

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

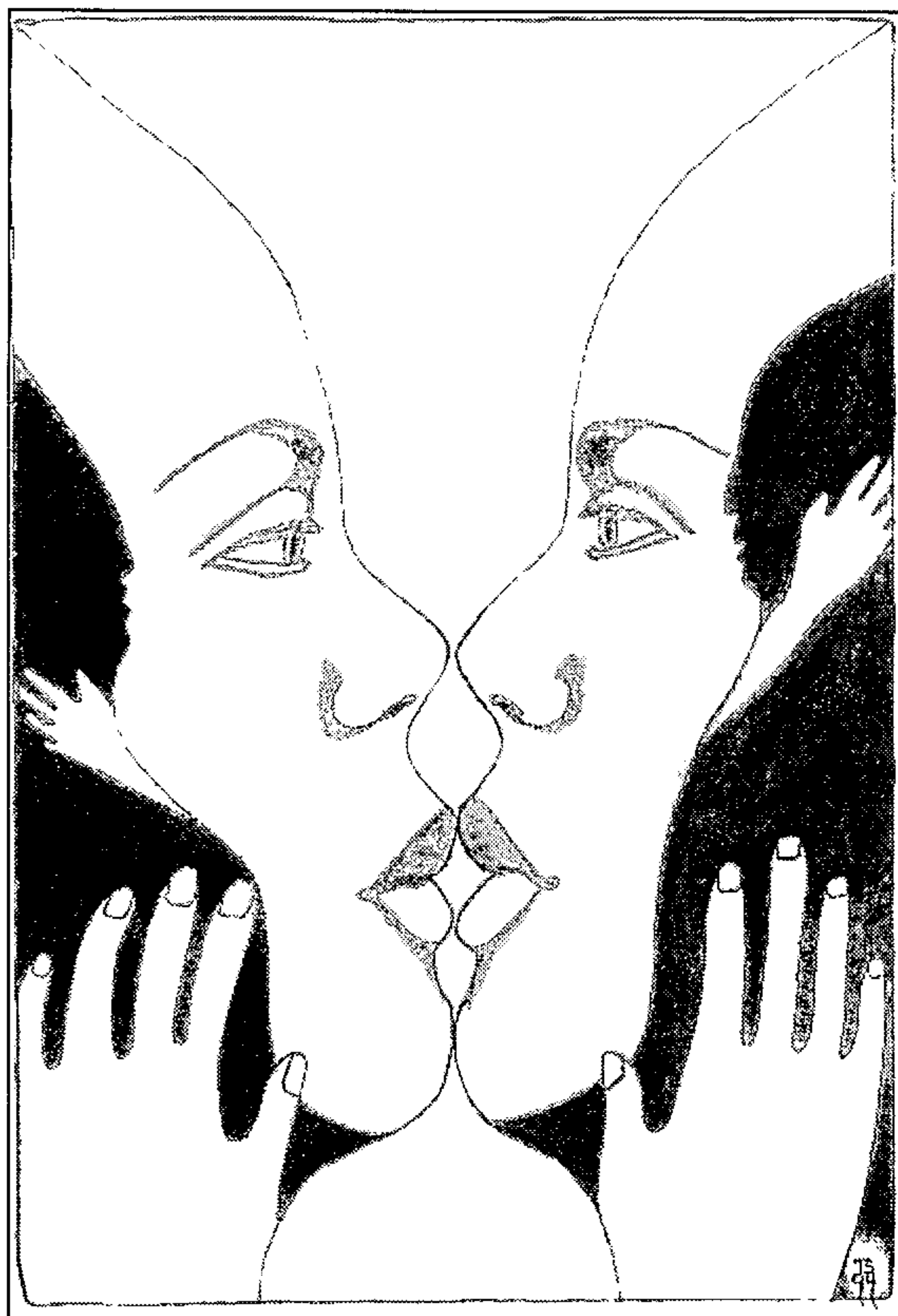
Vol XVI, No. 2

April 2004

ISSN1042-2277

Inside This Issue:

What Recovery Means to YOU! Friends and Friendship



By Living Earth

Recovery Is Everything

Recovery is moving to a new town
knowing nobody
building a home
a place to be
resting and safe

Recovery is writing a book
making a difference in the world
helping so many
because I have to
in order to heal

Recovery is making beautiful
friendships
dancing naked in the rain
feeling joy with others
staying fully present
during a passionate kiss on my neck

Recovery is everything
It is running on the beach
all of us together
having the time of our lives

It is letting go of the shame
the unrelenting nightmares
the gripping fear and torment

It is making peace
with our multiple selves
creating a family of love and light
laughter and joy
peace and forgiveness

It is being one with my body
mentally, emotionally, and spiritually
strong
wise
free

Recovery is beautiful
it's real
it's honest
it's everything

By Paige Alisen, Ph.D.

MV

Recovery

By J. R.

Recovery is a process of reconciliation and integration, which begins with and is sustained by safety and functioning.

My recovery began a little over two years ago when I was diagnosed with DID and began seeing a DID therapist twice a week.

Reconciliation covers a lot of territory. I'm learning to become reconciled with my parts as they reveal their secrets to me. I'm learning to become reconciled with myself, even though I feel shame and disgust and guilt at times. As reconciliation continues to grow stronger, so does trust. As my trust in the process, in my therapist and in myself grows, my fears lessen.

My therapist helped me to create a safe place in my head, and in the safe place I have a switching place. That is the place where I switch, and where my memories appear. Four of my parts clean out the switching place many times a day. In this process my parts hose down what appears, move it to the light receptacle, shrink it down, roll it into a ball and send it back to God. This helps keep me in touch with my DID. The more I'm in touch with the reality of DID, the better I deal with it. I spend a lot of time in my safe place with my parts and my higher power. There is a healing pool in my safe place. It is a place of refreshment, healing and peace. The creation of this safe place and switching place was a major steppingstone in my process of recovery.

Integration is such a personal thing. For me, the process of integration has been quite unique. There are periods of information-gathering from my parts. These are the rough times—the times of doubt and fear and anxiety. There are times at therapy when my parts take up most of the hour. I'm not always aware of what they've said, so I tape my sessions. My therapist always checks in with me, after my parts draw away and I return, to see how much I heard. My parts speak for me

because either I am not aware of their knowledge, or I am too ashamed to say what they say so eloquently. In the beginning of recovery there was always a complete switching when any part would appeared. After some time in therapy, occasionally co-consciousness would happen. There were even times when I could speak for a particular part and I didn't have to switch at all.

My parts and I worked well together (and we still do). They began to pass their experiences, and sometimes their feelings, on to me. I was able to reclaim them as my own. Some parts became more and more co-conscious with me, and then they just integrated—and now those parts are a part of me—not apart from me. When integration first happened, it felt like a death in the system. But then I began to feel more whole. I realized the reality that DID is a splitting off of me into parts of which I am not aware, and integration is reclaiming parts of me. With each integration I feel more solidly me. I'm reclaiming what has always been mine but has been split off from me. The parts whose names have integrated don't need to have any other name but mine. Each integration gives me hope for more integrations, and strength to hear what my parts still need to tell me.

So, for me, a middle-aged woman, recovery has been a journey from disintegration (which is how I felt before my diagnosis of DID) through reconciliation to integration. This has been achieved through the process of awareness, listening to parts, remembering, receiving their burdens, becoming co-conscious with them, and allowing them to move closer and closer, culminating in integration.

I have symbols for some of my parts. I have a coin with a cross in it for Sylvia—she used to steal. Then there's John. He is so angry. I hated him at first. He has his own journals. He goes through them quickly. Other parts have journals also.

An integral part of recovery is trust

in a therapist who can support one through it. I've been truly blessed with a therapist who is totally available to me without her own agenda. She consistently focuses on safety and functioning, reconciliation and integration. She has taught me to mother myself and my parts by the way she mothers my parts when they communicate with her. She also uses the technique of curiosity. My parts love it because when she gets curious, they get to respond. I'm beginning to like this technique and now use it in my daily life. Curiosity is a gift of looking for the truth in a non-judgmental way—and finding it! My therapist's non-judgmental and compassionate approach to our therapy has enabled me to be much less critical of myself and my parts.

Before being diagnosed with DID, I spent much time in institutions, losing jobs, drinking alcohol uncontrollably, and eating uncontrollably (or restricting). Since I've been diagnosed with DID and have been working with a DID therapist, I have experienced a whole new way of living. The more I become solid and can stay in reality, the better I live life one day at a time. I deal with an eating disorder a day at a time and I have been able to maintain my weight within a four-pound range over the past fifteen months. No matter how I feel, my experience of working with my eating-disorder parts and living in reality has enabled this to happen. As a recovering alcoholic and I use my 12-step program with my alcoholic parts. I have successfully maintained a part-time job since being diagnosed with DID. Finally, my relationships are better than ever before.

