

# MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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*In This Issue:*

## Support Groups Friends and Healing

## *I Need Someone*

I need someone  
who looks at me  
and sees perfection

who overlooks the flaws  
(though many)  
ignores the mistakes  
(however inane)  
and  
chuckles at the foibles

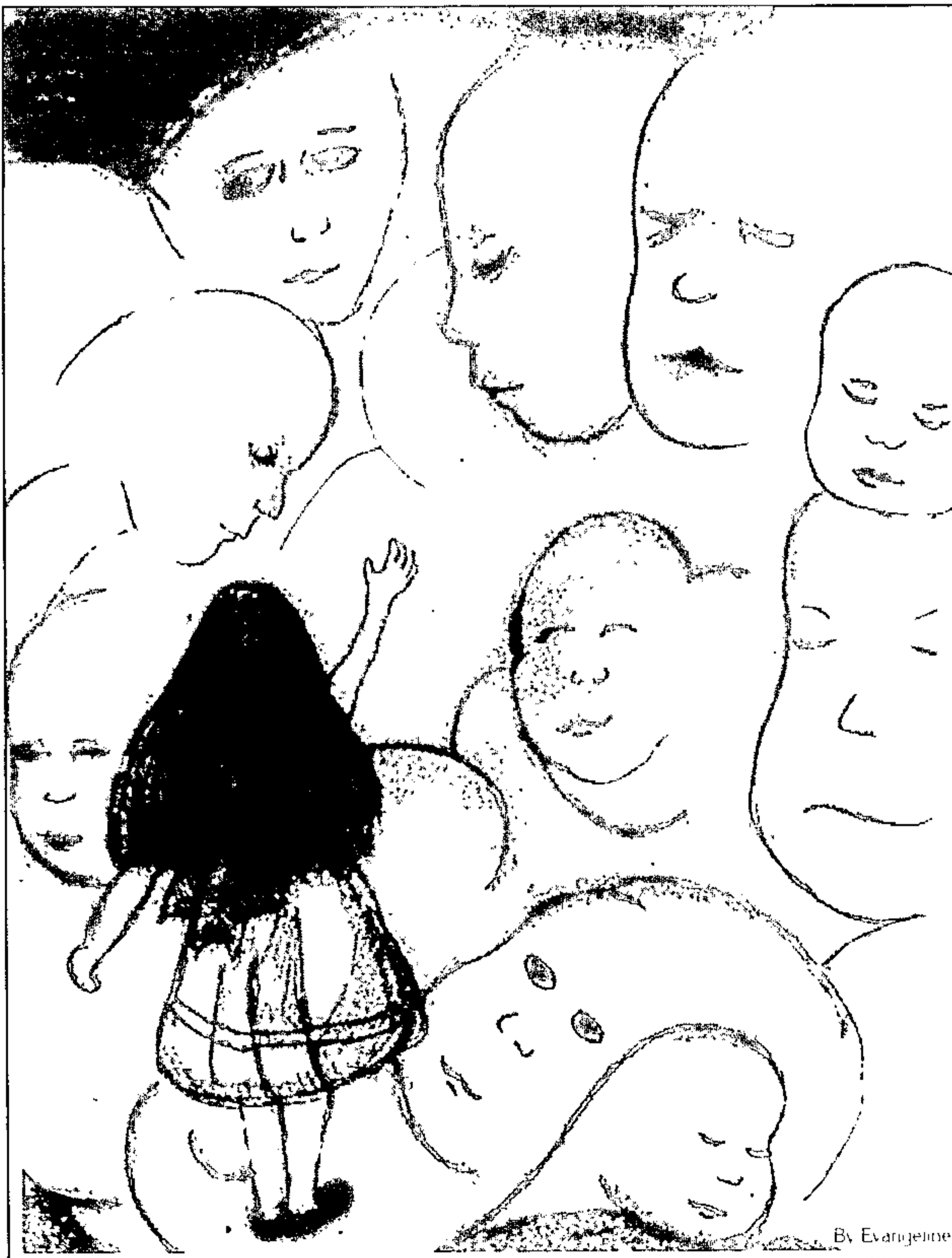
who encourages the growth  
(as much needed)  
supports the dreams  
(when you don't see them)  
and  
enthusiastically embraces the  
whims and fun

I need someone  
who looks at me  
and sees perfection

the rest of the world  
is always there  
to keep me in touch  
with reality...

*By Gaylle W.*

MV



By Evangelina

# Questions to Ask Yourself Before Disclosing, Confronting or Going Public

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**S**urvivors of various forms of abuse often want to disclose their experiences, confront their perpetrators, and/or speak-out about their abuse, in an attempt to try to help educate the public. Often the urge to share personal information about oneself occurs during various stages of healing. From personal experience and talking to other Adult Survivors of childhood abuse, it is suggested that you consider the many questions listed in this article. You may also want to refer to *'The Courage to Heal'* (by Laura Davis and Ellen Bass) and *'The Courage to Heal Workbook'* (by Laura Davis).

Unfortunately, the reality is that our society is NOT very accepting and or understanding to the various issues of Adult Survivors of abuse, especially of Spiritual Abuse and or Sadistic Ritual Abuse (SRA). The majority of the survivors I have spoken to, who have confronted individuals, and or have gone public — shared that they had negative experiences after they have shared their abuse histories with others. These survivors have all been met with disbelief and have been considered to be crazy, hysterical and or delusional. Too often when individuals state that they are Adult Survivors (of incest, cults and or other forms of ritual abuse), they find that they automatically lose credibility.

We, as survivors, cannot be responsible for the reactions of others. What we can do is take control of our actions and be prepared for the outcome if we as an individual decide to share our histories with others. It is also important to be aware and accept, that a vast number of adult survivors of sadistic abuse will not find it to be beneficial to confront, disclose and or go public. It is vital for each individual to decide for them self, and be sure that they are not being pressured to make any decisions. This is a reminder that once you share information about yourself, you can NOT take it back

If you thinking about going public, it is important to consider how you are going to do it

1. Are you going to use your real name or a pseudonym?
2. Will you wear a disguise of some sort?
3. Will you be paid? How much?
4. If you are going on television will the producer of the show agree in writing to use a computer and distort both your voice and face (this is strongly suggested for the beginner)?
5. Will you have to sign a contract or an agreement? What will it say? It is strongly suggested you read the agreement BEFORE the day you are supposed to speak-out!
6. Will your attempt to educate the public cause harm to your credibility? Are you allowing yourself to be exploited?
7. Will it hurt you in your present or future career, social life, family life (including your spouse and children)?

The Following are some questions you can ask yourself to help you make up your mind if disclosing, confronting and or going public is right for you.

*Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper. Think about the following questions and your answers. Share your responses with at least one trusted support person. Ask for Feedback BEFORE you disclose and or confront someone!*

1. Whom do I want to tell? Why?
2. Is someone or something internally/externally pressuring me to disclose my abuse history or confront my perpetrator(s)? Who and or What is pressuring me?
3. If my plans includes going public, what are my motives? (It's suggested you consider all of the following questions before speaking in any public forum).
4. What do I hope to gain from this

disclosure and/or confrontation? What could I lose by this disclosure and/or confrontation? Are my expectations realistic?

5. Have I thought about safety issues? What are they for me?
6. What are my motives for confronting my perpetrators? Do I have to be concerned about my safety?
7. Am I confronting my perpetrator(s) to gain information? Can anyone else supply me with the information I desire?
8. Would I be risking something I still want from my family (i.e. financial and/or emotional support, inheritance, employment in family business, other)?
9. Could I live with the possibility of being excluded from family gatherings (i.e. Holidays, Weddings, Deaths in my family. . .)? What would that mean to me? How would I deal with the loss?
10. Am I willing to take the risk of losing contact with other family members with whom I want to stay connected? What would that mean? How would I deal with the loss?
11. Am I grounded and stable enough to risk being called crazy?
12. Could I maintain my own reality in the face of denial?
13. Can I withstand the anger that I am likely to face from others?
14. Could I handle my own anger and or other feelings? How would I do that?
15. Could I handle no reaction at all?
16. Do I have a solid enough support system to back me up before, during and after the confrontation?
17. Which support people agreed to be available before, during, and after?
18. Can I realistically imagine both the worst and best outcomes that might result? Could I live with either one?

**Disclosing. Cont'd.**

19. How have I prepared myself for the Confrontation and/or disclosure?

20. Other issues I've considered regarding confronting or disclosing my abuse to others.

Remember: It is important that you focus on yourself and your own personal needs before deciding to go disclose, confront and/or go public. This is also true before, during and after any confrontation. Try to remember what you want or need to say (for your own personal needs and not anyone else's), how you want to handle the situation, rather than on any response you may hope to get. Plan to process the confrontation and/or disclosure with your therapist and/or trusted support person(s). Remember, this can be an ongoing task (and that's ok).

MV

**Balancing**

My adult male alters have trouble dealing with female adults.

Our adult female alters are not attracted to men for any reason.

Our children are often open to men and women, when they sense that the adult is "safe."

Most of our friends are women and children. Mainly women.

