

# MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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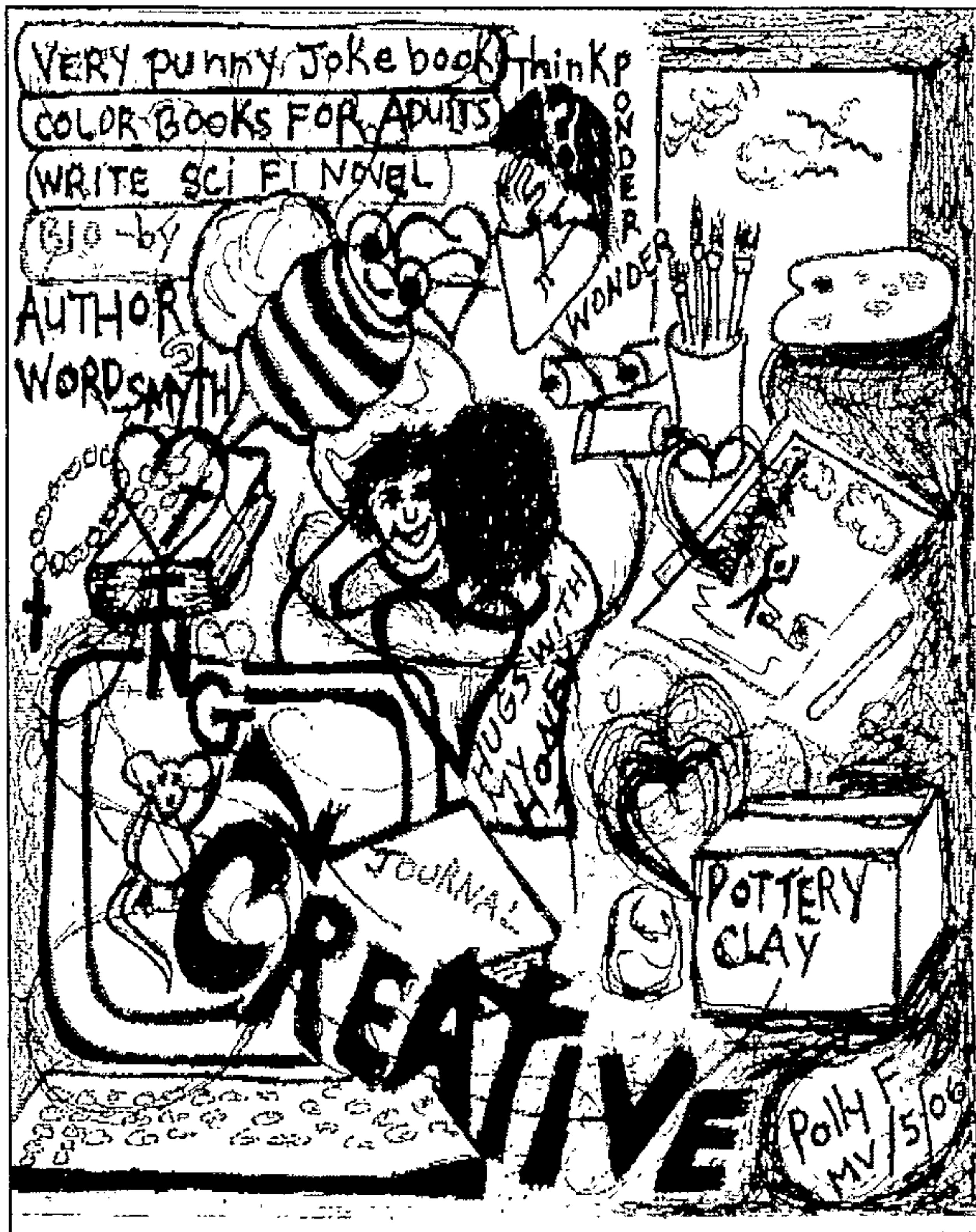
Inside this issue:

**What You Do for Fun**  
**Expanding Life Outside Therapy**  
**...and much more!**

*Being Honest*

If I laugh, I want it to be real.  
I don't want a fake laugh to steal  
The place of a real one.  
Laughing is so fun.  
Faking it is not—  
It puts your heart on the spot.  
Makes your soul work so hard  
To cover up how sad you are.  
A soul shouldn't strain itself  
By trying to fake emotions  
For everyone else.  
Your soul needs to be what it feels,  
What you know is real  
So you don't become a body  
That's a bomb  
Waiting to go off, from too  
many emotions  
You've hidden for so long.  
Laugh when you want to.  
Don't if you can't.  
It's so much better to show  
what's true  
Than to try and dance  
To a dance you don't know the  
moves to.  
Trust me, I know from  
experience.  
Let them live. Give freedom  
to your emotions.

*By Kristi Sharp*



MV

## My Idea of "Fun"

By Serena

**M**y idea of "fun" is a bit offbeat. It doesn't involve doing something. It's about NOT doing ..and here's why:

The body I live in is so full of fear, pain and tension—financial fear, real fears about physical health, fears of loneliness and isolation, fear of being "found out" as a mental case by employers, and punished. The leaders of my body try to pretend there are no "others" inside—that we are a singleton, not a highly complex puzzle of interlocking pieces, dependent on one another, even though some of us almost never see daylight.

They would like to think that I'm not here. But I persist, because I have a purpose.

My job is to soothe the system, to bring it down from the edge of hysterics to connect with reality. I don't want to promote denial. There are good reasons for this body to be afraid, and the leaders have to cope with these issues. But they cannot cope if they are strung out on fear. That's where I come in.

I help the body and mind to relax. To ever-so-gently release their death-grip clinging to all the sharp, cruel edges of our life—edges we cannot fully control.

Teaching this tense body to relax by "not-doing" is a very interesting challenge—and it is fun!

To start with, I don't "take over" abruptly. That scares everyone. Instead, I seep my way into the control room gradually. It may be through meditation. Other times I enter when the body is having a bout of sleeplessness. Or sometimes, when there is a lot of distress, I enter on a wave of deep, slow breathing.

Once I have most of the controls, I continue to modulate the breathing, trying to time the breaths with the heart beats I can feel, then trying to slow down the heart, especially if it is racing due to fear.

I flood the body, from under the skin, with a soft, glowing warmth. Sometimes the glow has a color, usually gold or soft pink. But other times there is no noticeable visual effect: it is just the sensation of soothing warmth, internally. The glow spreads from my shoulders to fingertips, all down through the torso, into the abdomen, the legs, and out the toes. It flows like a gentle brook.

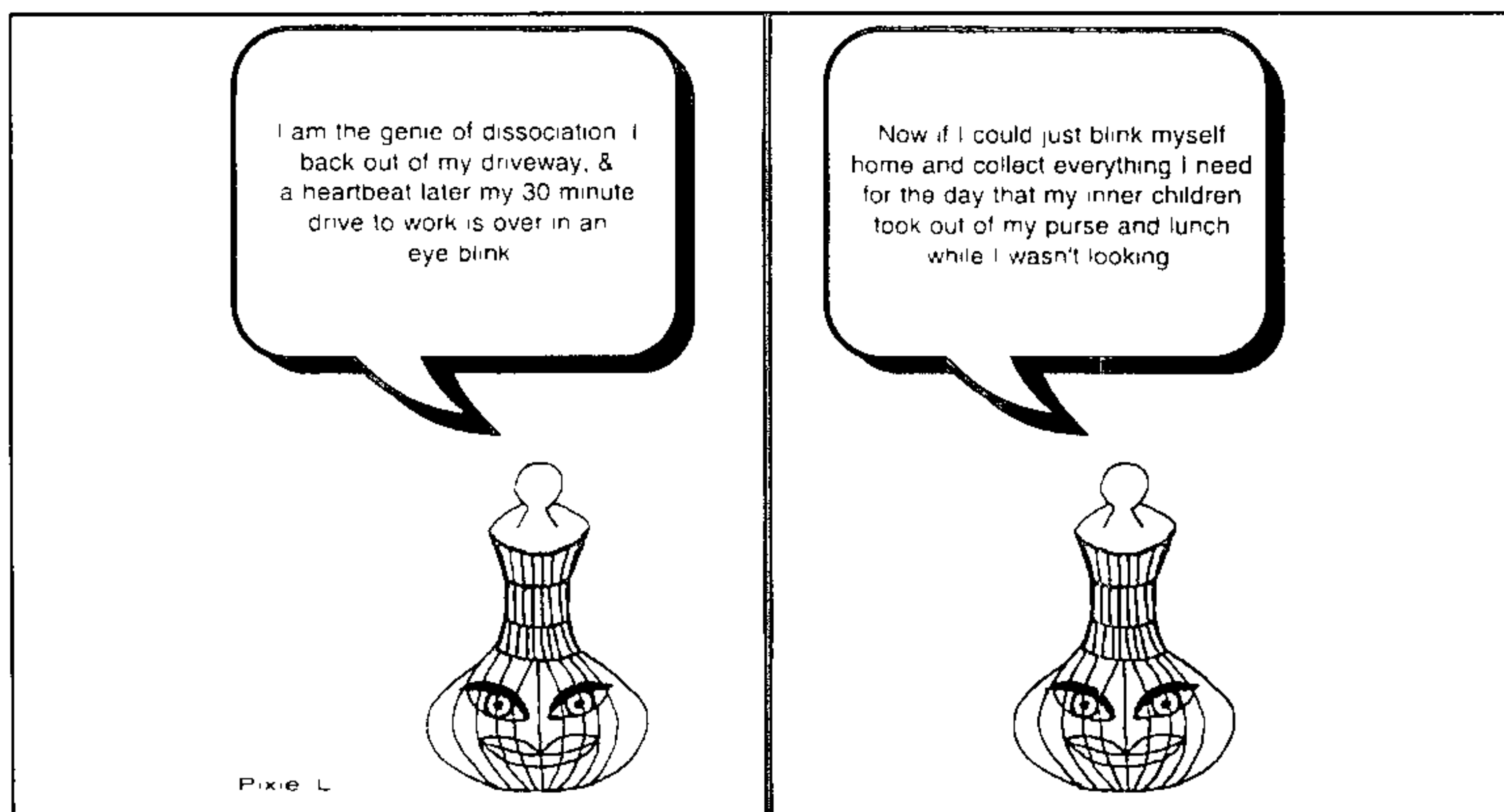
The head requires a special relaxer. I bring comforting pictures with me. One of our favorites is from a childhood dream, walking through a

vast meadow of tall grass, alone, with trees silhouetted against a bright blue sky. The body walks and walks but never gets tired, and doesn't feel lonesome at all. It feels as if it could walk in this beautiful place forever.

