

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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Partners in Healing Dissociation and Work

& More...



Partner on a Ledge

I'm on a ledge again
My partner steps out
to hold my hand
He always does
but does not pull me in
This time I look down below first
to see how far
then inch back inside with him

I am criticizing my partner
I see my brothers
I see my fathers
Why do you do this to me?
He defends himself
then finally says
"You seem angry"
The ice breaks
and warm waters flow through

He is not my rescuer
He does not oversee
He listens
with patience
and speaks his thoughts
We talk
We laugh
He is a friend

I try to distinguish the faces
I tell myself that my partner
is not them
over and over
Round and round I go in deeper
another layer
to discover who he isn't
I try to feel who he is
but I am scared
He waits for me

By I.S.

MV

Holy Heck—I got Married!

By Diana & Co.

In seven day's time it will have been exactly three months since I got married. Wow! Three months! Did the wedding ceremony really happen or did I somehow dissociate through the whole thing? I guess you could say that I am still in shock over having gotten hitched! It still doesn't seem quite real, and I find that I have to remind myself constantly that I really am a wife now!

Like many of you, I have spent years denying all aspects of my sexuality, terrified of men and relationships, and covering up my pain through many addictions, including my life-threatening battle with anorexia. My eating disorder was a way for me to become asexual so that no man would ever find me attractive. Subconsciously, I felt that this type of thinking would protect me from ever being sexually abused again. While it did shelter me to some degree, this behavior wreaked complete havoc on my body and soul. Thus, I had to be hospitalized many times.

And then Anthony became my therapist. I never thought this would be possible, but I ended up falling in love with Anthony, although we did not become lovers. I learned to trust by loving him, and Anthony never broke boundaries to engage in a relationship with me.

But suddenly I realized that many there were safe men out there who respected women and didn't want to hurt me physically, emotionally, spiritually, or sexually. It had taken me years and year to get to this point, but I finally felt safe enough inside to start pursuing relationships with men. (If you are not to this point yet in your healing, PLEASE know that it is okay to take all the time that you need! Don't ever feel pressured to be in a relationship. I felt this pressure so many times from people who tried to "rush" the healing process for me. It is something that you need to take at your own pace, and in your own time).

Thus, I began dating Rob. I felt very

comfortable and relaxed around him, and to make a long story short, I am now married to this man that I love very much. Initially, some of my parts didn't want to get married and still resent the fact that we did get married, because they feel that they won't get the attention they need nor have the opportunity to engage in a lot of self-destructive behaviors as they once did when we were single. Sometimes they even want to do mean things to Rob to push him away, so that we can confirm the belief that no one would ever want us and that we really are unlovable. They also think that he may leave us, so why take the risk of being vulnerable in a relationship? We have been abandoned so many times in our life by so many people who "cared" about us. Rob promises that he will never do this, yet we still have a hard time believing it to be true.

The "child issue" is one that I have wrestled with frequently. Because Rob doesn't want any children, he will be getting a vasectomy next month, which is a decision that we have made together as a couple. It has taken me a long time to reach this point. This is because I was raised as a Mormon (although I am not one anymore), and it was deeply ingrained in me at a very young age that having children would be my greatest mission in life. I always wanted to be a mother, something I have fantasized about ever since I was a little girl.

However, realistically speaking, and given my history of extensive abuse, I know that having a child would not be a good idea for me. I still have so many unmet needs from my childhood, and so many child parts that are hurting. I am so afraid that I would turn into a raging maniac like my mother and lose all control and abuse my kids. I would never forgive myself if this happened. Even therapists have advised me not to have children, given my emotional state.

Fortunately, I have found something of a way to meet my need

for mothering through my work, which involves teaching elementary school children music—something for which I am passionate about. I have discovered that I love working with kids.

Intimacy-wise, I still struggle with "being there" whenever Rob and I have sex. Sex is such a complicated thing, especially if you have been sexually violated. It has not been an easy process for me, and flashbacks do occur every once in a while, and certain positions are very triggering for me. In particular, my parts tend to have a hard time staying in a safe place and not being present for sex. I am slowly trying to teach them to stay in a safe place, but they still think that they need to be present. Gratefully, my husband is very patient and does not demand sex from me, although I know that I still need a lot of help with this area.

Overall, I can honestly say that I am much happier and stable now since I have gotten married. My husband tells me a hundred times a day how much he loves me, which freaks us out a little because we are not used to receiving so much love! He also makes me laugh and see things from a more realistic perspective, which has added a healthy balance to my life. It is also wonderful to always have someone there for you—something which I never had. Despite some difficulties, I am really glad that I made the choice to get married. I guess miracles really do happen!

MV



Footsteps

I come into your world
 with many different eyes.
 I approach you in fear
 Of rejection and
 misunderstanding
 Sometimes, quite clear,
 No understanding at all.
 An offer of acceptance; yet,
 Not knowing what acceptance
 is needed.
 I don't feel whole, I don't feel well.
 Am so afraid of
 What you would or could see;
 And/or not seeing at all.

I am not an island, I am not the sea
 Standing alone with a
 whirlpool
 Whirling about, put at sea.
 I am similar in many ways,
 Quite a few, I am not.
 I fear you, your good wishes
 and
 platitudinal phrases awash over me.
 I feel the hollowness, the
 shallowness
 That you just cannot see.

I know you mean well
 And meant what you said.
 The thing is, they hit my head and
 Bounce away into the ether;
 What I feel I need is broken-down
 honesty.
 What I fear is your gasping—
 Not your grasping of who, what I am
 really,
 But an incomprehension, a
 gasp
 As you say, "that just cannot be!"
 I AM THERE SAYING,
 "I AM."
 "IT CAN BE."

By Linda K.

MV

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River Oaks Hospital - New Orleans, LA

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

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

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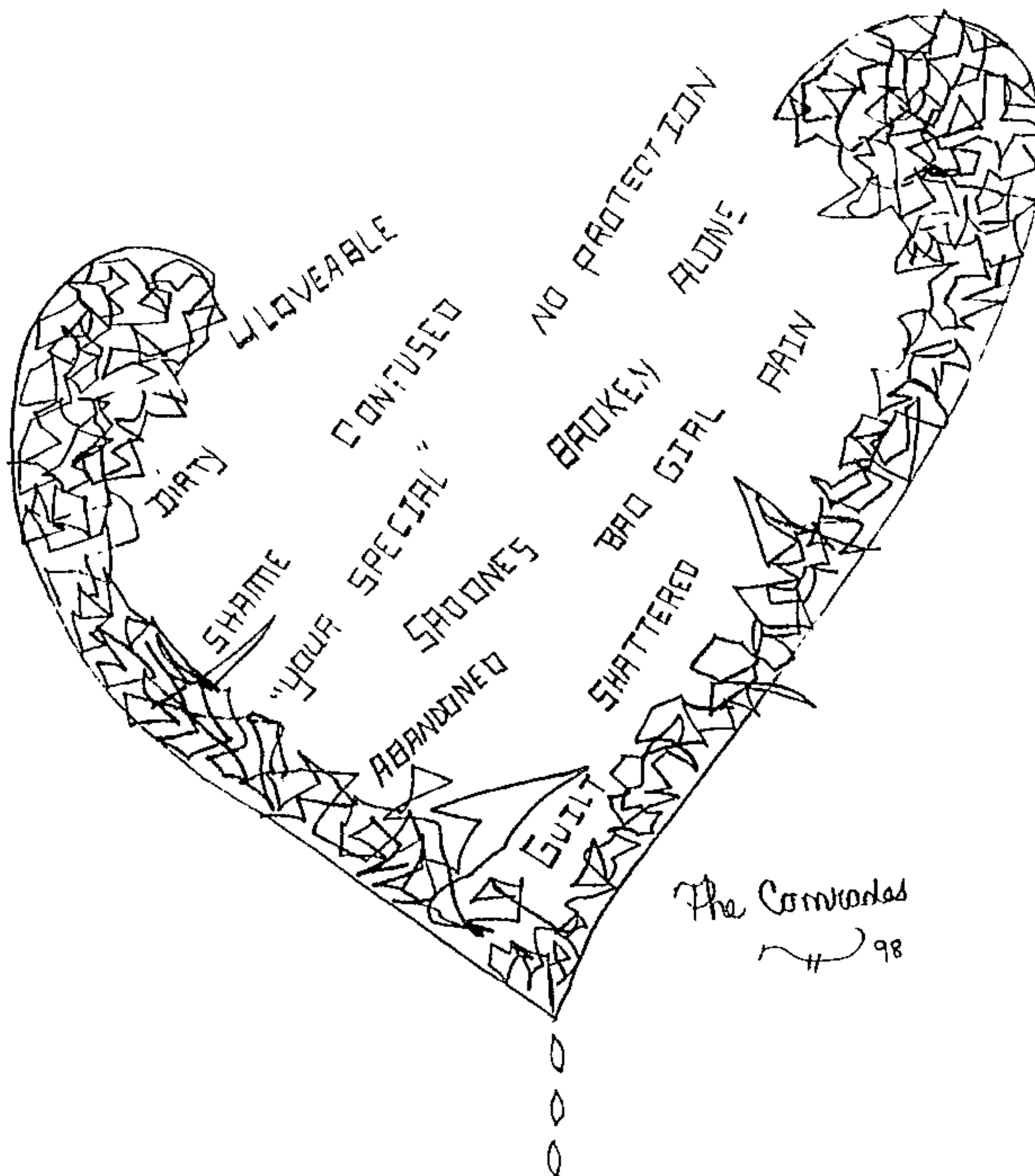
Call David Tate: (816) 356-5688 or (800) 225-8577

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 We appreciate your support! —Lynn W., Editor



Safe In This Time

By Elexus

People keep asking me what life is all about. Some say it's "no money, no money, no money!" I say, "Honoring nature is the essence and self-sufficiency is the key to empowerment and freedom."