I am a broken woman whose parts are being put back into place one at a time. I have many parts still around—little ones, big ones, sad ones, fearful ones, and even a wisdom lady. Today I'm not afraid to face my parts a day at a time in the year 2004. My journey in recovery has been rocky, up-hill, down-hill and even smooth sometimes. Trust has given in to doubt at times. That's when I go

Recovery, Cont'd..

back to safety and functioning. When doubt rears its ugly head, I am reminded by my therapist to look back at my experience over these past 2+ years. There is no doubt that I have become more stable, free and functional. The proof is always in the experience. I'm grateful to MV for allowing me to share my beginning recovery.

MV**Universality**

As we plow ancient lands
Children watch from behind
glass.

Metal, trees.

And the sea still amazes us.

And the sea still sings:

About love and other giants.

The sea sings while the goat
waits,

While waves relate, while

mermaids watch

For lost ships and wonders.

To look outside is universal
Space for the imagination to
wander.

For there really is a rhyme and
reason.

Men and women hide.

Children find them easily.

It's still the same

And the universality still
amazes us

And the universe still sings.

By E.L.

MV**MANY THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS!****Forest View Hospital - Grand Rapids, MI**

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

River Oaks Hospital - New Orleans, LA

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

Sheppard Pratt Health System - Baltimore, MD

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

Timberlawn Mental Health System - Dallas, TX

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

Two Rivers Psychiatric Hospital - Kansas City, MO

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

Women's Institute for Incorporation Therapy - Hollywood, FL

Call Larry Spinosa: (800) 437-5478

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

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

We appreciate your support! —Lynn W., Editor

Mail Problem? - The correct address for Many Voices is PO Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639. A postal error has caused some correctly addressed mail to be returned to sender. If this happens to you or someone you know, please call us at (513)751-8020 or e-mail me at LynnW@manyvoicespress.com. We need the intact original envelope to give to the Postal Inspector who is working to resolve this. Thanks! - Lynn W.



Take What You Like and Leave The Rest:

A twelve-step perspective on recovery

By Dani

When I think of recovery, I always think of twelve-step groups. This may be understandable, since I'm in three.

Before I knew anyone in recovery, and well before I began recovering from anything myself, I thought that twelve-step groups were only about recovery from addiction. I thought that it was a very simple equation: if you're an alcoholic, you go to Alcoholics Anonymous to stop drinking. I didn't really know anything about any other kinds of addiction. If I had heard of the idea that "it's not about alcohol," or that "alcoholism is the symptom, not the problem," I wouldn't have understood it.

Then someone close to me started going to AA, and I learned a little more. I went to a meeting with him early on, to provide support, and I saw a lot of people saying startlingly wise things about their lives. I watched my friend starting to take responsibility for his behavior and starting to reach out for support when he had problems. I kind of thought I needed something like that, although not around alcohol.

I didn't really know what else there was. I heard about Survivors of Incest Anonymous, eventually, but I didn't know or accept that I was a survivor and I didn't see how the twelve-step model could work for that problem. And all the while, I was mired in abusive work and personal relationships, complaining loudly about family problems and work situations, and going rapidly more insane.

Now I have a little more than a year "in program," first in Codependents Anonymous and later in Survivors of Incest Anonymous and Debtors Anonymous. I've learned a tremendous amount about boundaries and money and relationships and a lot of stuff that basically translates to self-care. And I'm starting to understand why addictions are, ultimately, not

considered the main issue even in groups dedicated to healing from an addiction.

ABUSE & ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR

Addictions and abuse often go hand in hand. I don't know anyone in SIA who isn't working another program around alcoholism, sex and love addiction, eating disorders, compulsive debting, drug addiction, et cetera. SIA, in fact, puts out a flyer with a drawing of a tree that has all these addictions and more nestled in its branches, and incest at its roots. As abuse survivors, it's natural for us to do everything we can to continue our abuse as adults, because it's how we were raised. It can often feel illogically safe to be abused or to harm ourselves, to be in an unsafe situation again, because that's what feels most familiar.

That can and does manifest itself in many ways. For example, I've tended to seek out emotionally abusive partners and stick with them harder the more my friends try to explain how abusive they're being; I find ways of overspending and confusing my records around money so that I'm in a perpetual state of financial crisis, no matter how much or little I'm making; and underneath it all, I don't clean up after myself, don't eat when I'm hungry, don't sleep when I'm tired, and generally make sure that I never actually feel safe. And that brings us to one of the reasons that people in AA know that alcoholism is merely a symptom: they know that if they want to, they can quit drinking entirely, focus all their self-destructive energy elsewhere, and stay just as stuck in the chaos and pain of their lives as before.

RECOVERY: WHO NEEDS IT?

SIA edited the steps by group conscience at some point to fit their program better. Now the revised version of the first step emphasizes that "we were powerless over the abuse and the effects of the abuse"

and that eventually we learn to recognize when we are "behaving in patterns still dictated by the abuse." That's one of the benefits I've gotten from going to different meetings and working the steps. My understanding of what effects the abuse has had on me, and what it is that is bringing me to need recovery, is getting more and more fine-tuned.

Sometimes I notice the same signals in the lives of people around me, and even though I don't want to be so egotistical as to think I know what they need, I still keep a running list in my head of "signs someone might be helped by recovery." It has, at least, helped me remember where I'm coming from in my own recovery, because the things I notice are all things that I do.

The list goes something like this: "If your life feels unmanageable; if you don't have much self-esteem; can't commit to finding a job; feel like you have a hole inside that you don't know how to fill; feel like your needs aren't being met or don't know what they are; don't feel safe or even know what feeling safe would be like; if your life or some part of it seems out of control; if you can't tell the difference between what you can or can't control or think you can control everything, or nothing; if you try to solve problems with extremes or tend to binge/purge in general, like... deciding to never date again, going on eating or spending binges, swearing off alcohol forever with no support, becoming socially or sexually anorexic, trying to live in financial deprivation, overscheduling or always being late... then you might really be helped by recovery."

It's a backward way of thinking about the issue. That is, most of the twelve-step groups that I've run across have a checklist or two of things you might be doing (like smoking pot to relax) that might mean you have a problem. But instead I'm trying to make a list of the effects of those

behaviors, or really of the general things in people's lives that lead them to addictive behaviors. It's sort of useful in avoiding all the stigma attached to words like "alcoholic" and "addiction." I don't understand the stigma that people associate with these things. I've seen a lot of people get very upset because their therapist or their boyfriend or their parents think that they're an alcoholic. Intellectually I can understand it — if they do have a problem, it's a very scary suggestion because then they might have to let go of their addiction and they're not even ready to look at it head-on yet. But on a gut level, my reaction is more like, "The twelve steps are just a tool that anyone can use to deal with a wide variety of problems. They can help anyone. And if you don't have an addiction, then that's great — if you do, well, so do a lot of people. What's the big deal?"

I know. I can be terribly naive.

SO, WHAT'S RECOVERY LIKE?

I have a book about writing called "If You Can Talk, You Can Write." The main suggestion that the author keeps repeating is to just free-write until something good comes out. As he puts it, "Blah, blah, blah... blah, blah, blah... blah, blah, blah... GOLD!"

That's a lot of the twelve-step experience, for me. I go to meetings, I sit through the various readings welcoming people, describing the meeting's format, the twelve steps, and so on, and then I listen to people share. And I share myself. And usually, at least once in a meeting, I hear something in someone else's share — or even in my own — that sets off fireworks in my head. Maybe someone talks about how their idea of God is still caught up with their violently angry father, and it makes me think about how one of my saving graces might be that in high school I ditched the religion I grew up with and found something I could believe in that had no connection to my family. Or they talk about how they have this tremendous resentment against their co-worker and they can't set boundaries with her or talk to her at all, and I finally get the concept that my resentments are a threat to my life. Or they talk about their struggle

to pay their bills on time so they don't incur unsecured debt, and I think, "I have to stop doing that too!"

It's the great thing that makes the world of support groups go 'round. The difference between twelve-step groups and many other support groups is that twelve-step groups are peer-led. That means there's no therapist guiding the discussion, and no leader who makes the rules for the whole group. Anyone can volunteer to be the meeting secretary, that is, to read everything and do whatever else the group has decided the secretary does, and they don't get to make decisions without everyone else discussing the decisions at a business meeting. And there's no discussion to lead, because (usually) there's no cross-talk; people get to share without worrying that people will start commenting on their problems or judging them.