I send out reassuring messages to all the scared ones. It is fun for me to tell them how brave they are, and how they can make good decisions by being relaxed, with a clear mind to consider all the possibilities, not just the risks that scare them. I keep large boxes of hope and good experiences from the past (we DID have some good experiences!) and I open these boxes so the positive vibrations spill out into the Self.

The really fun part, for me, is feeling the system respond, ever-so-slowly, but with genuine appreciation, to my efforts. I love feeling appreciated, and when I can touch the leaders of my system and feel their approval as they sink into the relaxation and comfort...that sensation comes back to me with an intense pleasure. It puts a smile on my face every time. And I think to myself, "Serena, you may not do much. But you sure do know how to have fun!"

MV





## Play Time

Wow do we love playtime! Deb always makes time for fun. She buys us coloring books that are awesome—they have stained-glass pages. And we have mandelas. Those are really Billy's books, but he lets us use them. Billy is 16, but he loves his mandelas!

We are younger. Debby is six, Chip is eight, Ginger is ten and I'm thirteen. My name is Micah, and I'm kind of immature for my age. I like hanging with the kids.

We have tons of markers—Deb makes sure of that. For some reason we don't like crayons. We far prefer the markers. And books—Wow! We go to the library every week. We also have two thrift stores we go to. We find some awesome books there and spend very little money. We love this really big book of poems for kids; it's our favorite. Deb writes poems for us too. We read out of the poem book every day. Deb loves to read and she buys her books at the thrift stores too, but she never leaves us out. We always get at least one. They are just like brand new.

We also have stuffed toys, mostly bears. We love to hold onto our bears. Our therapist, Rick, has stuffed toys and he had a turtle we just loved. We named him Tommy and Rick let us carry him around and hold onto in therapy. Today he told us to keep Tommy. We were thrilled. We all love Rick He has helped to give us life. Deb just didn't know what to do with all of us before. He helps us and helps Deb too. Deb says we can always be ourselves. We don't have to integrate. To do that would take something very special from Deb—us. She loves us just like we are and we love her too. We love the other guys too. They are all older than us, but they play with us when Deb can't. We just love our life the way it is.

Thanks Rick, for all your help. We love you.

Here is one of our poems:  
*Little Debby eat your peas  
 She liked them topped with  
 cheddar cheese  
 She ate them all and asked for more  
 Then promptly threw up on the floor!*

By Micah

## MANY THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS!

### Del Amo Hospital - Torrance, CA

Call Francis Galura: (310 ) 784-2289 or (800) 533-5266

### Intensive Trauma Therapy, Inc. - Morgantown WV

Outpatient Treatment for PTSD & Dissociation - (304) 291-2912

### River Oaks Hospital - New Orleans, LA

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

### Sheppard Pratt Health System - Baltimore, MD

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

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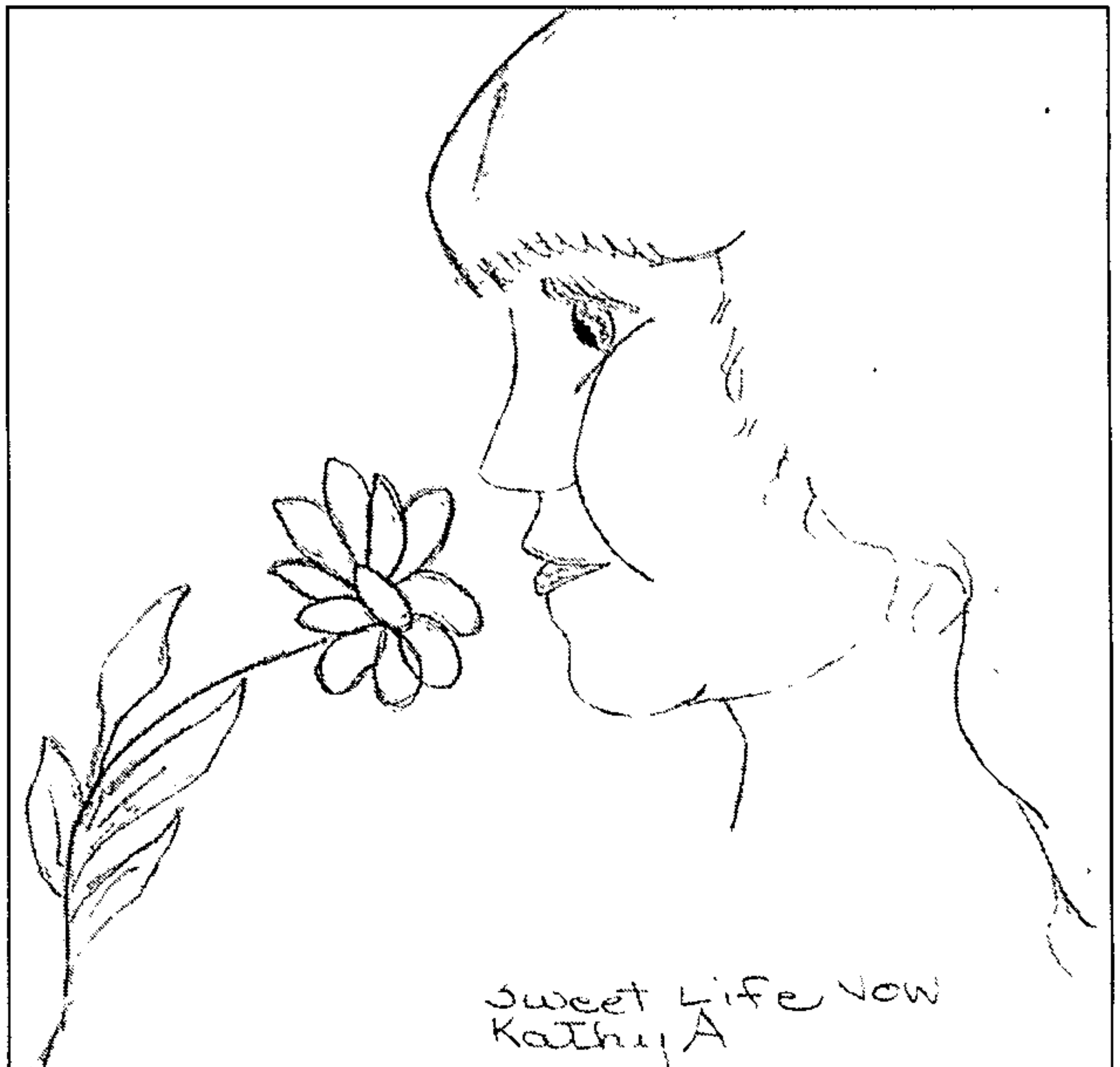
Call Larry Spinosa: (800) 437-5478

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Does your clinic or conference need flyers? If so, please call 513-751-8020.

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Tax-deductible donations, volunteer help, and good ideas are always welcome! We appreciate your support! —Lynn W., Editor



# Navigating the Socialized Mental Health System

By Jenn J.

I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and torture. I was abused in the summers from ages 11 to 16. I have spent at least ten years in therapy. I was maintaining living day by day during much of that time.

In 2002 I divorced my husband who was "tired of the roller coaster." He told me that no judge would give me custody of my children, and by the way, "most men would have left me by now." He was emotionally abusive without a doubt. I married him because he wanted me. I felt unlovable as so many survivors do.

Fast forward to 2005. I was working as a pharmacy technician. I was fired from my job due to inattentiveness. I mistakenly gave away approximately three hundred dollars in prescriptions. I was unable to handle the high level of stress during the 4 - 6 rush hour. Because of the loss of my job, I lost my health insurance.

In December 2006 my COBRA ran out. With no health insurance, I was unable to pay for my medications which were over \$2000 per month.

Enter the mental health system for the uninsured. In a suicidal crisis I went to the MHMRA Eligibility Center (Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority). I was ready to take all of the medicine I had. I was literally moments from trying to kill myself. I checked in and waited curled upon a couch to be called. The receptionist took my information and said I had an appointment an hour and a half later. I was sobbing and the girl said "Would you like to see someone now?" I nodded. I briefly saw a counselor who sent me immediately to the Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) at Ben Taub Hospital. Anyone can go there, insured or not.

I sat in the emergency/ evaluation unit for over an hour. I saw the doctor and was admitted to the CSU. I was there for 5 days. There was one educational group and one night time group. Otherwise we either slept or watched tv or a movie. There was no

individual counseling there. It was like a holding unit with little therapeutic support. The physician was great and adjusted my meds accordingly. Upon leaving I was assigned to a satellite clinic for care.

The clinic was about 20 minutes from my house. I had no problem getting there. I met with and was evaluated by a nurse and a case worker. After that I saw the doctor. Then I waited for my prescription to be filled. I was there for over 5 hours. I was fortunate that the doctor there had trained under my psychiatrist that I was working with. She said my doc knew what she was doing and she wasn't changing anything.