Toxic home environment, attempting to fit in where I didn't belong, striving for success and never satisfied - is what I remember most of my childhood experience. Disconnected, depressed, tense and anxious; I sought relief for the way I felt.

There were institutions (education and otherwise), therapies and medications; geographics and substances - all temporary patches. Isolation and dissociation became my means of psychic survival, defense mechanisms against a cruel world.

I am feeling disgusted. Vegetation is thick as a machete chops my path through the woods to grandma's place. She is the only one I trust to tell me the truth.

The Muscogee tribal healer I call Big Mama Wise opens her self and greets me with a warm, comforting acceptance. She rubs rosewood oil on my head to calm my nerves and burns sticks of pine and sage to clear out bad spirits. She places eucalyptus around and I am engulfed with pleasant feelings. Her mantras, "your answer is always inside you" and "all unhappiness is caused by comparing" ring in my ears.

Embracing cups of her special tea, we go outside. Big Mama and I are relaxing under the sacred ayahuasca trees surrounding her dwelling. "The cypress stumps where we sit," she reminds me, "were placed here for sacred meditation". Sensing my contemplative mood, she whispers, "more will be revealed" and disappears inside. Suddenly, my vision becomes clearer, my senses refreshed. I am seeing for the first time. I have been looking without seeing, seeing without understanding.

"It's the roles I play that are dangerous. It's where I get trapped." Feeling uncomfortable now, I scream,

"No, I can't do it any more". The sound echoes through wilderness as a flock of white birds takes flight and a black dog barks in reply.

Through a window I see my grandmother setting down a bottle of fish oil, then grinding milk thistle seeds, her lips turn up slightly in a faint smile. The eastern sun peeks through the trees. My sensing I and my spiritual I sit still, elevating our thoughts, perfecting our intention. In our hand an herb grows into to a flower, melts to honey, and turns to gold. In the west, eleven moons play across a rainbow. "Yes, this is my world, too."

We are quiet within our one self. My twin rises up from my body, is suspended momentarily and floats toward an abyss. She turns and says without speaking, "We appear as different, yet we are one. All is in the one. Our separation is from our true nature - a place where pretending and superficial things fall away. When we return to our true self, we will be fully conscious, natural and spontaneous. Today, we meet our mother, Nature." She calls me to the edge of a cliff and our arms morph wings.

"First", she whispers midair, "we purify". My senses are floating downward to a stream as our naked reflection reaches up to meet us; cleansed with lightness, we swim ashore.

My body and my soul are walking along a river's edge, a fragrance of honeysuckle permeating the forest as we drink senna tea from a gourd. Our heel is the tool we use to dig out a circle on soft ground; we sprinkle wildflower seeds and push them under.

My wings are arms I spread wide, palms toward heaven, face to sky, "We acknowledge this time of the new moon and participate in Your mission. We ask Your continued blessings and give thanks. As always, we remain Your obedient servant in the name of universal consciousness. Ashay!"

Grandmother covers our body as

we squat barefoot around a fire. Appreciating the purple aura encircling her woolly head, we ask for a healing. Her worn, brown feet lead us upstream as the wind gently sways our cotton coverings and blows our twisted hair - long, kinky snakes that whip around our heads and coil down our backs. Big Mama leads us back to her sacred place, studies the horizon, and speaks softly to herself. She scoops valerian root, passion flower and dried leaves from amber jars - and prepares an elixir. I accept her cup gladly and drink quickly, expecting a miracle.

Grandma Wise ignores my more recent selves talking and focuses intently on my eyes, much as she's done since my birth. "The truth is in the eyes 'cause the eyes don't lie", she chants. "My precious one, I am exhilarated by your blue aura. You are, at last, receptive to a gift I'm here to share. Where have you been for so long in this world? Never mind. What you can see to do - is what you can see to do - when you see it. Life is simple, but not easy. Let us give thanks and offer praises for the abundance of blessings and the promise of salvation.

"Here is what is required. Live simply so that others may simply live. Avoid those with red auras - too materialistic; brown auras - too negative; gray auras - too depressing; and white auras - they lack harmony. All will rob your spirit.

"Do not molest any being and be warned about eating down God's creatures. Accept life on life's terms, not wishing life to be different. Choose to be happy, joyous and free; regardless of people, places and things and regardless of situations and conditions. Remain in prayer and meditation at all times, no matter what."

A familiar voice - I come to consciousness. "Mother, mother, wake up!" My son has breakfast waiting. It's a new day! Was that a dream or is this the dream? It matters not.

Safe Time, Continued

I and I no longer have concerns about the many voices, inside and out. We accept them all, just as they are. Striving has fallen away - we are exactly where we need to be in this time - accepting our gift of life and honoring it, however it unfolds. We understand how we create our own heaven and hell while we live, according to our thoughts; and that we are offered a daily reprieve from suffering, based on our spiritual condition. My body and soul are grateful to feel safe and at peace in this time.

MV

Scattered

the grenade at my feet
curious, i bend down
to have a closer look

the deafening noise
the strange people surrounding
me
looking
i think i hear laughing...

me—i'm just shattered
scattered
parts of me
are everywhere;
but no more than yesterday
and no less than tomorrow

By SJS MV



Partners in Healing

By Elizabeth

Finding a healthy partner often takes time. Sometimes having been in so many abusive relationships over time has caused me to believe that all relationships are abusive. After all, if one only knows abuse it can become "normal." When I found my current partner I was amazed to discover myself in a healthy relationship, one with mutual respect and caring.

To help my partner understand what it is like to be a survivor of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse I found that open and honest discussion is the key. Knowing that my partner was not a survivor, I started out slowly, not going into much detail. I waited for my partner to be the one to want to know more. It is extremely helpful to discuss the challenges a survivor faces in the aftermath of abuse. I hoped with all my heart that my partner would not reject me as damaged goods. I was not only accepted, I was reaffirmed as a person by my partner who voiced only love and a desire to truly understand.

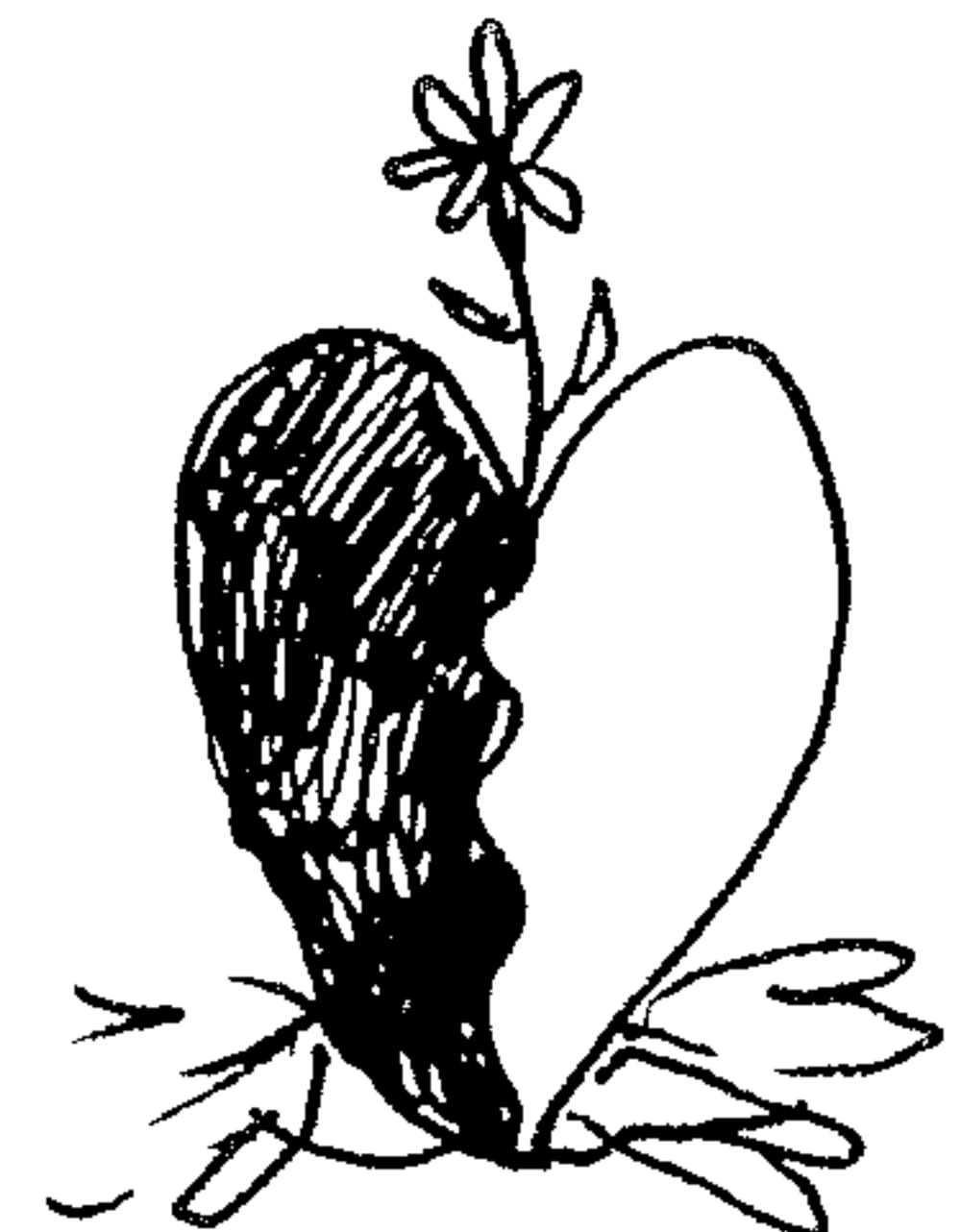
The most helpful thing a partner can do to help is to listen and not judge. A partner needs to know that there are no simple answers, no "quick fixes," and that the healing process takes time, often years of hard work. Often I can sense that my partner feels helpless, wanting to console and make "everything better." There are many tough days when I seemly need to be alone to deal with flashbacks and memories on my own. Being able to resort to coping resources such as taking a long walk, writing in my journal, or curling up in a safe place with a warm blanket and just rest can help a lot. It's important that my partner understands that my need for alone time is not a rejection, only one way I use to deal with painful times.