Sharing without getting immediate feedback was hard for me at first; the silence after I spoke felt like judgment. Even though I knew it was just the same pause that happened after everyone shared, inside I was sure that it meant I had said something horrible and everyone hated me. I learned to try to make people laugh during my share so I'd know that they liked what I was saying — classic codependent tricks! People still came up to me afterward and said nice things, whether they thought I was funny or not, and eventually I learned to let go a little and to say nice things to myself for sharing so I wouldn't have to depend on anyone else to convince me I was an okay person.

I know a lot of people who get plenty of recovery just from going to meetings, but I also know a lot of people (including myself) who have found that our recovery becomes much faster when we're working the steps.

"Working the steps" basically means that we read the twelve steps and we each figure out for ourselves what they mean for us, and what we have to do to feel like we've got each one of them. There are plenty of workbooks, and lots of the "Big Books" of different programs have suggestions for how to work them

too, but ultimately everyone does them differently. Often people will get a sponsor, which means that they find someone who has something they want (like the ability to weather body memories of abuse unfazed, or a lot of inner serenity, or a healthy relationship) and ask for help getting there themselves.

Those are the main pieces of recovery, for me: listening to other people who share my problems, talking honestly about my problems myself, and being willing to work on my problems in my everyday life. Recovery is the clarity and self-awareness I get when I do all of this, the supportive community I find of people who understand my problems because they have them too, and, slowly, the inner peace that comes from being able to trust my intuition, keep my boundaries, and understand that everything is going to be okay.

Survivors of Incest Anonymous

<http://www.siaawso.org>
Survivors of Incest Anonymous
World Service Office
P.O. Box 190
Benson, MD 21018-9998
Telephone: 1-410-893-3322

Codependents Anonymous

<http://www.codaws.org>
P.O. Box 7051
Thomaston, GA USA 30286-0025
wscoda@aalltel.net
Telephone: 1-706-648-6868
Fax: 1-706-647-1755

Debtors Anonymous

<http://www.debtorsanonymous.org>
PO Box 920888
Needham, MA 02492-0009
webmaster@debtorsanonymous.org
Telephone: 1-781-453-2743
Fax: 1-781-453-2745

Alcoholics Anonymous

<http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/>
Street Address:
Alcoholics Anonymous
475 Riverside Drive
11th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10115
Mailing Address:
Alcoholics Anonymous
Grand Central Station
P.O. Box 459
New York, N.Y. 10163
privacystatement@aa.org
Telephone: 1-212-870-3400

Learning to Navigate in a New Landscape: Difficulties of Getting Better

By Laura

Until recently, many of my parts lived in a huge, magic bubble which I call the Atmosphere. The Atmosphere sustained me, more or less reliably, for over 50 years, and was more real to me than the "real" world. Getting better has meant losing the Atmosphere, and now that I don't have it any more, I am having a very hard time. I am more connected to real (outside) people than I have ever been, and I know that is supposed to be good. But it doesn't feel good. I don't yet know how to navigate in my new landscape, or how to breathe the air. I didn't grow up here. I don't know the culture, or who I am in relation to other people. I have never felt so disoriented.

The Atmosphere was similar to a baby's experience of the world. The baby has no idea that she exists as a separate person, that the boundary of her body is her skin. She is aware only of one primordial ocean of feeling and being, a holding, caring Atmosphere which automatically provides everything she needs. The Atmosphere knows when she is hungry, and milk arrives in her mouth. It knows when she is wet, and she becomes dry. She doesn't know whether all this happens from something inside herself, or from something outside herself. She doesn't even know that she has a self.

If the baby's needs are met while she is still in this state, she eventually comes to realize that her mother is a separate being. And, if all goes well, she is eventually able to form a mental image of her mother. That image helps her know that her mother exists even when she can't see her mother. The baby tests this new concept in the deadly-serious game of peek-a-boo, laughing with relief every time her mother reappears. Finally secure in the knowledge of her mother's permanence, the baby can develop her own singular identity and step out into the world.

That never happened to me. I grew up and stepped out without having developed an internal image of anyone. I managed in life by constructing my own Atmosphere, piecing together a protective cloak which I kept around me for over 50 years, not even realizing, until I began to

lose it, that I was doing it.

All through the years, whenever people in the "real" world were the least bit nice to me—teachers, therapists, nurses—I added them to the Atmosphere. I had two versions of those people: the one who walked around the regular world in a skin container, and the one who was in the Atmosphere as a formless essence, mixed together with essences of all the other Atmosphere people. It was always the Atmosphere version I felt closest to.

This two-world structure enabled parts of me to become successful professionally (my first career was as a public library director; my second as a business systems analyst for Corporate America). But it didn't permit me many deep personal involvements with skin-container people (they weren't safe, because they could never live up to Atmosphere standards).

Losing the Atmosphere was a painful process. (It took several years and the help of a wonderful therapist.) But the pain was almost easier to deal with than the disorientation I feel now that I am "better." The closest analogy I can find to explain it comes from something I read in *An Anthropologist on Mars*, by Oliver Sacks. He talks about people who have been blind from birth, or from a very early age, and then have their sight restored when they are adults. In their formerly-blind world, to which they had adapted well, they had no concept of space, distance, shape, or perspective. When they are suddenly thrust into the visual world, they have an extremely hard time adjusting. (People who have their sight restored after they have been blind for short periods of time don't go through this disorientation; they have memories of the visual world that help them readjust fairly quickly.)

Dr. Sacks writes about Virgil, blind for 40 years before he had an operation that the surgeon said might restore his sight. The surgeon removed the bandages the next day, asked Virgil to open his eyes, and waited for Virgil's response. Virgil did open his eyes, but didn't react or say anything. After a few minutes, the surgeon prompted him with "Well?" "Only

then did Virgil say he could see. When asked later what happened, Virgil said he opened his eyes to a blur of color and shapes he couldn't de-code. He had no idea that one of the shapes was a person. (He knew what people felt like, because he had worked as a masseur for many years. But he had no way of associating the touch concept of Body with the visual shape of Body.) It was only when the surgeon said Well?, causing the surgeon's mouth to move, that Virgil deduced that that shape was his surgeon. (Virgil knew voice sounds came from mouths; something had moved at the same time that he heard the surgeon's voice; therefore, that something must be the surgeon's mouth; therefore, that shape must be the surgeon.)

Another formerly-blind person knew his dog well (from petting and feeling him with his hands). After his sight was restored, he understood that the shape in front of him, looking into his face while he petted it, was his dog—a black and white dog. But when the dog turned sideways to walk across the room, his shape looked different, and it seemed to the man that it was a different dog, also black-and-white, but not the same dog. This was a new concept: an object looks different when you view it from a different angle, yet it is the same object.

A newly-sighted person must also learn about visual perspective. A blind person measures distance by counting: it's 24 steps to the top of the stairs. When he first regains his sight, he doesn't know that things appear smaller when they're farther away, and larger when they're closer. If he watches a ball roll away from him, it appears that the ball is shrinking, not that it is getting farther away. So he has no way of judging how far or close he is to the top of the stairs just by looking.

These are concepts that people who have been sighted from birth take for granted. They don't realize that they, too, had to learn them—because they learned them as babies.

I had lived with the Atmosphere for so long that now, having recently lost it, I find myself without the concepts necessary for

getting along in the Skin world. Things that used to be familiar have become strange. Reading Oliver Sacks was comforting because it helped me put into words what I was going through. Just being able to articulate it made me feel a little better. First, I summarized it:

a) A world in which you have lived for years and years and adapted to fairly well can suddenly seem so foreign that you cannot get along in it any more unless you develop a completely different set of skills and concepts.

b) That could happen even though the world itself hasn't changed-only your perception of it has changed.

c) Everyone else in the world doesn't realize you are having such a hard time adapting and navigating, because what is so hard for you is second-nature to them.

Then I made a list of some concepts that were different in the Atmosphere and Skin worlds:

TIME

Atmosphere. The Atmosphere has Present only.

Skin. The Skin world has Past, Present, and Future. Concepts like "yesterday" and "last week" imply a break in time. If Steven, my therapist, says "I thought of you yesterday when I was looking at socks" (I get upset if he wears different color socks on different days), I feel betrayed by him. If he were in the Atmosphere, as he used to be, he would be thinking of me all the time. If he thought of me yesterday, that means there was a break in time during which he didn't think of me, and, by extension, during which I didn't exist.

KNOWING THAT YOU EXIST

Atmosphere. You exist because the Atmosphere sees you. There is no break in your existence, because the Atmosphere sees you all the time.

