatever does my spelling for me can't process, it comes to me missing letters, or misspelled. I'm not sure how I know, but I always know the word is misspelled.

So I might see a word for an unfamiliar particular Native American tribe as "Iriquois" or Ir quois."

I could never understand how people could deal with the constant intrusion of these incorrectly spelled or incomplete words. To me, it's like a visual assault, and the only way to ease its effects is to correct the spellings.

Learning that not everyone perceives the world in this way was confusing, and a little scary for me.

It felt a bit like a gift, and a little bit more like some stupid joke somebody was playing on me. But understanding it has helped me develop some patience for others and an awe for the capacity of our minds.

And it has led me to wonder how many different ways people perceive this world that they just don't talk about, because they either think that everybody is the same, or they know that they are different.

MV

## Yippee! My Kid is OK!

(Well, she's a bit older than a "kid" but she'll always be my little girl!)

Many thanks to all who wished my daughter well during her surgery, sent prayers, suggestions, etc.

She is recovering nicely, thank goodness, and I am back at the MV stand. Let me know if MV can be helpful where you are, and please send artwork, prose, poetry and free survivor classified ads at any time.

*Best wishes. Lynn W., Editor*

MV



## Changing Therapists

By Sahara

When I looked on the "Themes" page of the Many Voices web site and saw the topic of changing therapists, I knew I needed to write about my experience. This was one of the most difficult things I have ever done in the course of my therapy. It is also one of the most difficult things to write about.

Actually, I have had five primary therapists since 1984. My first therapist was in high school and I "wasn't" multiple yet, just borderline...run everyone! I saw that therapist on and off throughout college and had a child. Ten years later, we lived in another state and I started having major depressive and PTSD symptoms so I began seeing a counselor there. During that time I crashed majorly, and this counselor with a master's degree in education allowed me to be involuntarily hospitalized by refusing to make a safety contract with me. She thought it "might be a good idea" for me to go into a state hospital for a few days.

I found my old therapist from when I was in high school and began seeing her again. It was during this time that I learned I had parts. I worked with Julie intensely for 2 years. I lived with my parents and they helped take care of myself or my children. Then I ran off to medical school for a couple of years and saw her on and off between breaks. I had to quit school after a bout with major depression and an overdose. I had initiated a suit against my abuser and crashed after seeing him in court for the first time in twenty years. My therapist said I needed to find someone with a pager to work with, that she couldn't give me the support I needed. She told me this at a session when some of my littles had written her a note asking her if she would be our mom. We never gave her the note.

Then we found a therapist recommended by a friend of our mom's. The psychiatrist happened to have cancer and didn't have time for

another client, but that was unbeknownst to me. I just wondered why she wouldn't call me back for two or three days at a time. She was supposed to be a specialist in dissociation, but all she wanted to do was talk about my feelings about my parents. She referred us to another doc for meds and we had a nice little triangle going there and he was doing therapy with me too. After I had been seeing her about 9 months, my moods became very erratic during the early summer. One day I was happy ready to finish medical school, the next I was suicidal. She told my husband she couldn't understand the huge mood swings I was having from one day to the next. (Specialist in dissociation???) One day she called me at work and told me she didn't want to see me anymore. She said I told her and the other doctor different things and that I lied and was manipulative. I was devastated. Even though she was obviously not a good therapist, I was abandoned. I called the other doc and he said he couldn't see me, because she referred me to him. Oh, he also was totally panicked he told me, because I had called when I was suicidal and had taken some extra meds when he didn't return the call. He told me he couldn't handle that type of behaviour. (Interesting for a psychiatrist, huh?)

With the help of an online friend, I found my new therapist. She was fabulous. I had never worked so well with anyone. Susan was validating, unconditionally accepting, honest and caring. She said from the outset that she knew during the initial phase of therapy that we would probably need to call her between appointments and that was fine. She told us how long to expect her to call back. She said she knew that we would get better and not need to call as much. She set very clear boundaries and told me when she was available and when she was not. She told me she didn't check messages after nine pm. If I needed help, call the women's center.

I had never had a therapist that was so clear before! It was amazing knowing exactly what to expect and getting it.

After probably six weeks I told her I had parts. I was afraid that she would refer me out. She didn't. She told me that I would have to give her a chance to get to know everyone before she could recognize who was who. Different parts began working with her depending on who needed time. Each of us had total respect from her. We were all treated equally. She kept confidences between us, telling me that I would learn what I needed to when I was ready or the other part felt safe enough to share. She also let insiders call when they needed to talk to her. Most of all she trusted us. We could write safety contracts and she honored them and our ability to keep them.

One of the best things about our therapist was she loved all of us. When she would give us a parting hug at the end of our session, she would say "Be sure Meghan(or whatever part needed it) is feeling this too." She even cared about the parts that we didn't want to have, giving them respect and honoring their purpose. She was also excellent at enlisting those difficult parts in helping the system to heal.