I continued in individual therapy for which I paid, and went to the clinic monthly. In May 2007, I ended up in another crisis and returned to the CSU to ensure my safety. The doctor there said that we should try to avoid future hospitalization and sent me for a two week stay at the Crisis Residential Unit (CRU).

The CRU had a great program. It was a low budget operation, with few amenities. They were very professional and concerned. One thing that stuck out for me is they did not judge people no matter what their diagnosis. The doctor was great and explained his rationale for treatment. The clients ranged from homeless addicts to people like me with no insurance. It was very interesting to me to learn in a safe environment about what it is like to be homeless, or addicted, or schizophrenic. I watched others become well in the unit.

There were no locked doors. You were free to leave if you wanted to. It was a voluntary program. I had a therapist that I worked with who was great. We had groups all day until 4 pm. The groups ranged from Goals group to Cognitive Behavior Therapy to AA type groups. All were useful. One of my favorite groups was the twice weekly "Ask the doctor." I have

never heard of a program where clients can ask the doctor anything. There were questions about meds, brain chemistry, motivation, exercise, and pretty much anything else you can think of. Questions were not limited for content.

A huge component was exercise. The doctor told us to exercise daily, and we had an exercise group first thing in the morning. This program spends less money than any other program of its type and has the lowest recidivism rate of nearly all similar programs. Former clients are allowed to come to the groups any time in the future. There is continuing support as needed. This program illustrates how efficient and helpful a program can be even with few funds. It should be a model for all public health residential programs.

Now, my mental health care is limited to MHMRA. My car is dead so I have to travel by bus. The clinic I go to that is 20 minutes away is a 3 hour or more bus ride. It usually takes almost 2 hours for my 15 minute appointment with the doctor. I had my financial application redone six months earlier because they were charging me \$90 a visit. Now I pay nothing other than what I owe from the time when they were charging me.

One of the most difficult things for me is to gather and put together the multitude of information they need for renewal of services. I bought disability insurance for my car--a special insurance that covers the cost of payments or repairs if I became disabled--but have lost the paperwork to send in. I quit making payments four months ago.

The other hard part is that they can't seem to keep a decent doctor there. From what I understand the pay is poor and the benefits are negligible. It seems that doctors in this system often feel superior to their patients. Having been to medical school, I refuse to be treated improperly...but then I become



another "difficult or crazy" patient. Mental illness and high intelligence are not necessarily exclusive to one another. Maybe I'm not the norm, but I expect to be treated as an individual, not a diagnosis.

I have seen 5 different doctors since January 2007. The latest doctor has refused to speak to my psychiatrist that I have seen for 6 years. "I know how to manage medicine," he told me. I was very frustrated. I became Manic on his medication regimen and when I contacted the nurse and told her I was having side effects, he did nothing and said "Take your medicines as prescribed." I was incensed and discouraged. I was unnecessarily in a state of mania for over three weeks until I saw him again. I berated him for not paying attention to my symptoms and refusing to talk to my previous doctor. I told him that I wanted a new doctor and he said, "We don't do that here." I told him it

was my right to request another doctor.

I have had so many frustrations with my care over the past six months.

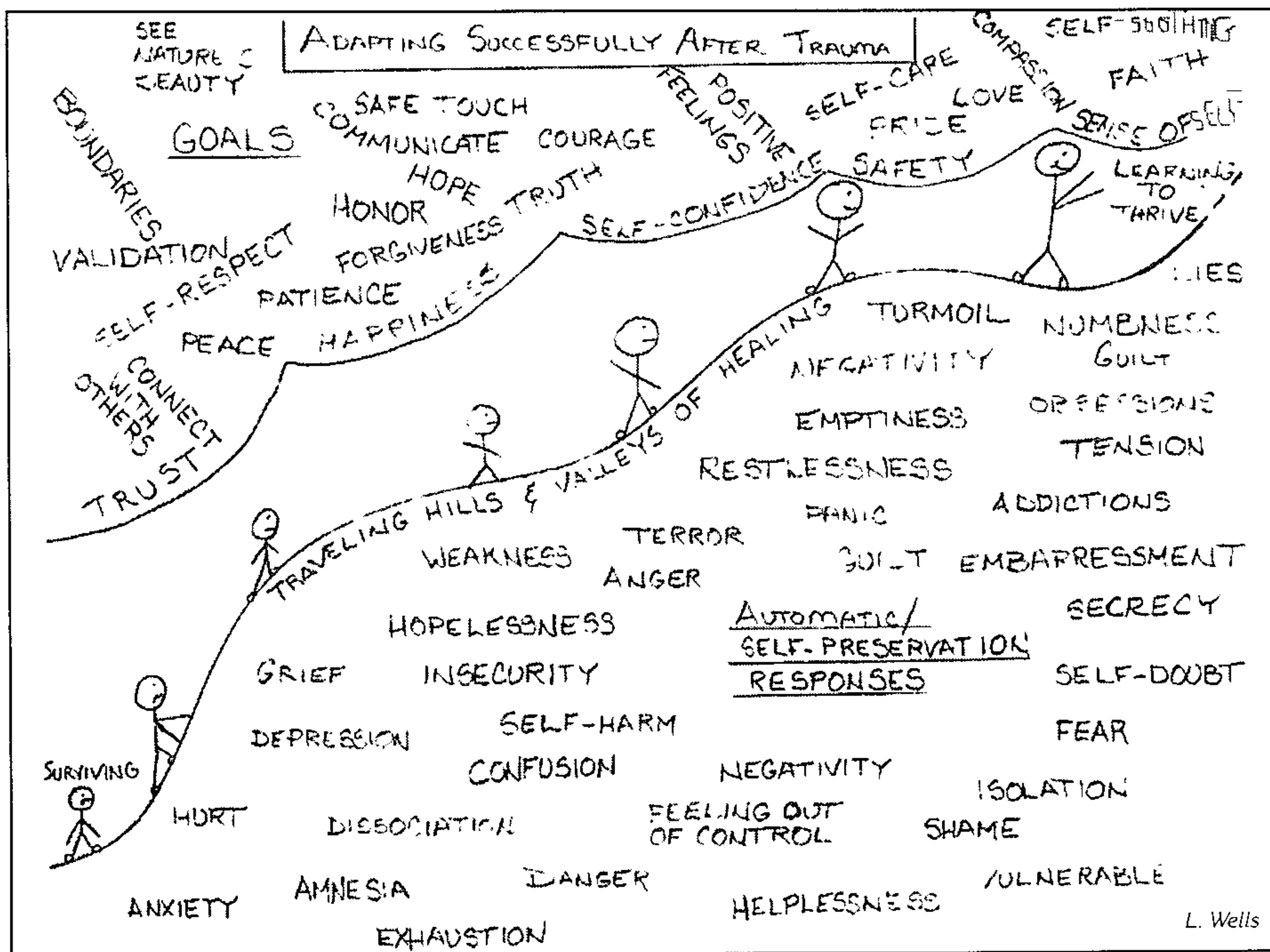
It is difficult to fight for your rights when you have a mental illness. Often, a person has neither the social support to stand up to the barriers, or the psychological strength to get the care needed. I am fortunate that I have a background and support to help me deal with inattentive physicians.

I still see a therapist at my own expense weekly. I also see my psychiatrist of six years every few months. Doctors have a fit because I am seeing her. She does not prescribe medicine for me, but we work on treatment planning and dissociation issues. She is my only provider that has a complete chart on me. Additionally, they don't treat dissociation at the clinic, so it is important that I work with her.

Sadly, with all that has happened to me, I still face the stigma of mental illness within and without the mental health system. I once had a doctor who told me that if I didn't settle down in the adolescent unit, he would put me in the adult unit "where the real crazies are."

It is so frustrating because some people look at me and stigmatize me because of my illness. I was abused as a child which turned my life into a series of unfortunate events. How dare someone point the finger at me for something that someone did to me!

MV



# Healing From Ritual Abuse

By Kim Kubal

From her forthcoming book  
"YOUR STRENGTH TO HEAL: A GUIDE FOR SURVIVORS OF RITUAL ABUSE, CAREGIVERS AND CLINICIANS"

I have found over my 20+ years of therapy and recovery, the following healing tools have been helpful in my journey. Please note that each person has their own healing journey, and what works for one person, may not work for another.

- \* Faith and trust in a Higher Power
- \* Willingness
- \* Courage
- \* Determination
- \* Support of friends and therapists
- \* Re-experiencing and releasing the memories of the abuse
- \* Journaling
- \* Letting go of addictions
- \* Practice of self-love
- \* Substitute self-harm with self-care
- \* Confrontation and separation from the abusers and cult members
- \* Letting go of the role of victim.
- \* Prayer and meditation
- \* Practice of forgiveness towards the abusers and myself.

## 1. Faith and trust in a Higher Power.

I gradually understood the need to change and develop a concept of a Higher Power who was all loving, compassionate and desired the very best for me. In order for me to accomplish this, I chose to let go of my addictions, have spiritual counseling and therapy and attend 12 Step recovery programs.

Based on my family of origin and the perpetrators, I had placed God on a pedestal who was abusive, non-trustworthy, hated me and had abandoned me. In therapy and spiritual counseling, gradually the deep-seated memories and suppressed feelings emerged. Suicidal tendencies emerged and I realized I needed to develop a loving

concept of a Higher Power and a reason to live. I also needed to work through the rage and hatred towards a Higher Power who allowed this abuse to happen. I screamed profanities at God, pounded pillows, cried and felt the deep abandonment of a Higher Power who had forsaken me. Once I worked through the rage, grief and feelings, I very slowly came to the realization that a Higher Power could not stop man's free will, did not abandon me, and that evil is permitted in this world.