For example, Jason, 6 years old, talks a lot to women he knows. Less so to men. Very seldom to other child alters, and not at all to children outside of us.

Gwen, 5 years old, and Allison, 3-1/2 years old, love to sing to me, my life partner, our psychiatrist and therapist—all women.

Jordan, 14 year old alter, teases Jason mercilessly.

I'm not sure how "balanced" we all are, but we do value and respect each other, and living as a community is satisfying and fulfilling.

By Sally B.

MV

**MANY THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS!**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

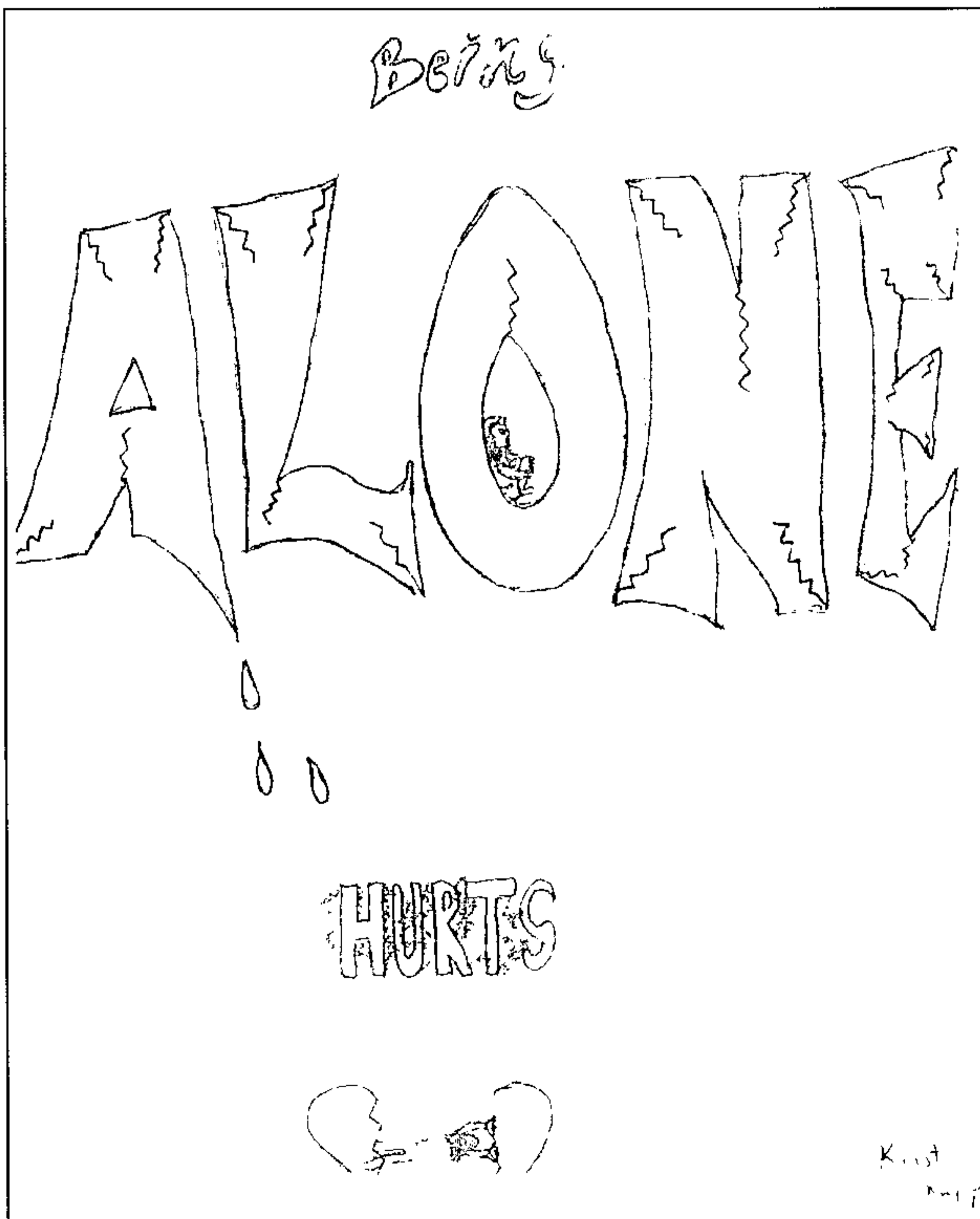
Call David Tate: (816) 356-5688 or (800) 225-8577

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

Call Larry Spinosa: (800) 437-5478

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



Krist  
2004

## Support – Where You Find It and More

**Editor's Note** Last year I asked several people if they had used support options in their communities. Here are a few responses. I urge you to write to me if you have other experiences or ideas. People frequently call MV, searching for supportive groups and agencies of all kinds. This is an on-going need. I'd love to receive input anytime. – Lynn W.

### Because I have multiple sclerosis

I'm on an online MS group. I'm manager of one for people with progressive MS (different from other MS). PMSSG is only for people who are diagnosed with progressive MS. Rules for support? We want folks to speak their minds, but if they disagree with others, we ask them to remember to attack the problem, not the person. It is a very safe group and I feel very good being there.

I do not go on-line with DID groups. I feel too nervous to do this. I need a more personal touch with that. The people at PMSSG know I had an abusive childhood, but we do not speak of it much. I enjoy having other things to talk about. It helps me have a more rounded life than I have had for many years. It's funny how MS plagued me, but also brought wonderful folks into my life.

The only support group I went to before I got MS was associated with the local rape and domestic violence center in my town. It was not just for multiples, but for incest survivors in general. I received help from it for about seven years. I liked it mostly because it was small and personal. When I needed them, I could find one of the counselors to help out. They also filled in when my therapist was on vacation.

*By Becky*



**I attend a support group** at RISE here at home which I find very useful. RISE is the local Rape Information Survivor of Sexual Abuse agency. They are affiliated with Planned Parenthood, I think, and are funded by the state. They are very good at assisting people (male or female) through the system if they're planning to take the perpetrator to court, as well as

providing counseling and/or assisting them to get outside counseling. They have programs for adults and adolescents, and have a rape hot line 24 hours a day.

I believe that Planned Parenthood in other cities can steer people to comparable agencies. I find from my own experience that this seems to be better than going through the Mental Health system, as that group is often overloaded and (this is my stuff) not as emotionally available as the RISE people. In New York the state is slashing funding to the mental health system and its hospitals, therapists are carrying ridiculous caseloads and perhaps don't have the energy to invest in survivors.

*By Rene*



**My insecurities come floating** to the top in a group and then, I go nuts. I start feeling that I talk too much and what I say is stupid. That's a major "yuck" from when I was a kid. When I was 4 or 5 I tried to tell my Aunt something and she told my mother that if I kept saying these stupid things she will not take me out ever again. This stayed with me and of course I never opened my mouth up again.

Regarding advocacy groups: One wise therapist once said, "Sharing with others who share is safe, as opposed to sharing with those who don't share." Unfortunately, I was in a group once where a woman shared much more than anyone could want shared. Later on I found out she was not dissociative but was pretty sick. She created her stories to be a part of this group. It was a support group that lasted for only a year or two.

From my experience, codependence groups are the most wonderful healing groups. I literally

went probably seven days a week for about six years. Every part of my system was so controlling, so codependent, and this was a wonderful way to get lots of healing. Safe sharing with people who have been abused one way or another, some with memories, some without.

One place I really like: The Dominican Retreat in Miami has a weekend retreat around Memorial Day each year. It is an amazing, healing place, as safe as you can get.

*By M.D.*



**There are a couple MSN (online)** groups that I read in daily digest form. SurvivorResourceCenter([www.msnusers.com](http://www.msnusers.com)), ManySelves([www.msnusers.com](http://www.msnusers.com)), HealingTogether([www.msnusers.com](http://www.msnusers.com))

On Yahoo there are sites like Notquiteplural that I haven't been to for awhile. We all pretty much do the same things. We just let people share what is going on inside.

*By Jacki S.*

*(Jacki also has her own group: <http://ladyjtalks.healthyplace2.com/> Check it out!)*



**Among online sites,** my only recommendation is *The Wounded Healer Journal* (<http://www.twhj.com>) I have checked out dozens of sites since discovering *The Journal* and none of them even come close. They cover a wide range of topics, most dealing with abuse. There is a category specifically for people with DID. It is still the most active forum on abuse issues I have ever come across. You can read without

registering. Posting requires free registration. You can use any username you wish, and are also given a password. I used to be a very active member. I moved from needing support a lot to giving support the majority of the time. I really enjoyed being able to give that support. The last couple of years, however, I began to feel like I had outgrown them a bit. I started posting and reading less, until I don't much at all any more. This is not the fault of TWHJ. As I continue to heal, I just don't need the support as much.

I also have fibromyalgia, which has changed my priorities a great deal. I have moved to other message boards dealing more with the fibro and lighter topics, such as pets. I did check out the forums to see if the quality was still the same and was not disappointed. They are still the best source of support for DID and other abuse issues.