She told us about 4 months before she was leaving that she had accepted a job out of state and would be leaving in the summer. We were devastated. We expected that she would be our therapist for life, which was obviously unrealistic. I think we spent 2 sessions talking about it, then we decided we should finish up our therapy before she left.

We worked like crazy trying to resolve some of our most difficult issues and memories. Every couple of sessions she'd ask us how we were feeling about her moving and did we need to start saving some time at the end or beginning of sessions to talk about it. Nope, we were fine with it. We deluded ourselves expertly.



We talked to a therapist that she had recommended and worked out a time for her to come to one of our sessions to meet us. The problem was we were smack dab in the middle of some tough memories and didn't want to do it yet. She couldn't come one day that we thought might work, so we ended up meeting her on the last day of our session with Susan. That was a monumental mistake. For one thing we didn't know her well enough to trust her for support, and the other she looked like our old therapist that thought going into a state hospital was a good thing. We look back now and now we realize we should have met her at least a month and more than one time.

Our last session was too short, since our new therapist came for part of it. We had our therapist record a relaxation tape of our safe place for us to keep. Saying goodbye was really hard. I still cry about it when I remember. We sobbed when we hugged her goodbye and for the rest of the day after that. Susan was really nice and gave us her new email address so that we could stay in touch with her. We had been emailing her for a couple of years with the stipulation that she wouldn't email us back. This time though she emailed us lots. We told her we really missed her and lots of our littles emailed her. We let her know we were really trying hard to work with our new therapist.

Little by little she tapered off the emails as did we. Often it was several

weeks between emails we sent. We began to work well with our new therapist. So well in fact, that three different times we wrote both our old and new therapist that we "had finally accepted our new therapist completely." We didn't remember the previous times that we had written that until the fourth time. I believe it was the fourth time that we allowed our new therapist to honestly become our partner on our healing path.

About 6 months after she left, someone who knew she was our therapist told us they saw her house was still for sale. Some of the younger ones got excited and asked if she might move back. She emailed us and told us that she would never be our therapist again, and that we had a new therapist who was very good and would help us with what we needed to do. We knew that was the truth, but we needed her to come out and say it.

We worked with her for a little over three years. Most of us grew up some. We have a fond memory of having a birthday party for one of our parts who was turning 18 and becoming an adult. One thing that was really wonderful was that she was very nurturing with good boundaries. She was a model "Mom" that we never had. In fact, she told us that the feelings that we were having about her leaving were probably mixed up with feelings about our mom not being able to give us what we needed. That made a lot of sense and gave us

a good understanding of why the feelings were so intense. She also told us that we didn't need a mom. We were a competent adult and needed a therapist that would treat us that way and help us work on being self sufficient.

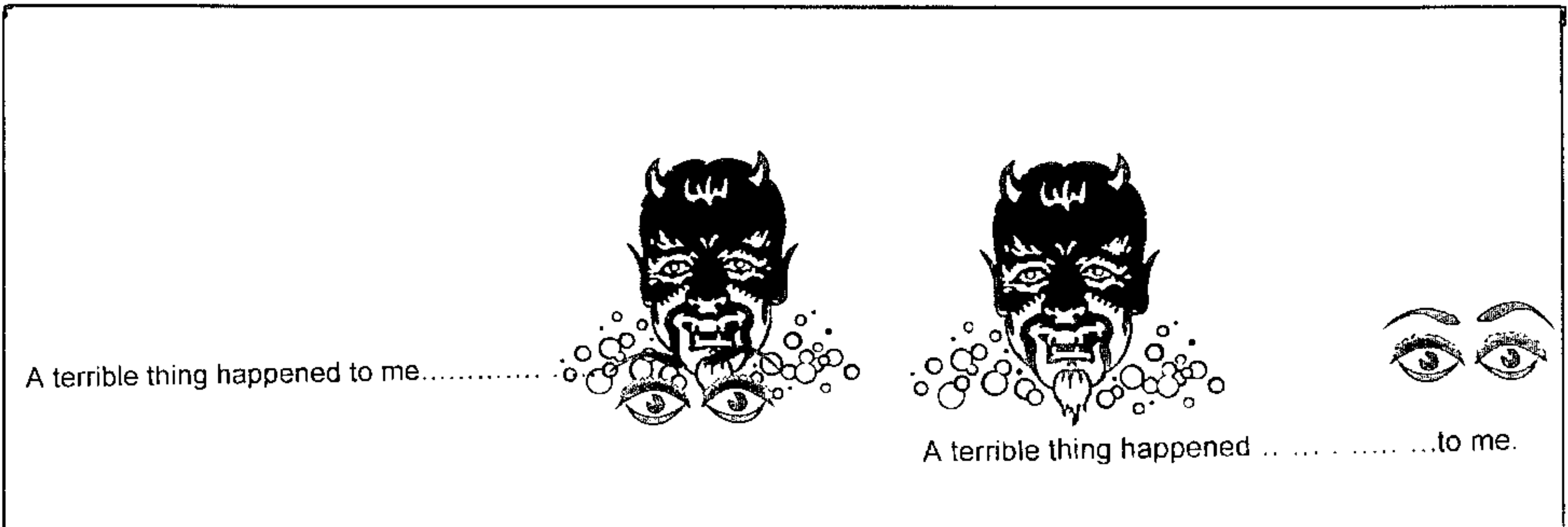
She's been gone for 15 months now and we have moved on to partner with and work well with our current therapist. She is different and offers different things and insights than my old therapist. I have moved on in my healing work. Part of that healing though, was healing from the loss of Susan leaving. One of the things I have to say about my new therapist is that she truly honored the relationship I had with Susan. She had the patience to give me the time I needed to heal from the loss of my friend and therapist.

