

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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Family Life

Relationships & Trauma Recovery

Spring Planting

The bones of last summer's marigolds haunted my front door all winter, perched on the dirty air conditioning unit, decaying the view from my living room window.

It's June again, before the storms let up enough to consider new plantings.

In the shadow of impending lay-offs, I skip work one afternoon and cruise the green aisles of Home Depot.

In the borrowed evening hours of daylight savings, I choose pots carefully, insulating the flowers with dirt from a six dollar bag. Sometimes it doesn't take much to cultivate new blooms.

By Pam W.

MV



By Elizabeth D.

Family: Can There Be One?

By Brenda

In order to establish whether a family is able to exist among those with DID, one must first define family. Within my Webster's dictionary, the definition states:

(Family-1. A group of persons, consisting of parents and their children. 2. The children distinguished from the parents. 3. A group of persons forming a household. 4. a succession of persons connected by blood, name, etc.)

It is my opinion that one must choose which part of the definition best fits a person's lifestyle. I prefer #3 as my choice and have many reasons for doing so.

Within my therapy I have learned (and am still learning) how dysfunctional my blood family is. I can now see the extreme harm and mind-destroying things they do, or try to do, to me. It is unfortunate that I have lived more than half my life thinking all families were like ours. Now I see it is not true. My therapist explained, "Your parents did not protect you from the repeated illegal things done to you. You owe them nothing." While growing up, a child believes their parents know best. This, also, is not true. My series of unfortunate events were from two of my immediate family members (incest) and a friend of a sibling. I carried many, many skeletons in my closet for far too many years. I am thankful for therapy. Slowly the burden is rising while I learn better ways of living.

To better my life, the first quest was to separate from my blood family. This difficult task takes great strength and, at times, can be overwhelming. I do feel a bit foolish to admit I am finally learning about boundaries. I am ever so slowly learning how I make them and how I break them. I continue to get angry with myself when I break a boundary with someone I care for. The explanation for this is one of my triggers is "fear of abandonment." I do not want them to be angry with me and never speak to me again.

Recently, I had an issue with my so-called mother. My parents separated two years ago while they continue putting me in the middle of their problems, as always. I did learn in therapy, I have my own life and I can make decisions by myself. I finally decided I did not want to be in the middle of their problems. I told my parents they were to never question or quiz us (my husband, children and myself) about each other. Their business was none of ours. I did not want any of us to be in the middle any more. My so-called mother broke this boundary recently using my 12-year-old daughter emotionally to get to me. I called my so-called mother and told her she broke my boundary. I politely warned her if it happened again, she would lose her privilege of speaking with her granddaughter. I mentioned she could not speak to my daughter unless I was at home to monitor the phone calls. I naturally received a sob story about how much she loved me...Love? What does she know about love? I now know when she says she loves me there are strings attached. I can proudly say the strings no longer exist.

My dad is another situation. I still speak with him, as he has not broken the rules I have set. He asks nothing of me and I will do for him what I am able and when I am able. As my therapist reminds me, "You set the rules which will lead you to a better life. A life the way you want it." Still, I keep distance from both parents and siblings, who are just as dysfunctional, to better my life. I am a middle child, whether this makes a difference or not. I sincerely feel less pressure the greater the distance I have from them.

Can there really be a family? My answer is yes. My family consists of my wonderful and loving husband and three children. They are MY FAMILY. This is the reason I chose #3. (A group of persons forming a household.) I really believe I would not be here today if it were not for my family. The so-called family I was born into was not really what I call a family,

now that I have entered therapy and learned the topics I have. Though I have been in therapy only 2-1/2 years, I can see I have many more lessons to learn.

I cannot say it enough. I love my husband, my two sons, and my daughter. Of course my daughter would say, "What about the dogs?" Yes, I love our two dogs also. This is how a family is: Lots of T.L.C.! (Tender Loving Care.)

MV

Family

We/I write letters and cards and email to our blood siblings and our Aunt Marge.

They all deny I was abused. They think I am imagining it.

Most evenings I call my brother. At times I mention DID or something that I learned in therapy.

He does not speak, but just kind of grunts.

My spouse/partner Becky is very very supportive. My inside kids call her "Daddy."

Becky often makes them cookies or brings them a new video or toy. She is very close to six year old alter Jason.

We sometimes hurt because so many people we've trusted simply do not believe us.

By Sally B.

MV



Why My Family

Family was equal in definition as Loonie Tunes weird. No communication or much else. As a kid I only wanted a real family. I wanted mom to be a mom, my sister a sister, and my brothers become brothers and not the bullies they were. I had a great relationship with Grahms. When I met my Ex and got married, wow, I was going to have my own family. It didn't last. The Ex was extremely abusive. I had a major breakdown. He got custody and I got put into a psych ward. When I got the MPD/DID diagnosis I had no idea what that was going to involve. The megatherapy sessions and the sheer number of personalities...

Through the years there were groups and others who were aware of having the multiple in personality. So they as small kids wanted family so very much began to form their groups like brothers and sisters, cousins.

What this small little trick they decided to pull "Well, brover ain't nice but you be brover I be you sista." It filled the needs in a way we were not aware of until therapy began. Those family connections bonded in shared abuse and fighting to survive.

This gave us a very solid foundation to begin to build our recovery upon. At first the fight to control was strong. A would fight F who would really rip into M, but no one was getting anywhere. Our therapist, by then aware of the family ties, would help us to stop bickering and arguing to agree to share authority, jobs, and helping each other to not only survive another day but live it and one day live them happily!

At this point most of our days go pretty well. We still have problems and issues. But we finally found a mental health center with great staff and an awesome psychiatrist.

Learning to work together was extremely hard. But my therapist would say "Keep it up. You are doing well. You'll see real results once you stop bickering and arguing."

He was right. Yah, just like any family we nag each other, or try to argue. But that's just normal within any family, isn't it?

By PF/Toni MV

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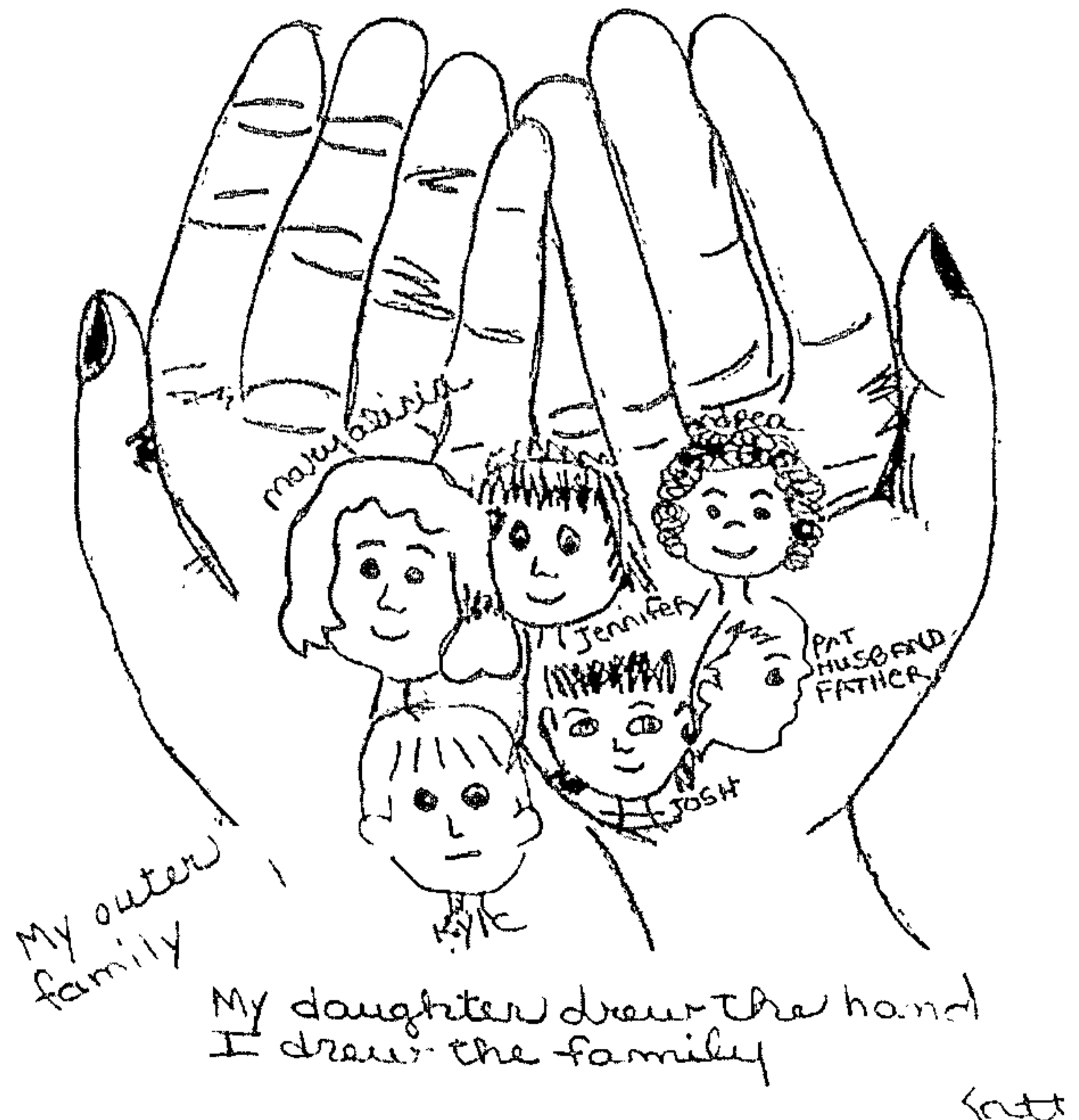
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The History of My Life With My Family

By Katt

I have been through years of treatment, different therapists, many hospitalizations and confusion and losses of time. It wasn't until 1988 that one of the small ones within came out and demanded help. She was met with hostility by many of the others but we were out, and within the year the proper therapist was found for us.

