

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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An Interesting Discovery

By Kathy A.

Today is the day I have been working for, for 20-odd years. Today I am one. I finished integrating about one month ago and I want to share with you my concerns and the discovery I have made just recently.

As a multiple I was all things to all people. I have read about others' integration and they have talked about all their talents coming together. I worried why was I not the manic, all capable, do everything person that I (we) once was. Where are all those talents we once possessed?

Well, maybe I am being an unrealistic individual. Once I sewed clothes for all my children at holidays and other times. Clothes for them, plus their dolls and even making their dolls, plus drawing and writing poetry, plus working in their school's PTO and working for a National Adoption Advocacy group, plus being there for everyone.

We seemed to be capable of everything. Going to school and getting a degree in Social Work with next-to-perfect grades, etc.

Why was I now, after integration, feeling so incapable and sluggish? Of course back then I was miserable to live with for my children and husband. I was wonderful, smart, all-knowing to

outsiders, but my children and husband suffered. They were the ones that these manic capable alters (me) took their wrath out on, until we were in therapy and started healing.

As time went on and alters revealed themselves, got closer and some integrated, I realized that a lot of the previously-manic talents did not seem to be there, or were subdued. I thought I did not possess them anymore.

After full integration, I once again complained to my therapist about losing my gambit of talents. After all, aren't we supposed to retain our alters' talents in the integration of "I"? Where were the 'super woman' talents that many possessed?

Don't get me wrong. I still do poetry, not the dark poetry I once prided myself in, but positive ones now. I was forever complaining to my therapist. Where was my substance I once prided in, now that I was an I?

Yesterday it hit me. Now I find myself more loving, more rounded in a positive, not manic way. We have taken the good part of us, the part that sees life around me, that loves her children and grandchildren and x-spouse unconditionally. That now takes the time to walk with them, the time to talk to them and read stories

to them. Time for love, something we did not find time for when we were all things to all people. Today, I feel quiet inside, instead of crazy with mania. I touch people with the whole being of us.

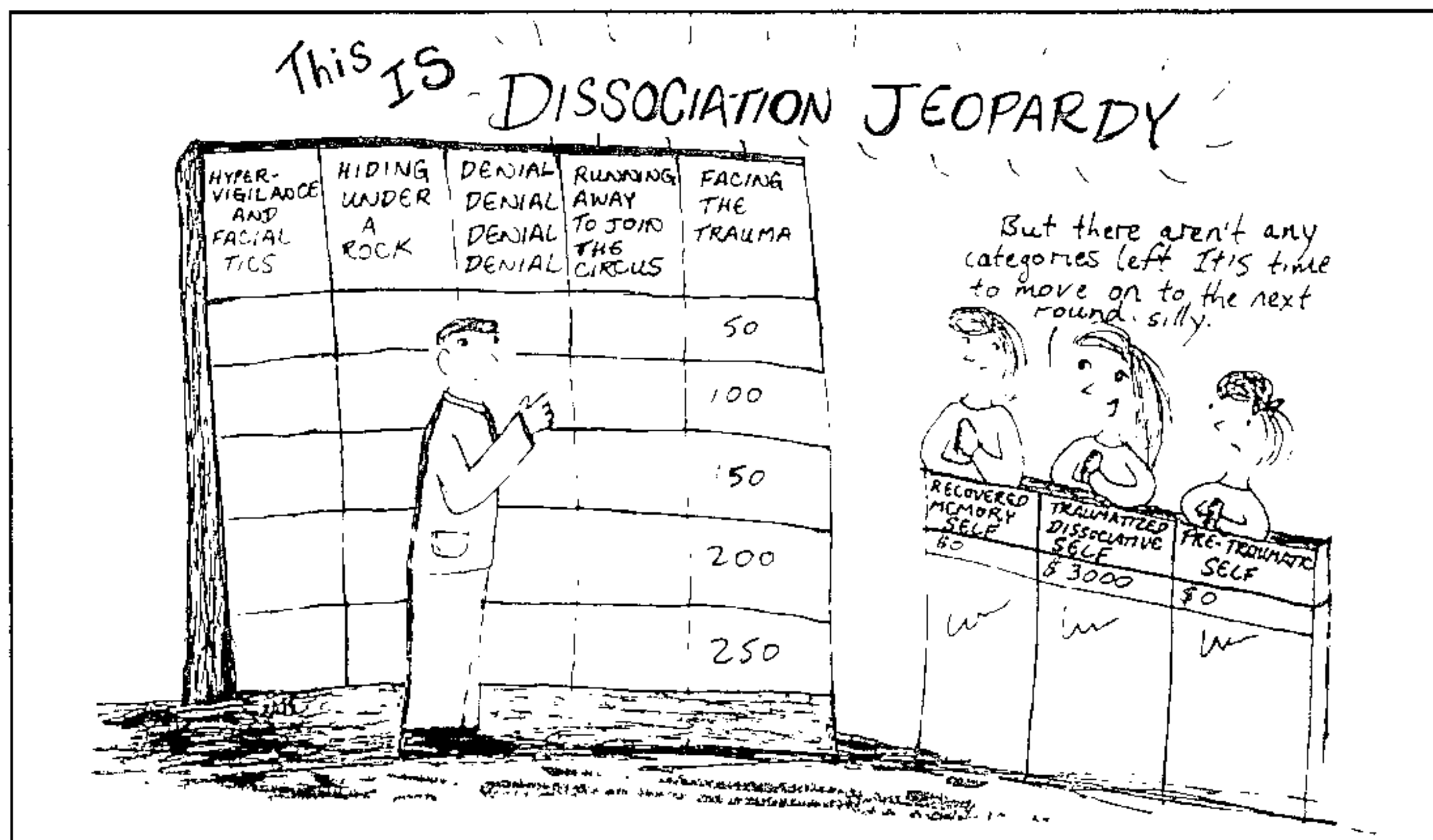
I love life, where once I hated it. I am a whole (I) that can accomplish less in some ways than once before, but actually more in others. I see people, my life, the world around me with clarity and respect and love. My children are receiving my whole attention.

I think eventually some of my other talents will return or I'll make room for them. But now for the first time, I am taking the time and energy to see the world around me and loving it.

One other thing to include is, after integration I found myself full of depression and kind of let down. I didn't know who I was: one minute I felt like a child or a teen or too old to be real. It lasted about one month and now has subsided, and I am able to write the above.

I wanted to put this into words to help others thinking of integration and who might experience something less than euphoria: it's all a process and it will come. Good luck and keep up the work because it is all worth it.

MV



Finding Joy

By The Four Dragons

Depression is the absolute worst kind of darkness. Really, the FBI should post it as America's number one most wanted enemy because it kills, maims and destroys anyone unlucky enough to be in its path. I know. Depression nearly ended my life. It put me in the psych hospital for months on end. Despite reams of therapists and hospitals, I didn't know how to get out of the black hole. It seemed to have a power all its own that kept sucking me deeper into the jaws of its vortex. Eventually it sucked the life and the joy out of everything until I no longer wanted to live because I had nothing to live for.

I desperately needed an answer to this problem. But it didn't seem readily available. In the hospital I noticed many other multiples who were fighting depression too. Like me, they were not having much success or they wouldn't have been there! I saw depression run rampant among the members of the 12-step meetings I attended. It frequently attacked the other women in my group therapy. Now I even see regular, monobrain people, like my coworkers, struggling with it. And of course other members of my family are afflicted with it. I've seen family and friends die from it.