I was upset at work on day before Susan had left. My director at the time noticed and asked what was wrong. She was so compassionate. When I told her that my therapist was leaving, she said "Oh, that's hard. It's like losing a family member." That is the best description of the whole process I have heard. It has taken me almost a full year to move beyond my grief. Life has gone on and we survived the experience. I believe that we cross paths with people that we have something to learn from and to teach them. At some point, it's just time for a new perspective.

MV

## Another New Perspective

I have always read about separating oneself from the one who caused so much pain, but it never really sank in until I was able to express this thought visually. Maybe this will work for you, too. —Brenda B.



## Attempts Failed To Destroy

Deranged men of power  
attempted to destroy  
Relating this with numerous  
murdered ancestral ties  
Ultimately giving strength by  
announcing failure  
I survive...

Each time you had me  
suffocating beneath your  
manhood  
Shivering with terror at your  
torturous threats  
Silencing me under a shroud  
which almost killed me  
I survive...

Protecting yourself under  
religious granted robes  
Wondering why you sought  
innocent boys for control  
Leaving a scarred struggling  
person confused beyond belief  
I survive...

Fortunate having unconditional  
love from a very few  
Reaching out when faced with  
complicated grief and loss  
Barely able to regain what was  
viciously ripped and torn  
I survive...

Sickened by your superiors who  
denied what was criminal  
Sensing that it all came down to

blunt selfishness of insanity  
Unwilling to deal with the bravery  
of survivors breaking chains  
I survive...

Using sacred writings in your  
ploys to divert attention  
From diabolical acts many wish  
to ignorantly keep away  
Further motivating this survivor to  
finally speak out  
I survive...

Discovering my ancestral links  
which strangely adds clarity  
With the crucial dissolving of  
restraints placed by perpetrators  
Never will I be threatened again  
by others who still sadly exist  
I survive...

*I will survive—remind PRN...*  
May 7, 2003

*By John C. Ireland*

MV



By Hilary T

## Trust

Trust...what is the meaning of this?  
I think it's something I've  
misconstrued  
all my life,  
Because I realize now that trusting  
Only slices my heart like a knife.  
I used to trust everything, everyone.  
Anything that was done  
To me, that hurt—  
I was always the one  
To quickly spurt  
Out "It's okay, it's no big deal."  
And when an apology would be given  
to me  
I'd feel  
That I could trust that person again—  
After all, it was only a mistake, and I  
too  
Have made lots of them!  
So I forgave and forgave  
Until in recent years I realized I was a  
slave.  
It's good to forgive,  
But I know that letting people treat  
you bad  
Isn't a good way to live.  
I also know, If someone treats me bad  
once,  
It's possible they may pack another  
punch.  
I'm still a forgiving  
Person, but now I'm living  
My life on guard.  
My body can't harbor that many more  
scars.  
As for trusting, my trust has been  
broken, crushed  
Sliced and gushed...  
It's something I try not to touch.  
I don't want to sound mean and cruel,  
It's just that I'm not the fool  
I used to be.  
If people want me to trust them, they  
will have  
To earn it from me.

*By Kristi S.*

MV



# Some Comments on Personhood and the Therapeutic Process

By A. Irving Rosenberg

Mr. Rosenberg is a retired attorney at law who writes about Mental States. The following is an excerpt.

A frequent question among persons with DID is that they have difficulty finding the "I" or "Me" which most people feel they possess. This is because the DID individual keeps "switching" so that several personality states exist, and keeping one state in charge is a problem.

I have concluded that "I" exist as an intelligent electromagnetic pattern, which also incorporates an Executive and various imprinted patterns of behavior, representing Needs and Archetypes. "The Executive" as used above is defined as a complex, self-regulating organization which includes the Inner Self Helper (ISH) but also other mental structures which keep the entire mind/body in a state of Dynamic Equilibrium. This is demonstrated by the sketch "A" below.