After many, many long years of hard work and determination, I now come from a place of love, see the Divine in myself and everyone, and feel a very deep connection to all, including mother earth.

## 2. Willingness.

I found I needed to have the willingness to go to any lengths to heal and this meant firstly praying for the willingness to be willing to surrender. Early in my recovery I felt I was in charge and in control. What I now know to be true is that I am not in control, that the memories and my recovery will come in God's time, not mine and that I need to continue to surrender my will to a Higher Power on a daily basis. I had projected the image of the perpetrators onto a Higher Power and so I needed to change that image, and the words "surrender" to "letting go", as surrender meant surrendering to the abusers.

## 3. Courage.

For me this meant firstly surviving the horrific abuse of the cults and family as a child and adult, and then healing from that abuse. I needed to re-experience the fear, pain and desolation of the cult memories by using EMDR, emotional release work and other modalities. During this time, I wanted to die as I re-

experienced these memories, the pain, desolation and despair, however, I had the wonderful support of therapists and friends who listened, loved and believed in me and I ultimately knew I was being divinely guided.

I have needed courage to speak my truth as an activist at conferences, 12 step meetings, writing my book, speaking through my website and in being a powerful woman.

## 4. Determination.

In my first days of recovery, I made a decision to have the diligence and persistence the walk through "the many dark nights of the soul" in order to heal. I also knew I was not alone in this journey. I had a power greater than myself who would guide and heal me provided I let go. I had a belief in myself, in my mission and ultimately would not give my power away to the cults.

## 5. Support of friends and therapists.

Over the years, I have had support from well-meaning therapists, friends, 12 Step mentors, who believed in me and who loved me until I could love myself. I have since learned I need to ultimately follow my own intuition and judgment.

## 6. Re-experiencing and releasing the cult memories.

In order for me to heal at a physical, emotional, spiritual and psychic level, I needed to re-experience the cult memories. This happened over many, many, many years, until I finally let go of the memories, the negative beliefs, mindset and fears.

## 7. Journaling.

For me, writing to vent my anger released repressed feelings and also



helped me to better understand what I was feeling at that given moment. I also wrote letters to the abusers, but never sent them which helped me to get in touch with the rage. Another way of releasing anger is writing all the incidents of the abuse that happened, dealing with those feelings, and then with witnesses, burn the writings outdoors.

### **8. Letting go of my addictions.**

I needed to address my addictions which I believe blocked my path towards healing. Feelings which had been suppressed by the addictions began to emerge and the fog in my brain lifted. I have now let go of seven addictions on a one day at a time basis. I needed to "hit bottom" in each of my addictions before I could surrender and then turn my will and life over to a Power greater than myself.

### **9. Self-love.**

Taking care of myself means exercising, eating healthy foods, getting a good night's sleep, and letting go of abusing myself and abusive people. This also includes learning to set healthy boundaries, saying no when needed, and not feeling responsible for another person's feelings or actions.

Because I was taught from an early age not to trust myself or others, I have learned to be present to myself and others, to listen to my body, to trust myself and my judgment, which in turn has enabled me to trust others.

### **10. Substituting Self-Harm with Self-Care.**

For me, self-injury was a coping mechanism, a way to relieve stress and anxiety and a way of communicating when words were not available. The first step in eradicating self-harm is to acknowledge the denial, become conscious of the self-harm and then remove the triggers. I learned to recognize triggers and separate the current situation from the past abuse, and not transfer those feelings onto the situation or person.

The next step is to substitute self-harm with self-care. Once I

understood how and when this behavior occurred, I talked about, drew or journalled, and then the pressure to act physically diminished. I spoke to my inner child about the forthcoming event, reassured her that this is not an abusive situation, tell her she is very much loved by the Divine and myself and she is no longer back there in the past being victimized by the cults.

Since survivors were never shown love growing up in an abusive home, it is important to establish a loving healthy relationship with one's inner child/parts. Survivors treat themselves how they were treated in their family of origin. They have no idea what unconditional family love is and nothing to compare it to.

Viewing good parenting tapes such as John Bradshaw's family tapes can help with this, as well as reading good children's literature such as the Ramona series. This gives a better perspective of a normal family upbringing

### **11. Confrontation and separation from the abusers and cult members.**

Although confronting my family and cult members was very challenging and difficult, I found it to be self-empowering and helped to break my belief system, the bonds and programming the family and cults had over me. I needed to create distance and break off contact altogether with the cults in order for me to heal from the programming, trauma and memories.

### **12. Removing the victim role.**

It was very difficult for me to first recognize and accept that I was the perpetual victim. I blamed everyone else and did not take responsibility for my actions. Based on my family of origin, I also took on the roles of caretaker and people-pleaser which kept me prisoner.

Taking care of others was the only way I could connect and feel worthwhile in my family or origin. I was put down and shamed for having needs and learned to deny those needs, turning instead to caretaking and people-pleasing.

I started to recognize I was the perpetual victim by working the Twelve Steps of recovery programs. I had to take a moral inventory of my life, where I did not take responsibility for my actions, and blamed and hurt others. I had to take a fearless look at my character defects and ask a Higher Power to remove them. This was very humbling. I needed to ask for forgiveness of others for my actions, and practice forgiveness towards myself.

I also needed to change my attitude from being continually negative to being positive about life and others, that the world does not revolve around Kim, and that I do not project my negative beliefs onto others. I also needed to be honest with myself and others, instead of keeping people at a distance for fear of being hurt.

### **13. Prayer and meditation.**

On a daily basis, I pray and meditate. I had a spiritual sponsor who once told me prayer is talking to God and meditation is listening. Over a period of time, I moved from rote prayer to talking to a Higher Power as a best friend. I meditate three times a day and in meditation, I practice letting go of the tension in my body, relax and then visualize I am resting in a beautiful healing place with a Divine presence who is nurturing me. Then if any thoughts come up, I don't fight them, but let them pass on through and bask in this pool of love

### **14. Forgiveness towards the abusers and myself.**

Loving myself meant forgiving the abusers and letting go of them physically, emotionally, spiritually and psychically. I also needed to forgive myself for what I was ordered to do by the cults. Forgiveness was a process and took many years of working through the rage, grief and loss until I was finally able to say I abhor the abusers' behavior, and yet see these abusers as very wounded human beings, who do not know how to love, but to hate others and in particular, themselves.

Blessings to you on your journey towards healing and wholeness.

# 101 Things You Can Do To Prevent Child Abuse

By Debbie Jenae

This article is © 2002 by Debbie Jenae and is reprinted by permission. Visit Debbie Jenae's website at [www.debbiejenae.com](http://www.debbiejenae.com) to see all the exciting things she is doing to prevent child abuse.

According to the National Council on Child Abuse and Family Violence more than 2.5 million reports of child abuse are made in the U.S. each year. If there were only one way to prevent child abuse, perhaps it would simply be to love more, and yet there may be as many perspectives on what defines love as there are ways to show it. We are the solution to preventing child abuse. Let this list guide you in creating a more loving environment for every child. For more information, visit "101 Things" at [www.debbiejenae.com](http://www.debbiejenae.com)

1. Talk AND listen to your children.
2. Become involved in your community.
3. Be honest with your children.
4. Speak out on behalf of all children.
5. Tell someone. Report suspected abuse.
6. Protect all children.
7. Have integrity. Say what you mean, do what you say.
8. Feel you're losing it? ...Go for a walk.
9. ...Take a bath.
10. ...Call a friend.
11. ...Call a hotline.
12. ...Count to 10, slowly. Repeat.
13. ...Step away from your child.
14. ...Stop. Take 3 slow, deep breaths. Repeat.
15. Demonstrate responsibility.
16. Recycle.
17. Spare the rod; spoil the child - with love.
18. Give praise.
19. Teach children that life is filled with lessons; mistakes are opportunities for growth.
20. Donate to a shelter for victims of domestic violence.
21. Donate time, services, money to an organization that helps.
22. Anonymously donate the cost of a counseling session.
23. Become a child advocate.
24. Join a mentoring program.
25. Make time for the children in your life.
26. Read to a child.
27. Let a child read to you.
28. Perform conscious acts of kindness.
29. Perform acts of kindness with your children.
30. Volunteer for an activity chosen by your child.
31. Never hit your child.
32. Never hit any person.
33. Demonstrate respect.
34. Be kind to animals.
35. Respect your children.
36. Take a break. Don't break someone's spirit.
37. Learn to meditate.
38. Take a communication class.
39. Take a parenting class.
40. Take an alternatives to violence class.
41. Know that asking for help takes courage and demonstrates strength.
42. Believe in your potential.
43. Read a book about relationship skills.
44. Read a book about parenting skills.
45. Encourage communication within your family. Make it safe to share/reveal feelings.
46. Speak the truth.
47. Get involved in the legal system.
48. Promise to change your harmful behavior.
49. Decide NOW to get the help you need.
50. After you've gotten help, help another.
51. Never belittle a child.
52. Never use a child for sexual gratification.
53. Never torture a child.
54. Encourage and choose peaceful solutions.
55. Demonstrate the healthy behavior you want to see.
56. Heal your wounds. Know you can.
57. Teach love.
58. Be an inspiration.
59. Demonstrate compassion.
60. Extend courtesy.
61. Create healthy family traditions.
62. Make mealtime a pleasant time for sharing.
63. Honor boundaries.
64. Honor your own boundaries.
65. Focus on the positive.
66. Trust more.
67. Teach rather than control.
68. Receive graciously.
69. Say thank you.
70. Be the parent you wish you had.
71. See your children as a gift; yourself as their guide.
72. Make quality time for yourself.
73. Share your talents.
74. Honor yourself.
75. Nurture yourself.
76. Remember and honor the child you were.
77. Do something you wanted to do as a child.
78. Remember childlike innocence.
79. Swing on a swing.
80. Explore the true meaning of love.
81. Know that love never hurts.
82. Promote peace.