I was dying from it. Antidepressants didn't work. I was still depressed and the solution was still eluding me. One day, after eighteen years of this stumbling around for an answer, I picked up a book while waiting for my son to purchase what he needed in the bookstore. There it was in a simple paragraph of questions examining purpose in life. The purpose of ALL people is to use their gifts and talents to help other people. But the book went further. It asked me what attributes I was born with. What things do I naturally like to do or find easy to do? I asked inside. I talked to those who were two to five years old because they were not yet so tainted with the outside world's expectations. Since multiples have easier access to

this information it was easier for me to do.

At the top of my list are singing, drawing, writing, acting and teaching. My chosen career doesn't incorporate very many of these. uh OH! Why not? I instantly answered my own rhetorical question. Because I was ashamed of myself. Why should I be ashamed of how God made me? I answered that rhetorical question too. When I was very little, I was treated disrespectfully. Since mommy and daddy are like all-powerful gods to small children, my baby selves interpreted this to mean that we were worthless. Why else would adults refuse to answer my cries, make fun of my mistakes and hurt feelings, and demand that I keep quiet and not bother them? After all, small children think that everything is about them. So if their wonderful wise parents are unkind to them, small children know that it's because they are bad. A small child cannot afford the luxury of thinking that the adult is wrong, because he has to depend on that person for his own survival.

Without anything to counter that erroneous belief, it gets embedded inside to become a truth that's just part of the infrastructure of his life. We don't even know these beliefs are there, much less think to question them.

But once I discovered I had mistaken beliefs inside, I knew I needed to find the right kind of ammunition to teach my inside babies a new way of thinking. This one is harder for multiples than for monobrain. There has to be ammunition for each person inside who holds that belief. And since many of mine are preverbal, it has to come in a format that they can understand.

My number-one best is to let my mind picture a set of three to five situations where the little ones have acted on these beliefs and were absolutely dead wrong. Then I have to replay it again and again and again

and again and...well, you get the picture. Small children need a lot of repetition. In fact, that's how all people learn. We do things over and over again until we get it. And by the way, anything that we learn can be unlearned. My older insiders need these kind of facts to keep them from getting discouraged when the inside babies are taking so long to relearn.

I have to tell you that it took a long time to come up with shame busting ammunition. Finally we pictured a newborn nursery in our mind and asked everyone inside to identify which babies were worthless. None, of course. AHA! Proof that I was not born worthless. Besides, God didn't make me for no reason. Who am I to insult HIM? Who am I to say that the imperfect execution of my talents makes me a bad person? My parents may not have appreciated the gifts God gave to me but that does not make them of zero value. God's word is higher than my parents so I will go with HIS estimation of me.

Now I already know that some people reading this will have trouble with the God part. I used to have some trouble with that too! One thing I have learned is that I can choose how to think.. So I decided to choose whatever kind of thinking is in my best interest. The number one thing that everyone wants is peace, love and happiness. I am no exception. And like everyone, I want to love and be loved. I want to feel connected to others. The type of thinking that gets me to this state of mind is obviously the one that's in my best interest. The only thinking that achieved this for me was spiritual in nature. But I balked because I wanted proof that there's a God and proof of His ability. I also knew I would never get that proof because it's not possible.

So I examined all the options. Suppose I believe in God and He doesn't really exist. If my belief in God brings me peace, joy and love, then I will live my life in a happier state even

if I'm wrong. What if I believe in God and there is a God? No problem there. What if I don't believe in God and there really is a God? I lose the good that my belief would give me and I'm wrong to boot, so I've lost out double. What if I don't believe in God and there is no God? No problem, except for the fact that believing in God provides me with an internal structure for feeling at peace and connected with the world. So I decided to believe in God.

You may think that this subject is simply one to be dismissed, but I think not. At my most suicidal moments, what I was really saying was that I was just so miserable that I couldn't stand it any more. If it's OK to die then that must mean that I have no purpose here on earth. If I have a purpose, then why am I suicidal? It's an existential question. It cannot be avoided because we are, by nature, spiritual beings. Those of us who have confronted death in the depths of depression have looked straight into the jaws of this question. I even asked my psychiatrist about the need to look at this issue of God and he agreed that those clients who focused on their spirituality were the ones who got out of depression and stayed out.

I also used to think that when I got happy, then I would figure out how to beat depression. Just let me feel good and then I can throw this tiger off my back. So I looked for people to love me so that then I could feel good, so that then I could be happy and at peace. What I really wanted was for someone to give me the love that my mother never gave me, so that I could stop feeling ashamed of myself so that I could be happy.

Guess what? No one can give you the love you didn't get. You cannot make up for it. But you can still be blessed with happiness beyond measure. The bad news is that if you make someone else the bearer of your happiness because they love you, then you have given your power away to them and they can control you. Eventually they will disappoint you because they are human. Perhaps you will engage in the old no-win power struggle with them. Or perhaps you will skip the power struggle phase and

just sink back into the pit of despair as you wonder how you could be betrayed by the one who loved you. Whatever the scenario, it's back to depression-black-hole for you.

But with God it's different. God is not like people; He is always there. We can talk to Him whenever we need to and at all other times too. He's never on vacation, or too tired, or moving to another state. He has a plan for my life. He wants everything good for me if I will follow His path. He can do this for you too. The first step is to decide that you will make spirituality the number one priority in your life.

I have to tell you that it was one year ago today that I decided to stop putting other people in the position of God in my life and I have been out of depression ever since. I feel a constant spiritual connection with others instead of that oppressive, unloved, lonely feeling. I have tapered off my medication. I do not need it. I have peace and joy every day. I could not possibly be more blessed. And for the first time ever, I am me and I like being me.

These are some of the truths that have given me my freedom:

1. **The world WILL insult you.** It's designed that way. You have not been picked out as the only person who has ever been tormented. EVERYONE is tormented in some way.
2. **Anything I have learned** can be unlearned.
3. **I learned to believe things** that were not true and I learned these things at an early age.
4. **I have to look for these beliefs** and find ammunition to fight against them.
5. **Children believe** that everything is about them. (For example: if their parents argue, they assume it's because they are bad. It does not occur to them that their parents might have a problem.) I have a lot of these leftover beliefs still operating in my life and diminishing its quality.
6. **God made me on purpose.** God made YOU on purpose too. I choose to live my life on purpose to glorify His name.

7. **My purpose is to use my God-**

given gifts and talents to be a blessing to other people.

8. **When I start looking** at what I can do for others instead of what they can do for me, I stop feeling like I'm always lacking something.

9. **I can choose which thoughts** and feelings I will persevere on. I can choose to look at things optimistically.

10. **I pay attention** to my thoughts and feelings. I may not be able to control what falls into my head, but I can control what I do with it. I can choose to feed only those thoughts and feelings which are in my best interest.

11. **I look for the way** that I am blessed, every day. The more I look at what I have to be thankful for, the more I find to be thankful for, and the more grateful and blessed I feel.

12. **There is a difference** between who I am and what I do. God created me and is pleased with who He made me to be. I do not have to be ashamed of who I am. I can ask God's forgiveness for the mistakes I do.

MV

Healing

Healing the spirit in my life has been ongoing. It began as an adult when memories of abuse started coming to me.

I think I began to honor life and love myself then, too.

Treating my inner children gently and happily, and their response being so joyful and such a blessing to me, is probably the most wonderful part.

All the love and encouragement I wanted as a child, we shower on the little ones, and on our selves too.

One way we help us adults is to accept ourselves as we are.

[We don't seem to get older in spirit. The adults came as adults, and still are adults. The children never get older.]

Why is this? Do any of you feel older than when you first knew yourself—I mean, inside?