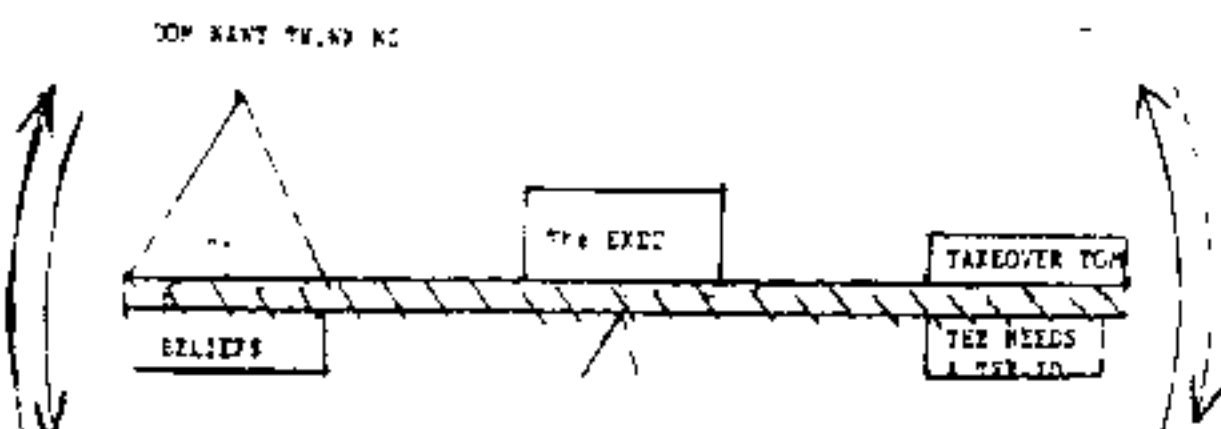
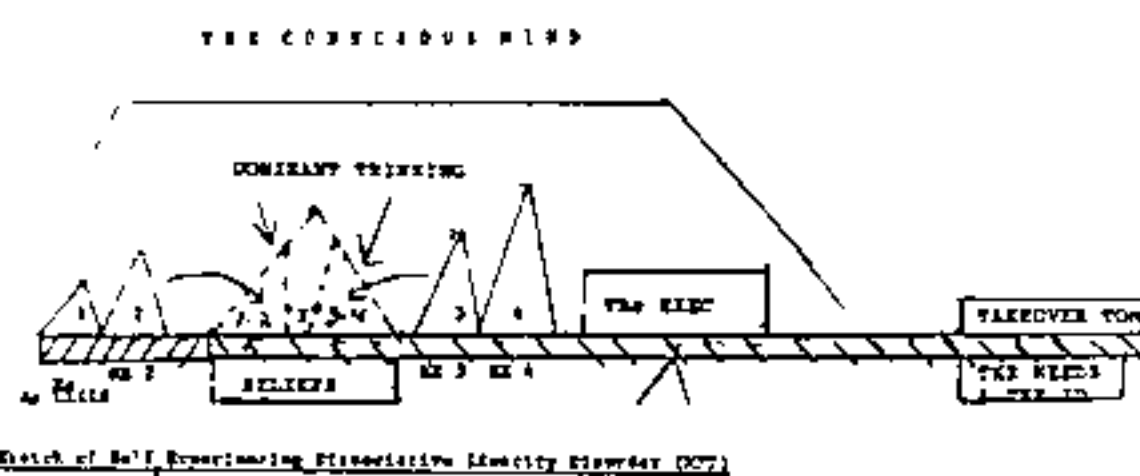


FIGURE A Shows the mental system in a state of dynamic equilibrium. There is some movement as the Takeover Complex. The Needs and Reproductive components are allowed expression. The central Executive is in supervisory control and Dominant Thinking "I" is also a positive factor as ordinary Beliefs do not interfere.

[Dynamic Equilibrium: A generally stable organization of forces or energy. Changes in one part of a system are reflected by a rearrangement of the energy distribution in the whole.]

When a person has DID/MPD, it is Dominant Thinking that becomes separated into protective segments so that the mind/body is allowed to continue functioning, although with alternating Intelligent Electromagnetic Patterns appearing as "I". The Executive is hard pressed to maintain control. (See sketch "B" below.)



[Sketch of Self Experiencing Dissociative Identity Disorder, formerly known as MPD]

The so-called normal person has a feeling of permanence due to an apparently continuous experience of memory from the time of childhood to the present. We think we are the same person that we were five or ten or twenty years

ago because of this memory pattern, although we know we're older.