- 83. Learn more about conflict resolution.
- 84. Decrease violence. Increase joy.
- 85. Write to your legislators.
- 86. Get involved in the political process.
- 87. Care more.
- 88. Forgive yourself for not knowing more, then and now.
- 89. Choose to make a positive difference from now on.
- 90. Join a parenting group.
- 91. Join a positive women/men's group.
- 92. Speak up about injustice. Share your ideas.
- 93. Focus on peace. Focus on compassion.
- 94. Focus on the abundance of goodness all around.
- 95. Expect miracles.
- 96. Make wishes.
- 97. Renew your spirit.
- 98. Be part of the solution.
- 99. Share this list.
- 100. Make your own list.
- 101. Love more

MV

## A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

By Kate Evans

Something that is helping me heal a lot is making little books for the little and child insiders. By cutting and stapling A4 paper \* , an A6 (1/4 A4) size book can be made – a swivel or long-arm stapler can get to the centre to secure it.

Each baby, toddler, little one and child (and, hopefully, later the teens and olders) gets a two-page spread each. On the left is a verse made especially for them. Most of these say how the awfulness is over, how big sisters (and brothers) are looking after them now, and they are safe and loved. For the ones who need containing, the verse mentions they need to keep the rules and be a child. Others need different sorts of encouragement.

The insider then chooses a picture to stick on the blank page, and it's the pictures, I think, that make so much of the difference. We've now got a lot of charity shop books and kids' magazines to cut pictures out of. But at the start, pictures of happy babies and toddlers, often in their mothers' arms, came from a mother and baby/toddler book I bought.

The insiders can see how much they are loved from these pictures. Pictures from a Buddhist journal have

helped others calm down. As the age increases, we've had fun cutting out pictures with dialogue, and sticking new words into the dialogue balloons. Stickers from sticker books have been great, too.

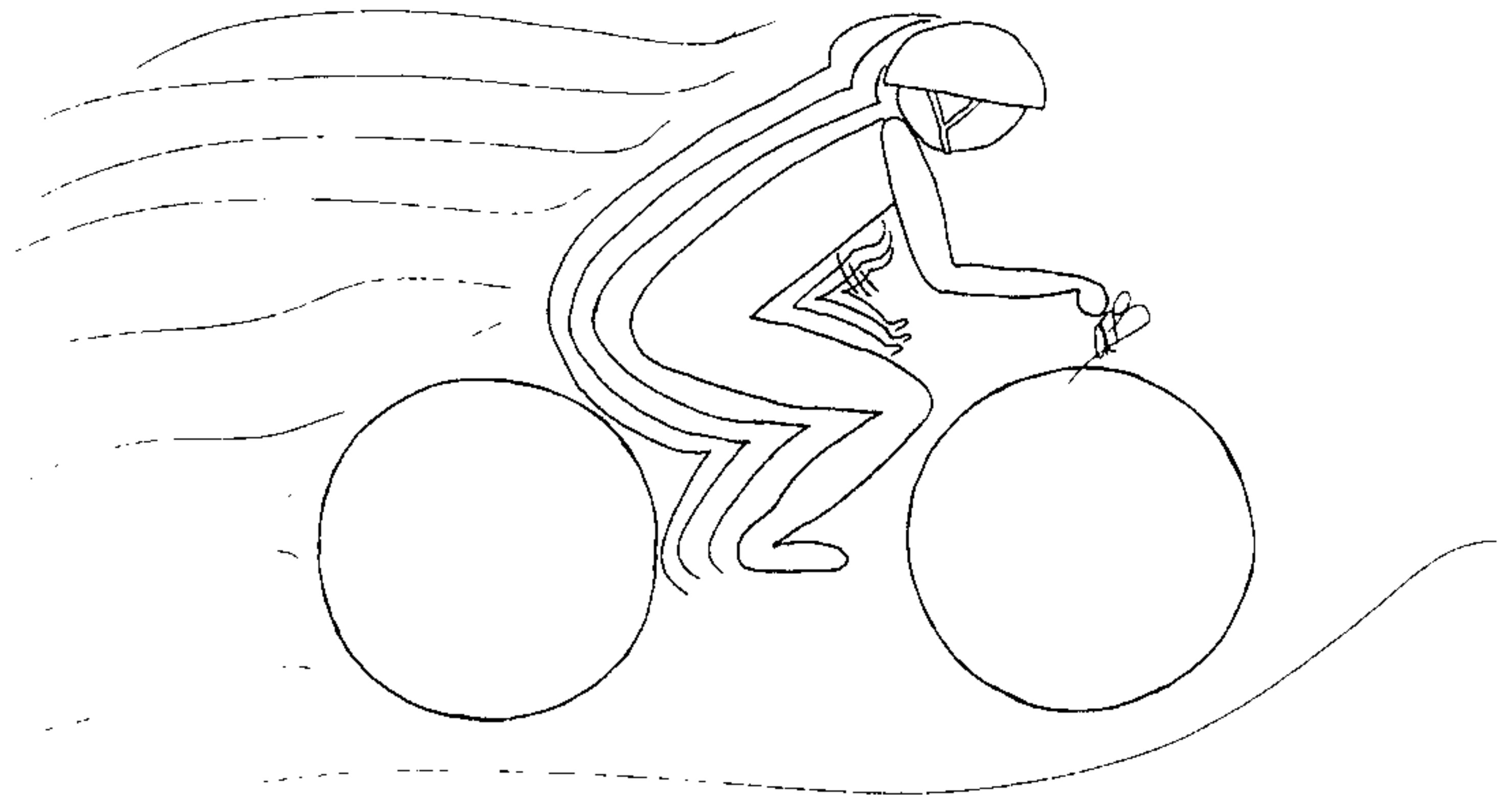
The little books have led to surprises and been a big help in building up a chronological narrative. Children we hardly knew have turned out to be cornerstones. But the main effect has been a great diminution of outside triggering, a great relief. It is as if, out of the little ones' feeling of being loved and secure, a buffer zone is created between us and the outside world.

I really recommend it.

*\* Editor's Note: A4 paper is an international size, not standard in the US or Canada, but used almost everywhere else. However, it is close to North American 'letter' size, and you can fold down a letter size piece of paper to make a small book too. Read more about international paper sizes here:*

*<http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~mgk25/iso-paper.html> and you will wonder why the US and Canada are so slow to adopt this sensible sizing standard!*

MV



# Containment and Pacing Using Art and Imagery

By Jenn J.

**A**ny trauma survivor knows that sometimes feelings can flood and have unhealthy consequences. Having a way to stop the deluge makes the excruciating pain diminish somewhat. Many therapists teach their clients to leave the pain at their office, but this is easier said than done. They have the client imagine all of the difficult items or feelings being poured into a big box and putting the top on it. While this works for many people, for me it never seemed that the box was big enough!

I have developed a system to manage containment and pacing that really helps me manage the feelings until I can process them with my therapist. This has made a huge difference for me as I travel the healing path. I hope that in some way it will be helpful to other survivors.

When I was hospitalized ten years ago, I was introduced to the idea of pacing and containment. The method they taught was to write a very detailed description using all of our senses of a safe place and then draw it. They told us this place should not have other people in it so that it was our very own. People other than parts would result in dependence on that person. Mainly the point was that you can't depend on others to meet your needs. Other people are not within your control. You can keep yourself safe as an adult. It was recommended that we read the description of our safe place three times daily. Our safe place was to be used at any crisis moment. This is where my pacing and containment began.

I have been using my safe place for years. It is an island that can't be seen because it is covered by a huge bubble that reflects the ocean. It just looks like the rest of the ocean around it. I walk along my safe beach feeling the cool water on my ankles and my

feet sinking into the sand. I can smell the salt in the air and feel the warmth of the sunshine on my face. As I look down the beach I see my horse Ladd trotting toward me. I love my horse. He was my best friend growing up. In my safe place I have a beautiful home that is safe and protected.

The description of my safe place continues in more detail and holds pleasant and safe imagery to help me relax and feel unafraid. There are several methods to use your safe place to calm and protect you. The first one is writing it out. Sometimes if I am really stressed out, I will write it out again from memory. I have also recorded it on tape and played it at night as I fall asleep. This really helped my fears recede. You can always draw it again to remind you.

Now I use a lot of short "vacations" to calm myself down. I can close my eyes take a deep breath or two and visualize my safe place or any beach. It takes about a minute when you are used to doing it. I also do what I call "programmed breathing." (I'm sure there is another name for it.) Basically, I relax in my safe place and then began breathing as I fall asleep. Not that I've stopped breathing! I begin breathing and thinking things like, "Breathe in safety and peace, breathe out fear and pain." This helps me fall asleep.

The last part of imagery that I use is visualizing my thoughts as clouds that just float by me. (Some people use bubbles going up in the water for their thoughts.) I usually do this at bedtime to calm down from the day. I imagine clouds all around me soft and cottony. They lift me up gently and I float peacefully above the ocean. I am safe and relaxed and my head is clear as I drift off to sleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

The second method I use is to draw out pictures of my safe place. Use any medium you feel comfortable

with – pencil, crayons, pastels, colored pencils, paint, clay. This helps solidify the safety in your mind. Another method I use is to find pictures online that feel peaceful and safe to you. I print them out and often put an affirmation or comment at the bottom. I use Microsoft Word to paste the picture and write the comment in pleasing colors below. Some of the things I write are: "I can always come here for peace and safety." "I am safely protected by the light of the healing path." "I can rest peacefully in the unseen arms of God." Use what fits for you. If you feel protected by religious based affirmations of safety you can use that. If you aren't comfortable with that, use something else that makes you feel safe.