By Sally B.

MV

Therapist's Page

By Charles L. Whitfield, M.D., and Barbara H. Whitfield, R.T., CMT

Charles L. Whitfield, M.D. is the internationally bestselling author of many books on recovery and trauma psychology, including *Healing the Child Within*. He lives and practices in Atlanta, Georgia, with his wife, thanatologist Barbara H. Whitfield, R.T., CMT, who is the author of four books on spirituality and recovery.

The Power of Humility

Charles and Barbara Whitfield 2006

Without humility it's pretty hard to heal. It's the Key ingredient to being able to work the 12 steps! The way we start to define humility is having the willingness to learn more about self, others, and the God of our understanding. Without that, therapy it will take forever.

Seven years ago we heard a new idea about handling conflict from our friends Jvoti and Russ Parks. That evolved into our new book *The Power of Humility: Choosing Peace over Conflict in Relationships* (HCI July 2006).

While writing and working out the concepts for this new book we decided to practice it in our relationship. While we personally, and as a couple had completed most of our Stage Two recovery work (i.e., adult child of trauma issues), and had a strong spiritual base, we knew that something was still missing. As we were working on this book, we watched our relationship grow into a more peaceful state because we had a language and a direction that was new and evolved beyond our old polarized way of thinking.

We knew from our new-found peace that we were on to something. So we kept refining the theory and practice with an enthusiasm that kept us chipping away until it was ready.

Taken from its origin *humus*, meaning earthy, the general dictionary definition of humble is two fold: 1) not proud or arrogant, modest, and 2) meek, submissive, low in rank or conditions (Random House 1980, Oxford 1971). It is in part on this first definition that we have focused and expanded.

Gaining humility is a major milestone in recovery. It usually signifies a life

transformation, in that the person flows more with life, functions better, and tends to be at a lower risk of falling back into conflict and pain. For all concerned the term "humble" is thus positive and is a great strength, and is not generally viewed as a weakness. Here's a list of characteristics we came up with to describe this personal power, taken from Chapter 2 of our book.

Characteristics

We believe there are at least 12 key characteristics of humility. These include: 1) openness, 2) an attitude of 'don't know', 3) curiosity, 4) innocence, 5) a child-like nature, 6) spontaneity, 7) spirituality, 8) tolerance, 9) patience, 10) integrity, 11) detachment, and 12) letting go - all of which lead to inner peace.

Openness

We begin to define humility as being open to learning more about our self, others, and God. This openness is perhaps its most basic and key characteristic. Without being open to what is I may miss countless chances to learn, experience and grow. When we have humility there is no such thing as failure. Each act or experience has something to teach us even if it doesn't turn out the way we planned.

"Don't Know"

The Third Chinese Patriarch of Zen, Seng Ts'an, wrote: *'The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences. When love and hate are both absent, everything becomes clear and undisguised. Make the smallest distinction, however, and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart. If you wish to see the truth, then hold no opinions for or against anything.'*

Having an attitude of not knowing the answer to every question or conflict I encounter gives me the chance to let go of always needing to come up with an answer or even be right, which may block my ability to experience inner peace and

serenity. This "don't know" stance is a basic and effective tenet of Buddhist philosophy and practice. By not knowing, I expand my possibilities. I don't limit myself. And I thereby have a greater chance to avoid conflict in or outside of triangles.

A Course in Miracles says: "Let us be still an instant, and forget all things we ever learned, all thoughts we had and every preconception that we hold of what things mean and what their purpose is. Let us remember not our own ideas of what the world is for. We do not know. Let every image held of everyone be loosened from our minds and swept away." It continues, "Be innocent of judgment, unaware of any thoughts of evil or of good that ever crossed your mind of anything." (648t, 12)

Curiosity

Have you ever thought you already knew the truth about someone or something and found out later that you were wrong? Having humility, including openness to learning more, an attitude of "don't know," and being curious about people, places and things, can help us to work through conflicts, including when we find ourselves caught in the pain of a Level 1 triangle. Curiosity drives us to see the authenticity of other people. Instead of the old habit of projecting on to others our conflicts and other unfinished business, our curiosity opens us to acceptance instead of prejudice and rejection.

Innocence

As we look at newborn infants we are reminded that we are innocent at our core. If God made us, and we are each a part of God, how can we also be sinners (as some religions claim)? *A Course in Miracles* suggests that we are not. Rather than being born in "original sin," the Course says that we are born innocent. We are already and eternally innocent.

While the Course describes various aspects of innocence, it defines it as being the same as having Christ's vision, which it

also calls true perception and right-mindedness. Innocence means that we never see what does not exist (i.e., the ego and its world), and always see what does (God and God's real world). At the core of our being what we are innocent about or unaware of is our ego and its world of pain.

After reading parts of the Course, we realized that upon entering the dream of the ego's world, we unknowingly caused our own pain. We were and are innocent, and were simply in a dream. The lion and the lamb lying down together symbolize that strength and innocence are not in conflict, but naturally live in peace. A pure mind knows that innocence is strength. We enter into our innocence each time that we co-create peace with another with whom we may be in conflict.

Child-like

The romantic poets, especially William Blake, spoke often of our innocence. In his long poem "Songs of Innocence and Experience," Blake said that we are innocent and that we can contact our innocence through the child within us (Blake 1794). In Workbook lesson 182 the Course says " . . . there is a Child in you who seeks his Father's house. This childhood is eternal, with an innocence that will endure forever " (339w, 4:3-4). To us, this is one of the most moving of the Course's 365 workbook lessons.

The Course says that whenever we are in conflict we are in our ego, projecting sin, guilt and shame onto the person(s) with whom we are in conflict. If we see sin and badness in another we lose the peace of our innocence. If we see any error in them and attack them for it, we hurt ourselves (41t, 7:1). It says that "You cannot know your brother when you attack him. You are making him a stranger by misperceiving him, and so you cannot know him " (41t, 7:4).

Spontaneity

Being spontaneous means living as our real self in this moment of now. Our real self only exists in the eternal now. As soon as we honor the present moment, all unhappiness and struggle dissolve, and life begins to flow with more ease and joy. Every time we let our selves go into the past (usually from guilt or shame) or project into the future (usually from fear), we are energizing our ego, which usually causes us conflict and pain. We know we are in our ego when we are not at peace.

In our True Self we not only experience stillness and peace, but also joy and intense aliveness.

Spirituality

Spirituality is about our relationship with self, others and the God of our understanding. And, it is much more. Whereas religion takes us by the hand and we follow the usually preordained path of those who have gone before us - spirituality is about our own personal path. We do it our own way and in our own time. We form an experiential bond with self, others and God that we may or may not find in religion.

By breaking new ground our journey becomes our goal. This is what the *A Course in Miracles* calls, "The Journey without Distance." It says, "The Journey to God is merely the reawakening of the Knowledge of where you are always, and what you are forever. It is a journey without distance to a goal that has never changed."

Our goal in living our journey is to surrender, including surrendering to the moment we are in. Surrender is not weakness. It is strong. A person who has surrendered has spiritual power. In this surrender, there are no longer problems. There are only situations. And, if we don't like the situation we can choose again. As part of humility, spirituality leads to detaching from or letting go of our numerous attachments, resulting in inner peace.

Tolerance

Tolerance involves the capacity for or the practice of recognizing and respecting the beliefs, preferences or practices of our self, others and God. The Buddhist teacher Cheri Huber says, "Suffering is resisting what is." If a situation is intolerable and we suffer from it, we have three options: 1) remove ourselves from the situation, 2) change it or 3) accept it as it is.