*By Hannah D.*



**The only advice I can give is,** if you want a good survivor advocacy group to help you, don't move to or live in Washington State, where I live. My current and past therapists have always said that Washington State is the worst state, generally, in which to be mentally ill. There is virtually no place to go. The few places that say they work for the mentally ill are too overwhelmed to do anything, and Washington State provides almost no money (but lots of legislature talk and voting and release of mission statements). I personally went to four or five in King County (the biggest population and politically-connected county) and discovered several bad things: I had a wait of a minimum of three months to see someone; when I did see someone, that someone usually had her hair pulled back in a messy dirty pigtail, she was usually wearing a sweat suit (gray), never gave me eye contact, met me in a borrowed office or supply room, came in with a stuffed case or large purse loaded with files and paperwork, gave

me 15 minutes of her time and made an appointment for me to see a REAL shrink in 3-6 months time, telling me that further services depended on my follow-up of seeing the shrink. HE usually was a fat, balding, bad-suit guy who was vaguely or not-so-vaguely abusive, who kept interrupting me and telling me I didn't know what I was talking about. He usually did not even read my paperwork, which consisted of 20 or so pages I had to fill out in my first visit, about work and medical history, and the problems (if any) I had functioning.

After trying several of these "recommended" places, I went to my Native American place, which has a building in Seattle. I tried out their widely-advertised services for the mentally ill. It was worse than the state/county/Seattle-sponsored places. One of the things that really stuck in my mind was all of the psych help were white, and exactly the same as the other places—a young harassed woman to meet first, a fat, unsuccessful-acting man to see later. Most of their clients were drunk men and women abusers, who were mostly recommended to go to Spirit Dances, Spirit Walks and Spirit Singing. They waited in the same areas as abused children and women.

I was lucky. I got a job which had insurance, and later when I could not work and went on SSD, my therapist agreed to take me on as a non-paying client. You could not get any luckier than me.

*By The Sunflower House*



**Surprisingly, I am not aware** of any survivor advocacy groups. I think the operative word here is "advocacy." As I understand that word, advocate means "to promote the welfare of." I'm a bit involved with survivor groups that are self-help groups, but I don't even know of any that advocate anything.

I recall a warning from my former therapist about getting together with other survivors. He said that the

people in those groups all have mental health problems and issues from their pasts. If they didn't, they wouldn't be a part of such groups. He then added that I might discover that the people are sicker than I and that certainly would not be helpful to me.

My experience in these forums is that some of the people are a mess, and some are quite stable. But those who still are a mess can upset me greatly. The forums are interesting, but they should come with warning signs. No matter. Thank you for listing them in your publication. I often feel like the walking wounded—damaged, yes, but not nearly as badly as most.

*By G. B.*

MV

## *A Short Lesson in Basic Repression*

If your "being" they reject  
You can simply disconnect.  
Cease to be so deeply true  
And hide yourself by all you do.

If your "being" starts reacting  
Repressing skills may yet be lacking.  
Bind and gag that inner you  
Before her voice starts breaking through.

If your feelings cause some trouble  
Numb them quickly, on the double.  
If physically you then react  
Control it with your intellect.

Although this method sounds appealing  
It's who you are that you're concealing.  
If it were safe to truly "be"  
Then who you are could be set free.

There is One who can connect you  
Who accepts and won't reject you.  
You connect to this Connector  
By accepting this Acceptor

*By "My Heart" (and Judy W)*

MV

# Therapists' Page

Michael J. Salamon, Ph.D.

Dr. Salamon, a psychologist, is the Director of the Adult Developmental Center, (ADC) and is on the Board of The Awareness Center. He is working on a book about revenge and is seeking insights, anecdotes and comments about this topic. He can be contacted at the ADC webpage [www.psychologicalhelp.org](http://www.psychologicalhelp.org) or through [www.TheAwarenessCenter.org](http://www.TheAwarenessCenter.org).

## The Desire for Revenge

The desire to seek revenge when one feels wronged is both promoted and shunned. It is perhaps one of the primary motivators of the human race, yet it is one of the least studied. Revenge is both a feeling and an act which is extremely common yet, we are commanded not to seek it. It is perhaps, because of this command that revenge has not been explored psychologically.

All relationships are based upon reciprocity so it should follow that experiencing a trauma would evoke a response no less than experiencing a positive event. Therefore, the need for revenge should be understood and dealt with

I believe that revenge, while innate, is a multidimensional concept that is based upon the spheres of individual, social and cultural experiences to which an individual is exposed. While the feeling of revenge is likely innate, seeing others hurt and reacting to that hurt provides the model for our own revenge behaviors. However, it is important to point out that not all revenge behaviors are externalized.

In addition to the spheres of revenge I have found that there exists a Continuum of Tolerance. By tolerance I am not suggesting that an abused individual can or should tolerate abuse. Rather, in the context of revenge tolerance refers to an individual's ability to tolerate stressors and strategize the most acceptable response. The five non-linear steps or stages in this continuum are: Repression, Suppression, Absolution, Mitigation and Anger. Using these stages as a model can help explain how individuals who have been traumatized develop certain characteristic and reactive behaviors.

In the stage of Repression an unconscious defense mechanism allows for a forgetting of the trauma to occur. Because it is unconscious, it is believed that the process of repression cannot be overcome. However, if it is not brought to consciousness the trauma exerts a horrific degree of control over the traumatized individual's behaviors.

Those who use Suppression are believed to have a more conscious awareness of their traumas but try to defend themselves from them by concealing them. The fact that the trauma is not being addressed appropriately on a conscious level also results in the possibility of revictimization.

The third stage of the continuum, Absolution allows for the conscious acknowledgement of the traumatic events. Unfortunately in this stage, revenge is immediately muted by absolving the perpetrator of the wrong that was done. Thus, in the first three stages of this model, the inability to react to the wrong causes a sense of helplessness. This helplessness can result in a turning inward of the need to act resulting in self-destructive thoughts or behavior. If there is no way to acknowledge or to react to the external then the only means left is to take it out on oneself. Healthy outcomes depend on channeling the need for action into self-preservation, as we will shortly see.

Mitigation is a stage in which actions to deal with trauma and enforce revenge can begin because there is conscious awareness and no absolution for the perpetrator. This can be an ambivalent state though, because while there is acknowledgement of the pain, suffering and the actual perpetrator, lessening of the effect can cause the internal conflict to fester and result in

negative acting out behaviors and emotional distress.

It is only in the final stage where Anger is accepted and acknowledged that the true healing for an abused individual can occur. Anger does not however rationalize a negative behavior. Acceptance of anger, if properly directed, can be channeled into constructive actions and true healing. If anger is channeled toward self-aggrandizement much energy is wasted leaving little for self-improvement. Self-aggrandizement behaviors are those that put one's ego ahead of the need for healing. There is an internal statement made that says "I will get back at the person that has hurt me." A truly therapeutic use of revenge would be to channel anger into self-preservation. This approach toward seeking justice is a statement that there can be no forgetting, whether conscious or not, no absolution, not even mitigation. But, there is awareness that actions to improve one's life and the lives of others are supreme. When one uses the anger of revenge for self-preservation we find that individual is one who goes on to become better educated, contributes more to society and works to prevent any further outcomes.

Individuals who have been abused as children who have never gotten to the stage of anger carry emotional scars that impact their emotional well-being for many years. The connection between the cause for anger and the desire for revenge may not be evident. Thus the true direction for healing is one that begins with an acceptance of anger, an understanding of its source and a desire for the appropriate revenge. Channeling that need for revenge into self-preservative outcomes are the most acceptable forms of coping with the traumas one has experienced.

## NY Support Pros Wanted

By Dana Snyder, MSW, LCSW

In New York, the Long Island New York Society for the Study of Multiple Personality & Dissociation groups (NYSSMP&D) meet monthly in Copiague and Huntington.

The New York City group has had a hard time of it, what with the war and 9/11. We can no longer meet at Columbia, as they have tightened their security and no longer allow outside groups to hold meetings, even ones that have been there for many years without incident.

It is also very difficult to find professionals willing to get involved. I feel that a professional should be available to problem-solve with support groups, if necessary. If I could get ten professionals to offer one day a year, I would be happy. Even five. I will do some, but those professionals who used to run NYSSMP&D with me were from outside the New York City area and no one wants to go in if they can help it. I just can't do it all myself. Best I can say is, I am working on it. I hope to get something together soon.

ISSD (International Society for the Study of Dissociation) does not have a great deal of comfortability with the combined format we have always used (including both clients and professionals at meetings) and our philosophy that professionals and clients can learn from each other. I have my work cut out for me, it seems. It's a shame. I must get a phone call a week from someone who wants to join the discussion group.

*(Professionals who might want to assist Dana in working with the NY support groups, or who have ideas to share, may call her at 516-623-3989, or contact Laura Beck, at 212-787-0173).*

MV

## Recovering

By Ammelia

To MV readers: My life is so different now. I rarely go to therapy. Life in and of itself has become healing and restorative. I moved on in the very real meaning of those words.

The time of intense healing, pain, therapy and confusion was done a while ago. I don't need to describe how difficult and painful parts of that journey were for me. All of you know. That time of healing spanned most of my adult life—totally 11 years. Because of the effects of severe trauma and torture and how complicated life can become with multiple personalities, I have spent most of my adult life on disability benefits.