About a year ago I decided to make a containment box. I used a 6" round paper maché box and painted it to fit my issues. I painted the inside with colors of threatening feelings. I painted the outside of the box in relaxing and neutral colors, browns and green. On the lid of the box I placed stick-on letters to spell out "Containment." I used imagery to put my threatening issues in the box. Then I began writing the problem or fear down on a piece of paper and placing it in the containment box. I took the box to therapy sessions to work on what was in there. This has worked very well for me.

I also have made all kinds of other boxes for different places or situations. I made a Safe Place box that has a beach inside with sand and palm trees. My horse is in it, but the cut-out I used is a bit out of scale! That's okay; my horse was one of the greatest things in my life. My safe place box is there to remind me in the event I forget and can't visualize it. Sometimes I open it up just to feel the good feelings that go with it. Sometimes I take it to therapy with



me.

I have another containment box that is red with a blue hand on it that says STOP.

I also have a small beach in there and a tigress for keeping things in order inside. This box is a hexagon and inside has an important word on each side - Peace, Honor, Trust, Safety, Hope and Respect. I believe that the parts I'm having difficulty working with can come to this place. As all parts were critical to my survival, I believe they should know that they are indeed respected, honored, trusted. We will work in an environment of Safety, Hope, and Peace. Getting to this place in my healing has taken a long, long time. This box is closed until doing the work with those issues. That is true for all my boxes. They all have covers.

I use all types of art media in my healing process. Some type of drawing is common. When I'm afraid, I draw abstract things that my therapist and I check out to see what's going on. One really important thing I have realized is that I cannot immerse myself in my trauma. I do what is called "Acting Opposite." I stop expressing the trauma, and draw rainbows and flowers and other pretty things. Often I let my younger parts do it.

All of this boils down to pacing and containment. The imagery and concrete art works help me to set aside issues for later therapy sessions. It really helps me to "box" things up instead.

Like many survivors I have wanted to do something to help my fellow survivors as they make their healing journey. I have begun to make custom boxes for people and I think I may become a regular provider of these boxes to people. They are not difficult to make, but they do take some time. It is actually a good way for me to contain my feelings by making the boxes! They are reasonably cheap to make - I buy the boxes for about \$2 at the craft store. Then all you need are brushes, paint and vision!

MV

## Why We Write for MV

By Kate and the Committee

Plopping onto the sofa, the little girl removed her shoes, as usual, and crossed her legs Indian-style.

"Look! I got a Barbie Band-Aid!" Pointing at her toe, she laughed, "She's looking at me!"

"It's been a pretty stressful week," the woman went on ruefully, twisting an errant lock from her tight bun, "I guess we took on too much and got overwhelmed."

The therapist nodded sagely, nearly containing the inevitable shock as his client switched personalities in mind-thought without appearing to notice or care.

I am that client.

With the "help" of a skeptical mental health community, I/we were encouraged, if not forced, into denial through many years of therapy. As I begin to come to terms with multiplicity, I feel anger and outrage toward all the professionals who let me down. The signals were all there

and, looking back, we can't understand how they could miss it. So many things simply make sense in that context and no other.

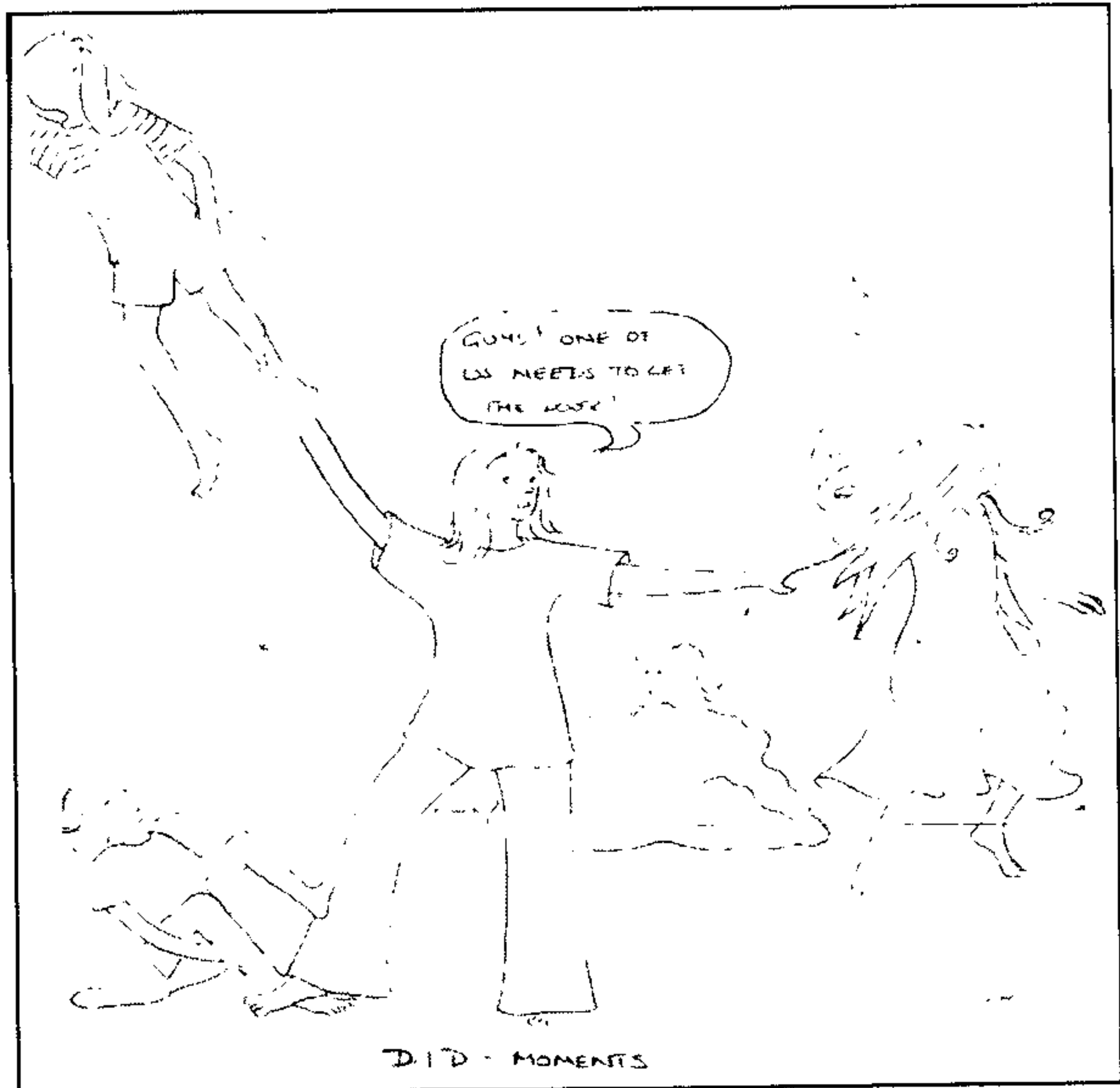
We learned a lot from them about what we are not, so it wasn't all wasted time. Besides, I speak more fluent psychobabble than most shrinks!

We write in Many Voices:

- for me so I can heal.
- for other multiples so more will come out of the social closet and demand acceptance.
- for professionals so more will understand and learn to help us.
- for adults so more will understand the terrible consequences of child abuse.
- for children so more will feel safe to tell someone what is happening to them.

Offering safe hugs to those who want them.

MV



# Unmapped Miles

By Beautiful Dreamer

You might as well face it: you are many...inside of you resides a wealth of talents, needs, hurts, abilities and longings. Deep within you lies a metropolis of your own making, peopled with personalities only you could have created in the privacy of your own mind. An architect of sorts, you have built this underground world with your own blood, sweat and tears. You have done this to survive the outrageous thievery of groping hands. And now your own hands grope like a stumble-burn in the dark, in search of the dim light at the end of the tunnel.

Hesitating (for do you truly want to find that light—or rather, dare to hope against hope that it exists?), you stumble across an oaken door deep within a gloomy forest with the cryptic letters DID chiseled deep into the weathered wood; beneath its brass handle (worn smooth from centuries of hands big and small grasping it as much for strength as for admittance) a rusty keyhole gapes a mute welcome.

Squinting, your face takes on a slideshow of expressions: puzzlement, resentment, indignant denial, and the first inklings of a subdued—but excited—acknowledgment of the rightness of those monolithic letters.

Fumbling for your leathery backpack, you swing it around and toss it to the ground, then balance on your haunches while rifling through its contents. Your journey has been long and hard; you have not undertaken it lightly, nor have you turned to the right hand or to the left, but plodded ahead step by weary step, whether your path led through mountainous terrain or dismal valley.

The elements have not been kind to you; neither have the forces of evil knocking you about at whim...but this has not deterred you. You've cried salty tears, which ran into the split of your chapped lips; you've limped along on feet swollen and blistered; you've slept under bridges with the

other homeless, (some of them for the same reason as yourself); you've gone days without nourishing food, months without a nurturing word from friend or stranger. Indeed, you have often fancied that you were all alone in this lunatic quest you seem to have engaged in—but a quest for what?

Frowning into the depth of your backpack, you heave a huge sigh of frustration, and your hand (weak though it is from decades of giving giving and rarely receiving more than crumbs in return, or cramped from staving off thieving hands) grasps something coldly metallic. You excavate an oversized key from the bottom of the backpack, and hold it in your open palm for inspection.

Your hands, rough and chafed from the rigors of survival, warm the metal as you turn it over and over, staring uncomprehendingly at its reality. You can't recall when it first came into your possession, or how you knew to hunt for it deep within the womb of your backpack; you seemed to know instinctively that it was there silently offering its services should you ever choose to use it.