In reality, the "Me" of the ordinary person is the same type of Intelligent Pattern as that of someone with DID, except the DID person has more of them. In DID, memory limitations result in a lost sense of multiplicity. Actually, we are all multiples, and as John O. Beahrs, M.D. wrote in *Unity and Multiplicity*, changing dysfunctional dissociation into useful dissociation transforms a symptom into a skill. It has often been reported that poets, mystics, inventors and scientists have gained insight into meaningful discoveries when they "step aside" from their usual thinking pattern and are taken over by "something more" than their customary self. So, to all Multiples, the message may be that a creative situation has gotten out of control. There have been many therapeutic paths suggested for treatment, to stabilize the person and restore a state of dynamic equilibrium. Referring to the sketches, it appears there are two places accessible for helpful changes to take place—in Dominant Thinking "I" and in the Balancing Executive. To that end, a course of action is suggested.

In order for Dominant Thinking to regain a semblance of stability, "I" have to feel the following:

1. A sense of personal security.
2. A feeling of trust and confidence in my self, and also in a relationship to at least one other.
3. This will permit me to allow myself to be vulnerable and open my self to feelings of intimacy and caring, to my self and the special other.
4. To feel that I know who I am as I view my self and as I reflect from others.

When these alterations in thinking and feeling occur, The Executive no longer has to set up the protective divisions and the state of Dynamic Equilibrium can be restored.

How can all these wonderful changes take place?

The dedicated therapist is one who assumes the responsibility for attempting to bring about these changed feelings in the patient. This entails a requirement of

respect for and a willingness to understand the patient. All of this requires courage in the therapist, to undertake the commitment to instill the above-mentioned elements.

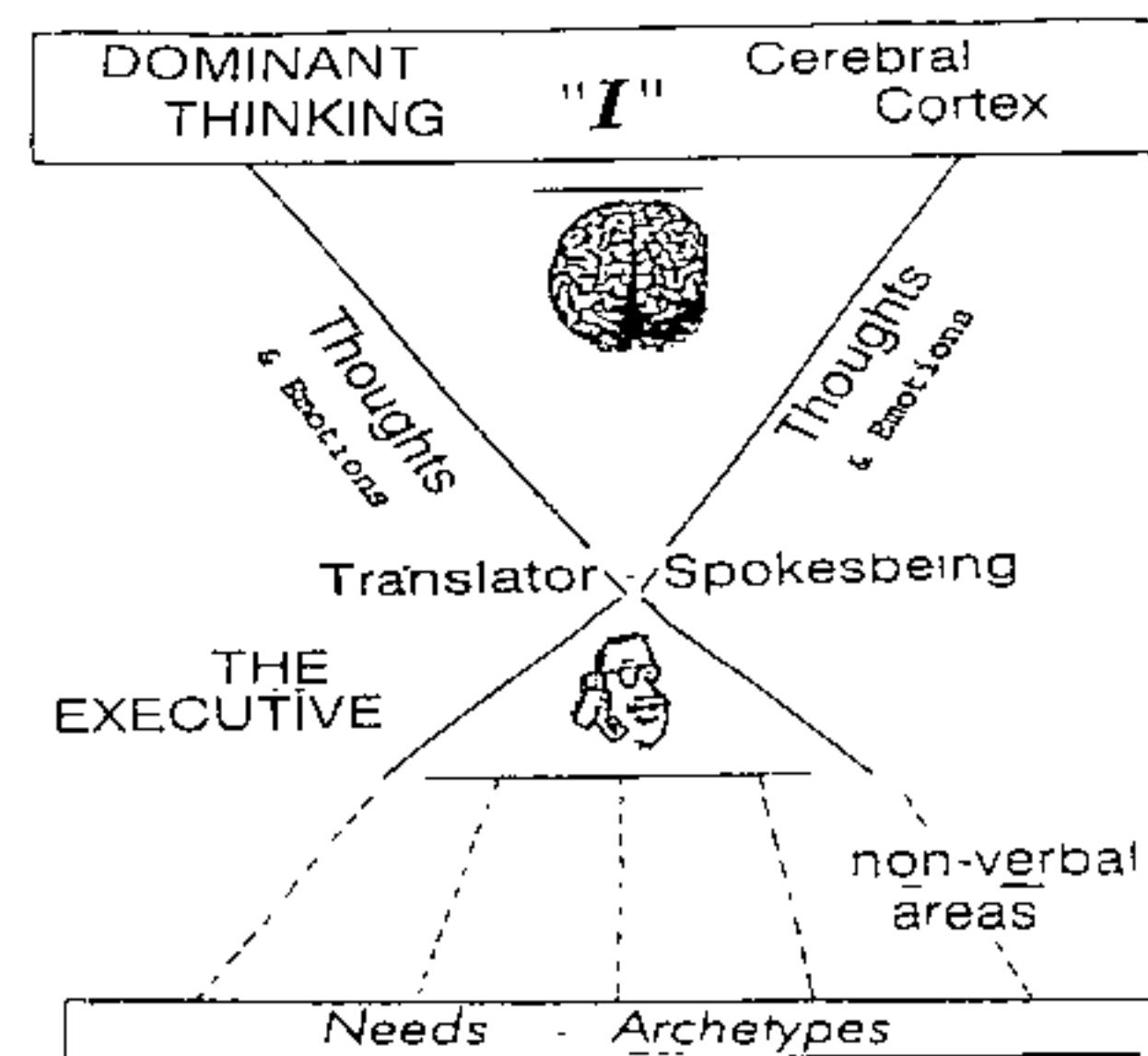
And above all, the therapist must care for himself/herself so he or she is able to have the patience, spontaneity, and humor to be linked on a certain level in a warm, professional relationship with the patient.