I am not even sure what I want to say, other than I can do so many amazing things now and can live freely. Some of what I can do are things that many non-traumatized people take for granted. I go to work. I graduated from college. I eat healthy food regularly. I sleep.

Other things I do are out-of-this-world fun. I am a fire dancer. I do

yoga. I have a puppy who as cute as anything and just as much trouble. I cross country ski. I can think about if I want to have children. I climb.

We don't punish ourselves. I have friends. I feel this balance inside that is healthy.

As I was scrolling through MV's website I realized what a long time it has been since I have read MV and even longer since I sent something in. To write this feels like the second part of the journey towards health. The first part was to drag myself through and anyone else who was around and the second part is to turn around and look behind to see who needs a leg up.

If I could pour my heart out and offer great healing words I would. When I try to think about them I am stuck. What is the magic answer? What helps people come through the kind of times that we have to go through? I can offer no advice except to keep going, because I know what we have is really worth it.

MV



## Life is Like the River

By JoEllen

**N**avigating this river of life is full of surprises, twists and turns. Which is precisely why for most of my life I have been so reluctant to join it.

For most of my years I have sat huddled on its banks under a flimsy shelter I created for myself. After all, it was this very river that nearly took my life.

I had once struggled to free myself from the death grip of its fearsome monsters. I barely escaped, dragging my bleeding, dripping body to a safe shore.

And there on that shore under my protective shelter I huddled, year after year. I constantly repaired my comfortable shelter from the spray of that angry river. I was certain that this was the only way to survive.

I enjoyed watching the ones I loved splash playfully in the cool, still pool. And I peeked through trembling fingers as they courageously navigated its treacherous, terrifying rapids. I sighed in relief as they emerged, celebrated, oars lifted high, shouting victory.

My children and husband could not understand my fearful reluctance to live in the river of life with them. But of course, they didn't know the horrible story of my life nearly sucked away in its vicious torrents.

I had attempted to protect them from the deadly river, but they saw all the life living in the river brought, and thrilled in its refreshment. Still I remained huddled on its shore bound in comforting blankets of fear.

However, recently I finally garnered the courage to take what seemed was the fatal plunge into life's mysterious depths. I could no longer ignore the pleas of my family to join them.

To my surprise, I am actually enjoying life in the river! I thrill at its twists and turns. It is exciting and exhilarating and sometimes frightening. But I now have the skills to master its dangerous rapids

While on the safety of the shore a Master of this river taught me all I

needed to not only survive but conquer this monster that once dared me to even dip a toe into its rippled surface.

It took years of training and practice, first with the security of flotation devices and always with suspicion and caution. I spent years splashing in its shallows, always waiting for its monster to rear its ominous head and pull me to my death.

But alas, I have never seen such a monster, only small ones with no teeth that seem more frightened of me than I of them.

There is one danger in this river that seems peculiar only to me. There is the awful swirling whirlpool. Sometimes I accidentally float too near its suction and hang precariously from a nearby limb to escape its deadly pull. I fight for my life on this limb, because there is no escape from its swirling depths.

The whirlpool sucks life from its victims. They die a slow, suffocating death. Each gasp for air only aspirates the poisonous fluid of a lost will to live.

I refuse and fight with all my strength not to be drowned. I grab the saving hand of a nearby friend and am rescued.

I can no longer return to my shoreline shelter. It has long been destroyed. I no longer even desire its protection. I much prefer to splash in the river of life with most of all humankind.

I am strong. I am capable of navigating the river of life's most difficult rapids! I now anxiously anticipate the new adventure that lies beyond each bend!

MV

## A Message Of Hope

Cold winter - bitter  
branches dead  
trees standing  
not proud and tall  
not blossoming  
cold and frigid  
during the winter days.

Tree - what gives you courage  
when all is cold outside?  
Why do you not break  
under the  
bitterness?  
Do you not despair  
when you do not bloom?  
when there is no color,  
no life blossoming forth  
from your branches?

You see a cold, dead looking tree.  
branches bare, no life you say?  
Well I endure the winter.  
I remain standing. I may not  
seem tall and proud, but I do not break  
I do not collapse.  
My bark is strong,  
my roots stretching  
grasping firmly  
deep into the ground.

In the cold winter night  
I endure  
because I know what follows the winter  
You do not see the color  
the life blossoming forth  
but I know of a season to come  
and if I break now,  
if I collapse  
I will never feel the warm  
sunshine of the spring.

So all I must do is endure?  
But I am not thriving  
I am not blossoming.

In the cold winter  
my fruits  
don't show  
But on the inside  
I am not broken.

Stay with the bitter cold  
endure  
because the Spring  
will come.

By Chaya T.

MV



## The Corner Served Us Well

A Survivor's attempt to lay down

By Sofee

Afraid to lay down or go to bed day and night  
The clouds of force ever new...a cyclone's press all about.  
No skies to see behind these chaotic clouds that rage,  
They are blinding terrors knit tightly by our tears.

I ask each tear, each shake and tremble nigh,  
"What is it now that's screaming to be heard?  
Please stop the sounds, there's no bed here,  
Just your friendly stuffed animals and you on the floor,  
Just the pills your doctor said to take and be still,  
Just this comforter quilt that really should be safe—  
All in a corner, our corner out of sight."

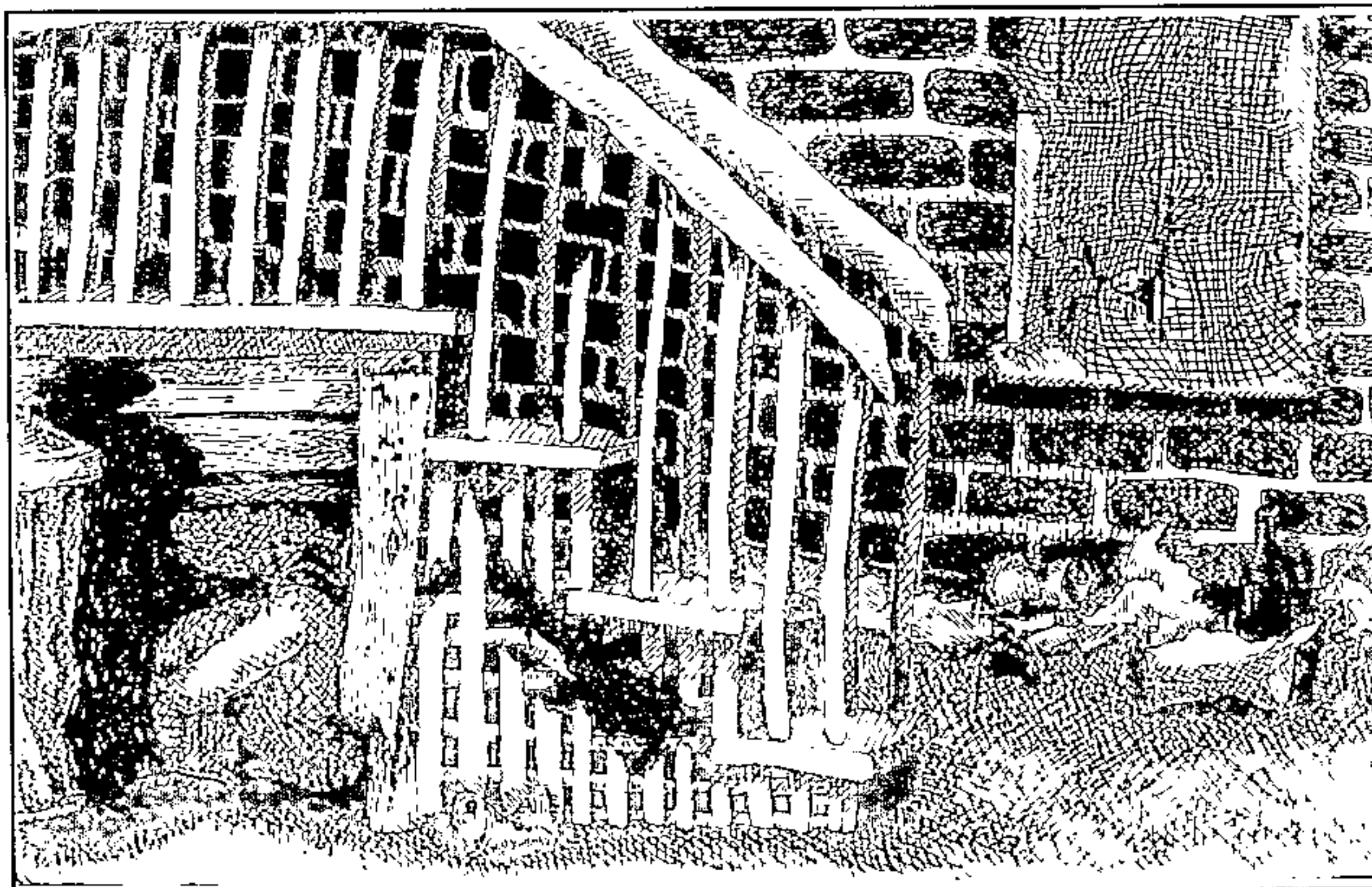
But "Wait." you say. "We're more than this quaking plagued shell,  
We have rooms closets and basements too—  
Places we've been but are lost getting out."  
So we rock, we whimper, we cry; can anyone see?  
No, because we've hidden ourselves inside and out.