When my partner seems to need help, I try to be there to listen, to understand the need for my partner to have support. Partners sometimes

need to have alone time of their own; knowing that this is important and not a rejection of me is often all that is required to give a partner some space.

Suggesting my partner talk to other survivors' significant others has helped a lot. My therapist has also been a great help. We have gone to several "couples sessions" where my partner can voice concerns, get support, and be educated about the after-effects of abuse. Of course, it is extremely important to have a therapist who is skilled in working with trauma survivors and who will respect the confidentiality of our individual sessions together. My therapist never discusses what goes on in individual sessions. The therapist is mainly available to my partner as an educator and a sensitive listener. My partner and I have grown together through the learning process, finding out a lot about each other and getting the appropriate support that each of us needs. My partner also knows that a time may come when it might be helpful for individual counseling to help with feelings of helplessness or stress. This is known by both of us as another resource that my partner can keep as a backup plan should it become overwhelming living with a survivor who has a lot of need for support of my own and a lot of tough times.

MV



Therapist's Page

By Lorraine M. Graves, Ph.D.

Lorraine Graves, MA, MTS, Ph.D. has practiced as a psychotherapist in a variety of settings for over 20 years (in Pensacola, Florida) She is President and therapist of the Anchorage Counseling Service, through which she maintains a private psychotherapy practice with a focus on integrating mind, emotions, body and soul. She is involved in an energy-based healing program, in which she is the Southeast coordinator, a certified trainer, teacher and healer. You may contact her: lmgphanchor@aol.com. She asks that you please kindly be patient for her response.

BUBBLE PEOPLE NEW AWARENESS-Energy Psychology

In the process of maturing, we hopefully move from being unaware of our world to an awareness of what is really going on around us. I call this growing from unconsciousness into consciousness. When you started therapy you probably were unaware of some things about yourself, which you discovered with the help your counselor. Your multiple personalities were most likely a shocking discovery. Your mind had to expand to accept the fact of fragments and alters. This is an example of moving from being unconscious (unaware) of their presence in your life to being conscious (aware) of the fact that you had alters. This new fact of alters probably explained some things about your past and present life that never made sense before. It may have helped you understand why you lost time and the appearance of items you had no memory of buying. In my own maturing as a person and therapist, I began to realize a natural law at work, which has helped me understand DID from a new viewpoint. I present this article in the hope it will help you heal. I ask you to expand your mind and consider my idea.

This natural law has to do with our evolving awareness (consciousness) and gives some explanation about "how come" your mind split off. The law implies there is consciousness, variety and multiplicity in life.

VARIETY

We see variety everywhere we look. It is so common we take it for granted. One glance at a spring garden and you see a variety of flowers and color. There are a variety of cars, clothes, stores, food, and homes. Think of the varieties of birds and animals, of trees and all plant life, rocks, and stones. Walk through an international

airport and you see people from all over the world with different skin color and style of dress. There are different makes and models of cars, houses vary from single mansions to small patio homes for singles; and apartments come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and price ranges. There are towns, cities and states to choose to live in or near. We all have different hobbies, interests, jobs and abilities unique to each of us. Variety is a part of earthly life. DIDs have a variety of alters and fragments.

MULTIPLICITY

If you plant one rose bush, you will have multiple rose blossoms. If you plant an apple seed you will have an apple tree, with multiple apples with many more apple seeds inside. What happens when you plant a tulip bulb? You get one tulip, but over time the bulb multiplies and in spring more tulips appear to brighten your garden. These bulbs multiply underground, unseen and invisible to your physical eyes. You know the original bulb has multiplied when you see many tulips blooming in the spring. The universe is extremely generous in nature.

When you have a child you multiply physically. Human beings can give birth to multiple babies; and many animal species routinely have multiple births. Most of us smile when looking at a litter of kittens or puppies. Multiplying seems like a natural occurrence in the world, like it is a universal law. Mother Earth is full of multiplicity. The list goes on and on. What else can you mentally add to the list?

CONSCIOUSNESS

Let's have some positive mind fun. (Now is where I want you to expand your mind and take in a new awareness.) I just took you on a conscious mental trip. You took this mental trip while reading about a spring garden and colorful flowers. Did you create a picture of a garden in your mind? As I mentioned the airport, I hope you saw different cultures and races of

people walking from one gate to another. Again, hopefully, you created a picture of an airport in your mind. You consciously used your mind to read my words and then created your own flower garden and airport picture. If you have a child, did you momentarily see a picture of him/her flash in your mind? I bet you did. These mental pictures show the power of the mind to create. You have a creative mind. It can create mental pictures. You used mental energy to create your mental pictures. If you had emotions, like smiling at your child's face or over a kitten or puppy you used your emotional energy along with your mental energy. All of these mental pictures are invisible to others!

Our brains and minds are marvelous instruments. You used your mind consciously and with intention to create your mental pictures. You consciously used your mind to imagine a variety of people at the airport. While going on the mind trip with me, you 'saw' a variety of pictures (which you created). They appeared instantaneously on your mental screen. If you have several children, you may have seen multiple pictures of them. If you saw your children, kittens and puppies romping around, and people walking in the airport, you used your creative mind like a video camera. How clever our minds are!

EXPANDING YOUR MIND

Are you beginning to see the connection I am attempting to make between your mind's ability to create and the tulip bulb multiplying invisibly? Do you get the idea your mind can make mental pictures, which can grow and change like a video. Are you beginning to understand your mind has the instantaneous ability to split off and multiply into fragments and personalities just like things in nature do? One is physical multiplying (apple seed and tulip bulb); the other is non-physical invisible mental/emotional splitting off.

Physical matter can multiply. Your brain

Therapist's Page, *Cont'd.*

is physical matter while your mind in 'invisible' matter. Doctors can look at the physical brain and even do surgery on the gray matter up there, but where is the mind? Where are your feelings? I think they are different from the physical brain. They are invisible to our eyes.

YOUR MIND IS ENERGY, YOUR EMOTIONS ARE ENERGY

I would like for you to look at your splitting off from the energy viewpoint. Mental matter (energy) can multiply just like an apple seed. (Are you still with me?) I think you used mental energy to split off and create your alters. Your mind used mental and emotional energy to create mental pictures. In the same way you used mental and emotional energy to create your alters and fragments. Like the tulip bulb, your splitting off happened out of sight. It was invisible to the physical world. It is not surprising to me that you multiplied. I think your mind was following a natural law, but with one huge difference. The difference is consciousness and positive intention. Nature multiplies with consciousness. For example an apple seed has some kind of consciousness in its seed to reproduce itself, and has the positive intention to make more apple trees. You did not have conscious control over your splitting off. You dissociated unconsciously and unintentionally. It was an automatic response to trauma. Your splitting off was for survival and happened out of your awareness. Even though it was automatic and instantaneous, I think it was still following a universal law about how nature works.

ENERGY, DID AND SPIRITUALITY

The Christian Church speaks of the Holy Trinity, the Three in One. How can this be? The Trinity (or three aspects) of the Godhead in Christianity flow downward from the Creator to the Son and Holy Spirit. The Hindus have multiple gods and goddesses they worship as aspects of the same one God. In major religions, the belief implies that the Creator is able to multiply. The Divine as Mother/Father, created the Son, and together, the Holy Spirit. From this Trinity our souls, minds, emotions, and the physical body flow! The Divine Being first 'cast off' a part of the Divine Flame as a conscious, loving, intentional and positive act. We are all sparks of the Heavenly One. Multiplying seems to me to be in the natural order of

things. It appears The Divine established the multiplying pattern.

Many of my DID clients have told me they always believed God was multiple. I think my clients were saying, they believe God split into several 'invisible' personalities. You have a physical body, intelligence, and feelings. If we are made in the image of The Divine (Who is above), we (who are below), have the ability to multiply, and to expand our understanding and consciousness. We are all sparks of the Divine Life and we too, do indeed have the ability to create, multiply and, yes, split off when one needs to for survival. In thinking about all this, a pattern about life and DID began to evolve. This is especially true if you have the belief that we are created in the image of The Divine. It began to make sense to me. Does this pattern make sense to you?