But I was 42 by that time, and had already had a family of a husband and five children; I had no idea how to exist within them. My children and husband suffered a lot under our care. It was crazy growing up with us. There were maybe 35 different alters who dealt with the family. Sometimes one of the small ones would play with the children with no caution as to what was appropriate. They would play with no abandon and then we would switch and the bigger, older alter would come out and yell and discipline the children for what they were doing with 'their mother' moments earlier. The children were frightened and totally confused.

This type of confusion went on throughout their lives. We would not use the dinner table because it was constantly cluttered with notes about what we were supposed to do the next day with the children or where they were at any given moment. We never knew when we went to bed at night whether we would be the one to wake up, and without our notes we would not know how to be consistent with the children.

A few times my younger children would be places, with a sitter for example, and we would switch and not know where they were. Once we went to the beach. Coming home we checked the backseat for our son, but we had switched and didn't know that he actually was at a sitter; we panicked at his loss. It took a lot of searching and finally switching to realize he was not lost but safe at the sitters.

The children never knew who they were dealing with; later they told us that they would watch the walk or

speech to determine if they should approach or stay away.

We did not know how to parent and we would watch people in the public and copy them. We'd stroke their faces because we saw someone doing it. In church we'd copy parents cradling their children on the bench to bring love to our child. We never saw parenting or love so we did not know how to pass it on, so the family starved for it. Many times one or the other child would remind us of our brothers, who were hurt a lot in the ritual abuse, and we would want to protect our current child from that danger. We wanted them quiet, which is impossible for a child. In order to protect them from our perceived danger we were abusive in order to keep them quiet or behave because that is what we thought the cult would want. But the cult was long gone from us and our brothers were adults now so there was no need to 'protect' our children or keep them quiet. This abusive behavior brought in help from a parenting agency. But we would switch often and were never of the same mind, so the help we received was not shared by all enough to better our parenting.

It was rough growing up with us, but even rougher for our husband. He never knew who he was coming home to. Sometimes there was sex, other times we would switch and he did without; we didn't know who he was. He admitted he never called me by my given name because it just didn't seem right; this even before he knew of our multiplicity.

In 1989, with our new doctor, we finally 'admitted' to the family that we had MPD. It really wasn't a big shock though, and one of the children said she always wondered if this was what was going on. She said she didn't feel so crazy now that we had told her we were actually the 'crazy' one. It was a turning moment and with education, things got somewhat better.

Oh, I'm not going to say "better" because with new therapy we started making sense of the memories and

flashbacks which led to pain and anger and disgust. It also led to many hospitalizations.

The children were met with alters intent on destruction, or so emotional that we couldn't move out of our bed for days. For our youngest it was a little better. He made friends with some of the alters and enjoyed some as playmates. Now that he had permission to know us, he did. It also added to his loss when one or the other of his friends would integrate or disappear for months. But we talked about it; nothing was hidden or silent now, and it was comforting for all.

As therapy went on and we started making progress, things got better. Our initial MPD therapist retired, but not before he found us a very nice and smart lady therapist, and she kept up our work with out missing a beat...although the loss and reintroduction was hard on us, we got by.

All this said, our life with the children has been difficult for all. We have lost one son when he was 18. He ran away and we know not of his health or where he is now. It's been 7 years and we mourn for him. The other children each handle our MPD and recovery in different ways. Our younger child has managed to see the humor in it all. He's not afraid to make jokes and see the merriment in his life with us, and it is reassuring to us. He talks to us about different shows he sees dealing with MPD and we answer as honestly as we can.

Our next child is learning disabled, and it has taken a lot of talk and explanations for her to see even part of the premises of MPD. But she and we try.

Our middle child has always been upfront with us, asks questions and is willing to talk about each step of our integration. We went on vacation with her and she took lots of pictures of me in a green shirt in different poses (it seems in order to fully integrate we had to fully see what we actually looked like in the reality). Well, she

excitedly took over the task of bringing us up to date in our search for me. When I integrated, which I'll update at another time, she gave me a necklace with a green stone (the color we chose to denote growth and health). She celebrated the day with me.

My oldest child seems to be more quiet about the issues and we don't talk together about the MPD as much as I do with my other daughter. Although she took a very active part in helping us communicate with an individual who came forward with fears that he was afraid my brother was involved in ritual behaviors. She was the go-between, between us and the individual. I appreciate her for this and love her. Recently we spent the day at the spa together and during lunch she asked questions about the past and the MPD and I felt so close to her and loved her all the more for her risk-taking.

As for my husband, he's been great. He was confused and depressed with our marriage and with the fights we would have when he was surprised by a bitter alter. It got all too much for him and before our 25th anniversary we divorced. We stayed close and he has helped me with my recovery throughout the years. We just celebrated our unofficial 36th anniversary and we are the best of friends and potential lovers. I am encouraging him to write for the partner's page and tell you from his point of view about our life together.

In conclusion, my life with my children and husband has had many lows and highs. I have apologized to my children over and over and I think they heard me. Today is a good day for me. My children are adults and I am a grandmother, which I love enormously. Times are better now between me and those around me and I pray daily for all of them.

One day we watched the movie "The Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood." It was such a help to me when the mother and daughter talked about the past and reconciled. I cried tears of relief and recognition. I called each child up and apologized to them about the past; they heard and said they forgave us and understood. It was a weight off my heart and today I go

in peace with the past and my children.

And then there's—my family of origin.

My family of origin, now that's a different matter. I grew up the oldest of 5 siblings. We each grew up existing beside each other with our unconscious memories. Except for one who somehow never blocked out the torture by our father (incest) and our mother (enabler, physical and emotional abuser). She said she mostly observed, but I feel time will tell.

When later at the age of my late 30s I started falling apart and I tried to commit suicide because of continuous flashbacks and confusion, that sister came forward and gave me a tiny peek into what had been haunting me. My world opened up but came apart at the same time. I pummeled down into more deep, deep depression and confusion, but with a need to confront my abusers and with an enthusiasm to talk to my siblings. I spoke to my sister and yes, it was true; she had been starting to remember instances of abuse. My youngest sibling, who feared father terribly and was still living with him revealed what she knew and came to stay with me for the period of our unveiling of the truths. I flew to my brother who was living out of town to just talk, and talk we did. He questioned me all night about how he was feeling and remembering. It was a catalyst for both of us.

But then everything came crashing down. Our father called him and threatened he would commit suicide if he talked to me and turned on him. Our sharing was all over; he closed up as did the others. That old misguided guilt we all shared so well, started shaking its ugly head. I was portrayed to all as crazy, bad and contaminated...something they had always heard growing up with me, starting in their young lives.

When I got back home from my brother's, I confronted my abusers, told them the fringes I was remembering. The place was an open park—wrong idea. I am a multiple, so I started splitting and spilling out all over the place. It was a disaster. Of

course, they denied everything and they confronted me with those evil eyes and faces we feared so much. I was a mess but felt at least somewhat victorious that I (we) had confronted them.

He called my siblings and threatened them, saying he was innocent of all crazy Kathy was saying and he would kill himself if they went near me anymore.

They turned on me and I went into seclusion with a deep depression and terrible confusion. I (we) started splitting all over the place at their lack of support and love. Reasonably I was expecting something we had never experienced all our lives, so it should have been no surprise they turned on me. That was twenty years ago and I grieve at their loss, especially after the closeness we had in our beginning-sharing. But they were not at a place to scream out loud and put themselves first.

I have heard bits and pieces about them throughout the years. My brother was investigated by the authorities and they feel he is a very dangerous person. I reported my father to the police out of fear for my nieces and nephews (his grandchildren.) He acquired a lawyer and because it was me against the group of them the investigation went no further. I have heard that my sister recently (for some reason) moved across the United States, far, far away from my parents. Perhaps she has finally started to put herself first. I pray someday she will come back into my life.

Today my life is full with my adult children, grandchildren and x-spouse (cherished friend.) I can't say I have totally forgiven my father. Somehow I feel forgiving him would be condoning evil, but I live life now without negativity of spirit toward my perpetrators.

Life is too important today to waste it by spending time investing in hatred.

Family Issues: Taking Care of Myself

By Dorothy

After four years of dealing with abuse issues and intense therapy three times a week, often for two hours at a time, I decided it was time to visit my aunt's barn where all my dead parent's belongings were stored. I thought I could handle anything I found there now and it had been about twenty years since I had seen any of these things belonging to my parents. I thought I had dealt with most of the memories. My personalities were raging inside of me and I and my therapist felt it might help me put things into perspective. I questioned the validity of many of the things I said about my childhood, but learned later it was all true. I guess I needed proof that it really was as bad, or not as bad as 'we' had thought.

One summer, I and several of my friends worked from May to August in the barn and sorted out all my parent's stuff. Much of it was destroyed by mice and krap but a lot of it was still intact and brought back flashbacks you would not believe.