But that's okay because together we've built us a fort  
With tightly fitted walls and tiny places close.  
We try to lay down though we rock in horrid fears,  
It's a kaleidoscope nightmare at high speed,  
Gale hurricane forces that gag our mouths shut  
Causing eyes in raw shock to not risk closing at all.

We remind ourselves, "At least most of us is hidden in our fort—  
out of evil's hands;  
What's left unprotected in the vicious land outside our fort  
I pray it find a way to survive...after all, it's still a part of us."  
We're always surprised when the dawn finally comes  
And we're still in one piece; I wish we had PEACE.

The corner served us well one more time.

MV



By M E K

## Good News

I am entering six of my poems in an Art festival here where I live. They are going to be mounted.

The ones we selected are "My Struggle", "Special Angels", "Butterflies", "Brave Little Girl", "Waterfalls", and "In My Own Time".

I think these show how far I have come in my healing, and people can relate to them.

By Mary G.

*Congratulations to Mary for not only writing her poems but getting up the nerve to submit them to an art festival. Sharing work with others helps us all!*

*Which reminds me—we REALLY need prose (all kinds, short or long) and artwork. We're fairly well-stocked with poems, yet remain interested in seeing those too. But for right now, think about the problems you're working on or managed to solve and write it down for MV. You don't have to have all the "answers"...we welcome the questions and concerns, too. Thanks SO much for sharing with your friends, the readers of MV*

— Lynn W., Editor

MV

## Cry

A lot of times I am laughing  
On the outside and crying on  
The inside.  
It has become a way of life  
For me.  
Sometimes it is hard for me to  
Cry, and let people see.  
I may get laughed at or told  
I am weak.  
I long for the day when I can  
Let go and cry like other  
People do.

By Patricia R

MV

## Jen's Healing Journey

By Jen for MyCircleOfLife

These poems express our healing journey, from when we were first diagnosed 10+ years ago, to where we are today, to where we hope we will be as we continue to heal from the horrors of our life from age 3 to 18.

### Healing (1995)

I smile  
so no one sees my tears;  
so no one hears my cries;  
so no one knows my pain.

I speak  
and someone listens to me;  
and someone hears me;  
and someone cares about me.

I cry  
and gentle arms hold me,  
and love finds me;  
and I begin to heal

I laugh  
because I'm happy;  
because I'm whole;  
because life is good.

I smile  
and know I never have to hide again

### My Soul Begins to Mend (2000)

Running, always running,  
Trying to find somewhere to hide.  
Trying to ignore and to forget  
The pain and fear I feel inside.  
Seeking, searching for a cure,  
A way to ease the fear and pain:  
Some balm to soothe my wounded  
soul.  
My broken heart to mend.  
Not knowing where to look or search  
To find that which I seek.  
Someone reaches out and takes my  
hand.  
And suddenly I'm free.  
Freed, for a moment, from the fear,  
Freed from the pain within.  
Wrapped in kindness,  
Wrapped in love,  
By a gentle, caring friend.  
Hope lights anew within my heart  
My soul begins to mend.

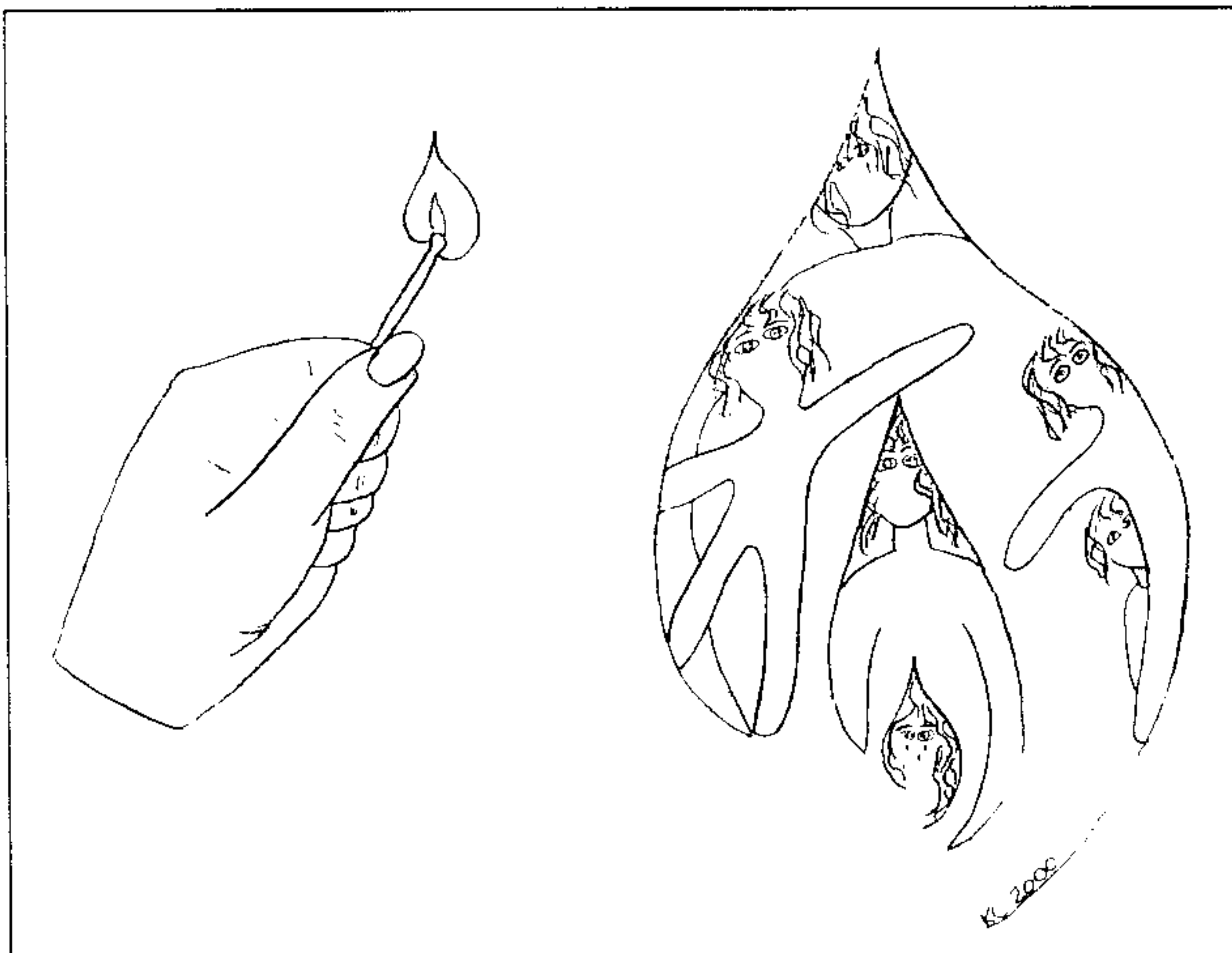
### Change (2002)

I turn my face from things past  
From the anguish and pain and grief.  
Breaking the chains that held me  
down;  
Escaping their power over me.

I turn my face toward today,  
To things that are now before me.  
The challenges, trial, and daily  
growth,  
And fleeting moments of peace.

I turn my face toward tomorrow,  
To promises of things yet to be.  
Seeking the person within my soul  
The woman I'm meant to be.

MV



### Breaking Silence

Breaking my Silence was a very hard thing to do but it was well worth it.

Had to free myself from all that happened in my past. Had to find my inner peace that was inside for so long, but I had trouble unlocking the door.

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

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

By Mary G.

MV

# Gender and System 19

By Hilary T. for Roland

I live with a bunch of girls! I am Roland. I am one of three male members of a system of 19. I'm also the only one who's old enough to notice the difference between genders. Or at least, I am the only one who seems to take certain issue with our outnumbering counterparts, the girls. Balance has often been a topic of inspired debates among us. (To put it kindly).

As each one of us began to come forward and introduce ourselves to one another, age old struggles suddenly had faces to go with them. The issues weren't only with those of another gender; everyone had issues with everyone about nearly everything. The real issue was who was going to control the body. It didn't matter, male or female, we all fought tooth and nail for up-front space. Each one of us believed that only themselves knew best how to occupy our time.

We used to fight over who was who, or allowed to act how. Learning to share, and become empathic and try to understand each other's reasons for being and behaving has made us all a lot more appreciative of each one of our unique qualities, even gender. For instance, I am relied upon, under certain circumstances, for safe driving, and I'm resident bug eliminator.