We can be pushed by our pain and suffering or pulled by our spiritual vision.

Patience

Patience may be one of our hardest lessons to attain. When we are in our ego, we want it right now. Our ego has no patience and as such may lead us to believe we are being mistreated, empty, bored or otherwise in pain. It's almost humorous to realize the spectrum of emotions we experience when we find our selves stuck in our ego. All we need do is

slide over to patience and if we struggle with patience - practice tolerance in our struggle.

An effective way out of pain from being in conflict with a person, place or thing is to use prayer. When we are not at peace, we can remember that we are in our ego. In our prayer we simply ask for help and then surrender to the God of our understanding. On a humorous note, we can consider the prayer for patience "Lord give me patience, and give it to me Now!"

Integrity

Humility breeds integrity and vice versa. They support and feed one another in a positive way. Integrity means wholeness. Integrity is one of the most important and oft-cited of virtue terms. It is also puzzling. For example, while it is sometimes used instead of 'moral,' we also at times distinguish acting morally from acting with integrity. We believe that humility leads to integrity. And, people with true integrity have humility at their base and actions.

What a conflicted world may need now is integrity - in ourselves, in our relationships and in our private and political systems. The more we incorporate humility in our interaction and intra-actions (i.e., our inner life), the more we move up the Four Levels that we describe in this book, and the more integrity becomes an active part of our being. Why? Because integrity means we are whole, we are working from our authentic self, who God made us to be, and at the same time we are wholly taking in the people and the world around us.

Detachment

Detachment involves withdrawing our emotional attachment to a person, place, thing or outcome of any situation - including our conflicts. It involves releasing our attachment or connection. Detachment is sometimes mistakenly interpreted to mean "not care about," but the word actually means "to separate from." It requires a willingness to let go and allow others to take responsibility for their own lives. This is especially difficult for the "rescuer" in a Level 1 triangle, who feels driven to jump in and help or "fix" the "victim's" plight. If the rescuer does not learn to detach, they often become the victim.

Detachment is a keystone skill in recovery for members of the Twelve Step

recovery for members of the Twelve Step Fellowship of Al-Anon. Many of the principles of Buddhism and related paths illustrate similarities with Al-Anon's view of detachment. The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism include: 1) Life involves suffering, 2) Attachment (desire, selfish craving or clinging of our ego causes our suffering), 3) Detachment is the cure for suffering, 4) Detachment can follow an Eightfold Path (Smith 1957). This Eight Fold Path includes Right Association (i.e., with people who have positive attitudes and clarity). It also involves several key principles and spiritual practices that embrace integrity and meditation.

In summary, expanding upon the work of Naranjo, we see at least six principle features of detachment. From a lower self-perspective, these include non-resistance, non-attachment and mindfulness. From a Higher Self perspective, these include God-Mindedness and Remembering Loving and Letting Go.

Letting go

Letting go is both a process and an event. When we can remember, it is also often a series of continuous events. We work in our recovery process to let go of our accumulated baggage from our past traumas, including how our ego has beaten us up. Letting go is in large part about letting go of our ego. When we let go of our ego, being humble becomes easier.

When we are whole, when we are living as our True Selves, we can help the people we love by being present with them, and loving them unconditionally. But we can't fix anyone. We surrender our ego's need to control this reality we share with our loved ones and move into the larger Reality, where our inner life and the Light of unconditional love work together. As we move into balance, our relationships move into balance.

As we give everyone around us the space to be who they are, which also involves unconditional love, we give ourselves the same space. One of the rules of the Universe becomes so obvious. We treat others as we want to be treated and then everything we give out comes back.

Being Humble

Having summarized these twelve characteristics above, we will now describe some further principles of humility in recovery and in life.

Gratitude

As we let go and watch our relationships transform, transcend or dissolve – we not only recognize all the characteristics above playing out in us and our loved ones – gratitude moves in and possibly even takes over as an underlying continual attitude or mood.

When the stressful pressure of conflicted and painful relationships is released – something needs to take its place. (The Universe seems to fill in a vacuum.) And, that something that takes its place is peace and gratitude. We feel better. Our ego isn't running our inner life anymore. Our inner life is now more of our Sacred Person.

Being "Nobody Special"

"The story of life, of humanity, of the universe is cast in terms of what we know, or what we can ever understand. Death comes, like birth, and there is nothing we can do about it. Strutting and fretting our brief hour upon the stage of life is really quite meaningless. In stepping back and seeing the play from the perspective of one's true nature, compassion arises for all. Humility becomes one's natural clothing. There is no one, no person, no doer, no diver, yet all is blissful when the mind with all its knowledge, memory and emotional residues stands back and lets go its hold on life." (Whenary R 2005)

In the process of humility we work through a cycle early in our life from becoming ego-attached or 'somebody special,' to then becoming ego-detached or 'nobody special.' Ram Dass and Levine (1976) said "We are in training to be nobody special. It is in that nobody special-ness that we can be anybody. The fatigue, the neurosis, the anxiety, the fear, all come from identifying with the somebody-ness. But you have to start somewhere. It does seem that you have to be somebody before you can be nobody. If you started out being nobody at the beginning of this incarnation, you probably wouldn't have made it this far. It's that force of somebody-ness that develops the social and physical survival mechanisms. It's only now, having evolved to this point that we learn to put that somebody-ness, that whole survival kit, which we called the ego, into perspective."

"At first you really think you've lost something. It's a while before you can

appreciate the peace that comes from the simplicity of no-mind, of just emptiness, of not having to be somebody all the time. You spent the first half of your life becoming somebody. Now you can work on becoming nobody, which is really somebody. For when you become nobody there is no tension, no pretense, no one trying to be anyone or anything, and the natural state of the mind shines through unobstructed – the natural state of the mind is pure love, pure awareness. Can you imagine when you become that place you've only touched through your meditations? You've cleared away all of the mind trips that kept you being who you thought you were. . . You experience the exquisiteness of being in love with everybody and not having to do anything about it. Because you've developed compassion. The compassion is to let people be as they need to be without coming on to them. The only time you come on to people is when they're actions are limiting the opportunities for other human beings to be free." (Ram Dass & Levine, 1976)

In a society where everybody has to be somebody special, what a joy it can be to walk along and be nobody special. It is freeing, peaceful and serene. We learn to listen and hear. And where we are when we are nobody special is in the heart of our True Self. Twelve Step fellowships also suggest being nobody special by their principle of anonymity. Their Twelfth Tradition says, "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

MV



War Against Attrition

By Carol L.

Definition of Attrition - a gradual erosion of strength or morale.

I don't know about the rest of you but I find myself constantly fighting a war against attrition. That is that subtle withdrawing from others and the world in general. I start giving up on little things at first...keeping my hair cut or wearing clothes that fit...even something as small as not bothering with earrings or other jewelry ..it is so insidious. And then even personal hygiene suffers....who cares if I wash my hair or brush my teeth....nothing matters and nobody cares.