In another context, all of the elements required for the individual to attain these feelings and to have them nourished by the therapist, is what is called Love—which the DID/MPD person did not receive or experience during critically formative years. It is no wonder that clinicians treating dissociative disorders face such enormous challenges in the therapeutic process, which can tax their very being.

However, the DID person can look forward with hope to better times, knowing that trust, security, confidence, vulnerability, intimacy, caring and self-knowledge are some of the essential ingredients of Love—Love that leads to the path of recovery.

Being aware that we have a protective and wise Executive Function will facilitate its maintaining a state of equilibrium.

An occasional mental "Thank You" is appreciated by this ever-present Mental Manager whenever helpful thoughts or memory retrievals seem to pop up from nowhere. If that is done, in one way or another, we may become aware of a responsive, "You Are Welcome."



NEEDS are biological imprints with ability to communicate their vestigial propensities to Dominant Thinking via the Executive Translator

## Betrayal

After his recent breaking of boundaries and my subsequent loss of trust in my therapist, I am discouraged, saddened, and angry. Consequently, the following poem came very spontaneously. I wonder if it would touch a chord with any other readers? Not that there are any guarantees, but I will now actively seek only a female therapist.

You used to think of them as gods,  
Towering high above you with their big hands,  
Standing firmly on still bigger feet,  
Capable of sweeping you up onto rock-hard shoulders  
to see the world in all its splendor from the vantage point of eagles.

Falling was out of the question  
For trust was taken for granted  
From the perspective of a three year old, anyway.

Until the day when your world turned upside down.  
Until the day when touch became a nightmare.  
Until the day when these earthly gods turned into hideous monsters.  
And  
You first realized  
That you had  
No  
Power.

From then on  
Trust was the stuff of fairy tales and  
Everything became a threat or a cruel trick.

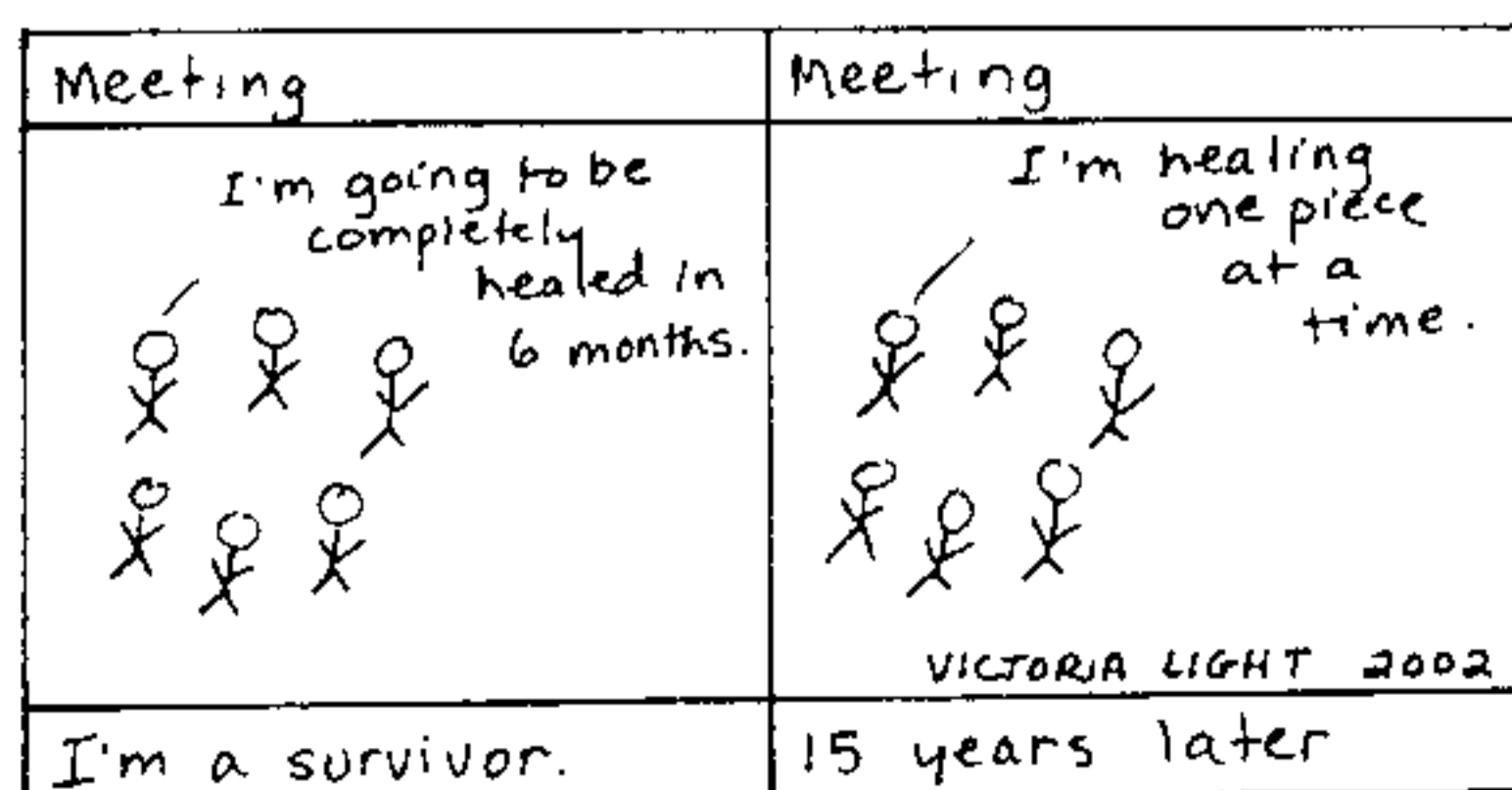
A pat on the head that made you wince,  
A crooked smile on a face without smiling eyes,  
A kiss on the lips that lasted far too long,  
A promise that reeked of a lie.