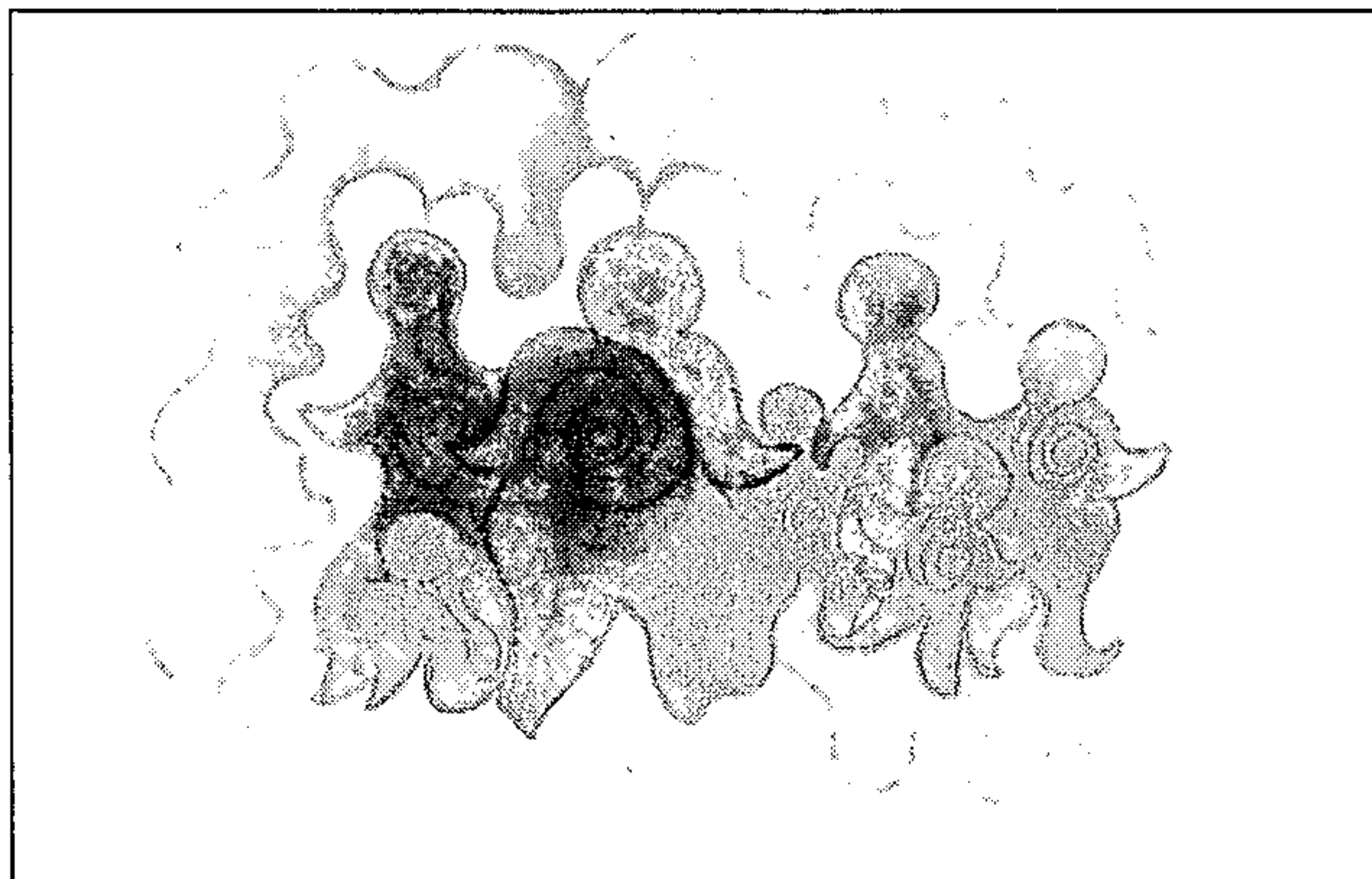
I tend to find it much easier to find

things in common with young men, rather than women. I used to often have a problem with our other parts' girlish and feminine ways, such as nail polish, hair spray and high heeled shoes...these things would send me reeling.

The biggest gender challenge for me has been the astonishing realization that I am not in the body of a boy. I was shocked. I still struggle with this aspect of myself that is not there, when I feel so strongly that it is...having a gender, but not having it at the same time.

The others have been a great support, though. They allow me to be who I am, no challenges. We all work hard at being who we are and respecting that to the fullest, without judgment. The goal of each System member is to "be who we want to be, to be Who we are." It seems to be making everyone happier, or coming to a place that's leading up to that. Respect goes a long way to reaching a place with equality. It has with us. We have learned to treasure the differences between us, whether it be gender or hobbies. It is the differences among us that make up this self. It is simply "who we are".

MV



## "How Are You?"

"How are you?" he asks. it is a simple, ordinary, everyday type of question

but it is not simple, ordinary, or everyday for me for within me, every Part reacts, responds, roars to life each with it's own reality, its own pain, its own needs, its own desires, its own past, present, and future

some leap with joy, expectation, and hope

"You care about me?" they plead. "You really care?"

but it is a simple, ordinary, everyday type of question it is not about that kind of caring

"Why do you care?" others sullenly assault.

"What's it to you? Why should I tell you?"

the silent accusations tumble out in a jumbled torrent of pain and confusion but it is a simple, ordinary, everyday type of question

"How do I answer that?" other Parts question.

"If I'm honest, I'll expose myself. Protect, protect, protect at all costs. If I don't answer with feeling, with me, he'll be more convinced that I am nothing, that I don't exist. But what to say?"

How do I protect and open up at the same time? That is my quandary.

"How are you?" he asks. it is a simple, ordinary, everyday type of question and once again I am left alone, confused, wanting, needing, feeling, emoting a multiplicity of reactions for a multiplicity of Parts all of whom are somehow me and yet not me

"How are you?" you ask. it is a simple, ordinary, everyday type of question

*By addi gabrielle moore*

MV

## Easter Egg Child

By Mary Katherine Powers

Once upon a time there was a little girl who had lived inside of an Easter egg for as long as she could remember. This was not any ordinary Easter egg; it was special. A tiny hole had been made at each end and through these holes the yolk had been blown out. The outside of the egg was painted with intertwining yellow, pink, red, and orange roses. Most importantly, there was a special scene inside.

The little girl loved the scene, for she had created it. There was a tiny hill, with a house at the top. Grass grew everywhere, and behind the house was a beautiful garden full of flowers. At the bottom of the hill was a little lake where swans and ducks swam.

Inside the egg, the sun always shone and it was always pleasantly warm. The girl loved to run up and down the hill and play inside the garden. Sometimes she sat by the lake, which was always just cool enough to be comfortable, and watched the swans and ducks.

And when she got bored of being outside, she could always go inside the house, which was her very own. The outside of the house was white clapboard with blue trimming. Electric candles illuminated the windows, which always made her feel welcome. She loved having a house of her very own.

The living room contained a blue spruce tree that was always decorated for Christmas, all in blue, which was the little girl's favorite color. It seemed that every shade of blue, from the palest of sky blues to the deepest royal blue, was represented on that tree, and the lights were a beautiful robin's egg blue. There were presents under the tree wrapped in silver and tied with iridescent blue bows, which the girl loved to look at but never opened. Just seeing them in their shiny silver paper with the beautiful bows was enough. In this room was a rocking chair, and the girl could sit and rock and look at the tree to her heart's content.

In the kitchen of this house was a basket, which was filled with beautiful ribbons of all colors. These ribbons were every color, from the palest of pinks to the deepest blues and the darkest of greens. They could be shiny or matte, but they were all beautiful. The little girl loved to spread them out on the table and look at them. Seeing them all laid out always made her feel good.

On the kitchen table was a vase filled with yellow roses, the little girl's favorite. Sometimes she would take one out and smell it and twirl it around for awhile before returning it. In this perfect world inside the egg, the roses never faded.

The house also contained a library, with floor-to-ceiling bookcases filled with books on every conceivable topic. The girl loved to read, and her favorite books were books on art. Of all of those books, her favorite was a book with Impressionist-style paintings of cherry trees. She loved looking at the cherry blossoms in bloom, and their beauty seemed to represent Heaven on Earth.

There were some disadvantages to life inside the egg, despite the ever-present beauty. Upstairs there was a comfortable bed with white pillows and soft blankets, but sometimes it was hard to sleep because the sun always shone. Sometimes the girl longed to see the moon and stars, but it had been so long since she had seen them that she barely remembered what they looked like.

Another disadvantage was that there was no one to talk to except for Sheila, a bunny who lived inside the egg. The girl had wished for a rabbit companion and had gotten one, but she often wished that she had also asked for another little girl to talk to. Sheila was nice but her conversation usually centered around carrots, which could be quite boring to the little girl.

This girl knew that there was something wrong with her life inside the egg, though it was idyllic. Long

ago, she had been a girl in the real world, not the Easter egg world. But in the real world it was not safe to be a girl, so she had split herself in two. One part of her stayed out in the real world so no one would suspect anything was wrong. The other, more vulnerable part had created her own special scene inside the egg and had hidden there for many years.

Meanwhile, in the real world, time passed, and the outside girl was now a woman. So much time had passed, the woman had forgotten that there was another part of herself hidden inside an egg. Sometimes, vaguely, she thought that an important part of herself was missing, but she never thought about it too long. She preferred to pretend that all was well in the outside world, although she often felt quite hollow.