When I first started to have flashbacks and memories that I did not know where in Hell they were coming from, I saw a gun being held to me and the gun was in the bottom of the oak roll top desk. It wouldn't be there now after twenty years. But the furniture and things were never opened and all the belongings were pulled exactly off the shelves where they were when I last saw them at ten years old. Two of the top drawers of the desk opened but two would not budge. I had told my therapist about the gun many times, and when I went to the barn to retrieve the desk, he was "on call" for me, if I needed him. He did not think there would be any possibility of the gun still being in the desk.

After we got the desk in the house and cleaned, some of my male friends helped me get the drawers open. They were nailed shut. Just before it was opened, I said, "Be careful, there may be a gun inside." I laughed nervously and said something about

no, it couldn't be. but it was facing the back of the desk and it had owls on the gun. They looked at me like I was crazy.. I really did not think it could be there. Opening the bottom drawers, there it was. Shiny and silver, with black owls. How in Hell could this be? It was right there from the last time my father and an evil cousin had used it on me. The men who were helping me that day carefully took the gun and opened it, but no bullets were in it, they looked at the rest of the ammunition and left it with me, believing I'd know what to do. I called my therapist at home and I was back in the '50's when all the shit was happening.

Dr. Drake came up and retrieved the gun and the bullets and we talked a long time over the phone. That was my first wake-up call that all I had said was indeed true. (We so often tend to not believe what was done to us.) However, having been through so much in those few months in the barn, even though all my friends were there with me and Dr. Drake was available to me, brought back ALL the abuse and the personalities had thousands of stories to tell. All this happened in 1992 and by 1995 I had had it and was ready to disclose the abuse to my living relatives. All were in their seventies and eighties except a few younger cousins.

I made the wrong decision to tell the truth at the time when my therapist was away. I had to do it. My "people" were angry and tormented and it was time, 'way past time, they said, to get this out in the open and stop the abuse. There was abuse going on in the family - lots of control and addictions. I knew where the Hell it was coming from and I made damn sure it was clear what had happened. So "all of us" sat down and wrote right from our heart exactly what had happened and who had done it. Uncle Dan was one of the worst because I loved him and it literally screwed me up for years. Because I was adopted, it was all right to do these things, he said. I was not really his niece and

besides God wanted me to obey my elders. Screw him. Wish I could have said that when I was in the playpen and eight, ten, and thirteen.

A cousin, who abused and had sex with my mother before and after she was married and put terrible things into my bottom, tying me up and having total control over a four year old's body, was a pervert. My aunts later admitted it was true! They had moved us to a different town so the cousin would not find us, but my father was not able to stay there as it was beside a lake and it bothered his asthma. So we moved back to the old house and of course, the perverted cousin found us again. By this time I became bulimic and ate and ate but threw up after, especially when he had been around. I was in second and third grade. I developed many, many personalities to survive it all. In the fifties, no one knew how to help or what to do, but not one of that 'family' if you can call it family, thought about ME. They were trying to protect their sister. God! How dumb can any family get or be?

And all the things that I had been tied to or been threatened with or used on me, were still in that fucking barn! I wonder how I ever held it together as much as I did, but I did. Multiple personalities are very strong people!

After my letters, the relatives refused to ever see me again. I was accused of being psychotic, taking drugs (not prescribed drugs either) of side effects of medications. I was called every name in the book and names I did not even know existed. Supposedly from Christian people! I was told I would be just like my blood mother and be a whore or worse. I kept fighting it. And I would not give in because by this time, I had all the proof. They did not believe it and accused me of inventing stories for attention. I refused to buy into their threats and my life was even threatened so that I had to get a protection of abuse order from the police. Some of the cousins are about

fifteen years older than I and some are about fifteen years younger than I and none of them believed ME.

In 1995, I received a letter from my special aunt, (I loved all of them but she was more special than the others) that Aunt Esther was dying. Would I please retract what I had said? This was the deal. In order to see them or even go to the funeral, I had to retract EVERYTHING I had ever said, and say those letters I wrote were a figment of my imagination. I wanted to go. I tried talking with them by letter. Nope. Wasn't gonna happen. I had to do it their way or not at all. And I had to write to ALL the fucking screwed up relatives. Nope. I had all the evidence and then some. By this time I had received permission to go and visit the home place where I lived as a child and had gone through the house, bringing back a flood of more memories. Again a friend was by my side and my shrink was available any time by phone.

It was very difficult to not be able to go to the funeral, but I arranged private visiting hours by myself with the dead body—they paid for the extra viewing but they never knew it was for me. I had to say good bye and try to explain. I did this with the other aunts, as I was not allowed at the funeral or church where the funeral was. The funeral director was getting used to this by now and he knew a lot more than he let on until I opened up about some of it. CONTROL, control and control.

This summer, I was emailed a request to try to help the cousins get back the aunt's property. Huh? It was mine, too, or did they forget? I knew they (the aunts) had said someday I would be sorry if I did not retract what I had accused my uncle of. That was their biggest beef. They wouldn't believe it. They believed about the bad, evil cousin and they believed about my father but not their brother. I also knew they had threatened to take me out of their wills many times and now I had the copies of the wills and I was not even once mentioned. However, seeing as the wills had been made six days before the death of one of the aunts and the other aunt had signed her own at the same time, raised my suspicions when the last aunt died.

But I decided not to fight it.

Then, when I realized the cousins of mine had forced and coerced the dying aunts into signing the wills, one who was high on morphine and on her death bed, I felt I had to fight it. For my own benefit, I hired an expensive real estate attorney. I told him my story and about the abuse. I had all the real estate material and copies of wills, etc. Now it's out there and he heard me and asked me, "are you suing?" No, I wasn't suing as I couldn't handle the emotions of the court system, etc. and all the krap that would be thrown at me about my being incompetent and crazy. What I learned astounded me.

Even though I was adopted, I was the niece of the aunts and was my mother's daughter and my mother was a sister to them; therefore, I would net one half of the inheritance. There were several nieces and nephews still living and yet the property would be divided between the four of them and also divided in half by one whose husband had died but their were children. The cousins would only get a fifth, and I the other half! The cost was outrageous, and I didn't have it. I couldn't do it, not even with the value of the property reported to be in the \$550,000 range. There were many properties. I took care of myself and my inside people again. I told the relatives who wanted me to do this, who by this time found out what I would receive. They begged me to drop it now. In fact, they disputed the word of my attorney, but it is the law! Interesting, isn't it? Of course the cousins would receive so much less than I. I almost borrowed from a friend to pursue it, but didn't. I wasn't sure I'd win. I knew it was greed on their part but I had to say no.

They had already spent over half of the inheritance on three different attorneys because the cousins could not agree or get along! It all ended up in court a little while ago. Who won? Guess. Their attorneys! They netted close to \$372,000. The relatives got about \$5,000 each for the three of them. And the journals Uncle Dan had written in the fifties to seventies were being fought over. Those journals have marks in them by myself where I had to check off times

when stuff happened. Proof, again. The judge ordered the family of relatives to bring the journals to court but he didn't subpoena them! Jerk. Didn't he, too, know what kind of a family he was dealing with? Nope. The judge ordered the journals to the care of the youngest, screwed up cousin in another state, because the brother wanted the piece of land, and he had to pay \$28,000 for it. He gave up fighting for the journals and had to pay for the land. He got nothing for his fighting! Except a hunk of unusable land to pay taxes on. The taxes had to be paid on the aunt's estate after several years and all final expenses. Gone in a flash. They got what they deserved.

And of course, I got nothing; neither did the children of the dead nephew. And today it is ongoing. I have told them repeatedly to "leave me alone." They don't listen. I finally wrote an email and told them to "leave me alone, and that means...no more email, no more phone calls, no visits and no letters." Was I listened to? No! Can they do anything right, or does it have to be their way all the time? I have now blocked their emails and do not know or care if they try to contact me or not, as it is immediately deleted.

In January of this year, I wrote myself a decree of Divorce from All the Family, so called. All of them by name and there is to be no contact whatsoever due to irreconcilable differences. That is what is best for me and my inside system. I refuse to go through a thing more with any of that dysfunctional tribe I used to call family. I am alone and am happy with my inside family and my friends, including my support people. My friends, doctors, therapist and support people are my family and proud of it!

Remember: we have not endured this krap and abuse for nothing. We have to take care of ourselves and let the families go to Hell or destroy themselves or whatever they want to do. We can not change them. All we can do is change ourselves and take care of ourselves. All the time. Stubborn, impulsive and fighters, we are. All. How the heck do you think we got to be multiple personalities?

Father's Day

By William Corley

Father's Day. One of those holidays that brings on many mixed feelings. Sometimes a kind of warm and fuzzy one when I see a father with his kids, enjoying each other, smiling, laughing, and showing love and appreciation for one another. At the same time, a feeling of sadness, loneliness, longing, a real feeling of emptiness caused by something big being missing. Sometimes deep sadness, and yes, once in a while real bitterness and anger. Like many others, my primary - but by no means sole - abuser was my father.

My father died many years ago, so at least I no longer had to actually deal with pretending to celebrate this holiday.

But when I'd see other offspring enjoying the day with their father, whom they could easily love and appreciate, I'd have those feelings of emptiness and something big being missing.