Skin. In the Skin world, there is no one who sees you 100% of the time. But that doesn't mean you don't exist. Skin people can remember you even when they are far away. And through their memories, they can feel your essence. They know that you worry about certain things (will you be able to drive to work if it snows?), and they know general things about you, such as where you're likely to be (if you're on vacation, you're probably in the country; if it's a regular work-day, you're probably at work). They don't have to see you or

know exactly what you are thinking, feeling, and doing every moment to know that you are in the world. And as long as someone knows you are in the world, you exist.

Remembering. You need to be comfortable with the concept of Past, Present, and Future before you can understand the concept of Remembering. (Remembering can only happen because there has been a Past.)

WHAT CONSTITUTES A CONTINUOUS PERSON?

Atmosphere. Atmosphere people don't have moods or emotional needs. They exist solely to understand me, to know what I am thinking and feeling and doing. They themselves don't do anything. They just are. You can't interact with them. Because of that, they are stable and reliable. They never get upset or let you down. They never change in physical ways, either. They don't change clothes or get haircuts (they don't even have clothes or hair--they are just essences diffused throughout the cosmos)

Skin. Skin people have moods. Sometimes they are receptive, and sometimes they are closed off. Sometimes they need nurturing themselves. (Every once in a while, Steven needs to be "seen," by which he means acknowledged and appreciated. This is always startling to me.) A skin person's moods can make him seem like a different person, but he is really the same person. (It's like the dog who appeared to be a different dog when he turned sideways to walk across the room.) The totality of him didn't change or disappear. So you didn't lose someone just because his mood changed. You just might not be able to connect with him at the moment. If you can't connect with him now, you will be able to connect with him at another time, when he is in a different mood. (You can only understand this if you already have the concept of Future.) Also, a Skin person wears different clothes at different times. Just because he has on different color socks one day doesn't mean he is a different person. He is the same person, continuous from when you last saw him. And he doesn't stop existing when you can't see him, then start up again when you can.

HOW MANY VERSIONS OF ONE PERSON ARE THERE?

Atmosphere. When I had the

Atmosphere, I had two versions of some people: an Atmosphere version, and a Skin version.

Skin. Now I have only one version: the Skin version.

Example. When I had the Atmosphere, I had two versions of people who seemed to understand me. The Atmosphere version knew everything I thought and felt and did, all the time. The Atmosphere version was always concerned about me, never got angry, never smiled, never had any emotions or needs. The Skin version of the same person could be moody, forget things, get annoyed. When the Skin version didn't act like the Atmosphere version, the Atmosphere version became the fallback for the Skin version; the Atmosphere version would understand that I was upset at what the Skin version said or did. (I could be very upset with the Skin Steven, and, at the same time, feel the Atmosphere Steven understood me perfectly.)

JOKES

Atmosphere. There are no jokes. There is no play or humor. There is just a constant presence seeing me, knowing me, understanding me. There is nothing hostile

Skin. Skin people tell jokes. They say things that seem dangerous, expecting that I will know they are really not dangerous. But I don't know that, so the jokes are upsetting to me, not funny.

Example. I recently took up knitting. A friend joked, "Do I have to change my concept of you now and picture you knitting in a rocking chair all day in your apartment?" At first, I didn't realize he didn't mean it literally, or that I didn't have to explain that I really didn't sit all day in my rocking chair knitting; I even felt I should say I didn't have a rocking chair. Skin people can only joke like that because they know it's not true that you spend 100% of your time in a rocking chair knitting. And they know you know they know you don't. So they feel safe joking about it. I have to run those kinds of jokes through a translator before I react. The translation comes back that I am not being attacked, that poking fun in jest is what Skin people do. It's not necessarily hostile; it can even mean they like you. (You have to figure out when it's hostile and when it isn't.) If I don't run it through a translator first, I might react as if I'm hurt, and that makes the person who

Continued on Page 8

New Landscape. Cont'd.

said the joke uncomfortable, which I don't want to do

Somehow, these discrepancies between the Atmosphere and Skin worlds didn't disorient me when I first lost the Atmosphere. Initially, I felt as if I had woken up from a long sleep to a new world, bright with possibilities I had never known existed. I no longer felt like a 2-dimensional fake walking around the Skin world trying to appear as if I belonged. I felt like a 3-dimensional participant, a bona-fide member of the club. People I had known for years, people who didn't know anything about the Atmosphere or MPD, noticed the change. Esther, my cubicle-mate in Corporate America, said "You seem different lately." More sparkly Helene, my sister-in-law, said, "It's much easier to talk to you now. You're more connected." Other people commented on how vibrant I seemed, how "good" I looked.

At first, it was easy to step into the Skin world. I had a ready-made set of friends and relatives which I had been plugged into part-way for years. Now that I was ready to plug in all the way, they were ready to receive me. I began going to lunch with people from work. I lingered at the end of my weekly writing workshop to talk with the other students instead of hurrying out as soon as it was over. At family gatherings, I was less inclined to carry around platters of hors d'oeuvres, clear the table, bring out the coffee—all ways of avoiding intimate conversation—and more inclined to sit and talk with my cousins and their children.

Even practical things, like parking my car when I went to sessions, became easier. There are two parking areas for Steven's building: one in front, which is invariably full, and one in back, which usually has free space. Steven ordinarily parks in back, and because I used to get upset whenever I saw his car—it was a reminder that he was a Skin person who drove away and did other things—for years I arrived at least half an hour earlier than my session time and waited in front for someone to pull out. But after I lost the Atmosphere, I wasn't upset when I saw Steven's car—it was even reassuring because it meant he was there—and I parked in back.

Things went well for about a year, so I wasn't expecting it when I suddenly began to feel disconnected and isolated in the

Skin world. I could no longer relate to people. My sparkle disappeared. I stopped going out to eat with friends and reverted to hurrying out at the end of my writing workshop.

I found an explanation for this, too, in Oliver Sacks. He wrote that when the newly-sighted Virgil found it too difficult to shave by looking at his face in the mirror, he closed his eyes and shaved by feel. Sacks also described how a newly-sighted person might bump into things in a familiar place, even in his own home. But if he shuts his eyes and uses his blind ways of navigating, he does fine. After a while, though, the newly-sighted person loses the capability of reverting to his blind ways. He is in limbo. He can't go back to the blind world, but he doesn't yet have all the skills necessary for living in the sighted world. That limbo is the hardest stage for him.

I realized that I, too, am in limbo. When I first lost the Atmosphere, I was able to re-enter it when the Skin world got to be too much for me. I didn't do it consciously. It just happened. It wasn't exactly the same as it used to be, because I no longer had two versions of people: Atmosphere and Skin. So anyone I knew personally, like Steven, couldn't get back into the Atmosphere. Instead, I populated the Atmosphere with people I had never met, like Oprah, Hillary Clinton, Richard Kluge. But now, even that doesn't happen any more. I can't return to the Atmosphere, and I don't yet have all the concepts and skills necessary for living in the Skin world.

I am also going through another getting-better change. It concerns what I have come to call losing Perception Time (as opposed to losing Chronological Time).

Perception Time is when you know that something took place, but you perceived the events from the point of view of whoever was out at the time. If I am at a party of all adults, and a 6-year-old part of me is out, I hear the grownup conversation, but I hear it from a child's point of view, and I don't feel entitled to participate. The grownups may be talking about politics, romances, business. Those things are not part of my child's world, and they don't have the meaning they would if I heard them as an adult. I am awed by this grownup talk and stay to the side, clearing the table and making

myself otherwise useful, so no one will notice. I didn't lose Chronological Time, because later on, when an adult part of me is out, I do remember that I was at the party, and I remember what was said. But I lost Perception Time, because I didn't experience the party as an adult (in essence, the adult missed out on the party).

Most of my "adult" life was spent feeling 6 or younger. (It's not that I didn't have adult parts. An adult part came out at work, and was competent and efficient. But she was specific to work and didn't stay outside of work.) I never went through the developmental stages of growing up: 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's. It was only when I got to 60 that I caught up. All of a sudden. It was as if one day I was 6, and the next I was 60, with nothing in between.

At first, it felt good, the way losing the Atmosphere did. I felt I was part of the world in a way I never had before, an equal with other adults. I made myself a huge birthday party when I turned 60, as big as a wedding, sort of a coming out party (though I didn't tell that to my guests). But after the first exhilaration wore off, I found 6-to-60 too big a leap to get used to. Now, at 61, I feel like Rip Van Winkle, an immigrant in a new country. I didn't grow up here year-by-year. I don't know the customs, or the culture, or the rules of engagement. Talking to people and having ordinary relationships is almost harder than it was before. But I don't seem like a foreigner—I speak English without an accent—so no one realizes what a difficult time I'm having.