And the years passed and men who swore to end your pain  
Strolled in and out of your life,  
Leaving only violation and profound sadness in their wake.

And you learned your lesson well.  
That trust was for the uninitiated,  
That the male of the species was very often the enemy,  
That never again would you be so gullible  
as to believe it was really possible to fly with the eagles.

By CE

MV



## Cleaning the Closet

Cleaning the closet  
Piles of stuff  
Stacked here and there  
Stuff to be passed on  
...to be returned  
Stuff to be thrown away

Useful stuff, sentimental stuff,  
Stuff I've had forever and don't know  
why I keep  
Piles of stuff stacked here and there

Such a mess!  
Who'd believe this is a cleaning  
process?  
Certainly not anyone who asks...

Are you sure that Doctor is doing you  
any good?  
Why do you keep going to therapy if it  
causes such pain?  
Aren't you getting any better?

Is the closet clean yet?

By Katrina Katz

MV

## A Real Short Story

Once upon a time there was a twinkling star that you could see from everywhere you were in the world. It never faded.

One day a little girl saw the star and thought to herself, "What a magical star! I wonder if I could take it home." She went home to ask her parents.

Her parents told her that star was best left there in the sky for everyone to gaze at. They said that the star was never far away from her. She could hold that star in her heart. She may not be able to see it everyday, but she wouldn't have to look farther than her heart.

The little girl grew and grew, and when she was lonely or scared, she always knew the twinkling star was always there to keep her safe.

We all have a twinkling star inside us. It's never far away either. Just reach out and grab it!

By Mary G.

MV



## Recovery

There is the sun..."Hello, sun!"  
I can see you but...where is your warmth?

Here is a hill..."Hello, hill!"  
"I think I can, I think I can!"...just like little blue engine!  
"Help...I'm slipping!"

What a beautiful bird..."Chirp for me, bird!"  
Why can't I sing, too?

I'm slipping! I'm falling!  
Who will catch me?  
I can't "do" this alone!  
It's too dark and scary!  
Hills to climb...mountains ahead!