About ten years ago, I fell in love with a wonderful woman, and equally fell in love with her wonderful, then 9-year old, daughter. Despite being on opposite sides of the country, our relationship progressed, and we married, and in one fell swoop, I became a father. From the start, I felt like her father, not her step-father, and I believe that she's always felt the same way. She's a wonderful girl, a blessing of a daughter, and we have enjoyed a very strong relationship.

Early on, when it really struck home with me that I was going to become a father, I went through many, many emotions. I wondered: What kind of father would I be?

I'd had few lessons or examples on how to be a good father, and plenty of lessons on how to be a bad one, though sometimes learning what not to do is at least as important as learning what to do. In most ways I'd overcome the challenges of my childhood (if you ignore acquiring that pesky DID) I'd become a good man,

BUT did I inherit some other, as yet unseen traits through DNA or anything else, that could cause me to lose it in a certain situation or under some stressor? Would I somehow become physically or emotionally abusive under some trigger? I had no worries about being sexually abusive as that is so indelibly and utterly reprehensible to me and counter to every fiber of my being, but there are plenty of other more insidious forms of abuse that can take place.

In addition to my childhood experiences, I was a police officer years ago, and later, a firefighter, so I have seen innumerable situations where apparently good people did seemingly uncharacteristically awful things to their children. Not all of these things were illegal per se, but damaging and often permanent nonetheless. Did I have the unseen potential to be among them those types of parents?

Over the ten years I have been privileged to, I learned that apparently I don't have the potential to be one of those awful fathers. Have I been the ideal father? Of course not. I've made mistakes, plenty of them. I've lost my temper, I've sometimes set an example of which I'm not proud, I've missed opportunities, I've spoken without thinking, and I've said things I've regretted. Hopefully I've learned from these mistakes, and I try desperately not to repeat them. But I've been there for my daughter, I've been supportive, kind and patient far more often than not.

I'm extraordinarily proud of the outstanding young woman my daughter has become. Yes, I've played a part in that, but I give her all the credit in the world for taking advantage of the environment my wife and I have provided for her, the educational opportunities, and our undying support. She's taken good advantage of those things and coupled them with her incredible natural abilities and talents, and is incredibly well rounded, confident,

and accomplished. I am extremely proud of her - every day - and, yes, I'm proud too that I have broken the cycle of abuse. If I do nothing else in my life, I can be very proud of that.

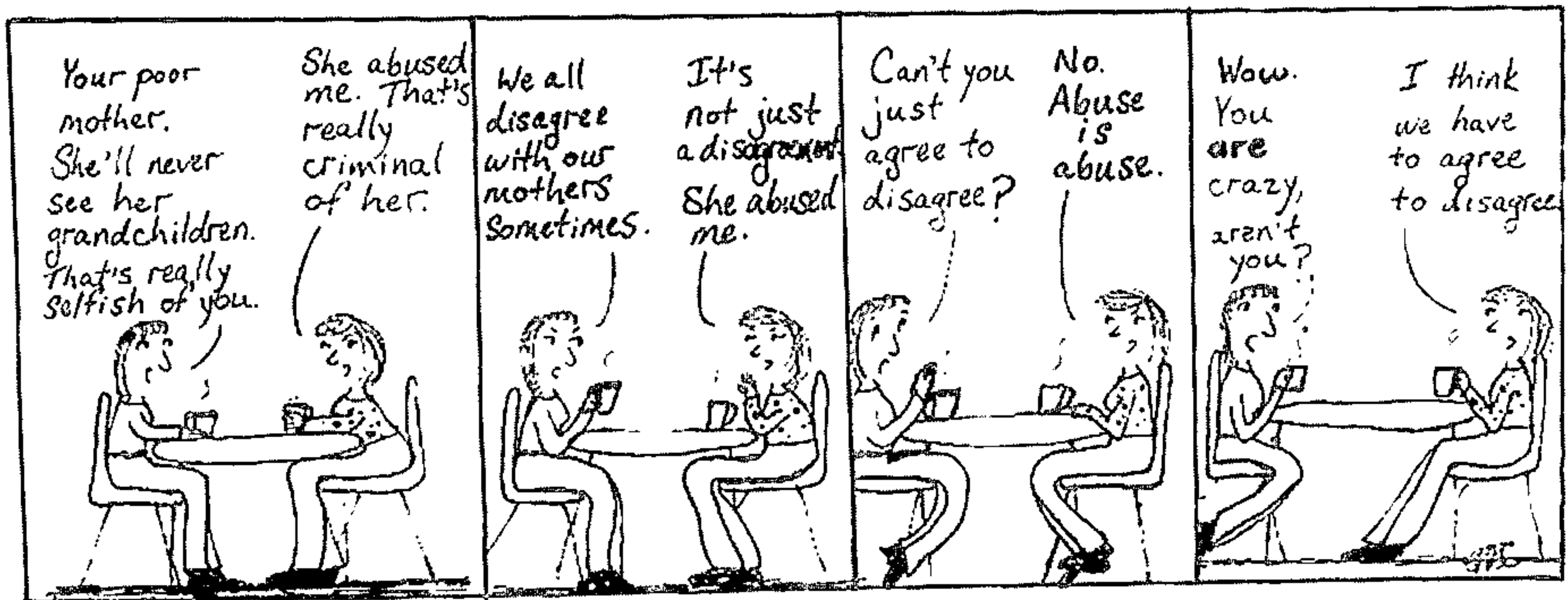
The mistakes I've made in parenting have at least been my own, and not a repetition of those "parenting techniques" employed by my own father. It hasn't always been easy, but I've truly been blessed by a wonderful daughter. For all I've given to her, she's given back to me a hundredfold.

Father's Day is still a day fraught with many mixed emotions, and probably always will be. But now, added into the mix, is added a real sense of pride, both in my own ability to parent well, but also in seeing the outstanding young woman my daughter has become. Parenting well, with all its hard work and challenges, can be done, and is the most important contribution one can make to this world. We don't have to be the parents that we were given. We can make a real difference.

MV



"This therapist refuses to blame me for being abused and won't call me a liar."



Alcohol Vs Music

I Believe

Alcohol vs. music —
One a killer
The other a healer.

Alcohol —
Destroys the trust
In a little girl
Battering her until
She herself is destroyed.

Music —
Lifts the little girl to heights
Where the angels sing their chorus of
Hallelujah
The gods bellow their hymn of
Righteousness.
Only there can her tears flow freely
Only there can her fears be calmed.

Alcohol —
Destroyed an innocent.
The little girl so trusting
Of a mommy and daddy
What did she know?
Her soul was caught
In a black bottomless pit.

Alcohol —
Annihilator of light and love.
The little girl is blind.
Her soul is dead.
Extinguished are purity and goodness
Trust and hope.

Music —
Receptacle of white light.
Only here can the little one
Find peace.

Her soul is purified.
Finding surcease from the pain.
The hopelessness and the despair.

Alcohol —
The great pseudo-healer.
It eases the pain
Only to bring on another.
The mommy and daddy look good
In this pseudo-light.
The little girl can bear the pain
Of the horrors they inflict.
Is the price too great?

Music —
Is it lost?
Buried beneath the remains
Of the little girl's innocence.
Can the music survive the
Power of the Demon?
Can the little girl?

Music vs. Alcohol —
Which will prove more powerful?
The strings with their mournful tunes
And soulful cries to the gods?
The brass with their triumphant calls
To listen to the power of the little girl?
The choruses singing their praises of
love and hope?
Or gin and bourbon with their power
To create blindness and devastation?
Which will win?
Who will win?

I have turned a corner or a new leaf. I see things clearly, for the first time I can say and believe that I am a good girl and person, nothing bad will happen if I say that, and nothing bad will happen if I tell MY TRUTH!

I have become the person I was meant to be, with a lot of bruises and scrapes along the way, but I am here and I am the person that I am meant to be, and I like her.

My truth belongs to me and the little girl who I hold dear and near to my heart; NO ONE can take that away from her or me.

Now I have to learn how not to punish that good girl, to let her feel the pain that she has had to endure all these years.

As long as I believe my truth there is nothing that we can't get through.

I have thought, "What if I was born in another place and time, would I be the person that I am today?" I don't have an answer to that question.

All my scrapes and bruises have made me a stronger and better person.

I BELIEVE ME NOW!

By Susan F.

MV

By Mary G.

MV

Maggie's Birthday : June 10, 2005

By Dorothy & Stella

In spite of all the horror, terror, hardship and confusion that is such a large part of learning to deal with my DID, I still find parts of the process to be fascinating, interesting and almost magical. Many (although not all) of my alters are able to co-exist in loving and caring relationship with others, both inside and out. Some have come not only with names and personalities of their own, but with their own special days as well. Maggie came to me just last year and this is a recounting of her first fifth Birthday party.

When I woke up this morning I knew there was something very special in the air. Then I remembered, Maggie's Birthday! Maggie had only recently come to us and was fitting in especially well. She is gregarious and loving and possesses a wisdom far beyond her age, experience taught her. Today is her first 5th Birthday. I gently took her hand and stroked it and as she opened her eyes I could feel the excitement building within her. Oh, it's a lovely morning, sunny and warm, a perfect day for a party "How old are you today, Maggie?" I asked as I brushed the blonde curls off her forehead

"Five. Stella, and I can hardly wait for my party and to see all my new friends. Oliver told me that he'd teach us how to play 'Wrap Rope.'"