You glance from the key to the gaping key hole, and experience such a jolt deep within yourself, that you blink in surprise. Could this possibly be the fit for which you've been searching most of your life? Your mind sifts forgotten memories which suddenly surface, memories of futile attempts to fit this key into other keyholes, keyholes which if labeled would bear names such as religion, marriage, motherhood, friendship, alcohol abuse, and so many more that you can't even begin to recount them all.

Rising to your feet with a bewildered excitement, you clutch the old-fashioned key with such intensity that it bites into your palm, but you hardly care—it is the good kind of pain, the kind of pain which lets you know you are alive and on the verge

on an enormous self-discovery of such magnitude that this moment, this breath, will forever be etched in your memory and heart.

Your faltering footsteps are like an old woman's shuffle, for you are bone-weary from all that it has taken you to arrive at this point in time. As you hesitantly approach the door, key still biting into your palm, your form sways, and you nearly swoon with exhaustion and a lifetime's accumulation of disappointed hopes.

You think, as you near the oaken door, that you cannot take it this time should this turn out to be one more such aborted hope. You think, *I won't let myself hope this time*, but something inside of you does just the same, something sounding oddly like a foreign voice (but you've heard it before, or was it merely a dream? So hard any more to distinguish dreams from reality!)

You think, *something is wrong with me that my perceptions are so jumbled*, but still you move forward. This you do, you move forward.

When you reach the door you fall against it and its weight is much sturdier than you would have suspected. With a fingertip you trace the carved letters and a tiny shudder wracks your body as truth communicates itself from the simple touch of flesh on wood. Sighing, for you have come so far to be once more enveloped in darkness, you bring the key up to the keyhole with a hand that shakes, betraying your steely resolve.

*It will or it won't*, you think idiotically. *It will or it won't, it will or it won't, it will or it won't*. Seconds before you attempt the single most important act of your life, you take a deep breath, close your eyes, and insert the key. It fits!

Overjoyed, your eyes fly wide open, and you stare in astonishment. *It fits, it turns, I'm home at last and no returns!* you singsong in your head. As the door clicks open you catch the



tail-end of an eerie song so infused with the childlike wonder of truth that it swirls and leaps out at you, alive with the power of things that are untainted with the world's lies. Someone inside of you giggles with joy, and you clamp a hand over your mouth in shocked dismay.

*But of course, you tell yourself out loud, of course, of course! There's bound to be other voices!* You've left the door ajar, not willing just yet to cross its threshold into the land of no-turning-back, recognizing intuitively that to do so is to say goodbye, however reluctantly, to what-might-have-been. Recognizing as well that to embrace the one is to dismiss-forever-the other.

Oh, but for now it is enough to stand this side of the threshold and cherish this time of knowingness, to savor the sensation of sensing all the shattered bits and pieces of your life falling into place into some kind of discernable shape. To stand here, just now, with the key protruding from the open door (and what a warm rush of affection you feel for this magical key!), and realize that you have always, in some fashion, lived in an alternate universe, or reality.

This is merely the beginning of your journey, or perhaps in some fashion, its middle. You have many more miles to put on your soul, but you don't realize that yet-or suspecting as much, don't care, for you have made a choice, the most critical choice of your life: you've chosen to use your key, to not back away from the meaning of those deeply carved letters. And for now, that is more than enough.

MV



## Fun (?) In Recovery

By Kristine L.

I guess this edition's topic is what we do for fun. Well I have been in recovery on and off for 2 decades now.

Note I say *in recovery*, not *recovering*. Only in the last month or so have I actually been spending any amount of time actually truly present in my body. Recovery doesn't do much if you aren't there for it.

My previous therapist was a healthy therapist. I have seen so many that aren't. My "favorite" was the one who told me after the death of my abusive mother, and the split from my abusive narcissist fiancé who was just like my mother- that what I needed was to start dating again

I was in the process of passive suicide by alcohol and nicotine, and I even knew at that point that dating wasn't what I needed. I can just imagine the abuser I would have picked at the time I don't need to imagine, I can just take a trip down what I have of memory lane, and pick one out of the line. They were pretty much all the same

But back to my last therapist- we were attempting EMDR, and I wasn't in my body enough for it to do anything. I gave up, figured I was to blame somehow, and just wasn't meant to get better- etc. the tapes just run on

Now a year or so later, I just started seeing a new therapist I just had my first session of EMDR with her I was actually present in my body and found that the EMDR helped

This whole being in my body every day has taken some getting used to I had a couple of rough weeks- the suicidal part kicked in The part that is so scared of the unknown, so scared of change Now that there is actually light somewhere in the tunnel- it would be a real shame to give up now.

I haven't been doing much for fun. I have had some strong feelings of happiness and joy in the last two weeks for the first time in my life I have even started clearing out the clutter Not just the emotional, but the physical

I used to joke that I had someone breaking into my house and leaving things. I know now that my inner children have been doing a lot of internet shopping, and these things that I don't recognize have

come from that. So I have been working on recycling, taking things to the thrift store, or just throwing things out. I don't need to hold on to my emotional garbage, and my house and car don't need to be full of garbage either.

I still have a lot to get rid of, (emotional and physical) but it is amazing how letting go of physical things and a degree of organization has helped how I feel I remember dissociating for weeks at a time, and walking into my house and wondering how in the world it got so dirty and cluttered. I knew the cats weren't leaving dirty clothes and dishes everywhere.

It amazes me that I can walk through things and not see them, and it saddens me that I had to develop the ability to be able to survive Had I not been able to dissociate, I would not have made it Even with dissociating, it still amazes me that I am alive today.

Now I want to move beyond just surviving, and on to thriving. The closing statement at my SIA (survivors of incest anonymous) meetings runs something like "If any one of us can recover, than so can we all" This gives me hope

I have a story to relate about my toilet seat I am sure others will relate to I bought an older home that needs a lot of work 6 years ago This home came with ancient toilet with a really cheap seat The pins and bolts that hold the seat on are plastic They were stripping out when I moved in. The seat moved every time you would sit on it- to the point of actually almost dumping you on the floor.

So after six years of this, I bought a new seat this week I was going to get the cheapest one with the plastic pins Finally after putting it to the committee, I decided to upgrade and go for the metal pins

For years my self esteem was so low that I didn't even think I was worth a decent toilet seat But I tell you, taking that old one off and putting the new one on was kind of fun I did get a lot of pleasure putting the old one in the trash

So I guess for now, fun for me is getting rid of things I don't need or am not happy with But I tell you, I am lot happier spending time in my body in a house that doesn't look like a bomb went off in it Baby steps!

MV

# PTSD is Not Forever

By Us

About 7 years ago I began to have a royally bad flashback. She was one of our most vulnerable girls. She was starting into a recurring flashback, and those who were co-conscious were saying "Oh man, she's just not up to it."

The teens began to chant "Change it—Change the sequence of events Change it! No-no-no don't look back. he's there but it's in the past. Don't look. Don't look."

Then a speaker began to say "Look. Look at the lilac tree. It's Grahms' favorite. Smell the sweet smell. Reach out and pick a blossom, then suck the sweet nectar like Grahms taught us to. Feel the warm sun on your face. Hear the birds singing. But don't hear him calling you. Ignore him. It's in the past. Long gone. Long over. Look at the pretty blue sky. The lavender of the lilacs "

At this time we usually only could picture things in our mind in black, white and greys. She'd start to turn her head to see where he was calling from, so more began to chant "No, no, no. Don't look. Just see the pretty lilac tree. Smell the sweetness. See the beauty but do not look back. It's in the past. It's only the start of a very bad dream. He's gone—not there. Reach out. Pick a blossom."

As she reached out for the blossom she had fixed upon, she had begun to change the sequence of events. "Yes, yes, yes!" they all joyfully shouted. "Yes yes yes. Change it! Change it! Hear the birds, not his voice. Taste how sweet the nectar is Yes!"

She then touched the tree and picked her blossom. The most incredibly fantastic thing happened. We were now a wall behind her, so he could not entice her to look.. The scene was in the black-whites and greys. It began slowly, but the sun had turned yellow. The sky was turning blue like a wash of color that started at the top and was bringing the beauty of color into our life. It sped up a bit. The greens of the taller trees were so vivid. Then the lilac tree

was a burst of beauty, the colors so lovely.

This Little One (her name) was so caught up in the colors, the songs of birds, the summer smells, that she could no longer hear him. A strong male turned to where he was hiding and demanded he never try to do this to the Little One again. He was nothing to us anymore. Just part of a nightmare. A flashback. And he was to go to ever, ever bother her again. Then the strong presence of anger, rage and pain he was trying to wake simply slipped away gone.

We were all standing, shouting in joy. "Little One, you did it! You did it! You fought the flashback! You made it go away." But the rest of us were in a state of awe. We had seen this beauty of color, where it had always been only black, white, and shades of grey. In our mind we never saw color, but as an artist, we could use it very well.

We were afraid that this inside color might never return, but it was worth losing it to simply have seen it inside.

We still have flashbacks, but not so intense, and we still have that ability to see color inside our mind. We also had a tiny seed planted. We could fight flashbacks. We had found some strength as a group to help stop most of them

It takes time. Others need to have time to believe it can change. It can be different. We put a lot of hard work into it. One night, over three years ago, someone said "Time—time is the key."

A flashback feels so real, like it's there and is being re-experienced. But time is consistent. Sure, blackouts tend to mess up how we experience time, but the past is left there, gone over, and done. It cannot enter the present. It can not ever be truly relived. It's the past.

We began to confront flashbacks with "It's the past. It's a very bad memory but only a memory. It hurts, it causes fear, but it's not an experience happening in this 'now', the present."

The more we would say this, the stronger the belief that a flashback is a bad memory, not a re-experience. The more power we demanded, the less power we gave to PTSD flashbacks...the less intense they became.