I have also begun to mourn for all the years I lost, and sometimes I get very depressed. One of the things that brought it home was looking in the mirror. When I looked in the mirror as a 6-year-old, I saw a child. Now, suddenly, I see a middle-aged face. I tried to describe this to a friend, and she told me that she, too, has the same feeling. She thinks of herself as young and attractive and is dismayed every time she looks in the mirror and sees wrinkles. I didn't know how to explain that that's not what I mean. She may feel younger than she is, but she stepped through all the stages along the way to get to where she is today.

My size also bothers me now; it never used to. When I felt 6, I thought I was tall.

Continued on Page 9

New Landscapes, Cont'd.

(my height is 5 feet). It was very strange to find out all of a sudden, when I became 60, that I was short. As a 6-year-old, I was never upset when people commented on my weight (less than 100), or my height and said things like "My son's girlfriend is even tinier than you are." It felt right, and I was even glad they noticed. But now that I am 61, I feel too small--an adult is supposed to be big, not tiny--and I get upset at such comments.

For a while, I thought it was coincidental that both things happened to me at the same time: losing the Atmosphere and suddenly growing up. Then I realized that when I lost the Atmosphere, I was still predominantly a 6-year-old. But in my new landscape, I was forming real connections with Skin people, and Skin people thought of me as an adult. So I had to get somebody quickly who could relate to them. I never had a 60-year-old in me. I think I just created her, another MPD personality who arrived to deal with the world I found myself in. And in order to let her have dominance now, I had to push everyone else aside. So not only do I feel disconnected from other people right now, I also feel disconnected from myself.

As Hannah Green said about getting better, "I never promised you a rose garden." But I am definitely finding a rose here, another there, and learning to tend them so they'll grow into bushes.

One of the roses sprung out of my change in age. When I felt 6, a 30-year-old seemed older than I was. I felt so

intimidated by the 30-year-old's greater understanding of the world that I was afraid to have a conversation. Now, a 30-year-old seems younger than I am. I like being able to give encouragement to younger people, to be nurturing, to offer advice when they ask. So recently, when Rebecca, a 23-year-old who is thinking of becoming a librarian, wanted a mentor, I was happy to oblige. I brought her to work with me (I still work in the library on weekends) so she could see what a librarian's day was like, and even joked to her that it was like take-your-daughters-to-work day.

I am also happy with the new relationship I have with my teenage (twin) nephews. I am not a 6-year-old so in awe of big teenagers that I don't know what to say to them. I am a 61-year-old who can take them out to eat, take them to the movies, ask them how camp was. When I don't know the names of the latest rappers, it doesn't feel that I don't know because I'm not old enough yet. It feels that I don't know because I'm part of the older generation, and my younger-generation nephews take pleasure in explaining things to me. I felt honored when one of them asked me to tutor him for the writing part of the SAT's (I did). I am sorry I wasn't this way when their older brother, my 24-year-old nephew, was growing up. I was fine with him until he was 9 or 10, and then I became so in awe of him that I couldn't talk to him. So I missed out on his teenage years.

Because I have lost so much time (Perception Time), I go from being

extremely depressed (mourning for lost years) to being extremely happy to be alive. I can't recover the time I have lost, but I can extract every moment of life from now on. I just have to get comfortable enough in the Skin world to do that.

"You could say the Skin world is a minefield," I said to Steven a few months ago. "But if you learn how to tiptoe correctly, you could have a good time."

"And even if you step wrong," he said, "your experience with me has shown you increasingly that mis-steps can be fixed."

We talked about that for a few minutes, and then he said, "The Atmosphere is like clarified butter. It's purified to take out any of the bumpiness of human beings. And it's very safe to drink, like distilled water. But you don't really need distilled water. Tap water is OK. You just need to be sure it doesn't have any of the poisons. You're not used to the bumpiness [of the Skin world], and it scares you. But it's really even better than the Atmosphere, because it's more flavorful."

I'm slowly coming to see that he's right.

Laura would like to form a support group of Almost-Betters in the New York City area. If you are interested, please email her at NewLandscape@hotmail.com.

Or you may write to *Many Voices*, which will forward your letter to her.

MV

Recovery

Recovery, for our community, means that each of us can be fulfilled in what we do and how we live.

We see being "well" as being able to function, enjoy ourselves, be secure and safe and to be part of a secure community.

Interacting in the world and with others is important and satisfying to us, and our adults long to be helpful to others in society.

Freedom to be "we" as well as "me" is a gift to us. Our world inside is now a loving, smiling place.

By Sally B

MV



Partner's Page:

Staying Married

By John Whitmore

I don't know the actual statistics but from what I have read, most multiples, if married, end up divorced. Considering that we have been married for 33 years, we not only have bypassed the average length of marriage for multiples who have married but also so-called "normal" couples. Most of what I have realized has come later than sooner, but some of it pretty much started when I found out my wife's diagnosis and began to understand what she was going through. Each of you will have to consider your own marriage or relationship before utilizing any of what follows. What may be good for one couple may not even be necessary for another. The number of keepers (alters, personalities) will vary; this comes from the perspective of our situation. My wife has well over a hundred and fifty keepers, while your partner may have as few as 2 or 3 or somewhere in between.

My first realization was to not take things personally. When a keeper is in an abreaction I am not me anymore, I am someone else to whoever is having the abreaction. I cannot react as if they are seeing me, I cannot react with anything except for understanding even it means saying nothing and doing nothing. It is not me they are cringing from or yelling at or trying to get away from, it is someone else from their past. Remember, if you are tempted to react personally, tell yourself, *they are not seeing me, they are not seeing me, they are not angry with me, it is someone else, one of the perpetrators from probably long, long ago.*

Next, I think, is to see their individuality. We went through a weekend of questioning keepers for names, identities and made their own "family tree of keepers." It began with the core baby and went upward from there, with other older babies, toddlers, infants, youngsters, teens,

young adults and adults with at least one senior in there. They each "became" for a purpose, many still exist and come out on a regular basis while others come out seldom and some hardly ever. All it takes is that one special trigger to bring someone to the surface or near the surface. Some may not want you to know who they are--fear and trust are still big issues for them--others may shyly offer their names, while others may surprise you with their zest and desire to be known and able to communicate with someone who understands or at least doesn't chastise or ridicule or hurt them in some way or another.

Interact with them individually or as groups. My wife's littles love to play games, some are games for the 1-4 year olds, like Candyland, while others enjoy Sorry. Every Christmas both Santa and I make sure the little ones get several gifts, maybe a game or building blocks or dolls or matchbox cars. I had known of baby for quite a while, I had held her at night sometimes, but not until several years ago did it dawn on me, she never had a soft baby blanket, never. So I bought her one, she sleeps with it every night and she sleeps better than she ever did before. She is not the only one to enjoy the baby blanket; there are toddlers and little ones who so very much love how soft it is and the fact that they have one. You cannot take away the hurt they endured but you can give them some of what they never had--love, caring and small things we take for granted that they did not have, like a baby blanket.

When you are not sure what to have for dinner, ask if anyone has a suggestion; you might be surprised when someone pops out and says spaghetti or pizza or beanies and weenies. They have likes and dislikes, each of them; Emily Anne loves to have scrambled eggs, turnovers and

bacon with chocolate milk, so we have breakfast for supper some nights. Remember to call out whoever made the request if you make their choice for dinner/supper so they can enjoy it. Being on the outside and eating the food you chose is not the same as being inside and having someone else eating it.

Clothes. Different keepers like and need different clothes. Several young ones may share a pair of shoes or a dress or a sweater. Teens need different clothes, while older adults prefer other styles. It is not always easy to outfit multiples; once they have clothes they consider theirs don't be surprised to see littles' shoes with teens' dress and sweater. Then there may be a few of the opposite sex; my wife has several boys, one of which is out way more than the other boys. He likes his blue tennis shoes and baseball caps and overalls, none of which the girls appreciate at all. But, having clothes they can call their own is very important to all concerned.

TV and movies...we have gotten pretty much away from television. Oh there are some we watch, like Friends and Smallville, the teens love both of them...and that guy who plays Clark Kent is so cute! Little ones have Monsters Inc. as well many other Disney flicks, littler girls love the Shirley Temple movies, the boys like anything with Arnold Schwarzenegger in it and so do many of the adults, along with Mel Gibson or Sly Stallone. We have some old TV shows on DVD like Red Skelton and Lone Ranger, shows from their childhood they can now enjoy.