We lived in a place that was magical and warm and full of beautiful trees and gardens. The June day was overflowing with sun and honey and robins and moths and creeping slugs and garter snakes and slow fat cats and butterflies and all sorts of wonderful things.

All morning we were busy with birthday preparations. Then, one by one the "friends" arrived - Sami, who quickly became Maggie's closest and dearest cousin-friend; Mona, who is 6 like Sami but can't seem to be happy, even for a moment; the little boys, Matthew and Nicholas who were hoping for cake; sweet sad Mary came with Joan and June. And Oliver, along with the Hurt Ones, Dottie, Elaine, Annie and little Kerry. Some of the other youngsters just couldn't make it; they were still just too afraid.

The party began. Oliver was anxious to help the others learn to play his new game, Wrap the Rope,

on the lawn behind the house. It's a simple but special game that involves throwing a piece of rope about a foot long, made heavier by tying a golf ball to each end onto an upright form made of plastic pipe, about 2 feet high. Each person stands about 20 paces away from the form and tosses the rope onto the pipe. Underhand. The game was very special to Oliver because a friend made it especially for him." Who wants to play?"

Maggie, Sami, Mary with Joan and June came forward. The rest chose to sit under the big Spruce tree and cautiously watch what was going on.

"O.K., Maggie, you go first cause it's your Birthday". Hold the rope by the golf ball, just like this, put one foot forward, toss it up in the air and try to get it to loop over the pipe".

Maggie tried following Oliver's instructions, but just couldn't get the feel of it. "Oliver, I just can't do it," she whispered while trying to hold back her tears.

"Oh Sweetie, it's O.K. I forgot, I'm using my left hand. For you the right hand is the right hand, but for me the left is right. Just one of those little differences we all have. Don't worry, try again, just switch hands."

She did, and the rope soared up and over and landed on the pipe, twisting round and round it and scoring Maggie her first ever Wrap Rope point.

Then the others got their turn, each following Oliver's instructions, using whatever hand was right for them. The game was an enormous success.

After more tosses the players got a little tired and everyone at the party decided they'd like to go to the garden and see what was new there. "We got strawberries," they cried in

unison when they saw the red berries glancing out from the greenery.

"Ask Stella first," said Mona, "we might get a tummy ache and feel horrible for the rest of the day." Stella, who was keeping an eye on things said, "It's just fine, only watch how many you eat, as a whole you're not very big."

That was O.K.; they only wanted a few anyway. Besides the strawberries there were other things in the garden that amazed them and drew their attention; fat pink peonies and blue delphiniums and wonderful purple foxgloves with individual flowers they could pick off, one by one, and wear on their fingers like delicate, old-fashioned, gracious ladies gloves; slugs that felt like slimy frog's eggs when you picked them up and squished them; enormous mud puddles that almost drowned you in a mess of sludge, but didn't. And the fruit trees! Some still filled with magnificent pastel blossoms still, but most had tiny baby apples and pears that with the summer sun would swell into great edible orbs, dripping with juice and sweetness and love.

"O.K.," called Stella. "There's a surprise for you inside the house. Time to go in".

"I don't think there could be anything better than this" said Maggie, "my birthday has been perfect so far", but they decided to go inside and see what the surprise might be.

Inside they found that Richard, their favourite "outside" person, had snuck into the house and put on the table a beautiful cake complete with candles and a string of balloons, all pink and purple and yellow floating in the air beside it. The cake was beautiful - the perfect size, just like a

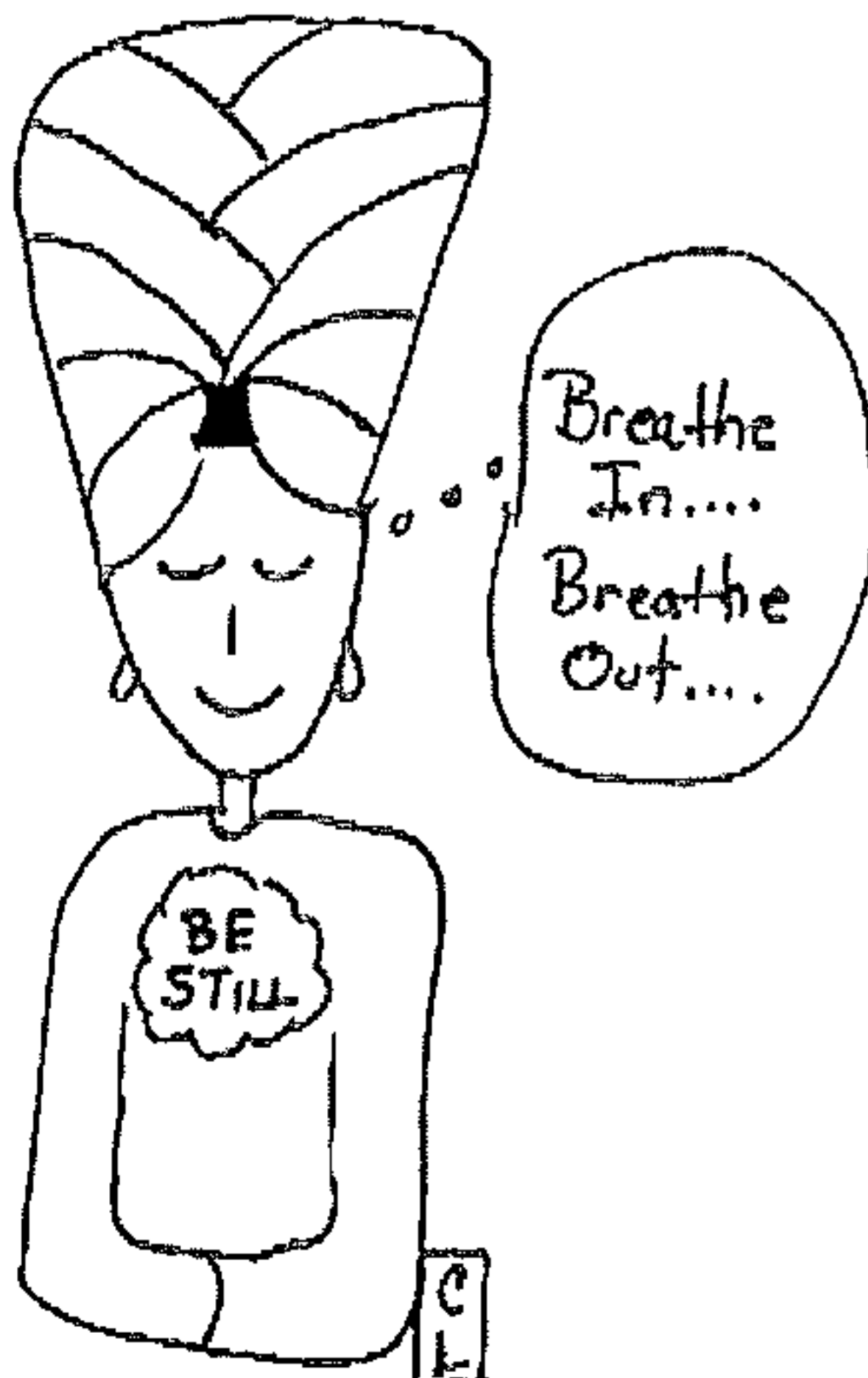
What Does Empty Mean?

By Jenn J.

tea saucer and covered with sweet smelling chocolaty icing with tiny blue flowers on the top. Maggie was in awe yet another time. The five candles were lit, taking up nearly the whole cake. Then, with a great gust of wind, out they were blown. The children sang and laughed and then the cake was cut in two neat pieces and shared, half by Richard and half by the rest of the party. It couldn't have been better.

It wasn't long till the children began to yawn and grow fidgety and tired. Just like they arrived, the "others" left, quietly and softly, fading one by one. Stella took the subdued Maggie back to her room to sleep and the kitchen suddenly became magically still. Richard slowly walked over to the cupboard, picked up two wineglasses and poured us each a glass of cool white wine. Then he took my hand and led me into the living room. I sat beside him on the couch and cuddled up under his arm. "Thank you for being so understanding", I said. "My pleasure," He smiled, "I love you all. And next year we can celebrate Maggie's fifth birthday again."

MV



Meditation With A Turban Full Of Alters

When I Am Empty Please Dispose of Me Properly. I read the words on the side of the Styrofoam container that had held my Coke earlier in the day. I laughed. It struck me as rather ironic, considering I had been feeling somewhat suicidal lately. What about older people? Do we dispose of them when they are "empty"? What exactly is "empty"? By the way, how can you feel "empty"? I mean if something is empty, how can it feel?

This got me thinking about the "emptiness" we sometimes feel. I am not a therapist but in my own experience I equate empty with pain and loss. I want to feel loved, or happy, or excited, or healthy, and those feelings aren't there so I must be empty of those feelings or just "empty". Sometimes I feel such emotional pain that I feel empty of all things worth living for. It's a horrible place to be. I want to die. Please dispose of me. If I don't wake in the morning, it's okay. Just take care of the details.

Sometimes, people feel empty when they are not "making a difference" in the world. I've been there-done that too. I was receiving little to no positive feedback or interaction with people. My husband was being difficult, the students that I was teaching couldn't care less about the classes. I have to say my children were very loving and gratifying. (If only the entire world were under 6!) Without any positive regard, or seeing that I was making an impact on the world or even a person, I again felt like living wasn't worth it. Of course, loving and taking care of my children was making a difference - I just wasn't able to see it!