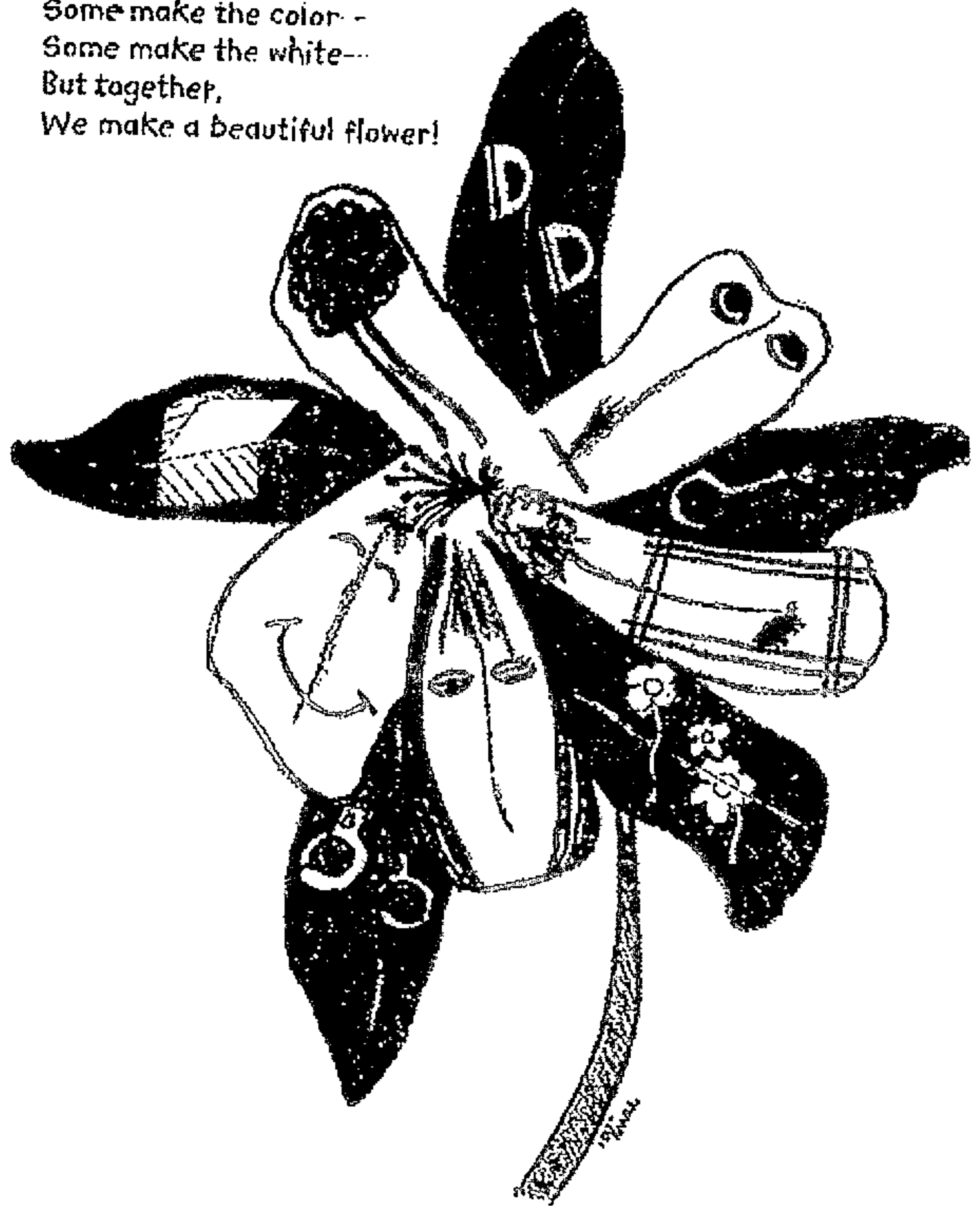
First, I need to get up!  
I need a helping hand!  
Just the effort of wanting to...makes me weary!

I need a reason!  
I need a purpose!  
I need hope!

By JN

MV

Some make the color -  
Some make the white---  
But together,  
We make a beautiful flower!



## Books

### Transforming Anxiety, Transcending Shame

By Rex Briggs, MSW  
©1999 by Rex Briggs. Published by Health Communications Inc. \$11.95. 343 pgs incl. index. Paperback.

MV gets a lot of books in to review, and once in awhile one falls through the cracks. That's what happened (I think) with this very readable book about dealing with anxiety. It's put together in a helpful, systematic way...detailing the differences between normal anxiety and the chronic, disabling anxiety and shame that many trauma survivors struggle with on a daily basis. Especially apt chapters include Knowing Your Rights and Setting Boundaries; Healthy

Anger; and Coming out of Hiding: Allowing Yourself to Love and Be Loved. Appendixes include Briggs' "Sixteen-Week Anxiety Treatment Program" and numerous other resources. This is a down-to-earth, practical book.

### Finding Courage to Speak: Women's Survival of Child Abuse

By Paige Alisen

© 2003 by Paige Alisen. Published by Northeastern University Press, Boston. \$47.50 hardback, \$18.95 paper. 236 pages incl. index.

Paige Alisen got her PhD in political science, but has a strong personal interest in child abuse. In this book she discloses her own diagnosis of

DID, combining her knowledge with the experiences of other survivors. Alisen, who teaches women's studies, uses her understanding of social systems to give sound advice about support groups, social security disability applications, and the social cost of abuse. She makes a case for moving beyond the study of individual "pathology" to address the larger ills of the society that permits child abuse to happen. Alisen's long range goal is to create a non-profit residential center where traumatized women can heal. Let's hope she succeeds.

- Lynn W.

MV

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 YOU for keeping MV useful to all!

—Lynn W.

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 Genders Art: Friends and Friendship  
 Deadline December 1, 2003

**April 2004**

What Recovery Means to You. Art  
 Healing Pleasures  
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Choosing a Therapist Thriving  
 Outside Therapy. Art: How people see  
 you vs How you see yourself  
 Deadline April 1, 2004



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