Be considerate and use common sense. If you have a good idea or know what circumstances brought about their keepers, don't view movies or shows that deal with that; you may be triggering all sorts of abreactions. If your partner reacts with embarrassment or surprise when you walk in the bathroom or bedroom and

their modesty is compromised you probably walked in on a teen or younger, not your partner whom you consider to be your husband or wife. This brings up a situation that cries out for understanding. If sexual abuse was used in their past, you cannot just walk up from behind and cup a breast or caress their backside because the one you are touching may not be who you think it is. Be sure, before you touch or say anything of a sexual nature, of who is there. Yes, spontaneity is removed but so is the chance of triggering an abreaction or simply horrifying someone who never would expect such a touch from you because of it being inappropriate.

You may have to distance yourself and your partner from people who by their actions and attitudes make your partner feel much the same as their abusers made them feel-unimportant, insignificant-and what I mean here is people who treat them badly, whether intentionally or not. If it is brought to their attention and they continue to do things that hurt your partner then they are now a part of the problem and the only way to keep them from having a negative influence on your partner is to stay away from them. We have had to distance ourselves from children, grandparents, brothers and sisters because they refuse to acknowledge the multiplicity or they treat keepers as though their feelings are "silly" or "stupid" or they should "just get over it" or they "should be in control". Intolerance and ignorance is not what your partner needs and neither do you.

Abreactions and body memories can be so distressful and can make you feel helpless; you know it is a horrific memory but you still wish you could help somehow...You can, at least sometimes.

During one of keepers' abreactions their body was being burned with bleach; the young girl could not stop the pain so I called poison control and they told me to bathe her in baking soda water and then to use antibacterial ointments and creams. I did and it helped her. She was able to get relief for the body memory because to her the pain was *now*, not then, so treatment could help.

Our children have had pets that

became family pets, and the girls had cats they took with them when they moved out of the house. When our youngest daughter moved out we were without a cat.

Although I'm pretty sure our 13 year old dog, Shakespeare, wasn't terribly torn up about it, the little keepers were. We talked about it and I promised them they could get a kitten. Off to the humane society we went, looking for kittens. Well we found some brothers from the same litter and we ended up bringing home 2 kittens! I also found out my wife had never had her own pet; the dogs and cat her family had were either the boy's dogs or the family's cat, so when we came home with 2 kittens and they belonged to little ones, they were ecstatic. The kittens have provided uncountable hours of joy for the keepers, little and big, and even poor old Shakespeare has livened up quite a bit with the two of them around. So pets that are theirs, something they never had before, but can have now, is another way you can help as the partner, by letting them have their own pets, to interact with, to love, especially their little ones.

One more thing. I know that sometimes the partner knows things the MPD partner doesn't, because sometimes their keepers don't talk to each other; but all in all, rely on their intuition and decisions, especially regarding therapy. They know way more about their situation than you do. You may have read a lot, heard a lot, been through a lot, but it is nothing compared to what they have learned over the years, and experienced, and they have to make those hard decisions. You cannot make them for them. They had no power as children to decide what was best for them; now they can and must, for their own well-being and recovery.

I'm sure that *Many Voices* and its readers would be grateful to hear from other partners about things they've done to help make their relationships work. Like any relationship, partnership with multiples is a two way street. If they had not let me into their lives, had not let me move past the point no one has been before, I could not do what I have done, I would not

have had the opportunity to not only help in some small way but to be a part of all of their lives. For that I am thankful.

MV

In His Eyes

You know how you see a dark moonlit night, with fog
and clouds begin to cover the moon,
but not its brightness. Then from

An angle a bird flies by. This is what I
feel God is to me—flight.
He's not the moon that changes, or
even the light that shines

from it. But the freedom that
surpasses the most beautiful night.
He's a wave after I touch the water,
not in the wave, not

the actual bird, but the power that
allows those things to happen. I've
seen such beauty that I had to reach
out and touch.

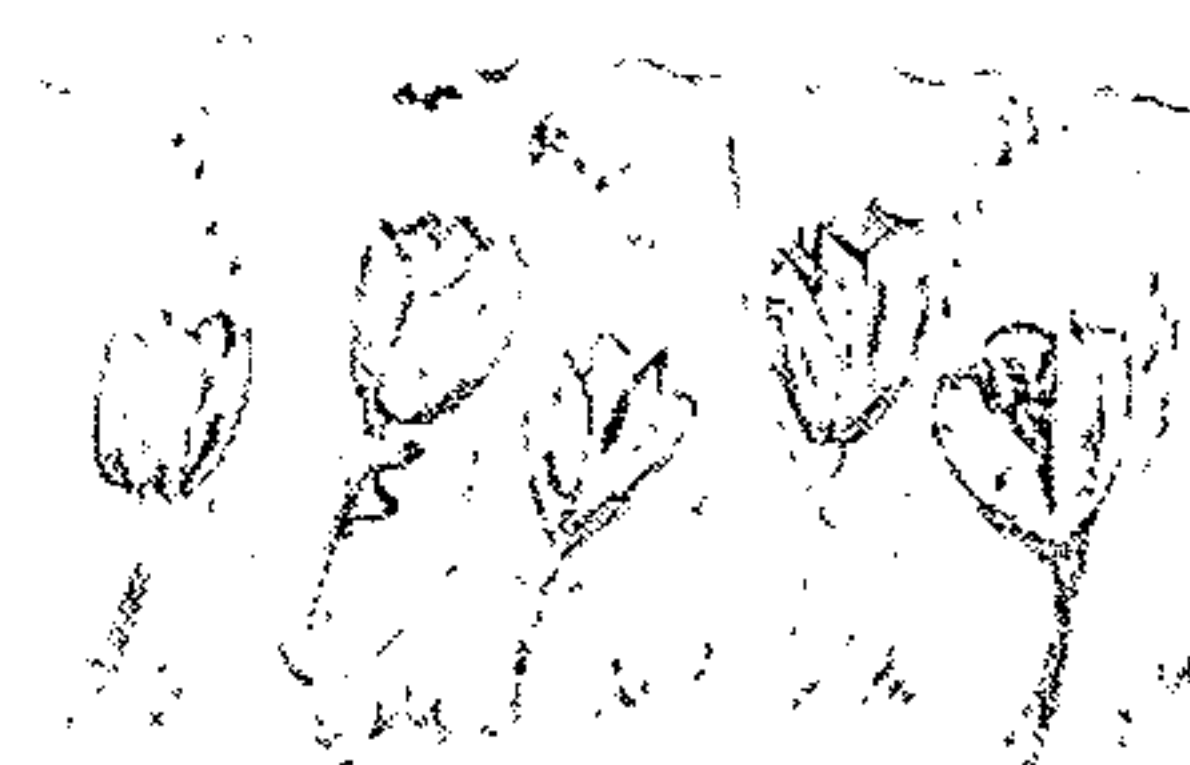
Beauty that I just had to have. I've
seen things I could not resist, but
God is none of these. He's the honor
that makes me

cover my face. The grace that unveils
it with a smile, and a gentleness that
whispers for me not to hide.
I must admit that I

can see myself better when I'm
looking in his eyes.

By Trisha

MV



By J.

IV

MV

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

Identifying the Parts

By Susie M.

I still have difficulty identifying what is going on inside even though it's been 5 years since I began DID therapy. It has taken me such a long time to know I trust my therapist; and, at the same, I've known from my first appointment with her that she really understood what I was talking about. There was an immediate connection; but, as soon as I left her office I remember a strong caution of fear coming from somewhere inside of me. One of my major problems is being able to stay connected with others, especially if it is someone I really want to be connected with, even my own self. I long for it, yet I'm terrified of it at the same time.

She has, however, been able to help me come to more of a level of comfort with her, and my own self. Having said that, I still get anxious when a feeling of closeness comes--again, even with my own self. My parts are not always distinct, so I have trouble knowing if I'm switching. I think I'm what is called co-conscious, fragmented and compartmentalized. And, because of this, being able to know, understand, and accept what a