Then one day, the woman found a teacher to help her with her feelings of emptiness so she could live in the real world as others did. This teacher pointed out that the woman kept her little-girl self hidden away, so that no one could find her anymore. The woman then remembered the Easter egg, which allowed her to see the little girl for the first time in over twenty years. She tried to talk to the girl, but no sound could get through the egg.

The little girl saw the woman as well, and realized she had a decision to make. Should she stay in her idyllic, but lonely, world inside the egg, or should she trust that the real world was less frightening now and join the woman on the outside? This decision took much thought but eventually she realized that life on the outside was just too enticing to pass up. At least out there, things changed. The little girl had known more than twenty years of total sameness, and she was often quite bored.

The little girl broke the glass panel which had allowed the woman to see inside the egg, and the woman and girl embraced. At this moment, the split that had happened so many years before was ended, and the little girl became part of the woman.

**Easter Egg, Cont'd.**

She did not die, however, and her influence is still strong. If you happen to see a woman collecting ribbons in a basket, and wearing them on her blouses, and collecting books on art, it is safe to say that this woman is listening intently to the desires of the little girl inside her. In the real world, there is not the static beauty of life inside the egg, but there is the chance to add beauty to one's real environment, which both the woman and the girl appreciate.

Additionally, the little girl retains her fondness for yellow roses. Sometimes the woman buys a bunch of yellow roses from the florist, and she twirls one in her hands, thinking of the idyllic fantasy life that part of her experienced, at the cost of separateness from the rest of her. As she returns the yellow rose to the bunch, she thinks that wholeness in the real world is preferable to having a lost part of her living an idyllic unchanging fantasy. The little girl agrees.

MV

The children  
are beginning to gather  
in a rag tag assembly  
of tough little girls  
and fragile weeping ones  
Women who once raged  
daily  
at an enemy  
cloaked in darkness  
are now beginning  
to paint a canvas  
in brighter colors  
Strong, angry survivors  
nowhold the hands  
of still frightened children  
introducing them to playgrounds  
and tweety bird.

Epitaphs  
sworn at innocents  
still echo  
in the minds and hearts  
of almost everyone  
Slowly, though  
soft sounds  
playing in the background  
soothe tired spirits  
as throbbing ears  
begin to hear at long last

**The Beginning**

words of comfort  
and songs of hope.

The children  
are beginning to see  
and be seen  
by each other  
and a chosen few  
who hear their voices  
see their pain  
feel their sorrow  
and do not turn away  
Tiny buds of trust  
and truth  
are opening  
providing shelter  
in strong branches  
for the butterfly children  
now emerging from cocoons  
blinking in the sun  
still afraid of straying  
too far from the cocoon.

The children  
are beginning to join hands  
in the meadow of healing  
and risk facing tomorrow.

By Hannah D.

MV**Survivors**

Young faces, dark circles beneath eyes that are old  
used  
without innocence

These are the children  
who lost their childhoods to adult children

These are the children who are the loners  
who write poetry and draw pictures  
to relieve the anger of crusty old wounds  
oozing with pain and tears backed up  
behind dams of tension and grief  
unshed for fear that yet another mass  
of horrid new memories will be added  
to the overflowing chambers within the mind  
to mingle with old memories  
slipping out, escaping rapidly, yet with great struggle

These are the children who struggle  
through thorn-riddled paths  
toward change  
in a world where death is easier than change.

These are the children who create change.

By C. J. Wilson © 1987

MV

## *It's Okay to Be Alive*

No matter what was your hell, it's okay to tell, it's okay to be alive  
 You may wonder why, but we many never know why, and is it important, that important?  
 What answer you hear, could it ever be good enough? We know not why, and we will never know even on the day we die  
 It only matters that we try, try to heal, take this journey to heal  
 And on this journey, be gentle with you, take time to breathe, when you get a break  
 Gather your strength for the next onslaught of fear, and terror, the nightmares, the flashbacks  
 Gather your strength to heal, for we all want to know what it is to live before we die

It's okay to be alive, it's okay to say no, I can't do that today, I am too tired, I need to rest  
 It's okay to be kind to you, to comfort you, to savor the things you like best  
 A walk in the woods, a ride in the car, a trip to the store to just stand and look at things you like to eat  
 A day spent resting, relaxing as best you can, a day spent reading, writing, watching the sky, the clouds as they move along, the sun that shines and warms the earth  
 The sound of water flowing over rocks in a creek bed  
 The sound of birds singing in the trees, it sounds like an orchestra, doesn't it?  
 Notice the green of the grass, and the pines, see the shapes of the clouds as they go by

Look, feel, breathe the air, is it cold, or warm, notice the day, it's okay  
 Take the day, a day for you, see it, hear it, feel it, and let it breathe life into you  
 Find a feather and pick it up, crunch the leaves on the ground, touch the earth, feel the ground beneath your feet  
 Watch you move along the earth's blanket, watch your hands as they open and close  
 stretch your body to the sky, it's okay to be alive  
 Count your fingers, count your toes, it's today, not yesterday, today belongs to you  
 It's okay to be alive, it's okay to be good to you

Take a deep breath, and think, think of what you like best, learn these things, and keep them close  
 Remember to think of you, think of all you would have done, if only you knew how to have fun  
 Learn now, this is your chance, your moment in time, your life, no longer must you survive  
 It's okay to be alive

We send you a cloud, a soft, white fluffy cloud, to wrap around you, to comfort you, to protect you, to keep you safe, and warm, we send you this cloud, today and every day  
 It's okay to be alive

*Rain 10-17-99 (c)2000*

MV

## *As I Lay Me Down to Sleep*

By Barb M.

As I lay me down to sleep, sleep eludes me. Tired and weary, yet; the mind does not stop. It is multiple and limitless in its thoughts, images, perception and events.

Feelings begin to surface inside like rumbling thunder and strikes of lightning. Feelings that were suppressed now hit with force. Feelings that were undermined, now turn into stress, stealing our sleeping time.

The day did not allow time for feelings. Instead the day called for responses from many to handle life's given situations.

I get up as my head throbs in pain. It reminds me of the many switches in thought, mind, and body. Again, the day called for response and not feeling. Now it is a must to deal with.

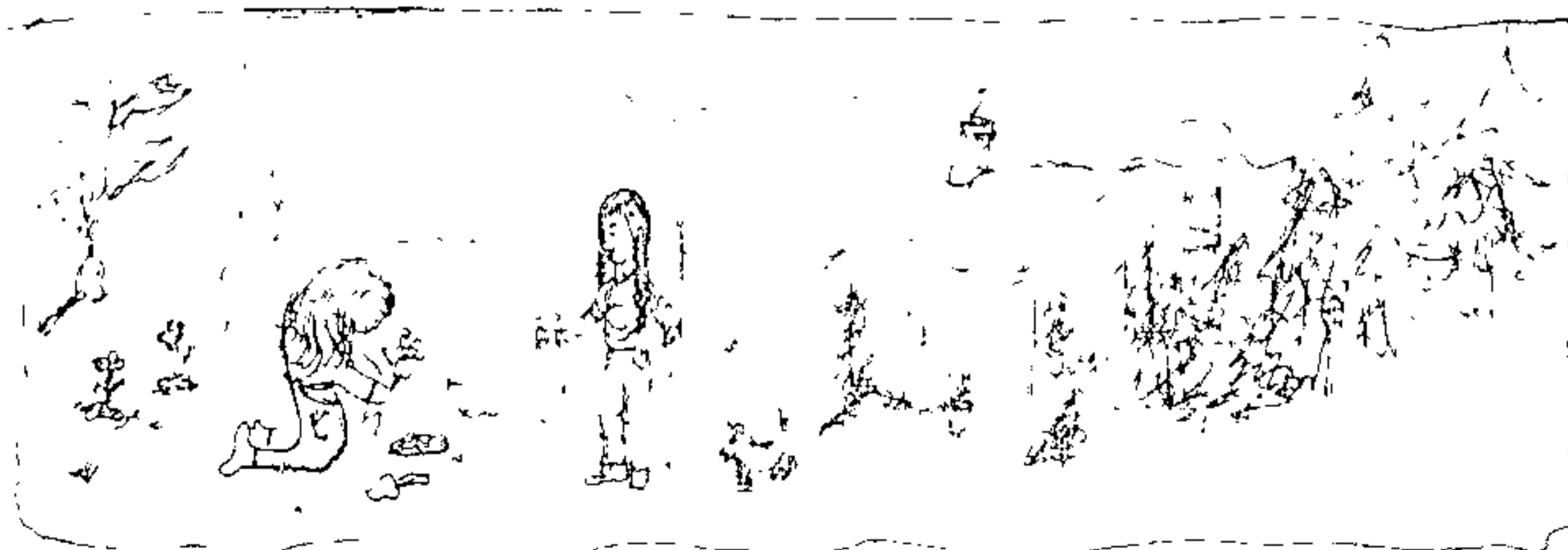
The mind holds a multitude of activity that the outside world cannot even comprehend. Life on a normal basis is enough for them, and this sure gives me a lonely feeling. Knowing the fact that our load is a heavy one. I try to give myself a break, knowing I still love despite it all. Still, this too can be overwhelming.