I think, in splitting you were following the pattern of incarnation that The Divine began in creating us. You created alters/fragments during the trauma with your mind and emotions. In this way, you have copied Nature's pattern in the ability to create and multiply. There is one huge difference. The Divine creates from love and with consciousness and with positive intention. The Divine works consciously with love to create positively. You split off unconsciously from fear, pain, terror, and for survival. Your alters are not in your life because of positive love, but because of negative abuse, which happened to you. You created them unconsciously with a positive intent for survival. I am very glad you did.

It was, as you know, the only way out from your abuse. It was a way to survive, a way to cope with unbearable trauma. I believe dissociating into fragments and alters followed a natural law and was a gift for your survival. I said above that matter can and does multiply. Matter multiplies positively when we plant one sunflower seed and get a flower with many more seeds, or when you plant an apple seed and a tree grows. These are positive and conscious ways of multiplying. You used your "created in the image of God's mind" to create an alter(s) or fragment, as The Divine has created the mineral, vegetable, animal, and human life, including the planets, solar system and the universe with the all the marvelous varieties of creatures.

I think you were following the creation process when you split off, but in a

negative way. Your mind did what the atoms and molecules in it were meant to do, which is to multiply. Molecules can multiply negatively as they do with cancer cells; with the splitting of the atom, we exploded the atom bomb, which was a horrible negative act. You were experiencing an enormous amount of pain, dissociated and unconsciously created your fragments. It was more pain than you could take, and you created a "personality" to handle it for you. Alters were necessary and helpful, yet, they came unconsciously and are now a problem for you. You did not have positive and conscious loving control when you split. Your emotional and mental self created personalities. Your mind followed the natural path, which was normal and easy. In doing this, your mind and emotions gave you a chance for survival.

When The Divine established the multiplying pattern, this ability became available for everyone of us to use. We are free to multiply physically if we chose. So are we free to create personalities. You are the host (creator) of your personality system as The Divine is the Host for the entire created world.

HOW ENERGY GROWS

Energy follows thought. Your thoughts created an alter, an 'entity', which seems separate from you. This alter then became energized by the continued thoughts from you as a preferred way to cope. Much like water running downhill will seek a convenient pathway. For the water this becomes the preferred path. Once a pathway is created, the water will continue to follow the same old path because it is easy and it works. After awhile the small path becomes a bigger and deeper one and erosion sets in. The same thing happened in your mind because the mind takes the route of least resistance like the water running down hill. Your mind fragmented because multiplying is part of the natural law of creation. Dissociation worked naturally for you. It was easy and became easier to do so each time because your mind followed the same path and dissociation became the path of least resistance; your preferred way to survive.

I think it is an unconscious process precisely because it is as 'old as the hills,' meaning our mental and emotional nature is the one human beings have had down through the ages. The molecules and

Therapist's Page, *Cont'd*

cells in our physical body have been handed down through ages of generations. Our physical nature is one we do not think much about. It just is. We take our physical, emotional and mental selves, for granted

I call it the path of least resistance because it is how we naturally and easily do things in this life on earth. It is the comfortable way for most of us. As you dissociated, alters, personalities, and fragments appeared, split off and grew in experience, strength and energy. The natural path was there for you to follow. It kept you alive. I have often wondered if, in the big picture of life, you are learning something spiritually very important. I do not have an answer to this question. Maybe you can shed some light on this.

Your mind had this pathway available and ready to carry your emotional waters. As the abuse happened over and over, your alter (s) stepped in and handled the abuse for you. You did not know it, but you were giving the alter(s) energy. Just think for a minute. Anything you give your time and energy to tends to happen. You want a new shirt, you manage one way or another to get one. Right? The idea comes into your mind and you create a mental picture. Your desire for a new shirt grows. Desire is feeling/emotional energy. You save money, look for the right one, and one day you buy it. That is a lot of energy for one shirt. We do this kind of process daily. We do not even think much about it. It just is the way we are used to doing things. We do it unconsciously.

It is the same with your alters. Time after time your alters had to step in and handle the situation. The pathway was there for them to step forward. It became easier and easier like water running downhill. It became your preferred way to cope. Every time this happened, the alters gained energy. After awhile the energy of the alters seemed bigger than your life. They seemed to take on a life of their own. They acted as if they were physically real. This is because they were unconsciously 'fed' each time you dissociated during each abuse incident and they had to step in and take over. You gave them 'air-time.' You had to do this to survive. If you water a flower it will grow. If you feed your physical body it will grow. When you feed your mental and emotional body, it will grow too! Each alter or fragment was 'fed' every time you needed to use them to

escape from a horrible situation. You 'fed' them your energy. Remember this happened unconsciously. It was a natural protective reaction (dissociation) to an abnormal stimulus (the abuse).

You are a body of energy. You can create positively and negatively using your mental and emotional energy. Your mind created the alters from your fear energy, not love energy. Your alters are examples of your energy projected into your mental and emotional invisible body (or aura), as an extreme way of coping and surviving. How very clever your mind was to do that. It knew what to do to protect and help you. The invisible emotional and mental body can be called your aura in energy healing and energy psychology. Perhaps you have heard this word 'aura' before. I will share a story with you in a moment so you will know how you projected your alters.

YOUR PERSONAL INVISIBLE SPACE

I want to talk about the space around you. We all have a space, an invisible boundary around us where we do not want anyone to enter. Most of us get agitated when uninvited people come too close to us. They are in our space. We even have a saying, "Get out of my face." Our personal invisible space is about two to three feet and surrounds us like a circle. To demonstrate this idea, imagine putting a circle the size of a hula-hoop on the floor and stand in it. Everything in the circle is your personal space. The circle and everything inside it is yours. Everything outside it belongs to someone else. The outer edge is your boundary line. It is your personal invisible space. In energy psychology we call this space your invisible energy body or your personal space (aura). No one is allowed into your personal space without your permission.

If someone tries to cross the line without your permission, you have the right to stop them, with force if necessary. When you stop someone it is called re-enforcing your boundary. This is what the marines do. They form a perimeter and post guards to protect themselves. If someone approaches they shout, "STOP! Who is it? Identify yourself." If it is the enemy, they will stop them. In therapy, this is called re-enforcing a boundary. You have permission to set your invisible, as well as your physical boundary and to re-enforce your boundary in any way, which will protect you and not harm another.

SEEING ENERGY

I have a friend, Pat, who can see the invisible energy body. She has seen auras since childhood. She can 'read' a person's aura. Some years ago, for fun, I asked her to come and talk with my adult survivors. All my PTSD and DID groups were invited. About 10 women came and only one from my DID group. Pat became believable when she was concerned and called attention to a dark spot near one client's bikini line. The client embarrassingly admitted it was a tattoo. The client was fully clothed.

I did not tell Pat one woman had DID. When it was my DID client's turn to stand up and have an aura reading, Pat saw my client's alters as small energy circles clustered around her head, rather like a bonnet of bubbles a child might blow. She told my client to 'talk to them, not to be afraid, they were harmless. If she talked to them she would not be afraid either.' I was blown away and excited by her reading, and it started me thinking in terms of energy psychology and energy healing. My client of course, dissociated but stayed close enough in contact to hear what Pat was saying. She was amazed. This information became a source of comfort for her. It was important for her to realize, as terrified as she had been of her alters, someone could 'see' them and see they were really harmless energy bubbles. They were no longer invisible and so scary. They were only mental and emotional energy. They were not physical.

No matter how many alters and fragments you have, you could not create a physical body for each. You were limited because they are simply a part of your psychic energy system. They have no body. They are made up of your 'cast off' emotional and mental invisible body. They have no physical body. They are bubble people. When I am talking to an angry or defiant alter and ask where their physical body is, they usually pop away. They cannot answer the question because they are made of your invisible emotional and mental body. They are "real" only in the sense that they are "energy" in your emotional and mental invisible aura. They appear real because you have fed them and given them your power (for survival). Begin to take your power back.

Your alters and fragments as part of the invisible emotional and mental you, are

bubbles of energy. They are not emotionally, mentally or spiritually developed and are not physically real. Many can be very young and most all are immature. Some are quite primitive in their emotions because they came from fear and trauma. Many are negative and abusive. Others are sub-human in their determinations to disrupt your present life, often through violent means. Yet, they are energetic split off parts of you. They are bubble people. I know it is new to think about your fragments and alters as energy, invisible energy, bubbles. I would like for you to experiment with this new idea and see if it might help you in your recovery.

Remember:

You are more than your diagnosis. You are more than your physical body. You are more than your emotions and thoughts. You are more than your alters and fragments. You are energy. You can work with energy. You can redirect energy and channel it. Take you energy back from the "bubble" people. If they pop away when I ask a question, realize the power you have to pop you own bubbles or allow them to float away. Children pop bubbles all the time. You do have personal power. Use your personal power to disintegrate and dissolve your bubble people. You are part of the natural order. I believe you are an energy body, a spark of divine life and have the power to reclaim your mental and emotional bubbles. All of you is divine. Reclaim your divinity.

A Client Responds...

"Before thinking of my alters as my own energy, I thought of them as very real. When thinking of them as energy, I can absorb them better than I could if they were actually real. This has helped me to not let the "crazyness" continue to take over; I can contain that "crazyness" since I can contain my own energy. That was much more difficult to do when I viewed them as being very real and not having the power to contain them. I think I have actually been able to absorb a lot of this 'energy' over the last several months and am really more in touch with the reality of my life than I was able to be before."