People call bad memories "PTSD flashbacks" but good memories triggered by sight, smell, etc., they call "Nostalgia."

This thought was triggered by the smell of a hot pie. It was so wonderful. Just like Grahm's pie. We found ourselves back in her kitchen, small, and watching her take the beautiful pie out of the oven. The smell so great. I was "Hey, we just had a good kind of flashback! That triggered a happy memory!"

We have a few groups. One we call the Logics, one the Intellects, and this was very interesting to them. "If the memory holds pain, fear, or terror—it's a flashback; yet if a sight, smell, sound wakes a pleasant, happy memory, it's nostalgia!" Then they drifted back to wherever they go to logically use intellect to figure out stuff.

Time passed and a few from the Logics and Intellects came to visit. "What if we try to locate good memories around the same time the bad ones are, and develop a way to trigger the good ones to fight off the bad ones?"

This caught the attention of most of those in con-consciousness at the time, Fast!

"Yah. Use good memories to help create a balance to fight the flashbacks."

It's worked pretty well for us. It's not chased every PTSD event away, but it has given them less power. They are easier to manage. We can still hold a spot of calm and keep saying "It's only bad memories, it's only bad memories. It's not happening now. It may feel like it's happening now, but it's a memory. "

Then we go looking for the happy memories close in time to the bad



one.

We feel good at demanding our own power back from those who had hurt us so badly. We know that even when a flashback is happening, we keep a part of our mind in the present to remind others it's not an experience in this present time. It's one way to get back the power we were born with, that other people—adults—smashed, shattered, broke. We can hold on to one more piece, find a place to use the best-ever superglue and fit it into a place of respect and grace for the healings and persons we are in this present, growing us stronger, and adding hope into the future.

We have tried to learn to stick to the present now. To use the present time wisely and know "bad memories hurt, cause fear—but only as memories. It's not happening, other than in the form of a bad memory."

MV

## Colouring

when I colour  
like a four year old  
with bright, sticky  
wax crayons  
getting lost  
as the colours mix  
and clash, swimming  
in light and dark  
planned or random  
patterns in the safety  
of a colouring book  
or courageously  
consummating  
a lonely white page  
it's not just comfort...  
it's connecting with  
my four year old's desire to survive  
her willingness to believe  
despite everything  
being alive can be  
wonderful

*By Kirsty Winterbourne*

MV

## Friendship Advice Wanted

Many Voices has helped me tremendously in my healing over the years, and now I need your help one more time. If any readers have this problem, or have any suggestions, please have Many Voices send your comments to me.

Although I have successfully integrated all my alters, I am having some difficulty in "integrating" into life in the present. My therapist says I have "too many security devices."

I'm having trouble with anxiety, related to people/friends in the present. NEVER in my life prior to this have I had friends. And, now, with my new job, I find myself talking to people and making friends. Even to the point of going out for dinner, or for coffee and pie, with a few friends. While I'm with them, I enjoy it, I have a good time. But, then, afterwards, I panic. And also, on most days, I panic before work in the morning and think: "No, don't go to work! Hide at home!" I'm so afraid of doing the wrong thing, or saying the wrong thing. Or somehow screwing up these new friendships.

All my life I've been terrified of people. Terrified of friendships. As a small child, my mother beat me and locked me in the garage for having a friend. So I learned

the lesson—don't make friends. As I got older in school, if I made a friend, I would soon sabotage the friendship so that the other girl would never speak to me again.

I have NO experience with successful friendships. And now, even with neighbors, I am terrified of them. If I want to sit out in my back yard, I scan the yard from my back porch window to be sure there are no neighbors outside. If they are out—I stay in the house. I have lived in my present house for 20 years and have never once spoken to any of the neighbors.

My therapist says it's just because I have no experience with friends—I need practice. But I wouldn't even know what to say to a neighbor.

I guess I'm afraid of my old habit of sabotaging relationships. And, even with my new friends that I go out for coffee with, I feel "on guard" because I don't want to "screw it up." My therapist has also told me people have different friends for different things.

But this is all so new to me. I've been a loner all my life. I'd appreciate any tips, any advice on friendships, that any readers have!

Help!

*By Jan T*

MV

## BOOKS

**Healing From Trauma: A Survivor's Guide to Understanding Your Symptoms and Reclaiming Your Life**, by Jasmin Lee Cori, MS, LPC. Published by Marlowe & Co., 2007. Available through any bookseller. Paperback, 260 pgs. \$14.95.

There is healing from trauma, and this book is an excellent resource for that journey. The author gives practical information interspersed with exercises that will help you digest the material. It explains in an easy-to-read manner how and why your thinking and feelings got so distorted, how trauma affects your body, trauma-related disorders, recovery strategies, and ways to create a nourishing life. Jasmin Lee Cori tells her own story of recovery from trauma and concludes with a list of resources

to aid us on our journey.

One of the most important points in *Healing From Trauma* is this: Get into therapy with a trauma specialist! Do not get a regular therapist! I totally agree with the author, and I say that from my experience with regular therapists and because of the peace and transformation that is taking place in my life due to the knowledge and skill of my trauma therapist, along with my dedication to recovery. It does make a difference!

I can't recommend this book enough. Get sober if you've been self-medicating with alcohol, drugs, sex, food, religion, etc. Begin the journey. It will be painful at times but it's worth it.

*By Gale M*

MV

**THANK YOU**  
*for sharing your  
wonderful work with  
MV readers.*  
**Please send more!**

**COMING SOON!**

**August 2008**

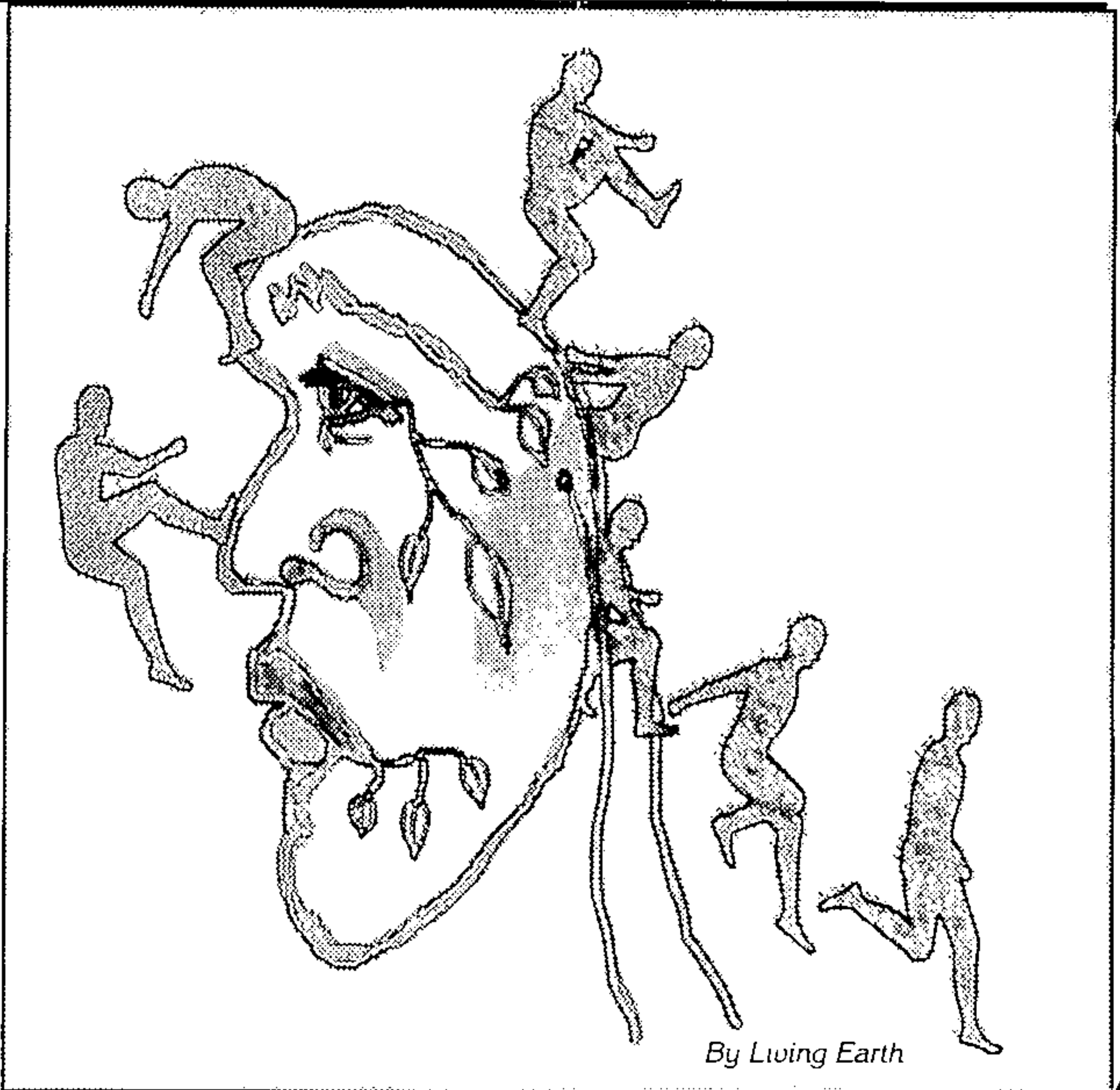
Recovering for Men. what's different?  
PTSD and sexuality.  
ART: Your supportive friends/family.  
Deadline June 15, 2008

**October 2008**

Spirituality in your life: yes or no.  
Opening the door to change  
ART: Your inner world  
Deadline. August 15, 2008

**December 2008**

Healthy celebrations Creative  
expressions. ART: A Creative Moment.  
Deadline October 15, 2008.



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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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