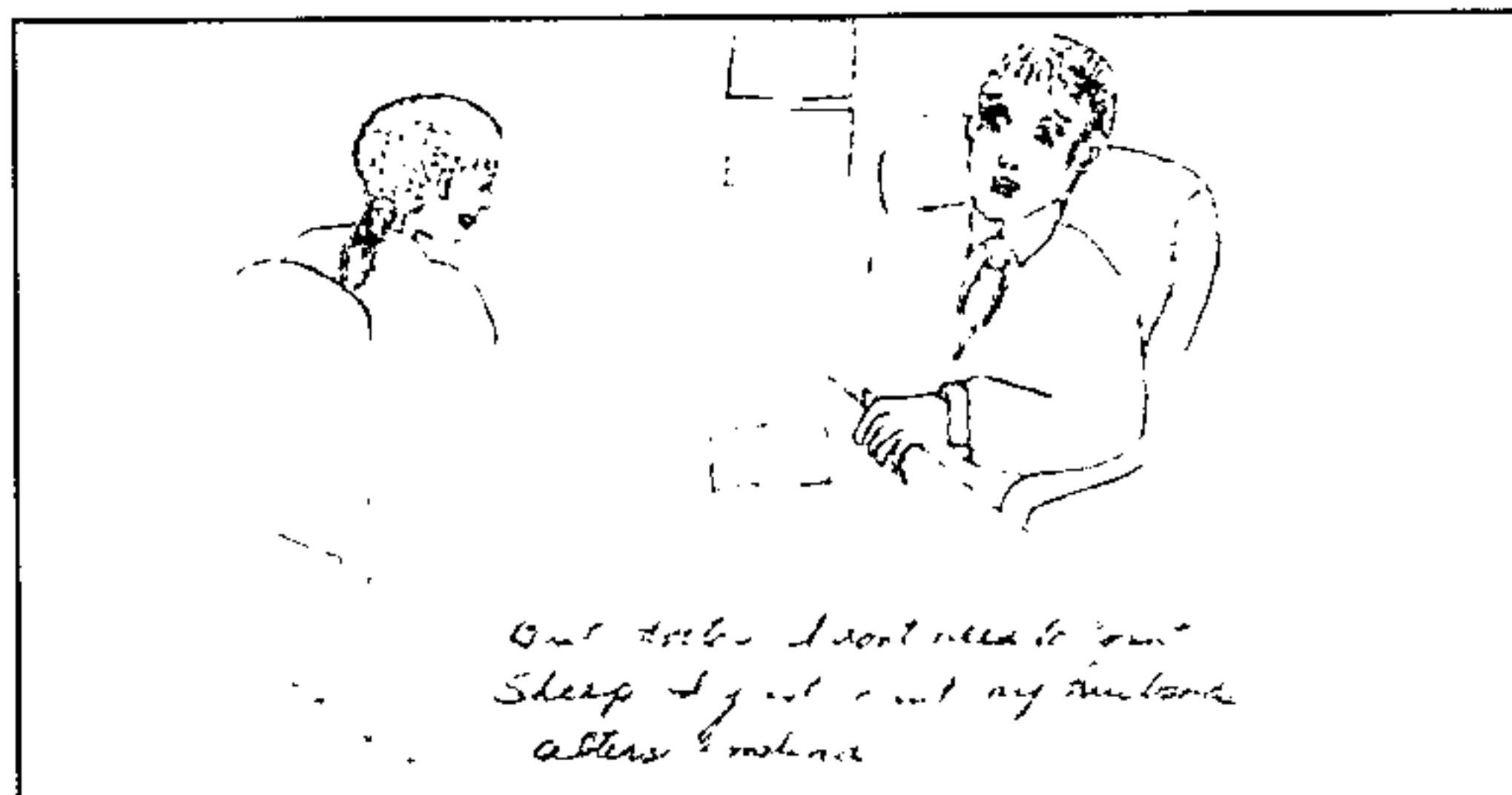
And social activities! To get together with others can be monumental effort. It can be a huge step to get up on time, get dressed, get out of the house, cope with traffic (so many cars!), and find the location I need to get to. Now when I get to church or my needlework group or whatever function, I usually do enjoy myself. I like people....especially groups where I already know others. Of course, sometimes facing just the superficial questions that everyone throws at you can seem exhausting...How am I?...well, do you REALLY want to know or should I just shrug and say "fine".

At times, it is amazing to see that I have limited my life to just a few things and I sure can remember times when I also let the scope of my life get whittled down to almost nothing. I am always SO determined to not let that happen again on any sort of a

permanent basis. But it a creeping paralysis that can come over me at any time. Sometimes when health issues (mine or others) consume me, I have to mentally shake off that patterning afterwards that would keep me at home doing nothing. Oh, I get lulled into it often but somehow I keep getting pulled into a fuller life.

God and some part or parts within myself WILL NOT GIVE UP! As Albert Camus wrote: "In the midst of winter, I found there was within me, an invincible summer." I don't know why I start that hard scabble up the hill towards more involvement with life again and again but I seem to have to..... It seems almost masochistic sometimes but the benefits always seem to outweigh the pain.

But when seated comfortably in my recliner in a stupor with the TV droning on and on with shows I don't even care about, the sheer effort to get OUT of the chair and get dressed, find my purse and keys, and drive anywhere seems insurmountable. Even if you've never suffered from depression, this might sound familiar to you. After all, isn't inertia by definition Newton's first law? "The tendency of a motionless body to remain still or of a body in motion to continue at a constant velocity along a straight line unless subjected to some external force." Now this isn't a physics lesson and I don't know what the external force is BUT there must a little bits of me that want to be in motion....motion towards a less solitary life...a fuller life. MV



The Path Home from Trauma

The path home from trauma
Is very long and windy
It is fraught with tragic drama
With frightening memories to recall

On the journey to be whole
We must have courage and strength
To stay out of the Black Hole
Or succumb to it and be gone

Healing means many things
For different we are in many
Circumstances
No one is truly alone, all of us are
Beings
On a quest for understanding and
Acceptance

With DID the first step is safety
Something we have been denied
To trust has only come lately
It can only be earned in time

Organized internal communication
Helps keep our family strong
Without it too much translation
Would be required for all alters to stay
Together

Recalling from the Black Hole
The memories we have locked away
Sometimes takes its toll
But we must fight or never truly live

Life as we know it is complicated
Most cannot understand
What it is like to feel dissected
Into many wholes

The wholes are part of the Birth One
The one we long to be
Before the abuse had come
Which left us in pieces

We think about integration
And wonder if it is possible
After all our traumatization
Or are we meant to stay as alters?

By Virginia

MV

What It's Like to Be a Survivor – Part II

By Jenn J.

I am a survivor of many types of abuse. I am a survivor. Surviving is a monumental thing in our society. We hear about the people that amazingly survived for 7 days in an earthquake. We are riveted to the TV as we hope and pray for survivors of a Tsunami. Thank God the little girl who fell in the well survived!

Abuse is another kind of "well" to fall into. We find ourselves as children in a "well" that we can't get out of for many years. There is no one to rescue us. No nation riveted and praying for our safe return. Mostly, there is silence. I find it outrageous that we "walking wounded" hear mostly silence from our friends, neighbors, colleagues, towns, states, & nation. When I say outrageous, I mean it enrages me that no one respects my efforts to survive. We survivors are called "crazy",

"unstable", "mentally ill", "nuts". Only our fellow survivors and therapists and sometimes our SO's realize how courageous we are to have survived such torture, suffered through the healing process, and haven't given up. We are amazing, us survivors.