By Kathy R. 12-13-04

MV

Happy Anniversary to Me!

By Brenda F.

Just having completed my first year in therapy, I thought I would write a little something to gain perspective about how far I have come. I know I don't feel as if much has been accomplished, but during my therapy, Gep has assured me I have done a lot. He says I have "stopped the bleeding." Of course it has taken me six months or so to accomplish this task, but he says that is a short time. One of the hardest steps was to start therapy. How I got started is a long story, but no matter how it started, the important issue is I *did*. After a few sessions I was diagnosed with DID.

This was then denied. I could not possibly have this sort of mental condition. I began to study and learn about DID, which helped me to understand. Finally coming to terms with having it, I then was frustrated and felt it was unfair for me to have DID. I soon began to question-- what could I do to help myself? I quickly became depressed because I could not change everything *yesterday*. I wanted things to be changed NOW.

My next lesson was learning to slow down and accept the fact I had no control to change things quickly. I had to learn that change can only happen over a long period of time. This in turn was burning me out; I had to learn to take breaks. Go slow and take breaks is a valuable lesson.

My next six months were quite a struggle. So much on my plate. A great deal of changing. Actually, my whole life had to be changed. Starting from scratch and beginning an entire new life. One of the first steps was to eliminate an issue which contributed to my switching... separation from my family. I am currently still working on this and probably will for some time. I find it difficult to cut the final string. They are family but I remind myself no one protected me while incest occurred year after year; from therapy I learned how dysfunctional they really are.

Currently there are problems with my job. Therapy is helping me cope with this matter also. My new and recent issue is learning how to have a

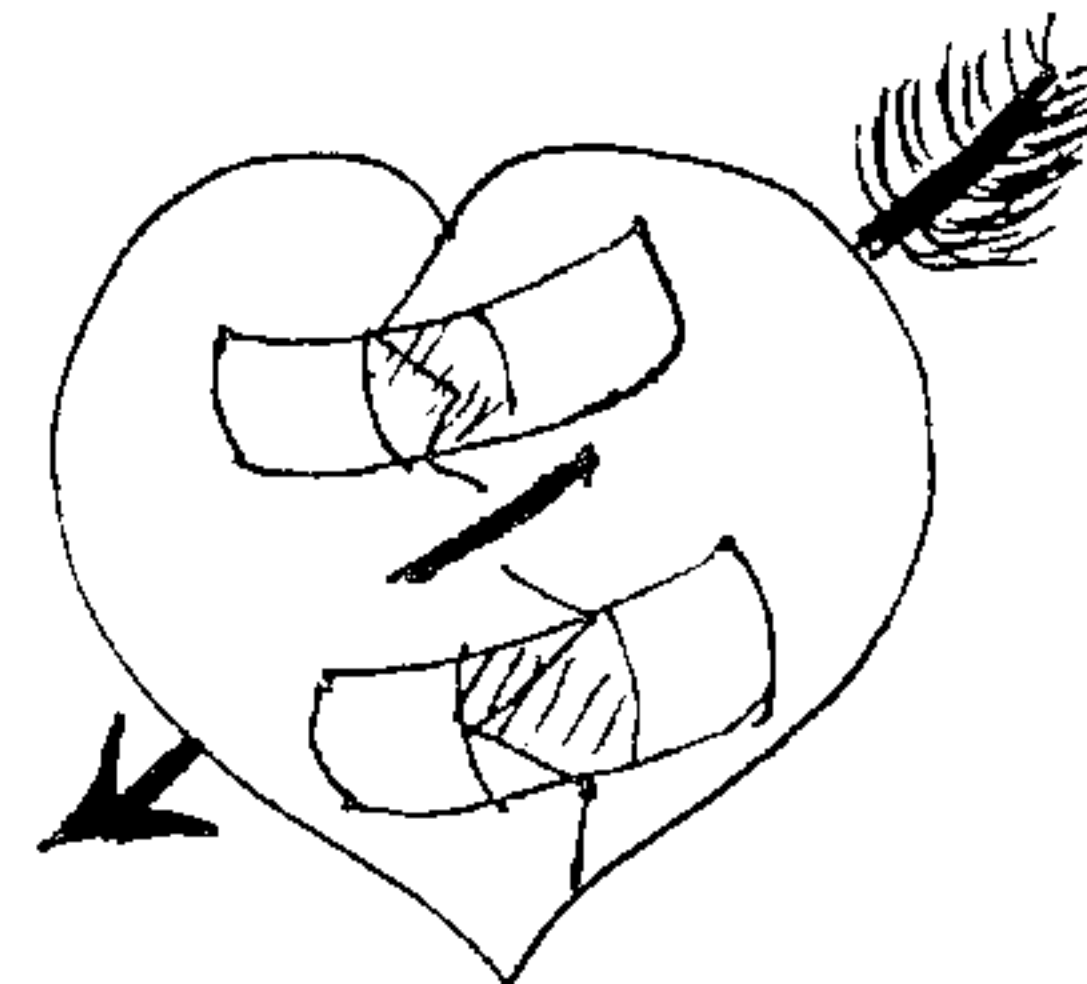
satisfying sexual relationship without switching. This I know will take a great deal of time to change. I love my husband so much; he has been supportive and patient with me during my first year in therapy. But I can do it, given time.

There is something I have done for myself that I have always wanted to do. Go to college.... I am having a great time learning. Math is so much fun but Accounting is questionable. And I don't care what anyone says about my age. Although at times I find it hard to concentrate and seem to find myself drifting away, somehow I am managing. This puts more on my plate, but enjoy it!

My first year in therapy now begins to look promising. The accomplishments which were made begin to look real. The bleeding has stopped and the healing begun. Though I still dissociate at times, it slowly is diminishing.

In closing, as my therapist Gep did say, one of the saddest parts of his job is the fact that people who come to him for help are people who need help dealing with those who really created the problem in the first place. The problem-creators are the real people who NEED to come! He says they never knock on his door, unless court-ordered or threatened in some way. But even then, if and when they go, they are the ones to deny they have a problem. How true this is....

MV



Dissociation

By Phoenix H.

I wish humans did not traumatize one another, physically, sexually, emotionally and psychologically. I wish no one needed to learn about dissociation and dissociative disorders. I wish that I didn't need to know. I wish we lived in a world in which there has never been the abuse of children, there's none now and there will be none in the future because people and society honor children, respect and accept them as separate intelligent human beings full of the potential of life, as they wanted to be honored, respected and accepted as children.

These were my thoughts as I read Dr. Harold Siegel's "*Therapist Page*" essay entitled "*Dissociation and Trauma: a Professor's Perspective*" in the October 2004 *MANY VOICES*. I would like to thank Dr. Siegel for his essay of passionate advocacy for education about dissociative disorders. I read this essay with a sense of relief that someone recognized the incredible importance of education people in a clear, unsensational and pragmatic way.

As I read, I was thinking also about my own experiences with dissociation. I have neither MPD nor DID. However, I have been dealing with dissociation for years as an aftereffect of childhood abuse, as part of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression. And I was thinking: from the perspective of someone intimately involved with dissociation, what would I want Dr. Siegel's undergraduate students to know about dissociation and dissociative disorders?

Dr. Siegel, in his essay, focused on two issues: 1) preconceptions that people, i.e., his undergraduate students, seem to have about DID, and 2) issues of prevention. My concerns focus on the first with perhaps a broader view toward dispelling preconceptions. I am not a mental health professional. So, here is what I have learned during years of therapy, and what I would like other people to know and understand:

Everyone dissociates.

Daydreaming is dissociation. Letting your mind wander during repetitive or unpleasant activity (like cleaning the bathroom) is dissociation. It's not some bizarre glitch in the mind that causes weird behavior. It's the psyche battling boredom. This mild dissociation is natural, human, and the psyche amusing itself. Everyone does it, much to the frustration of teachers and bosses everywhere.

Dissociation is a protective mechanism. With daydreaming, it "protects" against boredom. When a person faces a threatening, overwhelming situation in which she has no power and no escape, the psyche can trigger dissociation to varying degrees depending upon the situation to preserve and protect the mind and life. Every human being on the planet is born with the ability for dissociation and protection. It's automatic in the same way that the adrenal glands automatically pump adrenalin into the bloodstream to prepare the body for fight or flight. Once the threat is gone, the person then needs to process what occurred, tell her story, talk about her experience in physical and emotional terms. If this process occurs soon after the trauma, for example, after a natural disaster when people meet in groups or talk to the media, then the healing begins immediately and there is small chance for disorder to develop (as I understand it). If the trauma is not processed and/or is experienced repeatedly without escape, as in childhood abuse or domestic violence, the psyche continues to preserve and protect with dissociation, even in situations which may not be threatening, as if the psyche has gotten stuck in a loop. As I understand it, this is when dissociation can become a problem (or a godsend, depending upon your point of view).