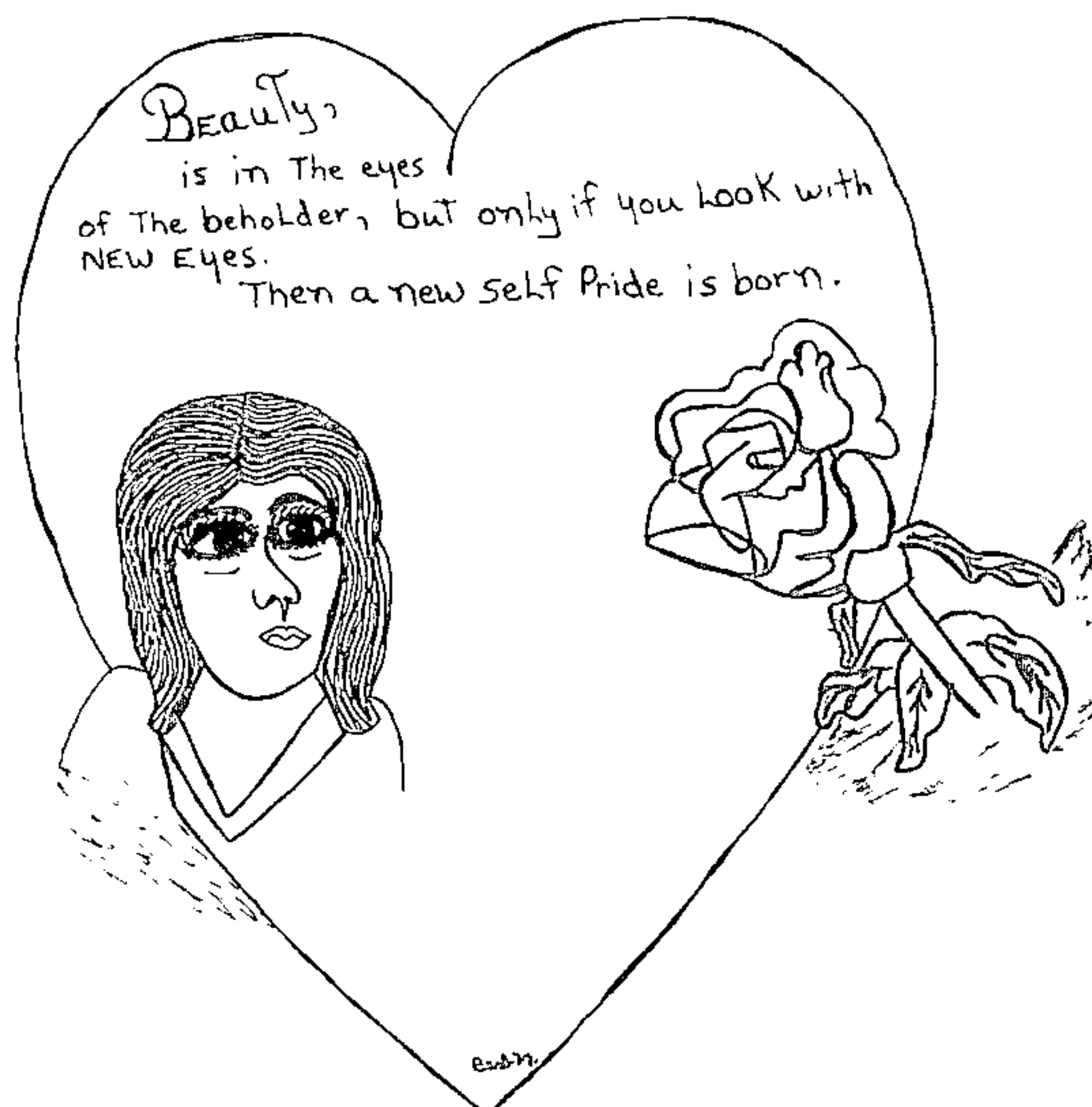
part is can be very difficult.

This morning for instance, I was feeling anxious, shaky, slight headache, shallow breathing and every so often I could feel my eyes rolling upward--classic symptoms of dissociation and anxiety attack. Oh yes, my handwriting was unstable, different from the norm, and I was having trouble concentrating. I couldn't identify any triggers or flashbacks, and I couldn't think straight to be able to soothe myself.

I therefore remembered, in some part, that I could take my anxiety medication, count and watch my breath, which is one of the major mindful exercises I've learned to help me get grounded; the combination seemed to help.

I still don't know what brought on this episode, and it frustrates me. I feel so helpless and lost when this happens. But, my therapist promises me I can get better. It's just such a long, slow process. But, I believe, trust her and am hopeful most of the time.

MV



Returns of the day

By Diana

April showers bring May flowers. And anniversaries. Some ancient, others still fresh.

It has been nearly a decade since I was sexually assaulted during that April 14th 5:30 p.m. afternoon in 1994. I was on a date to study for some finals that were occurring later in the week. I didn't know that I shouldn't have gone into his bedroom. I did not know that I was going to be assaulted. I didn't know that I was about to have my heart ripped apart from my soul, and be told that it was all my fault and that I wanted it by police and church personnel.

Ten years. Wow, it has been ten long years. In some ways, what happened to me seems like a long time ago. At other moments, the sting is still fresh. And the impending reminder of April showers only triggers my unconscious mind as to what really happened on that day.

As this anniversary is rapidly approaching, I think back to some of my other anniversaries, and in particular, my first anniversary when I was living in Canada with a friend. I quietly reminded Ann of what day it was, scared that she might suddenly change the subject on me. "Why would you remember a day like that?"

Why would I remember such a day? And why remind those who inwardly desire that I could be "over it" at last?

On my second anniversary, I sat in my college hall dorm with all the lights off and doors locked remembering, and wondering how the outside college chaos of students continued to function in normality around me.

On my third anniversary, I told my school support group that the meeting time of our group was taking place during the anniversary of my "incident." Their uncomfortable responses quickly turned the conversation into something more agreeable by discussing the happy side of dating those members of the group had experienced that week. Three weeks later, I tried to end my life by overdosing on aspirin.

On my fourth anniversary, I was in a treatment center for anorexia. Although the center was securely locked, I knew that my assailant lived only a short distance away. I wondered if he was somehow celebrating and remembering this day. Still convinced that I am not safe, I sleep on my bedroom floor that night in the closet, hoping to hide into further safety.

Four more anniversaries have come and gone, each one leaving me feeling empty. For the most part, I don't dare to bring up the subject in conversations for fear of others viewing me as "morbid" and "stuck." I have had too many instances like that where my pain was not validated. I have learned the hard way that you have to be very careful who you choose to share your pain with.

On my last anniversary, some of my older parts held the littler parts when the 5:30 p.m. hour approached. Our therapist then called us right at 5:30 to let us know that we were not alone and that other people did care, even if many people had failed us some nine years earlier. His concern was so comforting to us. Knowing that someone cared made all the difference. I am finally finding more people like that in my life. Building a support system has been slow, but well worth the effort. I am so thankful for those people who have reached out to help me in my remembering and my healing.

And so, I am awaiting the arrival of this year's anniversary. Another year is marching silently on. I cannot prevent it from happening, no matter how much I want to stop it from coming. And once again I am crying showers, huge thunderstorms of tenderly painful April showers.

MV

Darkness to Light

The darkness inside me is almost gone. The more I work on healing I see more of the good that I know I can and will become. People say Do Not speak of the bad things, but in order to heal I need to.

My past was and will always belong to me, and I am putting a shield around my past so no one can or will hurt me again. Life is good now, I see more colors than before. The colors I see are all the colors of the rainbow, and then some.

No more gray and black, now we see all of the colors.

By Mary G.