I finally acknowledge what is happening. I know many others want to be heard. Tomorrow, I kindly suggest. A break for tonight, I plead and pray.

At last, to try to sleep again. Countless times, I try to let it all go. Hours go by and intense feelings become stronger, overwhelming. I feel their trauma because they are both persistent and insisting. I see their faces, I feel their pain, I see their tears. This one has a strong hold on my being. It is too much and I am replaced. Now I rest in a nightmare as the body and mind continue to move and switch.

Goodnight...and may God bless the unknown and me; as the lightning strikes and the thunder rolls.

MV



## Freedom

she asked for her freedom  
but they said it  
was unrealistic,  
escapism,  
distorted thinking

well, sure it was  
but the sun  
and the moon  
were so inviting  
so solid, so sure  
so secure

that she ignored their  
selfish words  
and, though she knew  
she was also  
being selfish

she grabbed the  
chance  
and took  
her freedom

By sjs

MV



## Don't Go Away

I don't understand Mommy?  
What did I do wrong?  
I will pick up all my toys  
I will brush my teeth  
I will not cry  
What do you want me to do?  
I will set the table  
I will change little Johnny  
I will vacuum the house  
I will hang up the clothes  
I will make Daddy laugh  
I don't understand Mommy?  
I will never sass you  
I will be good in school  
I will be quiet  
I will put the others to bed  
I will dust my bureau  
I will weed the garden  
I won't be sad  
I will act all grown up  
Mommy please come back  
I am afraid

By J. C.

MV

## Books

### Male Victims of Same-Sex Abuse Addressing Their Sexual Response

By John M. Preble and A Nicholas Groth  
Copyright © 2002 and published by  
Sidran Press, 410-825-8888  
www.sidran.org 125 pgs includes appendix.  
\$17.95 paperback.

This is a slim book (actual text is only 60 pages) with an important message: "We don't choose the nature of our sexuality, we discover it."

It is intended to help clinicians work with men who have experienced same-sex abuse, often as children. While child sexual abuse frequently devastates both genders, men have particular issues. Among these are concern that they were aroused so perhaps 'invited' the abuse, fear that the experience means that they are homosexual or effeminate, and the often complex relationships between the offender and the abused boy...who may have looked on the offending male as a role model, a friend, or

protector.

Clinicians are cautioned to NOT give the message "This doesn't mean that you're gay..." which implies that gay-ness is a tragedy to be avoided at all costs.

There is considerable guidance here to help counselors steer a victimized male to a balanced perspective about his sexual history, and release him to express his native sexuality in the future.

It includes an extended appendix-questionnaire for Adult Males about Sexual Victimization.

### The Myth of Sanity Divided Consciousness and the Promise of Awareness

By Martha Stout, Ph.D.  
Copyright © 2001 by Martha Stout.  
Published by Viking Penguin, 2001. 252  
pgs includes index. \$14. Paperback.

Martha Stout, PhD, teaches  
psychology at Harvard Medical School

and is a Clinical Associate at Massachusetts General Hospital. For twenty years she has worked with trauma survivors, and this book reflects both her compassion for her clients, and serious thinking about the way their experience manifests in their lives.

Myth of Sanity is notable in part for the way Stout conveys information about the normalcy of dissociation for the average person. This might be a good book to offer a friend or relative who wants to understand more about dissociation and how it works. It also includes numerous case studies, (mostly composites of several cases, not identifiable individuals) that offer detailed examples of dissociation seen in therapy, as well as therapeutic techniques used to resolve problems caused by chronic dissociating.

This is a highly readable and interesting book, accessible to all. I recommend it. - Lynn W.

MV

### THANKS FOR SHARING!

Your writing and artwork helps MV assist our many readers, their therapists, friends and families in the process of trauma recovery.

**SINCERE THANKS!**

- Lynn W., Editor

#### April 2004

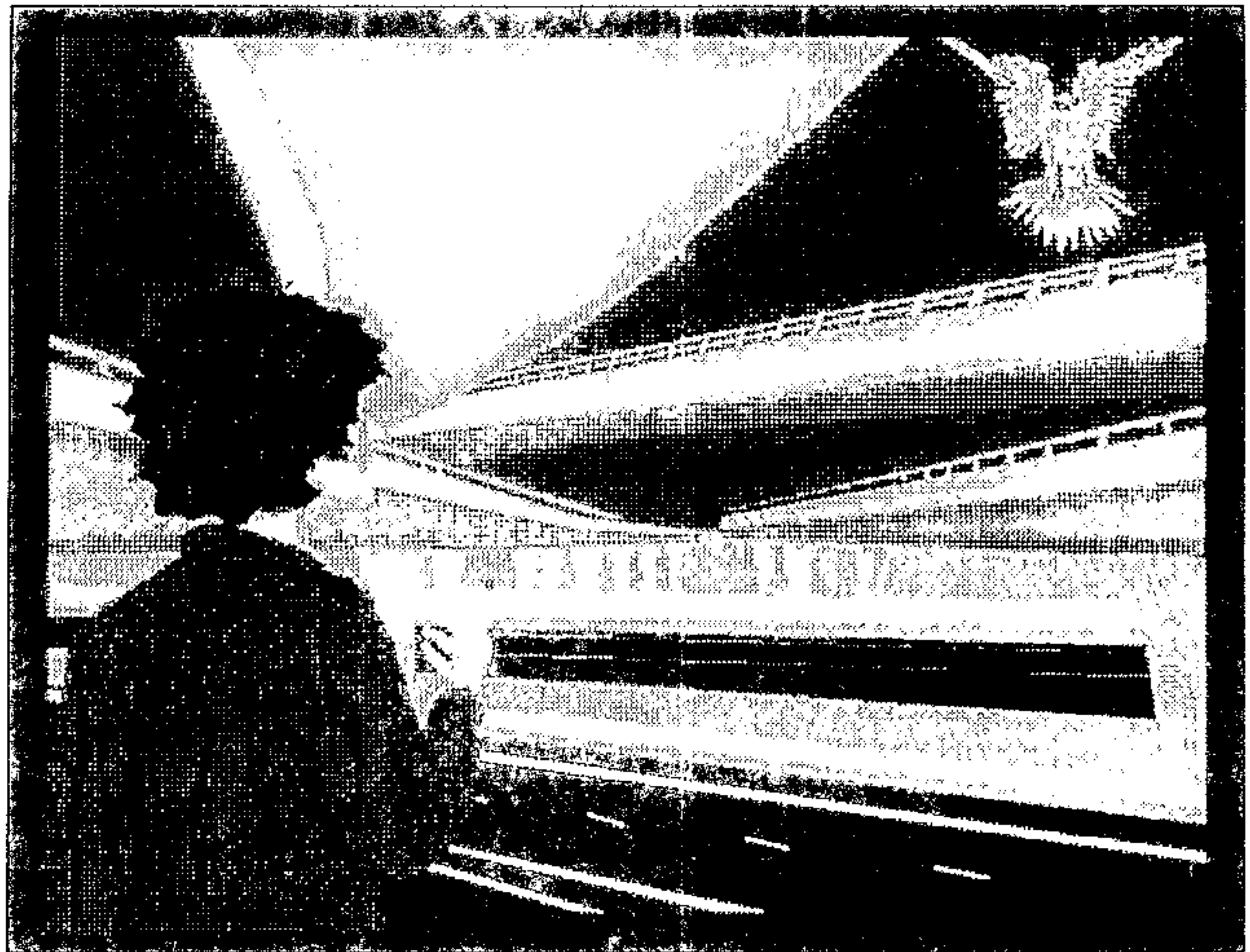
What Recovery Means to You  
Art: Healing Pleasures Deadline:  
February 1, 2004

#### June 2004

Choosing a Therapist Thriving  
Outside Therapy  
Art: How people see you vs How you  
see yourself Deadline: April 1, 2004.

#### August 2004

Managing PTSD Symptoms &  
Depression  
Art: Your Memory Storage System  
Deadline: June 1, 2004



## Incest is alone

Robert Adam, an artist, has prepared a wonderful website with a story in pictures at [www.aboysstory.com](http://www.aboysstory.com). The illustration above is an example. Check it out !

### Share with us!

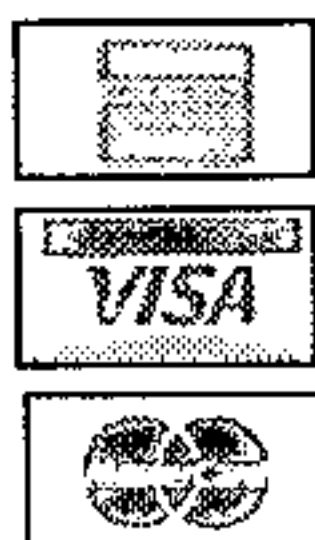
Prose, poetry and art are accepted on upcoming issue themes, (and even on NON-themes, if it's really great.) DO send humor, cartoons, good ideas, and whatever is useful to you. Please limit prose to about 4 typed double-spaced pages. Line drawings (black on white) are best. We can't possibly print everything. 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.

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