Dissociation occurs on a continuum, from mild to extreme. Daydreaming is a mild, voluntary

dissociation. At the far end of the continuum is MPD and DID, the psyche's highly creative responses to preserve and protect the mind and its function in response to repeated incidents in which the person is threatened, powerless and overwhelmed emotionally, i.e. traumatized psychologically. On the continuum, I have been just right of center in the past, according to my therapist. Now, I dissociate automatically only in situations that remind me of the abuse I endured as a child. I am aware of it as it happens, and although I have minimal control, I can manage and shorten it through recognition and reassurance; I'm an adult now and can defend and protect myself. Until I began therapy, I didn't have a clue what was happening to me, and I had no connection to my body below my neck. I'd miss entire conversations, parts of movies, and if someone touched my body because my psyche blocked them with dissociation. I'm not an expert on MPD or DID, but I have known women with MPD. They were productive members of the community with good jobs, houses, friends, family and busy lives. They were totally plugged into reality and their different parts insured that they remained so, even as they dealt with painful issues. And as exotic and "glamorous" as MPD and DID are perceived to be (they're not), due to famous cases that have received publicity, problems with dissociation are more often quite ordinary. That is, not everyone with a dissociative disorder or problem has MPD or DID.

Psychological trauma can happen to anyone, at any age, and is not limited to war. If dissociative disorders are a hidden epidemic, I would suggest their root cause, psychological trauma, is also. Childhood abuse causes psychological trauma which I think is not well understood by the general public. War combat is probably the most commonly understood cause of

psychological trauma, but humans have many ways of traumatizing each other: rape, physical assault with or without a weapon, domestic violence, child abuse, torture, political terror, brainwashing and the witnessing of any of these without power to change the situation or escape. Holocaust and Soviet Gulag survivors are survivors of psychological trauma. Natural disasters and plane crashes are also part of the list; the terrorist attacks on 9/11/01 were a major psychological trauma affecting millions of people to varying degrees.

All causes of psychological trauma have one thing in common: violence. The violence doesn't need to be physical, however; emotional or psychological violence also traumatizes people just as much. We live in a violent world. Why? Why are humans so violent to one another, not only physically, but in speech, in their emotional interactions? I think it is about power, dehumanizing others in order to feel powerful, whether they are conscious of it or not. Understanding and stopping the violence on the individual, community, national and international levels would be a huge undertaking and would require, most likely, many many years and a massive education effort. But violence causes psychological trauma which left untreated can cause more violence resulting in more psychological trauma and more violence and over and over.

People who dissociate are not crazy. During my early years in therapy, I was constantly afraid that I was crazy. Certainly, dissociation can feel crazy. I learned, however, that a psychotic person does not perceive the reality around him and has his own "reality" in his mind. Psychosis is a total disconnection from reality. Dissociation is a protective mechanism to preserve the mind and its functioning and to remain connected to reality. It is for the survival of sanity, highly creative and specific to the individual.

I have been sane all my life because of dissociation. And I am profoundly grateful to my mind for it. The abuse I endured in childhood was severe, at times unrelenting. My psyche did an excellent job preserving

and protecting itself during the abuse. I never became unplugged from the reality around me. I've graduated from college, followed my interests professionally, and pursued the challenge that faces every human: the challenge of living a good and fulfilling life. Just as my physical body has ways of protecting me and preserving my life, so does my mind.

When does dissociation become a disorder? I think this is an important question for anyone who cares about preventing dissociative disorders. I believe there are two factors to consider: intervention and stopping the cause, i.e. violence. I think we would not have dissociative disorders if there was correct and compassionate intervention at the time of psychological trauma. We do not yet live in a world where the mind is treated at the same time as the body, or the way the body is treated after trauma as standard procedure. Physical trauma can be seen in most cases. Psychological trauma cannot. Education about psychological trauma and its effects are essential in medicine and for the general public. So I understand that dissociation can become a disorder when psychological trauma, especially severe, is left untreated.

People with dissociative disorders are human beings. The mind can be a mysterious force in our lives. However, the mind is a beneficial, awesome and vital part of human life, even when it's doing something that's mysterious or hard to understand. When society stigmatizes the mind in any way, whether it's about disorder or simply because someone thinks differently (as, for example, in the Soviet Union 1917-1990), people are stigmatizing themselves. Everyone has a mind. So, all people need to accept their minds and the power they have in their lives, just as they accept their physical bodies.

What do you think? What have I missed. I think there must be more that I don't know. What would the MV community want Dr. Siegel's students to know about dissociation and dissociative disorders?

MV

Arboretum

Standing silent
Motionless upon a footbridge. Slightly
above a flowing stream
Screams of a long distant past
Bellow louder than her present

Present. A moment beneath her
Smooth. Tranquil if rocky
Circles of scattered memories

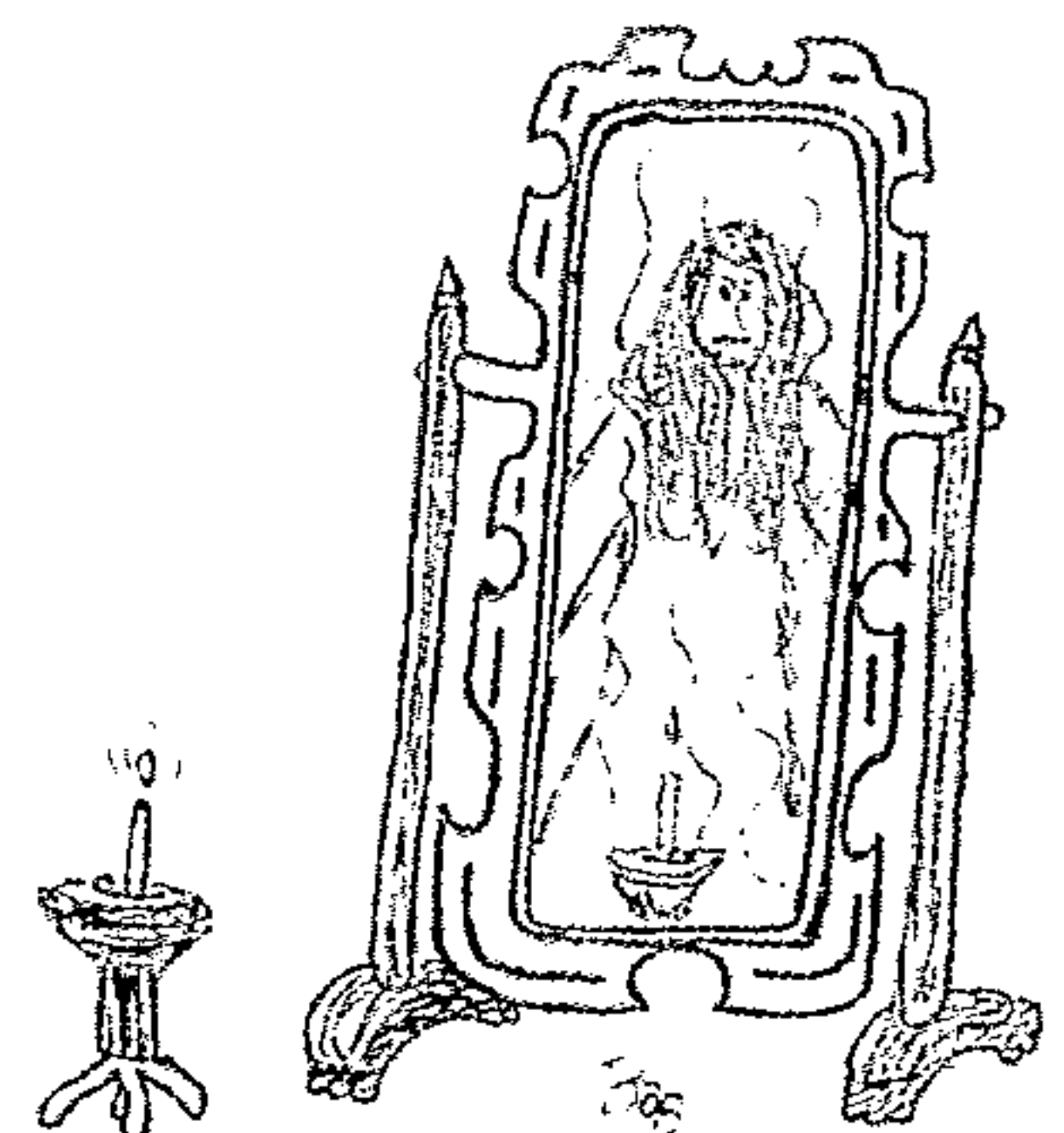
Concentration. Reflective meditations
Block roar of an era past
Drowns not present pleasures. An
inner peace
Diligence. Focus. Allow for tranquility

Gratitude swells out raging beginnings
Present. Faith-filled
Anticipation of beyond. Not quite
recognizable as yet
Held awareness and recognition of
powerlessness

Robed in confidence. Life has and will
flow
The past screams the loudest when
we are rooted
Planted firmly in the present
Faithfully awaiting an uncertain
beyond

By Marilyn G.

MV



This is For All the Lonely People...

By Lynn W.

As I typed in material on partners for this issue, my mind whisked back to the many, many years I did not have a partner...yet wanted one very much. And I thought about how some who are reading this today might feel, as I did then, that hearing about relationships—good, bad, or indifferent—was agonizingly painful. I remember the days when my body felt hollow and my skin would burn and ache from lack of touching...I'd have to rub my own arms to be sure I was "there" and to feel some sort of comfort. I want to assure those who feel that misery now that there is hope for change—even the most stubborn cases of relationship-itis may be curable.

If I could find a happy relationship, eventually, chances are you can too!

My problems with relating began early—not only by growing up in a seriously troubled family, but also living in an isolated, rural area where there were few people to interact with in ordinary, day to day situations. Like many others with abuse histories, I never learned how to be comfortable with small talk, or flirting, or even to enjoy relaxed, casual friendships. Sex was compelling to me from a very early age (another symptom of abuse, I now recognize) and I married young. The two of us were not a good match, and we did not have a healthy, mutually respectful relationship—though we were fortunate to have two great children and stuck it out together for 16 years before going our separate ways. (We're also fortunate today to be able to be "friends" for the sake of our now-adult children. That is a blessing!)