All of this said, here comes the difficult part. This is not for the weak stomach. When I was abused as a child I was tied up. Erotic you say? Oh, did I forget to mention I was tied up with bailing wire and then repeatedly raped by several men? Did you have an orgasm, didn't it really feel good? Yep, I probably had an orgasm when it was happening. I felt guilty about it for a long time. Did you know that even the body of an 11 year old involuntarily responds to sexual stimulation? The orgasms only confuse the victim more. Oh and that three letter word – s-e-x, the one that nice girls don't talk about? (at least not in my family). When I was abused which involved s-e-x, I couldn't tell anyone. I knew it was a bad thing. I knew it was wrong, but I felt so ashamed! I was supposed to be a virgin when I got married! It took me 25 years to understand that it was

not my fault. Oh, the other question – why didn't you stay away from the guy? Well, for one he may have been my father. How does a child keep her father from entering her bedroom? I mean I know I was a tough seven year old, but come on. Another reason is he told me he would kill me. I did my best to make everyone see that I was ok. I kept the status quo and my pets lived, my friends lived, and I lived. I had to see him again even if he didn't live with me or someone would know what had happened. I believed his threats. FYI, his threats included the point that my dad or mom would be really angry if they knew I did this. Think about what you are saying. Think about the questions you are asking your survivor friend. Stop and think how they might feel.

The problem is this: you see me, an adult, telling you about something that happened when I was a child. You didn't know me as a child so you have trouble conceptualizing the powerlessness I had. Your childhood didn't include abuse so it's difficult to remember what it was like to be powerless. Sit in the mall or at the park and watch the kids one day. Notice how they think and act. Notice how they respond to other kids. Notice how they respond to adults. Then, stop and think about child abuse. Think about how a child's life path is changed. Think about how your life would be different if you had been abused.

An interesting thing happened to me recently. A survivor friend of mine asked me those questions above. I was floored. Guess what? He hasn't resolved his abuse and needs to find a good therapist. To him, a little abuse like someone masturbating in front of a child, is not a big deal. He actually said, "All guys do it." He is way confused as to what normal, healthy behavior towards children is. He never experienced it. I write this here so that survivors and supporters can realize that not all survivors have it figured out yet. It is a journey and

everyone is at a different spot on the healing path.

The path of survivorship is a long and arduous one. It begins with realizing that what happened was abusive and you have been victimized. Next comes the difficult task of telling, which continues throughout recovery. Learning that telling doesn't cause the world to come crashing down is important. It is the beginning of understanding that the abuser is not a powerful person, but a weak individual who preyed on innocent children. Survivors often hold tight to the idea that it was their fault. It may seem strange, but it actually gives the survivor some idea that he had some control over the situation. Control equals safety and the possibility of escape. Generally, I would say the path of healing is sort of a two step forward, one step back affair, although sometimes you don't have to take the step back.

Having the support of someone who is empathetic yet empowering can help the survivor to keep on the healing path when it seems so much easier to quit. Often suicidal feelings come up. We don't want to die, we just don't want to keep hurting. Our depressed, traumatized brain is not rational. If a loved one can understand our motives for thinking this way, it can really help. Reminding us that we can get through it, even though you said that 30 minutes ago, is a great help.

Calling our therapist is often necessary, but can be frustrating for SO's. . . For me, sometimes my therapist was the only reason I stayed alive. She promised that I could get to a better place and I trusted her. I didn't want my spouse to know how bad I was feeling and he became frustrated that I had to call a woman that he didn't know about talk about who knows what. He wanted to know what we talked about in sessions and became angry that I wouldn't tell him. He couldn't understand that I was afraid and ashamed to talk about it. It

wasn't about him. It was about me.

I believe it is important that SO's understand that the therapy environment is often the first truly safe place we have known. Our therapist cares for us and accepts us. Our therapist believes us when no one else does. We learn to trust again through our therapist. In addition to helping us work through the trauma, the therapeutic relationship can be a good model for a healthy relationship. We don't know what healthy is. We never had it growing up. Unfortunately, many of us end up in a relationship before we are healthy. We might not realize it because we "fake it" so well that it seems normal. There are lots of outcomes here. Sometimes the relationship survives. Sometimes it doesn't. It depends on the personalities and tolerance of both parties. Often, therapy for the SO is helpful.

All in all, survivors have what it takes to get through, but your support and kindness can make it a bit less scary. Remember we may not be rational at times, but we are not "crazy". To call us crazy is demeaning and destructive. With your caring and respect you will find yourself amazed at our work. When the therapist says we can get through it, she means it. She has treated others like us. She's the expert. It is by no means easy path, but in the end it is well worth it for all involved.

MV



Losing a Best Friend

By John

Keepers and I lost a very good friend this past week, to Keepers he was a bit more than a friend, he was a best friend. He was our beloved Shakespeare, a 65 lb. mutt mix of Lab and Husky who, unbeknownst to us when he was brought in our house, would be a permanent resident for the next 18 years!! He was quite simply the sweetest most gentle dog we ever knew, he had a heart or spirit that more humans should have and if they did they would be better for it.

I expect other multiples and singletons have lost pets that approached this level in their relationships, but Shakes, as we called him for short, had something special with Keepers, a very distinct connection he had with them and them only. He could tell when they were hurting, when they were in an abreaction, and he would be at their side until they felt better. Often he would push his head into their hands and if they said "no" or "go away" he persisted pushing until they gave in and in effect said "you know, don't you boy?"

He could tell when it was a certain Keeper who was out, he knew if it was Emily Ann he could get a piece of her food, he knew if it was Terrence he could get petted and played with, and so on with others also.

For those 18 years our children were for the most part in their teens and upward, so there was a lot of time Keepers spent with Shakes as their friend and home companion when everyone else was at school or work. The last 10 years it was just Keepers and Shakes home all day until I got home from work. So he and they were buddies, best friends, compadres with each other.

Keepers and he were a major part of each others day, when Keepers took their bath in the afternoon he would try to sneak past the bathroom into the back bedroom where Max and Owens cat food was. He had developed a taste for cat food! Maybe it was because they used his dog food for balls, knocking the food kernels down the basement steps and across the floor like some kind of kitty hockey.

Ten years ago Shakes tore a tendon in one of his back legs and he had surgery to fix it, it kept him from climbing up on beds and couches all the way. He would let his top half climb up keeping the rear legs on the floor, and lay his head on your lap. That was when he would look up into Keepers eyes and they would melt, his

eyes told them "it would be okay, I am here, pet me, relax with me, I will stay here with you."

I know that he kept them going sometimes, just by being there for them. They saw in his eyes what they did not see in peoples eyes. There was a compassion he had for Keepers, it was for them and them alone. I saw it; in some ways I was jealous because I never saw a person or an animal look at someone else the way he looked at them. His eyes looked into mine often, and his sweetness shined through them, but it was even more so how he looked at Keepers

When we found him last Monday evening we thought he had passed away already and Keepers were so hurt and pained by the events, and then, we realized he was still alive, we rushed him to the nearest vet, only to be told that whatever had happened, probably a tumor inside that no one even knew existed, had burst, he was bleeding internally and his prognosis of even surviving a surgery was almost zero. It was obvious what we had to do for his sake, he had been in this condition for about 2 hours as best we could tell. When we left for supper he was fine, when we came back we discovered his perilous condition. We could not let him hurt in any way any more than he had already.

Then, Keepers petted him as they moved to his face and this time they looked into his eyes and knew he was ready to go, even though they were clouded as they had been for years, they spoke and Keepers knew they had to let their best friend go. Their pain was tremendous, they said "good-bye" and had to leave the room. I stayed until it was over.

The vet was tremendously kind, she too saw the pain on Keepers face, she looked at me and I know she knew how close Keepers and Shakespeare were.

We have 18 years of memories of Shakespeare to tide us over, to pull from our memory banks when we need a good chuckle or a wonderful memory or a boost in confidence that we will make it through whatever is going on. He was a very special pet, a very special friend, and to Keepers he was a best friend. I know to Shakes, Keepers were his best friend too.

MV

Life Worth Living

By Polly F. & Crew

Life being worth living for "us" has been a conscious choice. By 2001 I had lost everything but I still had what we spent years building: a set of pretty healthy co-conscious selves.