We can think about feeling nothing at all - again we might say that is empty. Mostly we call it numb, but some will say empty. When I think about that I picture an ice-cube with a person in it. Numb seems to have a possibility of improvement. Something is there you just can't quite

get to it. I think I might put that in a picture and hanging it on my wall as a reminder. Go Photoshopers!

In a different sort of way, many people see elderly persons as empty, used up. I am sure there are elderly people that believe that of themselves. (Unfortunately, our society doesn't place the value that is there in the life of someone who has lived a long life. I believe that there are those of us, no matter what age, that feel empty and used up. I know there are times that I have thought "I've done enough already, let me die now!" But the truth is we haven't done enough. We can always do more. This sounds trite, blah, blah, blah. Especially, when you are depressed this is difficult. Did you know that the air you breathe out helps plants live and they help us live by producing oxygen? If you can't think of anything else, think of that. Each breath helps the world.

We don't have to move the world, but we can find a passion and do something for it. This really is hard if you are depressed, but it might give you something to hold on to. One of my passions is mental health education, for obvious reasons. I take surveys when I can to provide information. I talk to people about my depression. I listen to other people who need to be listened to. I help people find therapists if they need it. If I hear someone make an untrue comment about mental health, I correct it. Maybe that person will be able to help someone else and "pay it forward". I also have a passion for horses and am working on volunteering for abused animals. I've been trying to get out there for the last year, but at some point I am going to get with those horses!

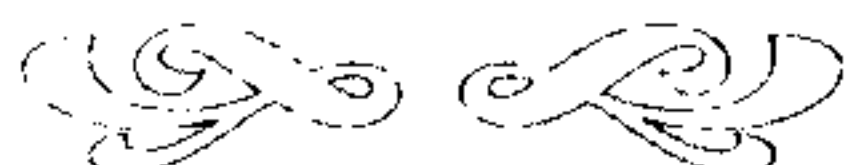
MV

Healing

By Kate Evans

(MV wants to thank Kate for this excerpt from her book in progress. Different initials after paragraphs identify the parts who wrote the preceding statement.)

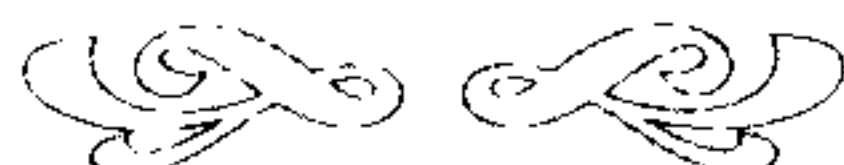
66 **I**f I know I am feeling 'wrong' — I say terrified, or full of hate, or despair, or sexually ravenous- I do what I call a 'Healing'. I have created a guided visualization. I deeply relax and ago into a safe place. I call healing personalities and set boundaries and safeguards. I allow the appearance of characters who need help and healing, or to be heard. I always find them a new role, a new way to use their energy. At the end I ask the characters to integrate into one. an adult who can use her experience to try to protect us." **K.**



"**In my safe place** I have an ideal mother figure who is usually involved in what happens when I go there and is very healing. Clarissa Pinkola Estes has made tapes and written about the mother figure, i.e. 'Warming the Stone child': myths and stories about abandonment and the unmothered child. I presume there must be an inbuilt inner knowing we all have about what ideal mothering would be like, which can come into play and bring self-healing." **G.**

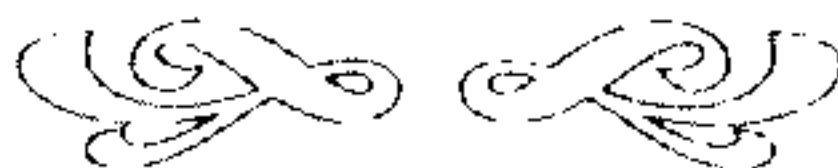


"**We have a spiritual being** with healing and helping powers, who also plays calming and beautiful music. She is the one who looks after the newly emergent insiders and those having a hard time " **L.**



Healing mantras can be most helpful. A healing mantra is a simple phrase which goes to the heart of the current need and can be endlessly repeated. The repetition is soothing, as well as being educational—it is very similar to the practice of religious

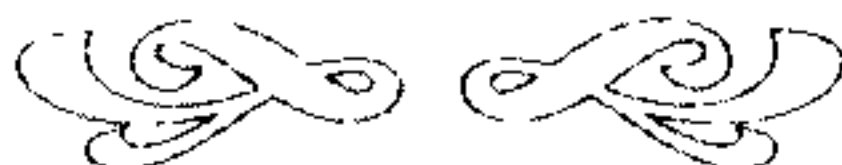
people repeating an invocation to their God or Saint to help them through.



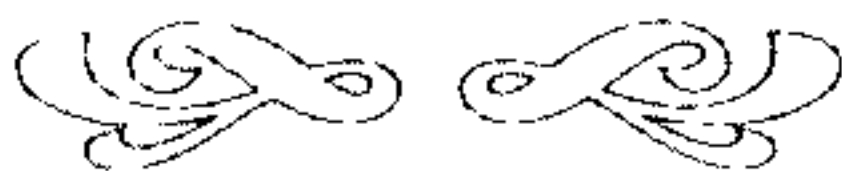
Ceremonies It can help to have small counter-ceremonies at the times there used to be cult rituals, possibly praying for the souls of those abused. A little shrine to pray or meditate in front can also be helpful. Recently we had a meeting of all those affected by a significant date and they all said what they would like to do. We had a pleasant afternoon reading poetry of the season with a friend. It has helped a lot, too, to spend time Praying for the souls of those abused, and to decorate a little shrine to pray or meditate in front of.



"**Recently we had a meeting** of all those affected by a significant date and they all said what they would like to do. We had a pleasant afternoon reading poetry of the season with a friend. A special New Year prayer, and simple, silent meditation with a friend was a good way to spend that evening." **L.**



Re-naming ceremonies – some people do this, as many insiders may feel their old names were slave names and prefer to choose new ones. On the other hand, so many names can be bewildering.



Emotional Education – restitutive experiences

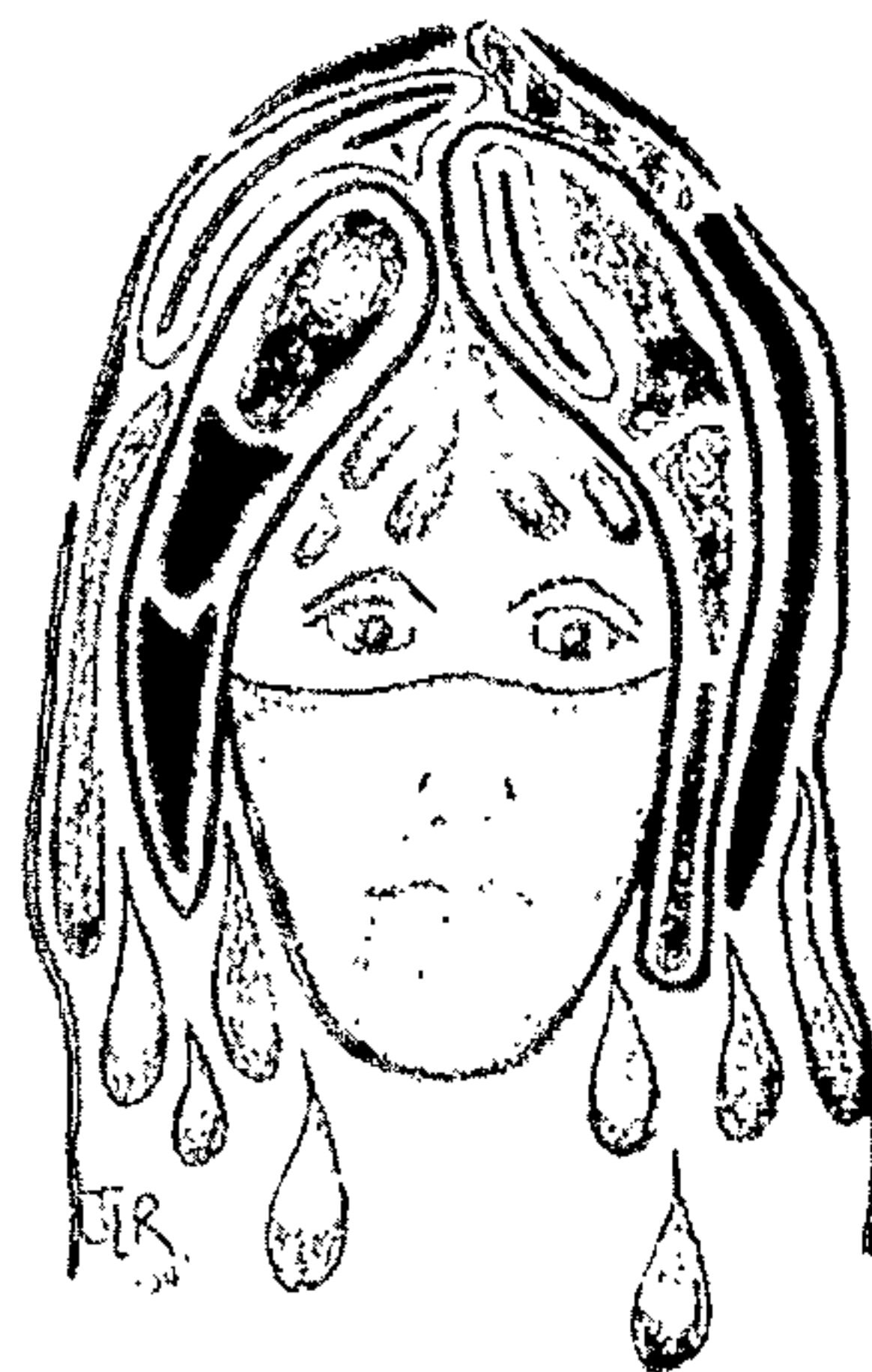
Many insiders may only have known extreme experiences – terror, excitement, etc. and have never

experienced calm, or quiet pleasure. teenagers may mostly know depression, fury, shame, etc. And for everyone things may usually have been all good or all bad, with no middle ground.