To demonstrate which of us had greater social problems—my ex moved smoothly through a few monogamous relationships beginning promptly after our divorce, ending with his remarriage several years ago. In contrast, I struggled with literally dozens of extremely brief "relationships" and encounters, or very-long-distance "friendships," for more than two decades after the

divorce. In fact, it was 7 years before I managed to hold any close relationship together for a single year...and after that disintegrated, it was nearly another 15 years before I duplicated or exceeded that level of intimacy.

During much of this period I was in active therapy, and over time I learned a lot about what a relationship should be, and how I needed to be selective in choosing a partner, and what I needed to do to improve communication, etc etc. But all this new knowledge was held in limbo. I would read women's magazine quizzes about relationships in total frustration—there was no one to "practice" my growing relationship skills with. From childhood I had always felt more comfortable alone than with others (no surprise, considering my environment) but I also yearned to be a companion to someone who liked me, and enjoy the pleasure of a satisfying, non-threatening relationship.

I tried everything to meet the right person. I tried bars (I'm not a drinker, nor a small-talker. I flopped miserably at this.) I tried singles dances. I tried joining groups. I tried churches, museums, bicycle clubs. I tried a zillion different types of singles organizations and personal ads. I volunteered. I asked friends to keep an eye out for me. And I met people, and dated people. But relationships for me were like oil and water. I could not seem to find a winning combination—where the feelings were mutual, and the end result was comfortable and viable for both of us. This was a real pain and I came close to giving up many times.

However—after about 20 years of this—I started noticing improvement. After a particularly disastrous relationship, I began being very selective. I knew what I wanted, and what I did not want. And I rigorously avoided the people I did not want. But I didn't hide out in a corner, either. I stayed active, looking for someone to "practice" my relationship skills with.

(It seemed to help me reduce anxiety by thinking of finding a partner for "practice" – not for "a lifetime.") I met a man who lived far away but his mother (who was local) became a friend. I "dated" him for 3 years—a record for me! This ended when I realized—finally—that he wasn't ready for a closer relationship. I wanted something more intimate. So I moved on. (This was a change for me—in the past I would not have taken the initiative.)

The next relationship was problematic, but physically much closer. There were some definite good points, despite the negatives. All my friends and advisors disapproved of the relationship, but I was "in love." I saw this person regularly for nearly three years, and the issues that surfaced gave me many, many opportunities for "practice." I was deeply disappointed when, despite all my efforts, the connection blew apart. This time, though, I decided to actually insist on a confrontation and clear the air. I went through with my plan—got my answers—and I didn't die! This was a breakthrough for me, because before I always avoided direct discussions. I was proud of myself, and despite my sadness, I decided to keep looking for someone who would be good to me, and who would benefit *from* me, as well.

Surprisingly soon after the difficult relationship expired, I met the person who is my partner today. (Yes—it was an Internet Date! We never would have met each other without taking that risky and sometimes gawdawful plunge.)

For us it's been two years—two unusually comfortable years—of genuine intimacy with someone who is remarkably compatible. We talk a blue streak. We're on the same wavelength. We share the same values. We've weathered serious financial problems, work problems, health problems, family problems together...each of us helping the other through difficulties. We've also had great fun these past months. I never

dreamed I'd be so relaxed and at ease with another person. My friends and family are pleased and surprised. It is scary, of course. To love someone means risking being hurt by loss, through accident or ill health or some other catastrophe. But right now I'm happy. It's a profound relief—a great and continuing joy.

Maybe my new-found capacity for healthy relating is partly due to age and experience. It may also be sheer luck...and persistence. As I told a friend the other day, "It took me 60 years to find this."

That is my message—and New Year's wish—for all of you who want a good healthy relationship and haven't found it yet. Remember the message of the 1975 hit song by "America" that titles this essay. Whether you're young or middle-aged—or my age, or older—start now to take some steps toward the healthy partnership you deserve.

"Don't Give Up...You Never Know Until You Try".

MV

My Partner in Healing

My spouse is truly a partner in healing for all of us.

Becky encourages all adult alters and host to take college courses, write, visit folks in prison ministry and nursing home residence.

Becky reads stories to and makes cookies for the child alters.

She is in therapy herself and her therapist helps her to understand and deal with all of "us." We have been able to help Becky, too.

She always wanted children and a loving spouse.

Now she's got both!

By Sally B.

MV

Relationship Concerns

By Tina B.

I just recently was in a relationship, the first real relationship since my diagnosis of DID. Sure, I had been involved with this and that person, but this was my real official "I'm going to do this right" relationship. This was my so called first "adult relationship".

I tried to be normal in this and deny my DID, but it came to haunt me.

During sex, I would have these feelings and flashes wash over me depending on what position we were in at the time depended on the flash of memory. The flashes were too real. I felt helpless and childlike and alters were popping out all over the place. I felt guilty for feeling pleasure.

I wasn't able to communicate like I needed to because I was afraid if I did I would be abandoned. I was willing to take anyone and any kind of relationship to fill the void of being alone and take the focus off of my problems and diagnosis. I didn't love the man I was involved with I loved

who I wanted him to be.

I didn't like having someone around me 24/7 and it scared me that he wanted to be with me all of the time. I was pushing my internal alters down and trying to run the show myself. Yeah, this really worked. The more you resist, the louder your head gets. Something I had to realize is that I get Trust and Need mixed up. I tend to think that I trust, but really my trust is based on my needs that I still demand get met by others that were not met as a child. My child alter Kristin lives in fantasy and in hope that someday a mommy will come along and meet her needs.

In short, my advice is to take any new relationship slow. To make organization #1 internally and have the appropriate alters tucked in gently. If you don't love yourself you can't truely love someone else. And, don't settle for just anyone just because it's somewhat better than what you've known.

MV



Re-entering the Work Force

By Donna

I am at a point in my healing where I felt that I wanted to do something with my life. After thinking it over I decided to re-enter the work force. I wanted to make a difference as well, so I chose to look in the health care field. I am on disability retirement from a back injury and need to supplement my income. I had not held an outside job for 17 years. I tried to prepare my "selves" for the changes I was about to make by telling them that we deserve a life and to be happy. That enough was enough.

It was hard to write resumes. I had to say nice things about myself but once I got past that it was easier. My first interview was terrible. I was nervous, uncomfortable in the clothes I wore (they were not 'me') had no self-confidence, the atmosphere was tense and I had an uncomfortable feeling while there. My parts were all over the place. I said all the wrong things but the interviewer was very interested in hiring me despite my bad case of nerves. After it was over I decided that I did not want that job. That it wouldn't be right for me.

The next interview I went to I wore what I was comfortable in: I did not dress up. I made myself peaceful within before I went and as I talked with the interviewer I actually felt I had presence. That lasted about an hour. Then I had to be interviewed by the administrator, which lasted another hour. We talked about art for the most part and when he asked me to tell him some things about myself I was genuine and open. I told him why I didn't dress up and that I am sincere and willing to learn. I left feeling very good about myself and thought that even if I didn't get the job I did my best and it would be okay. That my higher power would put me where I was supposed to be.

When they called to tell me I was hired I was in the middle of some serious feeling work as I had just had a session and about half way through the conversation my mind had shut down and I only got part of what she was telling me. I knew I had messed it

up. I tried to get myself straightened out about it but never really did but after all that worrying things worked out okay anyway.

I had all kinds of fears: like, would they give me the days off I need to go to therapy and would I be able to change things around if they didn't. My younger parts were terrified that we wouldn't see our therapist. We also had terrible fears that by us going to work we would be growing away from her like we were getting too well. Could I do the job and not dissociate? Would I make mistakes? Would I be able to remember what I was supposed to do? I had monetary concerns: would I earn too much and lose my retirement disability, leaving me destitute? I am separated from my husband, and wondered if he would stop paying my alimony, making me farther behind financially than I already am?

I tried to cover all the bases before I started work. I checked to see how much income I was allowed to earn so that I would not jeopardize my retirement benefits. I called my husband and told him I expected him to keep up his end of our agreement even though I was working. I talked with my therapist. I did a lot of inside work with my parts. They were very afraid of the changes. I requested the days off I needed and got them, so I could continue with my therapy as usual as well as my new outside activities.

I started work as an activities aide at a nursing home, which was an ideal job for me, and was nervous, which is normal. I had to wear dressy clothes, which I don't really like but soon got used to them. I loved the job but every morning I would become so distraught that I would have to call the local crisis line to get myself out the door as well as take extra medication. At first my younger parts would come to me after about an hour wanting to go home but I was able to explain to them and they adjusted. I tried different things, like leaving them in our safe place, only taking some of them with me but in the end we did

best when we were all working together at a new level of cooperation. After some practice I was okay once I got there and by the end of the day I was filled with so much joy that I found at times I was not able to go back to the healing work. While I was at work I was fully in the moment and felt a new wholeness. I did struggle with transitioning between the healing work and the job but there were times I was able to balance both. I felt that with time and through trial and error I would be able to fine-tune my system.