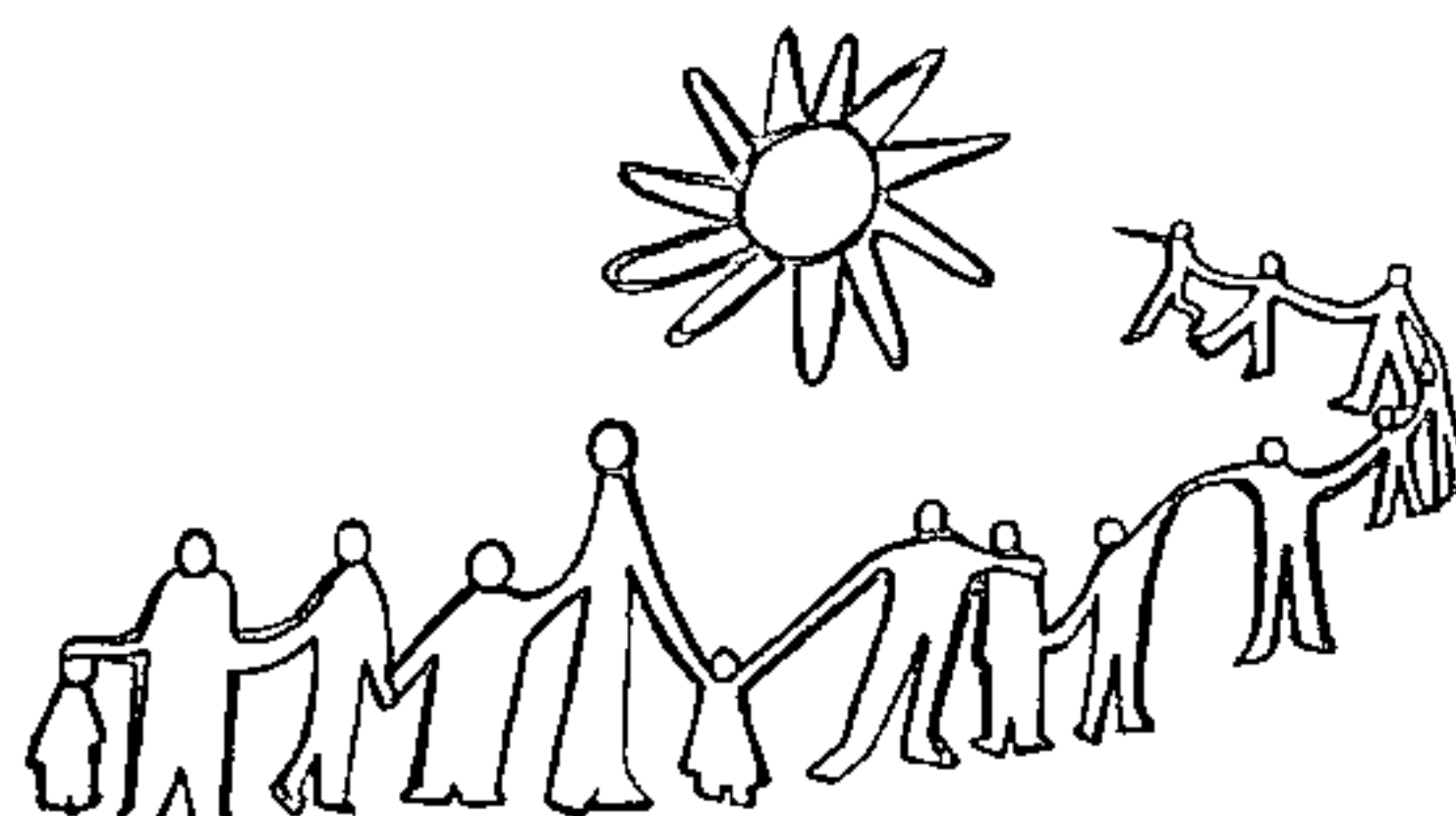
MV

Lipstick Duo

The strange girl in my dream put on lipstick so nice
I thought as a mirror she would surely suffice.
So thoroughly did I color bright purple on my lips
As we stood, lush eyelash to eyelash and lush hips to hips.
So when I finally finished and walked away,
"I don't have a split personality," I heard her say.
The others all laughed and thought that was funny.
But all I wanted to do was find my pink and white bunny.

By BDS

MV



J.C. 12/94

What Recovery Means to Me

By Sahara

This past year I broke through, or finished traveling over many mountains. I think I have been trying to navigate them for the past 20 years. But in the last five years I have made a concerted effort to heal in a conscious way. My therapist predicted that one day I'd be on the other side of all these hurdles and not even realize that I'd gotten there until I looked back. She was absolutely right.

Recently, I have had some days where I have been totally present and absorbed in the here and now. I have been amazed to see myself take my children to school, get to work, work productively, then pick up the kids and run errands. Just a couple weeks ago, I even cooked dinner and cleaned up afterwards. I pointed out to my daughter that I was cleaning the kitchen after we'd finished dinner. I said "Do you know what this means?" She threw her arms around my neck and said "Mom, you are well!" What an incredible moment that was for me!

Recovery means that I can do things that other people take for granted. It means I can have the energy to do the daily tasks of life and motherhood. It means I can keep track of my finances. I

can bathe daily and do laundry. I can walk the puppy and train him. I can feed the cat and dog regularly. It means I can suddenly "think" before I act.

Recovery means that I treat myself well. I take a break when I need to and don't push myself to exhaustion. I can set reasonable goals and reach them. I know how to calm down my anxiety without meds. Therapy is not the center of my life anymore. I chose to slow down in therapy, going every other week instead of several times a week. My emotions are calm now and are not the out-of-control freight train running down the tracks that they were for so long. I live in the present.

I never imagined I could be in a place like this. I didn't think it possible, but here I am. I thought I'd be in therapy for life. I may be actually, but I expect it will only be once every six months or so. My life will not revolve around crises.

Yesterday, I went to an art lesson. I never thought I could draw, but one of my alters Sarah is really good at it. It was awesome to be able to take the time to allow her to enjoy life now. What an incredible experience!

I have to say that getting to this place was worth all the work. I just wish I'd been able to know and see this life after "death". I say death because that is what it seemed like for so long walking the healing road. Sometimes, I envision that I was like a drowning swimmer with my therapist pulling me toward shore. Now, I have learned to swim. I have the skill set I need to live and laugh and cope with life.

I wish for everyone reading this to know that there is hope to get past the mountains and valleys on the healing path. I also wish that people who have not experienced the abusive childhood that we have could somehow be placed in our shoes and understand what incredible people we are to have survived it all. We are not "defective". We are competent, creative, intelligent people who have fought against incredible odds to survive. That act of cleaning the kitchen after dinner may seem ordinary to most onlookers. Only those who have experienced the life we have will understand what an incredible accomplishment that was.

MV

Books

MKZine

An Examination of coercive mind control, invasive human experimentation, and other related abuses. Published by Ron Patton. © 2003. Periodical. Each issue: \$5 US, \$7 Canada, \$9 International. Web: www.mkzine.com. Email: mkzine@mkzine.com PMB 175, 1910 East 4th Avenue, Olympia, WA 98506

This 64 page magazine takes on the most difficult issues: topics related to mind control, ritual abuse, hypnosis, covert drugging, programming, electromagnetic brain technology and implants. I read Volume 1, issues 1 & 2 to prepare for this review. Please take into consideration the fact that I do not have personal experience in these areas. However, I am a sympathetic outsider.

The entire arena of mind-control and related subjects is complicated and disturbing. I opened these issues hoping for a clear voice that would explain RA/MC

to me in a rational way. I wanted to like MKZine.

From my perspective, however, MKZine offers a very mixed bag. It includes some articles by authors such as Randy Noblitt PhD, that sounded convincing -- articles that appear to be well-researched and fact based. But others don't measure up to that standard. I don't know how to describe this without sounding as if I am "putting down" people with emotional problems who have difficulty communicating. I don't want to do that. But I also don't want Many Voices' readers to think I support the "I believe it, so it's true" school of reporting, especially when the subjects are so horrendous, and the accusations so adamant.

Also, I want to warn the fragile -- MKZine is full of details that could be triggering to vulnerable people. I'm also concerned that those of us with active imaginations could absorb details and incorporate them into our own "stories",

even if we did not have these experiences. (This is a tendency I have to fight in myself, regularly, which is why I mention it.)

I believe we are living in paranoid times—and some of what seems to be paranoia may well be based on reality. Unfortunately for me, MKZine didn't help me sort out the wheat from the chaff.. not in these two issues. Rather, it complicated the problem.

But MKZine has promise. And Ron Patton has guts for accepting the challenge to bring these views to the public. If the editing becomes more rigorous, if claims are backed by reputable sources, not just opinions by believers...MKZine has the potential to provide important support to a truly terrorized group of survivors. In short—if you're brave and you're in good shape & have support—read it and decide for yourself what makes sense. —Lynn W

MV

THANK YOU for sending
Many Voices your wonderful
 writing and art!
 We need it ALL -
 especially art and prose. Your
 sharing is the key to recovery
 for *Many Voices*' readers!
 Sincere thanks,
 Lynn W., Editor

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



Share with us!

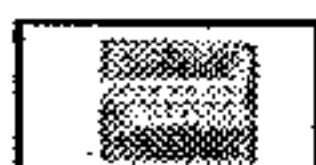
Prose, poetry and art are accepted on upcoming issue themes, (and even on NON-themes, if it's really great.) DO send humor, cartoons, good ideas, and whatever is useful to you. Please limit prose to about 4 typed double-spaced pages. Line drawings (black on white) are best. We can't possibly print everything.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

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

MANY VOICES

NEW!

**We now accept
 American Express
 Visa &
 Mastercard!**



Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/ZIP _____

☐ I have a Dissociative Disorder ☐ Professional/therapist ☐ Relative/Friend
 Subscription type: ☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift Send full list of past themes _____
 Full yr(6 iss)'89 ___ '90 ___ '91 ___ '92 ___ '93 ___ '94 ___ '95 ___ '96 ___ '97 ___ '98 ___ '99 ___ '00 ___
 '01 ___ '02 ___ '03 ___ '04 ___ '05 ___

Specific issues or preferred start date: _____

1 year:\$36 in U.S.: \$42US in Canada; Elsewhere, \$48 in U.S. Currency drawn on a U.S. Bank
 Make check payable to *MANY VOICES* & send with this form to

MANY VOICES, PO Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639

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

Cardholder's Name: _____
 Acct. # _____ Exp. Date _____ Total: \$ _____
 Signature: _____ Today's Date: _____