So, to give over-stimulated inside children quiet and calm times of soothing, chat or silence, on a one to one basis with the host can help them find inner peace and contentment. Along the same lines, depressed teenagers or young adults may need energizing experiences – physical activity, anger visualizations, etc. Chronically furious insiders may find breathing exercises help to calm and channel anger. Remembering to breathe can be a deeply helpful practice.

"Two of our inner six year olds fell asleep the moment they began to relax." **L.**

MV



Layers Dissolving Slowly

Family Through the Ages

By Colette

Family. Now there's a loaded word for anyone who is dissociative. I'm past age 60. I began therapy for a dissociative disorder some 20 years ago. I'm doing very well, thank you. But I still feel tied in knots by that six-letter word. FAMILY.

What is so tough about it? For me, it's probably the mixed nature of the experience of 'family' from Day One, that brought on dissociation in the first place. Because, like it or not, my parents were not 'pure evil', despite some crushing abuses that completely altered my life pattern. They had some outstandingly good points. I was fortunate enough to be raised in a highly-literate household, surrounded by books and ideas. My parents read to each other, talked to each other about 'deep topics' – religion, politics, science, literature – so I learned much of this by osmosis, it came in through my pores. I can't prove it, but I firmly believe I heard them reading poetry aloud to each other while I was in the womb.

I was lucky enough to be born well-before the TV took over daily life. So every evening – every afternoon, for that matter, since my father rarely worked in my early days – there was reading aloud. Most of it wasn't necessarily intended for us kids (I am the middle one of three sisters.) It was my parents interacting, pleasing each other. So they read the great humorists of the time: Benchley, Thurber, EB White, Dorothy Parker. They read every shred of Longfellow, aloud. They read funny books and serious books, and talked about their meaning, they critiqued them. Without a word directed to me, I learned.

My parents had a deep respect for nature. We lived in a rural area, and spent hours and hours outdoors (indoors was not pleasant, because we were poor and the house was a disaster—no running water, not even an outhouse during most of my

growing up— but outdoors was Heaven on Earth.) There were woods to explore, fields to wander, and I was given a fair amount of freedom to do this, once I was old enough to find my way back home. My parents found tiny plants and trees deep in the woods, dug them up, brought them back home and built a replica of the most beautiful aspects of the woods on our four acre postage stamp. (Living in an apartment, as I do today, four acres seems vast—but it was very small back then.) I had the opportunity to walk what had once been Indian trails, later the footsteps of the pioneers. With the help and teaching of my parents I learned to pick edible mushrooms, (baskets full of morels in the spring, now \$\$ per ounce in the gourmet stores!) We picked wild raspberries, blackberries, dewberries, strawberries, blueberries. Near the fallen log homes of some early pioneers, there were the remnants of earlier lives—roses and lilacs and daffodils gone wild. My parents dug up starts of these wildlings to bring home. In season we gathered wild apples, wild pears, and every kind of nut that grows in the midwest—walnut, butternut, hickory, hazelnut.

My parents were, in many ways, tolerant of human differences. At Thanksgiving, we invited some of the most isolated people in the neighborhood to our house, to share the meal. However, my parents were intolerant of what they saw as ignorance or excessive conformity or 'keeping up with the Joneses' – and when I was in school there was nothing more I wanted to do than 'keep up with the Joneses' – we were so far, far behind the Joneses, I felt, that it wasn't the least bit funny. All I wanted was a "normal" family – churchgoing, father employed, bathroom, more than one or two school outfits – that's what mattered to me back then, and that's what I didn't have. My dad spent most of what little extra there was buying

plants, trees, and fishing equipment. That's the way I saw it, anyway.

But despite our poverty, my parents tried to give us the chance to learn about culture, and somehow they scraped up the money to take us to town when big events came through, like the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and Louis Armstrong, and Icecapades, and Ringling Brothers 3-ring circus—in tents! (One of the last of its big tent-touring shows.) Though my older sister missed out on some of the 'advantages' my younger sister and I were given a taste of dance classes, art classes, musical and theatre training. They did not give us long, intensive schooling in any of this, but they gave us enough so we could decide for ourselves if we liked a particular creative area to pursue later on.

They also monitored our school work and expected us to do well. Since they'd also given us the blessing of what then seemed "good genes", we did well in grade school and high school. At least on the surface.

BUT—amid all this positive influence (and I've barely scratched the surface, to be honest) –there was "the other side," of family, to me.

Many Voices doesn't go in for graphic descriptions of abuse, so I'm not going to describe details. But I'll skim over the surface, and you'll probably get the idea.

Intertwined with all the positive, healthy, creative and intellectually stimulating activities and examples offered by my parents was a poisonous thread of abuse and dysfunction that distorted the lives of all three of us kids—though I'm the only one designated "dissociative."

Dad was a full-blown alcoholic from the time I was born until I was six or seven, when he stopped cold turkey and became "only" a dry drunk. He was also—I firmly believe—dissociative himself. Over the years I

Family through the ages, Cont'd.

decided that perhaps he'd been abused by priests. He was an altar boy in the Catholic Church and the pictures of him that we have from those days show he was incredibly handsome. However, he was also raised in a household where the father thought it was amusing to get him drunk at age five. As an adult (if you could ever have called him an adult) his moods changed on a dime; he would become furiously angry over, literally, nothing. Then he would be sweet and kind. Then he would be angry again. His rages were loud, and sometimes violent, with streams of accusations, cuss words, criticisms and fierce expressions. He didn't hit us—but he was violent in perverse ways with my mother, especially when he was still actively drinking. I remember her shirt torn in strips from the beatings.

He also liked to do 'experiments'...and because he believed that my sister and I were not his children (though we definitely were) he felt it was ok to do experiments on us. Sometimes mother helped, sometimes she didn't. At least once she rescued me from almost certain death. But many many times she either didn't know or didn't care or was simply overwhelmed and didn't know what to do. There were no close neighbors to call on. There was no car in the worst years, and she didn't drive even if there had been a way out. But in truth, she loved this man and didn't want to leave him, even though he locked her out of the house at times, and kept her at bay with a shotgun, while we children remained in the house with him.

It won't surprise *Many Voices* readers to know that Mother had her own set of problems, though drinking excessively wasn't one of them. I don't think she dissociated. But I do think she had been abused in her own childhood—though probably not by her parents (aside from emotional abuse, which can certainly be painful enough.) I came to the conclusion that she'd been abused because she could not stand to be touched, even by her tiny toddler children. She would leap back at the touch of a child—the 'startle-response' so

symptomatic of PTSD. She was emotionally distant and artificial-sounding to us, as children. She didn't want me to be "wilful" so she took definite, physical measures to be sure that I was cured of wilfulness, deliberately breaking my will the way one might train a horse or dog. (Fifty-plus years later, I am still hampered by internal fears of doing what I want to do, what I think would be good for me, because of this early, rigorous training.)

So—Mother was cold. And she was critical. While she didn't hit us often, physically, she used a different tactic—words. Perhaps because she was afraid of the physically-violent potential of my father, she turned to words as the outlet for her anger and frustration. She was very expressive—and she would describe, in vivid detail, all the awful things she would do to me if I didn't do what she wanted, or behave in a certain way. As a child, I 'saw' these horror-pictures in my head and believed they would really happen. So I went around my toddler-life in constant fear of dismemberment.

Of course my father regularly reminded me about what would happen if I 'told.' But when, once, I inadvertently said something to my mother about 'it' she informed me that I never should say that outside the house, because then the police would come and take Daddy away forever and we would never see him again. I was young. I didn't realize that this might be a GOOD thing. The splitting up of our very close family seemed to be the worst possible scenario, and I spent many years of my life, decades after Dad died, honoring my parents as a good girl should.

What I've written so far I can verify. There are other things, some more disturbing, that I cannot verify and may be inventions of my own fertile mind. The characters are long gone, and I will never ever know what is real or what is fantasy in the mystery of my childhood.

And that's just my parents. Two siblings enter into this as well (along with a long-unknown half-brother, my

father's child from his first marriage, who lived a continent away and wound up in a hospital for the criminally-insane for a prolonged period for an 'unspeakable' crime apparently involving his own children. I talked with him on the phone many years later, when I was an adult, long after he served his time and was released and remarried. We never discussed openly what he did but he told me his childhood was very strange.)

My older sister thinks our childhood was difficult but remembers no abuse (or chooses not to remember it) though she does remember twisting my arm, waiting to hear it break. And she remembers hiding under the bed when Dad waltzed around the house with his shotgun. She told me years ago she couldn't remember anything before the age of ten.