I had to move and I could not take many possessions, so I started over for real

We had decided that death was not an option, because in our minds that would allow all the abuse and abusers to win

To die at our own 'hands' would in essence say to them "Ok, I quit—you win" That thought made all of us very angry. First, no one had any right to hurt me beyond most limits; and then, to just give up without a fight? No no no.

I got serious in therapy and my therapist was as serious in helping me as I was to get to a place where the old stuff would not control my life anymore. It took a very long time. I started this 20 years ago, and I am now at that place where old stuff comes up, but the skills I worked so hard to gain, have proven they no longer control my life.

2001 is a very special year to us. We met Teddy Bear—one of our sweet names for our husband. He totally accepts all of us, and when I had back surgery shortly after we met, I was left unable to do a whole lot. Teddy Bear did not tell me to get lost. He took such gentle care of us. His love was to us a gift from God, like He was saying "Job well done. Now meet what true love is"

I draw, craft, paint, write. I'm doing a nontoxic bio, not to tell the horror show I grew up in, but to show how God planted people, places and things within our life and gave us a wonderful opportunity to start to let go of the past, to place it outside of us.

In 2001 I lost all my material possessions. Then God placed true love in Teddy Bear. Then in July 2005 God did what I could not believe

could happen.

My daughter, who was taken by our Ex at age 8-9, and I started to build a really healthy relationship. God has given me what most people want and desire. Love within a family relationship. This has motivated all of us to get the goal—a bio, then some sci fi fiction, do my arts, crafts, and hope to one day become self-supporting.

I grew up with not a lot of love. Now I know I am a very loved, blessed survivor.

We could not find a way to integrate so we learned to work together for the common good, the common goals.

All those lost material things have been replaced. My joy is in being loved. My peace is the respect of my psychiatrist, my case management team, and most people Teddy Bear and I know. I no longer believe I'm mentally ill. I'm mentally well...just need some help at times.

First we had to change our thinking.

2006 is being an awesome year!



Satisfaction, Joy, Life Worth Living

I always felt guilty about doing things for just me/us. I had a difficult time buying extra stuff, neat stuff just to have. My therapist spent a lot of time teaching me it's ok to be kind to ourselves, to buy ourselves nice things, to give ourselves permission to go out and just have fun. To feel good about ourselves and not buy into that old guilt.

Once I understood that it's okay to—pretty soon I could look at my art and my other accomplishments with new light. I could say "Not bad...That's a really neat sketch...or a job well done." I did it and not only do I like that, but you know, gang, we can all be proud of our survival and growth.

To me, because I can now see us, the whole system, as good and having true value – life really goes high up on the 'worth living' scale.

By Maggie

MV

Willow Tree

Slowly
The rainbow colors
are coming together
one or two shades
at a time
Soft good-byes
mix with tears
Separate hands
clasp other hands
in a complete circle
while a gentle god
embraces each butterfly
now becoming
part of the patch-work quilt
of one soul.

And the circle grows
smaller
sheltered in the arms
of a willow tree
absorbing scattered rays
of a brilliant sun
as a patient god
waits.

By Hannah D.

MV



Favorite Pastimes

My artworks tell a story,
 they speak, each piece a
 different tale.
 Music sings to my spirit,
 acoustic medicine.
 Candlelight dances,
 choreographed, illuminated.
 Incense rises,
 an aroma that takes me back.
 Kite flying,
 leave your body.
 In your mind,
 imagine being on the sky end
 of the string.
 There is the smell of dirt lacing
 through these moments.
 Bleeding Heart heavily laden,
 drapes toward the earth.
 Tendrils loom toward the sky.

Birds, fill my world,
 while the sky is back lit in
 indigo,
 whether dusk or dawn.
 their colors, their songs, their
 bathing and feeding.
 Nesting, flying, hovering or
 surfing the wind.
 they bring me home.
 Putting into words,
 I share my life.

By Donna Holzem

MV

By Kate E.*

MV

*From her booklet
 The Healing Road

A Little Meditation

Life can be overwhelming
 and you can lose your song
 but a little meditation
 can keep you keeping on

Just breathe
 and watch the feelings come and go
 just breathe
 let hopes and fears go on their way
 just breathe
 and watch the workings of the mind
 just breathe
 let thoughts arise and pass away

For the more you chase the good
 times
 the more they go to ground
 if you don't cling to happiness
 one day it might be found

And the more you flee the bad times
 the more they stick around
 if you don't run from sorrow,
 sorrow won't hunt you down

Just breathe
 and watch the feelings come and go
 just breathe
 let hopes and fears go on their way
 just breathe and watch the workings
 of the mind
 just breathe
 let thoughts arise and pass away

This life is a big dipper of emotion
 you're either going up or falling fast
 Don't buy into the chaos - let
 devotion
 direct you to the practice that will last

Just breathe
 and watch the feelings come and go
 just breathe
 let hopes and fears go on their way
 just breathe and watch the workings
 of the mind
 just breathe
 let thoughts arise and pass away

Recovering—Asking for Feedback

By Veronica

I'm about 53, female, and an alter who has managed this 55 year old female body for as long as I can remember. I didn't have a clue there was a host and many many other alters hanging around. I have been working in therapy for multiplicity for more than 10 years, and in therapy before that for another 20+ years: yes, my entire adulthood. Out of those decades I was misdiagnosed for about 25 years and given a variety of fancy labels, like schizoid affective disorder, bipolar 2, sociopathic tendencies, would you believe depression, PTSD, and a few more for added spice. Not that any of them helped in any way (except for depression and PTSD) but at least they could pigeonhole me into some sort of nonhelpful treatment protocol. Oh, DBT never helped either I might add (probably because I was in a male/female group and couldn't handle the structure.)

In the past I had sporadic jobs, little if any money, no insurance, no car and was so suicidal I didn't think of therapy as being anything but a desperate way to stay alive. For what reason I did not know. Working on issues was not an option because of the extreme suicidality (plus I cut myself deeply many times). My life has been a long string of failures at jobs, friendships, relationships until I met my husband of 20 years now. That, my friends, was a miracle. We have trouble getting along sometimes when others inside are out, he still does not know what to do when anyone but me is around and he won't go to therapy unless it's accompanying me. But, the good news is, he keeps trying...and he really does love me (that took about 15 years to believe.)

I have not been near a mental hospital since 1999 when I flew to Dallas TX and went to Timberlawn after much research by my old therapist. Since we're extremely frightened to fly it was difficult but I was so suicidal it made it easier. If the plane crashes, oh well. Actually, feeling suicidal in situations like that can make travel easier. Timberlawn was a good place to go at the time, better than any other place I'd been in (I'd been in about 20 times since I was 20 years old - state hospitals and psych units in general hospitals, and one psychiatric hospital in Vermont. None of

them were helpful for my multiplicity except for Timberlawn.)

My goal in life is to heal and be healthy and while I'm heading there I'm learning to stay present in my body, say affirmations every day (& try to get others inside to repeat them as well) and recently did the impossible and forgave all of the perps. I did that in the presence of my therapist only, after 10+ years of hating them so much it made me sick. It kept coming up in my life like vomit so I decided I had to do something drastic. I don't believe it's necessary for everyone, but for me it was. And since I did it, I rarely think of them anymore, which is such a relief. I do not want thoughts of them chewing up my moments of trying to build a new life for myself. The only way I could get insiders to go along with it was to emphasize to them that I was doing it for US, most definitely NOT for the perps. That helped a lot. I don't want to hate anyone anymore, most especially myself. But I also don't want them in my life in any way, and only see one very rarely as he is a family member. Also, I did not mention this but maybe I should, I had extreme sexual abuse in my childhood with many abusers, which is why my forgiving them was such a big thing for me. Yet even in my forgiving them I still plan to take self-defense classes someday so that I can beat the hell out of anyone who ever tries to hurt me again. I may be spiritual but I will not take abuse anymore in any way. (Quite often I beat the bed just to relieve any pent-up anger I accumulate. My husband jokes with me and tells me not to beat his side.)