Despite the joy there were a lot of negatives to this job. The general morale was so low it could crawl under a door. I had no orientation period or training and was expected to work alone 80% of the time, which was very difficult physically. My boss walked off the job after I had only been there a week or so. Then it was pure chaos everyday. You never knew what you would walk into. I was able to get past all of this and still do my job about after three weeks of turmoil I decided that I could no longer work under those conditions and quit. The strain had drained me mentally as well as physically.

Although the outcome was not what I had wanted or even expected, this was a wonderful experience. I learned so much about myself and my capabilities, it was well worth all the turmoil both inside and out. All my fears were laid to rest. I found that I can find a job, hold it, and I might add, do it well. That I will not dissociate and that I can remember what I need to. That I can learn to adjust to change and be better for it. That I can be assertive and protect myself. That I deserve to be respected and treated in a decent manner. That I can have needs and get them met. That there is no such thing as being too well, my therapist will still be there for me when I need her. My self-esteem, self-respect, self-confidence and self-worth are increased when I am being a productive member of society. I knew when to leave an unhealthy situation and felt good about my decision and that it is okay

to do so. I learned to reach out for support when I need it and that no one person can be there for me 24/7. I can find my center and keep it when those around me are negative. And most importantly that if my whole system is affected negatively by a situation I need to listen to them and remove myself from it. I'd like to interject here that I stuck it out because I was unsure thinking that maybe they were just revolting because of the difficult changes I was making and did not want to quit just because we were having some problems adjusting.

I have also learned what I need in a job and what my limitations are. I need a well-organized environment with structure and consistency. I need to know exactly what my job description is and what my employer expects from me. That twenty hours a week are too much. I need good

communication between staff and administration and there must be mutual respect and consideration. And finally, when looking for a job it is important that you interview them as well to listen to yourself and trust what you are hearing.

Was this difficult? You bet it was! Was it worth it? Absolutely! At times I thought I would not pull out of my inner turmoil or stop crying for that matter. But the positives far outweigh the negatives. I have learned new coping strategies and tools. I have learned all kinds of new things about myself. And maybe the most important thing I have learned is that despite my history and the results of that abuse that I will carry with me for the rest of my life, I can LIVE and be HAPPY! Not only can it be attained it is deserved! It is my right. I know what the future can be. I have seen it, and tasted success. Yes, success –for

despite the disappointing outcome, I was successful I did it! I cannot express the sense of accomplishment I felt when I held that first paycheck in my hand. and you know what else? Everything I bought with that money had deeper meaning. So do not let fears hold you back. Do not let the past color your future with that same crayon. I feel like I have left out a lot of important things but hope that in some way by my sharing this experience it will help others overcome their fears. I want to add that I am giving myself until after Christmas to re-group and then I am going right back out into the world and look for another job with the confidence and self-assurance I lacked the first time around. I am determined to find my place in the world and make it count!

MV

Books

Rebuilding Attachments with Traumatized Children: Healing from Losses, Violence, Abuse and Neglect

By Richard Kagan, PhD. © 2004. Published by Haworth Maltreatment & Trauma Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press Inc. www.HaworthPress.com ISBN 0-7890-1544-7. \$39.95 softback. 374 pgs includes index.

This book is a treat—one of the few written for professionals, yet readily understandable (and interesting!) to lay people as well. Dr. Kagan writes engaging case studies that draw the reader in to the emotional turmoil faced by so many children in our strung-out society. He gives facts about abuse and violence within a compelling narrative, and after helping the reader empathize with these struggling children, he offers ideas that may help them heal.

Dr. Kagan has strong feelings about “birth parents’ rights” –believing that children’s needs come first—so some people—including some dissociatives involved in custody cases—are bound to disagree. But he delivers very convincing arguments that, often, children are pulled this way and that, to the point that

nowhere is safe. Many MV readers will identify with these scenarios.

Personally, I think this book has very validating information for dissociatives who wonder if what happened to them was “bad enough” to cause splits. I also think it is useful for survivors, well along in therapy, who are trying to fill developmental gaps in their upbringing. By seeing what has gone wrong for others, we can see what might be done to improve ourselves.

In addition, Dr. Kagan has prepared a supplementary workbook, “**Real Life Heroes...A Life Storybook for Children** (about \$10 from Haworth) that can be used to guide traumatized children toward a healthy understanding of the past and a new focus for the future. I believe this workbook would be helpful for the young parts of dissociative patients, as well.

I give it a hearty recommendation!

Got Parts: A Insider’s Guide to Managing Life Successfully with Dissociative Identity Disorder

By ATW. © 2004. Published by Loving Healing Press, 5145 Pontiac Trail, Ann Arbor, MI 48105. www.lovinghealing.com

\$16.95. 136 pages. Paperback.

Clear and simply written by an abuse survivor, this is a useful beginner’s guide to therapy for dissociative disorder. It may also be helpful as an educational tool for a supportive family member or friend of someone who dissociates. ATW stresses the healthy needs for internal acceptance and communication, and gives guidelines for accomplishing both tasks effectively.

Some therapists and clients will have different terms and methods than those explained here...for example, the author states that all parts **MUST** have names...and if they don’t have one, a name should be chosen. Some therapists (and clients) would disagree. But the suggestions here are generally quite sensible and helpful, pointing toward better functioning as the goal. If a newly diagnosed person wants a clue about what may lie ahead for them in therapy, this may be a good place to start.

– Lynn W.

MV

THANK YOU FOR SHARING!
 MV Readers appreciate hearing your ideas & seeing your artwork. PLEASE SEND MORE of EVERYTHING--Especially Art and Articles! Thanks so much!
 Sincerely, Lynn W., Publisher

April 2005

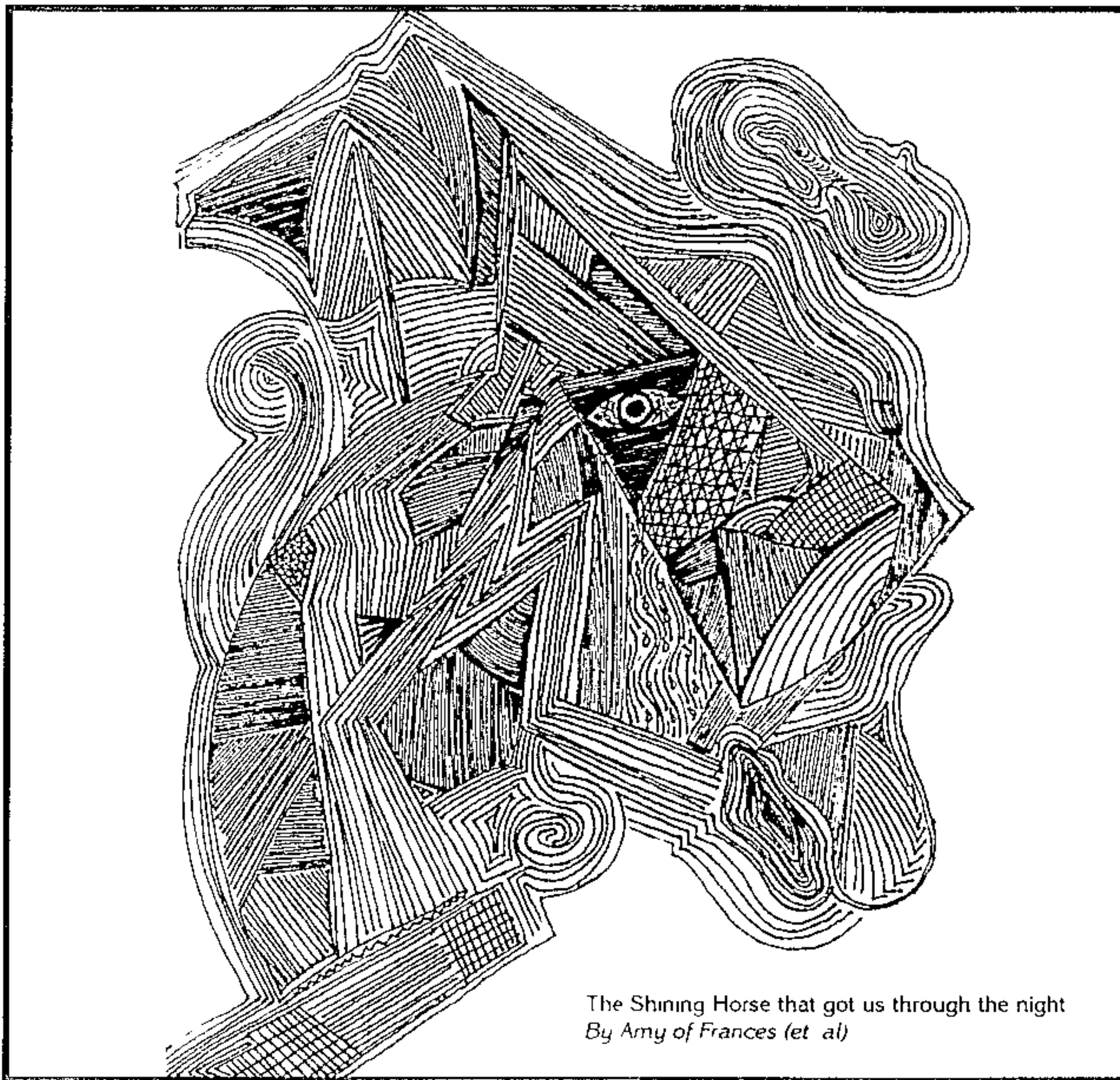
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DEADLINE: April 1, 2005.



The Shining Horse that got us through the night
 By Amy of Frances (et al)

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