My younger sister, now ill, was always very quiet and withdrawn. She married a gun-collecting man who controlled her contact with friends and family, and though she chafed at this, she never did anything to get out of the marriage. Now, due to her condition, she is unable to leave. When I've talked with her about abuse in the family she concurs, though she never had "treatment" as I did. She told me that when she heard about my 'inner selves' she told the voices in her head to be quiet and never come out, and they shut up. She had dreams that Father came back from the dead, rising up from the depths of hell, caged like a bear.

I married a year after Father died. I was just sixteen, and desperate to get out of my crazy house, to live the 'normal' life. Marriage ended my formal education, though I've spent every year since studying independently. Though my first and only marriage was a 'mistake' in terms of matching our personalities and needs, it lasted sixteen years, producing two beautiful children...both of whom have problems with alcohol, but nothing so severe as my father's problem...I think, I hope, I pray.

I've told my children some things

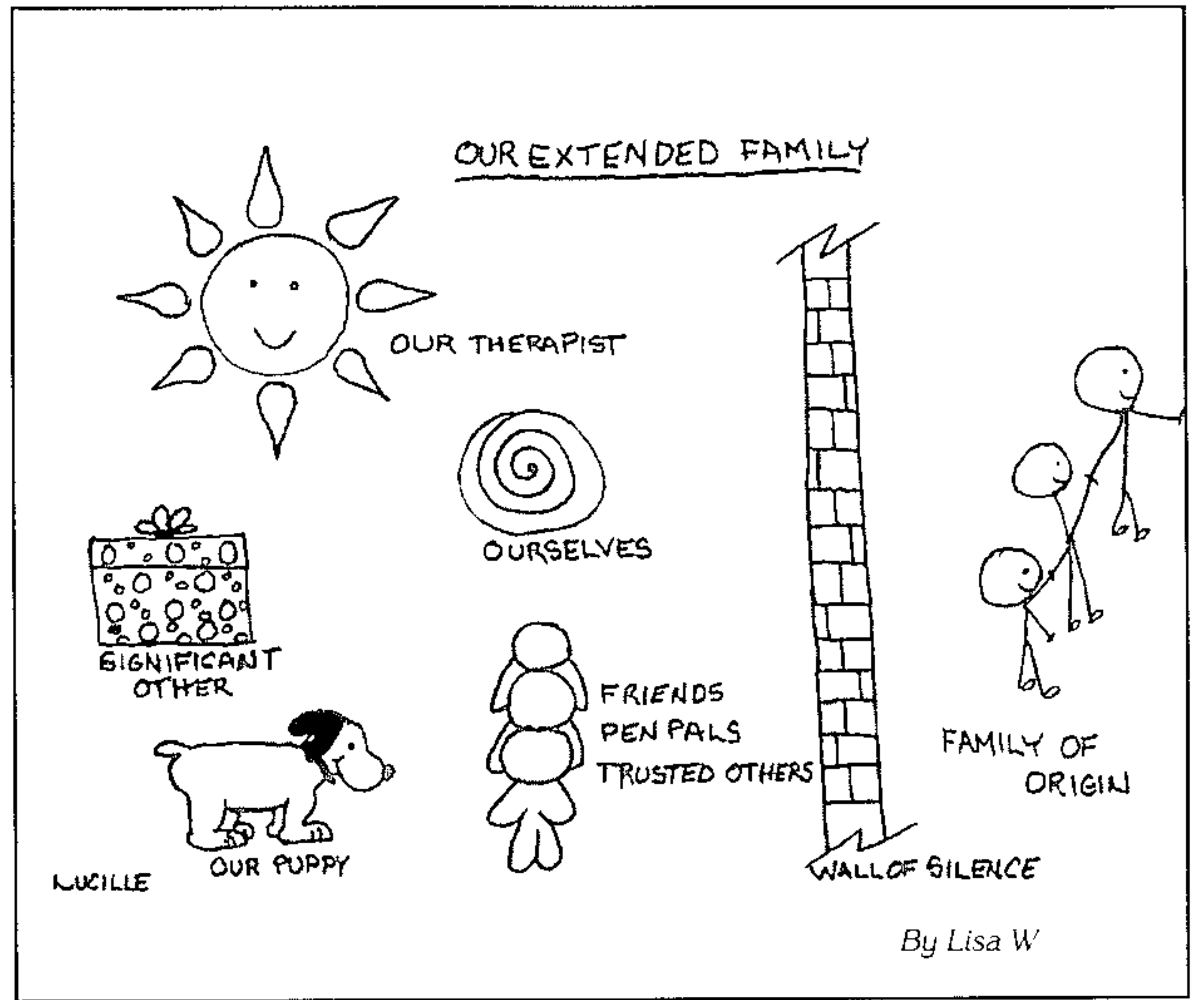
Family through the ages, Cont'd

about my background, but definitely not everything. They know I dissociate. They prefer to think it made no difference to them. I believe otherwise, but I've done all I could do, by apologizing after the fact. We get along pretty well. I like their choice of partners...tho it took my daughter many, many years to find someone suitable. Over the past decades as a single adult I've spent a huge amount of time pining over countless abusive men, but I think I've finally cured myself of that. I now have a wonderful companion who is bright, kind, considerate, understanding and thinks I'm wonderful as well.

Would I have been able to break away from the pattern of choosing abusive partners, if I had not gone through years of therapy? No. I wouldn't have known any better. I would have thought my past life was 'normal' and would have followed the mantra —'you made your bed, now lie in it.'

My parents—especially my mother—didn't have that option. In the early days of therapy I was very very angry about what happened to me. I still think it was grossly unfair and tragic, that what I 'could have been' was thwarted by a family so enmeshed, sick and isolated that the saner aspects of the 'normal' world could not penetrate our shell. But now that I have managed to keep on keeping on...and have pulled together some personal achievements and satisfactions—commonplace, not grandiose—I am reconciled to the real life I've managed to live, in spite of the obstacles. Whenever I get depressed about 'what could have been' I make a list of the positives that did and do exist in my life. The older I get, the longer the list grows. I know it is up to me, to make positive decisions that help me add to this list. 'The Family' is always with me. It's in my heart, mind, body, and bone. It has shaped me, and in turn, I shaped my own family...and to a small extent, changed things for some friends along the way as well. Dissociative or not, today I feel OK about it all.

MV



Books

Forgiveness and Child Abuse: Would YOU Forgive?

Edited by Lois Einhorn, PhD. © 2006
 Published by Robert D. Reed, Publishers,
 PO Box 1992, Bandon, OR 97411.
 www.rdrpublishers.com (541) 347-9882.
 215 pgs. \$22.95 hardback.

The editor of this highly-unusual book, Dr. Einhorn, was herself severely abused by her parents, in grotesque ways. Struggling herself with the issue of forgiveness, she posed the following question to prominent people from many different fields: "What would YOU do? You are a child in a family that sadistically abuses. You are forced to torture and destroy. What should you do now as an adult? Do you forgive your parents? HOW do you forgive yourself?"

In all, some 53 people responded. The answers are diverse and frequently contradict each other, but the wide range of replies to Dr. Einhorn's question present a forum for discussing the cruelties that humans do to each other and opens the possibility of responding to that cruelty in constructive ways.

One small example comes in the words of Ruben "Hurricane" Carter, who was falsely accused of murder

and spent 20 years, unjustly, in prison. He writes "I had to forgive because if we hate, we are mass murderers ourselves."

Abuse survivor and author Lynne Finney, JD, MSW says "The concept of forgiveness is greatly misunderstood. It does not mean we condone what our abusers did...Abusing a child is *never* 'all right'"

Illinois professor Dr. Suzanne Daughton adds that "I don't believe we can experience emotions because we 'should' feel them." Her advocacy states "I may feel forgiveness toward someone, and then experience a resurgence of the hurt at some future date, as I remember the event. That is fine."

And Laura Davis, co-author of *The Courage to Heal* believes forgiving the abuser is not required for healing. "Trying to forgive when we are beginning to heal undermines the healing process," she says.

No aspect of forgiveness remains unexplored by one or another contributor. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the quandary of forgiveness in the aftermath of trauma.

MV

THANK YOU For sharing your wonderful writing & art!
PLEASE SEND your ideas for NEXT YEAR'S THEMES.

We will present them in our August issue!

Remember, the more work you share, the better MV can be!

--Lynn W., Editor



All Twisted Up Inside

August 2006

Making a Life Worth Living. What you do to bring satisfaction, joy and meaning to your life.

ART: Your favorite pasttime
DEADLINE: June 1, 2006.

October 2006

Adjunctive Therapies. Your experiences (pro & con) with EMDR, Thought-field Therapy, Art Therapy, ECT, Bodywork and other treatments for trauma and/or depression.

ART: Your Healing Process.
DEADLINE: August 1, 2006.

Share with us!

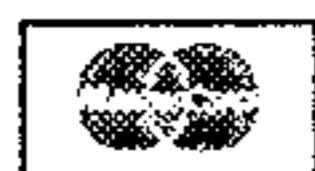
Prose, poetry and art are accepted on upcoming issue themes, (and even on NON-themes, if it's really great.) DO send humor, cartoons, good ideas, and whatever is useful to you. Please limit prose to about 4 typed double-spaced pages. Line drawings (black on white) are best. We can't possibly print everything.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

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