I am studying to work at home eventually because going out to a job is beyond my capabilities, I have come to learn, the hard way. I am an extremely hard worker, dedicated and accurate, but my social skills are strained and I am so afraid around people that I'm beyond exhausted after one day of working, even part time. Someday I hope to be self-sufficient financially and a contributing member of society.

I am now in the process of merging, which means some alters go inside the host and try it out but they can still talk separately if they wish. I have stopped

putting pressure on us to integrate (the "I" word) because there was just too much fear, so now I try to accept things as they are and pray we'll heal eventually. We still have moments of suicidality but I try to remember to comfort myself and them and know that this too is a coping mechanism that has kept us alive, as scary as it is. It has lost its power to overwhelm me but we still do a safety contract every week with our therapist, just in case. The numbers who are suicidal are much less, so it's manageable, but still something I don't take lightly. I am incredibly grateful to be alive, but that is me, not everyone else.

I can honestly say that I'm happy sometimes. I laugh more than I ever have, usually alone in the house for I'm still very anxious with most people, but that is getting better. A few alters have OCD so getting out of the house is a daily challenge. I don't take meds anymore, not even an aspirin and rely on homeopathic remedies, herbs and supplements for support. That makes my life even harder but I'm determined to go through this drug-free (have been off meds for about three years now) as much as possible.

The biggest change for me over the past year is that for the first time in my life I'm beginning to believe that I have some worth, that I'm worth fighting for, that I'm worth loving. The extent of my self-hatred and self-loathing was complete, so for me to even begin to turn that around I consider a miracle. I have a deep faith in God but am not at all religious. (In fact, insiders are atheist, Buddhist, at least one leaning towards Judaism plus we always include Allah when we pray.) I do believe God has helped me to begin to see myself differently. I know he/she forgives me for making mistakes and saying the wrong thing and doing the wrong thing so many times, but I have learned that I can say I'm sorry, but also not to say it TOO MUCH. I still have a long way to go but have come so far, and I wish I could share my story with others, but have no friends in the immediate area (have two friends on the west coast) and am very very cautious with what I share with others.

I don't know how to tell anyone how to change from self-hatred to self-love, I only

know it can be done, as I am learning how to do it. One of the things (besides therapy) that helped me were affirmations that I have to say daily, over and over. My favorites are:

I love myself no matter what

I love myself just as I am

I love and accept myself unconditionally, right now

Every day in every way I am getting better and better

I am richly blessed

It took me about 20 years before I believed any affirmation, so never thought they worked. This year they are beginning to kick in. Hope that doesn't sound discouraging, but it's what happened. I think insiders gagged every time I said them, but this year they seem to be more open to hearing them.

This is *my first time ever* letter to any publication. Thanks for existing, MV.

PS: I would appreciate any feedback from others if this letter was helpful in any way. The biggest challenge I still face is loneliness and feeling alone in my struggles, even though intellectually I know that I'm not alone. Thank you.

(Write to Veronica c/o MV and I will forward the mail to her. Also if you want your letter to Veronica published in MV, let me know so I can do that. You may also send responses to us via email. Use my email address: LynnW@manyvoicespress.com. And this is a good time to mention our Sharing Page. Go to www.manyvoicespress.com and click the Sharing link. Questions there are not duplicated in MV's print edition. You may find many items of interest. You can respond to any question on the Sharing page at any time. All updates are entered. Or send questions for possible posting! Thanks so much!
Lynn W., Editor

MV



Books

Neural Path Therapy

By Matthew McKay, PhD and David Harp, MA © 2005

Published by New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 5674 Shattuck Ave., Oakland, CA 94609. (800) 748-6273. 168 pgs. \$14.95 Paperback.

I wanted to let the readers of MV know about an excellent book I read, called "*Neural Path Therapy*."

As a survivor of severe, prolonged abuse, I still am bothered by triggers (thoughts and/or events.) I no longer dissociate. I have fully integrated all my personalities. But triggers still bother me and I get frightened and occasionally, suicidal.

This new book, however, has helped me so much in dealing with triggers. It explains how fear, anger etc. can become 'Hardwired/automatic' responses to triggers because a neural path was created by long term use in the brain itself. For example, my parents drilled into my head that bad things happening in the world are my fault (car crashes, plane accidents, bombings, fires, etc.) So when I hear of a bad event on the news (trigger) I get scared.

This book teaches you exercises to create a new neural path in your brain connecting triggers to being relaxed instead of afraid. And now I can hear the words: "Bad things are my fault" as just words... not something to get scared and suicidal about. These exercises need to be practiced every day, but they only take a few minutes.

As I told my doctor, they should market this book as an alternative to medication. I don't know if this book would work for everyone, but it has worked so well for me, I hope some of your readers will give it a try.

By Jan T.

If I Am So Smart, Why Can't I Lose Weight?: Tools to Get it Done!

By Brooke Castillo. © 2006 Published by Booksurge LLC. www.booksurge.com 248 pgs. \$14.99 Paperback.

Three years ago I needed to lose 5 pounds. Two years ago I needed to lose 10 pounds. This year I realize I need to lose 15 pounds – and this is where the weight-gain stops. Period. So when notice

of this book appeared on my email, I knew I had to review it. And I'm pleased to say –it's terrific.

I like its realism. Brooke, a professional life coach who specializes in weight loss (and lost 70 pounds herself via these methods) makes it perfectly clear upfront: "You are overweight because you eat more than your body requires for fuel."

Her techniques do NOT advocate special foods, complicated menus, deprivation, or weight/diet obsession. Rather, she suggests a 'mindfulness' approach—relearning to connect with your own personal body for its wisdom on what it requires for sustenance. She believes in a slow, patient – but perfectly 'natural' approach to weightloss.

There are a number of exercises throughout the book to help identify the difference between physical and emotional hunger signals, to explain what makes you go for the bag of chips or Twinkies, and to help you change negative beliefs about yourself and eating habits that have allowed weight problems to develop.

There are dozens of good ideas here, but the most useful suggestion for me was understanding the 'hunger scale'. If -10 is feeling like you're starving and +10 is feeling stuffed like a turkey, Brooke suggests keeping your personal hunger meter always between a -2 and a +2. In other words, when you feel you are at -2, eat a little something. When you hit +2 – even if it's in the middle of a delicious restaurant meal – STOP. And get in the habit of doing this, daily, every day. You may find yourself eating small meals every three hours or so, but you will never feel stressed due to lack of food, or guilty because your stomach is uncomfortably full.

This method works great for dissociatives because it helps us to 'connect' separate parts of ourselves into a whole, to be aware of what we are doing when we eat, to avoid 'eating in a fog.' I have taken just a few tips from this book into my daily routine, and in less than a month I've already lost those first five pounds—without feeling hungry, deprived, or guilty. Maybe it will help you, too!

By Lynn W.

MV

Thanks for sharing your wonderful creative work with others!

Please send more Art, Prose and Poetry. Tailor your work to our Upcoming Themes, or send us whatever you've got. We love it all!



October 2006

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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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